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UNSC APPROVES GUTERRES FOR SECOND TERM
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TIME TO ACT

Urgent need to speed up immunisation drive as daily case count crosses 1,500



Citizens and expats queue up for documentation prior to receiving the vaccine at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday (Muscat Daily)

303 patients in ICU, 1,553 new cases

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 1,553 new cases of COVID-19 and ten related deaths on Tuesday. With the latest figures, the total number of cases registered in the sultanate now stands at 226,648, including 2,434 deaths.

The total number of recoveries is 206,026, accounting for a recovery rate of 90.9 per cent.

A total of 983 COVID-19 patients were in health institutions on Tuesday, including 129 admitted in a 24-hour period on the day and 303 in intensive care units (ICU).



Meanwhile, Ibra Hospital has announced the postponement of regular appointments in the following specialised clinics: ophthalmology, ENT, dermatology and physiotherapy. Emergency cases will continue to be received in the main building of the hospital, starting June 13, 2021, until further notice.

Call for more vaccination centres, extended hours

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Citizens and residents are calling for more vaccination centres and an extension of working hours at these to expedite the immunisation process to limit the spread of the pandemic and reduce the daily COVID-19 case count.

In this regard, Dr Zakaria bin Yahya al Balushi, infectious diseases consultant at The Royal Hospital, tweeted, "The timing of vaccination is from 8am to 2pm. It is necessary to expedite the administration of vaccines to reduce new infections and deaths quickly. Vaccines are available in the sultanate, so vaccination centres must operate 24 hours a day to accelerate the immunisation process."

He added that health cadres, volunteers and employees of other sectors must be engaged to speed up the immunisation process while continuing to adhere to the preventive measures

IMMUNISATION PLAN			
Stage 1 (Since May 26)		Stage 2 (June 21)	
● General Education Diploma students and teaching staff	● Second dose for those who have completed ten weeks since the first dose	● Individuals aged 45 years and older	
● Second dose for the population of Musandam governorate	● Frontline service providers from ROP, Sultan's Armed Forces	● Higher education students and teaching staff	
	● and security apparatus		
	● Frontline service providers in the public sector		
	● Health workers in private health institutions		
		Stage 3 (mid-July)	

Vaccines are available in the sultanate, so vaccination centres must operate 24 hours a day to accelerate the immunisation process

DR ZAKARIA AL BALUSHI

until the number of cases decreases. "There is no reason to store vaccines; it should be given out immediately."

In reference to Dhofar, where khareef will begin soon, Dr Balushi said that to protect the people and visitors from infec-

tion, "the target group for vaccination against COVID-19 in the governorate should be expanded because of the season's economic and social importance".

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* outside the Al Nabha School for Basic Education in Seeb where a

vaccination centre is being run, Ibrahim al Sayed said, "I came with my father to get him vaccinated. I thank God that he got the vaccine, but I hope the authorities increase the number of centres so that the maximum number of people are immunised to end this pandemic."

Ahmed Nizar, 65, a Jordanian national who came to the vaccination centre at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher for his first dose, had to return disappointed. "I was surprised that they are only allowing those due

for the second dose. I hope all target groups are allowed and given the vaccine."

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services in Muscat has refuted reports in social media that some vaccination centres in the governorate have been changed.

The centres in Muscat governorate include Al Nabha School for Basic Education in Seeb, Quriyat Polyclinic in Quriyat, Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, Imam Jaber bin Zaid School in Wattayah and the Office of the Governor in Amerat.

The Ministry of Health on Tuesday stated that the implementation plan of the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 in June and July 2021 targets a large segment of the population. "In order to ensure a smooth implementation process with the best precautionary measures at the various vaccination centres, the ministry has set a schedule for each stage."

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 5mn doses of COVID-19 vaccines will arrive in Oman by October 2021, according to Dr Bader al Rawahi, director of Department of Infectious Diseases Control in the Ministry of Health (MoH).

In an interview with Oman TV, he said, "The sultanate has prepared the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 for all governorates. We received about 415,000 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine this month, in addition to a quantity of AstraZeneca vaccines. We will complete immunising 30 per cent of Oman's population before the end of July 2021 by administering 250,000 doses weekly considering 1.25mn doses are expected this month."

Dr Rawahi informed that MoH is facing the challenge of some people's reluctance to



get vaccinated as a result of false information. "Vaccination coverage is 40 per cent in the Governorate of Dhofar, while is 100 per cent in Muscat, Dakhliyah and Dhahirah. Vaccines are the most powerful weapon against COVID-19."

Meanwhile, MoH announced that 335,866 individuals have been vaccinated in the sultanate since the beginning of the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 on December 27, 2020, until June 7, 2021, representing 9.3 per cent of the total population.

Yemen counts on Oman's role for consensus among disputing parties

Muscat - Dr Ahmed Awad Mubarak, Minister of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of Yemen, has said that his country counts on the role of the sultanate under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in rallying international and regional efforts to stop the war in Yemen and establish rapprochement among the disputing Yemeni parties in preparation of a return to the political track.

Dr Mubarak told Oman TV on Monday that his visit to Oman included conveying a message to His Majesty the Sultan from President Abderabu Mansour of Yemen. The message expressed gratitude, commendation and appreciation for Oman's role in Yemen's stability.

"Based on the sultanate's good relations with all parties in



Yemen, we count on Oman's role in creating a convergence of views among the disputing Yemeni parties," he said.

Speaking about international endeavors to end the conflict, Dr Mubarak explained that the UN initiative towards this objective includes four main targets: Comprehensive ceasefire, opening

Sanaa Airport, facilitating export of oil products via Al Hudeidah Port, and resumption of consultations on Yemen's future.

"We have welcomed all those elements," he said, noting that any concession that the Government of Yemen makes will be in favour of the people of Yemen.

About economic cooperation

We count on Oman's role in creating a convergence of views among the disputing Yemeni parties

DR AHMED MUBARAK

with the sultanate, he said one of the objectives of his visit "supporting investment cooperation between the two countries", including collaboration in the marine cable between the sultanate and Yemen's Al Mahra area. This is in addition to connecting sea-ports of the two countries to enhance exports and imports.

Oman elected to UN ECOSOC

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman was elected to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of the six main organs of the United Nations, for the 2022-24 term in elections held on Monday in New York. H E Dr Mohamed al Hassan, permanent representative of the sultanate to the UN, thanked member states for their support.

Oman was elected in the Asia-Pacific States category along with India, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan. The results were announced by Volkan Bozkir, president of the General Assembly, following a vote by secret ballot in the assembly.

H E Dr Hassan said, "This is yet another podium ascended by the sultanate in the international arena. The opportunity will be utilised to develop economic and social sectors in the sultanate



H E Dr Mohamed al Hassan

within the context of Oman Vision 2040."

He added that there was strong support from the international community for Oman to join ECOSOC in recognition of its role and status internationally.

At the heart of the UN system, the 54-member ECOSOC advances the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental.

The council is a central platform for fostering debate and in-

novative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and co-ordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals.

Responsible for following up on major UN conferences and summits, council members are elected each year by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.

Among the African states, Cote d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Mauritius, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania were elected.

From the eastern European states, Croatia and the Czech Republic and from the Latin American and Caribbean states, Belize, Chile and Peru were elected.

Seats on the council are allotted based on geographical representation with 14 allocated to African states, 11 to Asian states, six to eastern European states, ten to Latin American and Caribbean states and 13 to western European and other states.

SAYYID FAHD RECEIVES SAUDI AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received H E Abdullah Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia appointed to the sultanate, on Tuesday. H H Sayyid Fahd welcomed the ambassador and wished him success in his assignment. Their conversation during the meeting reviewed the fraternal relations and means of developing these to serve the interests of the two countries' brotherly peoples and enhance the march of GCC (ONA)

Oman joins world in celebrating World Oceans Day on June 8

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman joined the world on Tuesday in marking World Oceans Day, observed annually on June 8.

Themed 'The Ocean: Life and Livelihood', this year marks the start of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The event aims to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources' by 2030.

On the occasion, Dr Fatima al Kiyumi, director general of Fisheries Research in Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said, "The sultanate approved the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals with countries of the world at the United Nations Summit in September 2015. Since then, it has become one of the member states to work actively to achieve these goals, including Goal No 14, and has incorporated them into the main pillars of Oman's Ninth Five-year Development Plan."

She added that Oman, due to its 3,165km coastline, has given great attention to what is known as the 'Blue economy'. "The con-



Due to its 3,165km coastline, Oman has given great attention to what is known as the 'Blue economy', which includes ensuring sustainability of marine resources

DR FATIMA AL KIYUMI

cept includes setting specific plans to preserve fisheries, ensuring sustainability of marine resources, and saving sea water from pollutants."

With regard to enhancing fish

stocks and biodiversity in the sultanate, Fatima explained that the ministry has implemented a project to establish artificial reefs in a number of wilayats, including Suwaiq and Sur. She informed

that the project implemented in Suwaiq is the largest marine farm of artificial reefs in the Middle East. It was inaugurated on December 12, 2019, and developed at a cost of RO2.65mn. "Spread on the ocean floor extending 20km in length and 7km in width, the artificial reef took two-and-a-half years to build. It included manufacturing 4,200 cement and 80 iron units."

According to the UN, oceans cover more than 70 per cent of the planet. They supports hu-

manity's sustenance and that of every other organism on earth.

The ocean is the source of at least 50 per cent of the planet's oxygen. It is home to most of earth's biodiversity, and is the main source of protein for more than a billion people worldwide. Furthermore, the ocean is key to the world's economy with an estimated 40mn people being employed by ocean-based industries by 2030.

"With 90 per cent of big fish populations depleted, and 50 per cent of coral reefs destroyed, more is taken from the ocean than can be replenished. To protect and preserve the ocean and all it sustains, creating a new balance is needed, rooted in true understanding of the ocean and how humanity relates to it. A connection must be built with the ocean that is inclusive, innovative and informed by lessons from the past," stated a UN report.

Thus, the purpose of the day is to inform the public of the impact of human actions on the ocean, develop a worldwide movement of citizens for the ocean, and mobilise and unite the world's population on a project for the sustainable management of the world's oceans, said the UN on its website.

Public Prosecution conducts tests for 1,400 jobseekers



Muscat - The Public Prosecution Department conducted written tests for 1,400 applicants with Bachelor's degree in Sharia'a and Law and higher qualifications, who competed for the job of public prosecution assistant.

The candidates were put in two groups as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The sorting of candi-

dates will be processed electronically as per a programme set by Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) for tests of government institutions.

Nasr Khamis al Sawa'ee, Attorney General, conducted an inspection tour to scrutinise efforts made to conduct the tests held at SQU labs.

ONA



37 industrial fires in 2020: CDAA

Our Correspondent Muscat

Thirty-seven fires in industrial facilities were reported in 2020 compared to 47 in 2019, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

The authority confirmed that the accelerated development and growth in the country requires preventive measures to preserve and protect the progress made. In this context, industrial installations must ensure practices to safeguard the developments of the country.

CDAA called on industrialists and industrial manpower to comply with safety norms.

The authority stated that fires occur for several reasons, including noncompliance with its guidelines and construction with nondurable and combustible materials.

'Storage of hazardous materials in violation of set guidelines, noncompliance with regular maintenance schedule for fire alarms and firefighting systems, and not verifying validity of internal electrical connections are common causes of industrial fires,' CDAA stated.

MoH participates in meet on international mobility of health workers

Our Correspondent Muscat

A virtual Tri-Regional High-Level Policy Dialogue on 'International Mobility of Health Professionals' commenced on Tuesday with the participation of the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO/EMRO), WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO), and the WHO Regional Office for

South-East Asia (WHO/SEARO).

The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Health (MoH), took part in the event with a delegation headed by H E Dr Fatima al Ajmi, Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs in the ministry.

The two-day meeting, themed 'New Challenges, Shared Solutions', aims to review data and trends related to



the international flow of health personnel across the three regions of WHO. It further seeks

to identify opportunities for strengthening legal and institutional framework and interna-

tional cooperation across the member states of the three regions to better manage interna-

tional health workers' mobility to be consistent with the WHO Global Code of Practice on International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

Additionally, the Tri-Regional High-Level Policy Dialogue aims at discussing challenges, opportunities, policy responses and innovations in the three WHO regions with respect to ethical international recruitment.

The event will highlight em-

ployment of foreign health workers, and ways to harness the contribution of diaspora health workers particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Halima Qalam, acting director general of planning and studies in MoH, will present a working paper outlining the sultanate's experience in dealing with non-Omani health workers of various specialties in the virtual meet.

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Film documents tourism potential in S Sharqiyah



Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to support the tourism sector in various governorates, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has launched a documentary film titled *Tourism in Jalaan Sector*. The documentary, launched by H E Maithaa Saif al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary for Tourism in MHT, aims to highlight the tourism components in the three wilayats of Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Jalan Bani Bu Hassan and Al Kamil W'Al Wafi in South Sharqiyah governorate. It also seeks to enrich tourism and support existing projects. The documentary includes clips of new tourist sites that have not been shown before,

Each corner of the three wilayats is characterised by a unique story told to the tourists, starting from Al Kamil W'Al Wafi where you find fertile land and towering mountains

SALIM AL SENAIDI

arranged in cooperation with a group of licensed tourist establishments and local community institutions. The documentary has been produced by Salim al Senaidi, and the drone shots were taken by Mustafa al Senaidi. Nearly 980 different shots were filmed and 142 clips were approved for the film. Senaidi said that the three wilayats of Jalan have a shared history as the "unity and familiarity between them is obvi-

ous in customs, traditions and heritage". "Each corner of the three wilayats is characterised by a unique story told to the tourists, starting from Al Kamil W'Al Wafi where you find fertile land and towering mountains, golden sands and fresh valleys. Village of Siq is prominent in the documentary." He added that as for Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, it is unique "with all tourist components of moun-

tains, valleys, sands and seas". "Mount Qahwan is yet another attraction with inviting golden sands. Village of Falaj al Mashaikh expresses the beauty of Jalan Bani Bu Hassan. My hometown, Jalan Bani Bu Ali has a charming beach that is characterised by warmth in winter and cold in the summer." He added that "Al Ashkharah is a jewel" in Jalan Bani Bu Ali. He also pointed out that the three wilayats of Jalaan have many "forts and castles narrating the fragrant tale of the past and the present". This documentary, MHT said is "not only an invitation to tourists, but also to investors to invest in the tourism, industrial and commercial sectors of the three wilayats".

FAHUD AIRPORT REOPENED



Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on Tuesday announced the re-opening of its Fahud Airport after the completion of its runway rehabilitation project. The first Salam Air aircraft landed safely at the airport following its contract with PDO, it added (Supplied photo)

Pact signed for Muscat to build GCC Statistics Centre premises



Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, on Tuesday received Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf, GCC Secretary General, who is currently visiting the sultanate. The meeting discussed ways of upgrading the GCC coordination and boosting joint future projects.

During the meeting, an agreement on designating the premises of the GCC Statistics Centre was signed by Sayyid Badr on behalf of the Government of Oman while Dr Hajraf signed it on behalf of the GCC Secretariat General. The fact that Muscat has been endorsed as venue for the GCC Statistics Centre reflects the sultanate's keenness to promote joint GCC action.

The centre aims to build capacities of the GCC institutions to keep pace with modern statistical requirements. It will also help develop joint working programmes, unify GCC national statistical strategies and standardise them in line with the best international practices and enhancing proper use of statistical data in making decisions and devising policies.

Sultanate's airport passengers decline by 72%

Muscat - The total number of passengers travelling through airports in the sultanate (Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm) until the end of March 2021 reached 1,003,762 compared to 3,571,647 passengers as at the end of March 2020, comprising a decline of 72 per cent.

According to preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSI), the number of flights till the end of March 2021 stood at 8,191 (including 5,865 international flights and 2,236 domestic flights), compared to the same period in 2020, which had

27,535 flights, (23,815 international flights, 3,720 domestic flights). Nationalities of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan topped the total number of passengers in the sultanate's airports till the end of March 2021. The number of Indian passen-

gers stood at 334,131 (arrivals 288,565 and departures 45,566). Bangladeshi passengers stood at 108,605 (arrivals 89,102 and departures 19,503) and while Pakistani passengers stood at 99,670 (arrivals 89,338 and departures 10,332). ONA

VACANCIES

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Qualification: CA, ACCA or equivalent qualification
Year of Experience: 15 years
Nationality: Omani Nationals only
Role & Objective: Guide and direct operations of Finance department; assist CFO in establishing, implementing and managing financial plans, policies and procedures. Ensure that all finance and accounting requirements are effectively managed within the policies set by the company and the regulatory bodies.

Position: MANAGER - QHSE

Qualification: Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering
Additional Qualification: Lead Auditor Course, NEBOSH IGC
Experience: 15 years
Nationality: Omani Nationals only
Role & Objective: Experienced across the full range of QA/QC & HSE management. Detailed QA/QC & HSE knowledge of the industry's various working environments, including oil and gas, Petrochemical projects. Quality & HSE related documents as per clients' (PDO, OQ) requirement such as Quality Plan, Quality Control Plan, Method Statement and related work instructions.

Position: HSE ADVISOR

Qualification: OSHA/NEBOSH with engineering qualification
Year of Experience: 5-7 years
Nationality: Omani Nationals only
Role & Objective: Prepare, advice, monitor, maintain and ensure that all staff and visitors on site are educated on the Health, Safety and Environmental standards and regulations. Able to interpret, evaluate and apply regulations, policies and procedures to a wide variety of work situations.

Interested candidates should apply for the posts mentioned above within 7 days from date to this advertisement by sending their CVs to careers@al-hassan.com only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date to Participate	Date of Submission	Grade	Price (R.O)	Sit Visit	Note
RFQ 61/2021	33/11KV PSS Civil Rehabilitation Works at Zone 3-Part B	20/06/2021	07/07/2021	Specialized	Free	From 27/06/2021 To 30/06/2021 at 8:00 Al Mawalleh Zone 3 Office with HSE PPE	To obtain the RFQ document, please contact us via e-mail sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	Companies may obtain documents online.
Purchase timing	Documents can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours To obtain the RFQ document, please contact us via e-mail sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , one week before bid submission date
Submission	Should be submitted in a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to the MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. marked only with RFQ number and the subject
Bid Placement	The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box No. 4 in the ground floor of MEDC Head Office building at Airport Heights, before 10 a.m. on the assigned date of tender submission
Email/Tele No.	24588600 sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com

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www.medcoman.com

A majestic entry at Barka

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An Naman Zoo in Barka has an added attraction - a full-grown lion called Alex.

Visitors have been flocking to see Alex ever since he came down, said Ahmed al Balushi, owner of the zoo.

Alex is the fifth big cat to make An Naman its home; two had passed away a few years back and right now a brother-sister duo (three years each) is there.

"Alex is comfortable with his new friends," Balushi said.

"He is a fierce animal but doesn't attack unnecessarily. He is polite and gentle. He came to the zoo last week and is playful and happy. Children love him and people admire his grandeur, colour and royalty."

Balushi said Alex is a gift from a close friend and is well looked after at the zoo and doctors are always around.

The eight year old lion consumes about six to ten kilograms



(Supplied photo)

of meat everyday.

After the addition of Alex the number of visitors to the zoo has swelled, Balushi said.

"We have visitors from vari-

ous nationalities and children are the most excited ones."

According to Balushi the zoo is being maintained solely for education purposes.

Alex is comfortable with his new friends. He came to the zoo last week and is playful and happy. Children love him and people admire his grandeur

AHMED AL BALUSHI

"Many people cannot travel abroad to see animals, and this zoo is a good chance for such people to witness animals from different places and different habitats," said Balushi.

An Naman zoo is one the only zoo in Oman and has different animals and birds, including tigers, ostriches, chimpanzee, foxes, hyaenas, hedgehogs, iguanas, hares, horses, monkeys, oryxes, lamas among many others.



TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp top picks for Middle East kids

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new Kaspersky Safe Kids study in the Middle East has revealed that children's interest over the past year has grown in the categories of 'software, audio and video' and 'e-commerce', while 'Internet communication media' and 'computer games' have slightly decreased.

TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp are at the top of the most popular applications. At the same time, TikTok overtook Instagram with almost double the level of popularity.

"The year 2020 turned out to be one of the most unusual for modern children. The pandemic has changed many common life situations across the globe, including education, meeting friends and family, recreation, and entertainment," said the global cybersecurity and digital privacy company.

Kaspersky analysed anonymised data, such as search queries, the most popular Android applications and website categories requested voluntarily provided by Kaspersky Safe Kids

users, to explore how the interests and needs of children have changed under the new conditions.

The most popular website categories among children in the Middle East were 'software, audio, video' (40 per cent), 'Internet communication media' (26 per cent) and 'computer games' (12 per cent).

Among the most popular apps, YouTube leads by a wide margin - the service remains the most popular video streaming service among children around the world. In second place is the messenger WhatsApp, and third is the popular social network TikTok. The top list also includes games, such as Brawl Stars, Roblox, Among US and Minecraft.

Children are very active in listening to and watching music videos on YouTube - its share is 17.35 per cent in searches for music genres and videos. A number of 'trend' videos were also visible in the statistics - 'pop it and simple dimple' and 'ASMR' account for 4.43 per cent of the queries. This year, requests related to the video game maker

Gacha Life also stood out in the top ratings of children from all over the world with a share of four per cent.

When it comes to music tastes, alongside traditional leaders like K-POP bands BTS and BLACKPINK, singers Ariana Grande, Billie Eilish and Travis Scott, another musical genre, like 'phonk' became popular.

Cartoons account for half (50.21 per cent) of all video searches by children around the world. The most popular ones are Lady Bug and Super Cat, Gravity Falls and Peppa Pig. In second place were various TV shows - the most frequent search in English was The Voice Kids.

In movies and TV series, the most popular trailers were Godzilla vs Kong, Zach Snyder's recent Justice League and the Disney+ mini-series WandaVision. Netflix also continues to attract the attention of more kids - the most frequent requests via the platform were for Cobra Kai and the now iconic Stranger Things.

For video games, the most trending with children was Minecraft (22.84 per cent).

EA plants 1,000 mangroves in Al Wusta

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 1,000 mangrove saplings were planted in the wilayat of Al Jazir in Al Wusta governorate, according to the Environment Authority (EA).

In celebration of the World Environment Day, the authority planted 1,000 mangrove saplings in Khor Qaisd in Al Jazir.

Badr bin Saif al Busaidi, head of Wetland Environments Department at the EA, said that efforts are being made in this field,



(Supplied photo)

including the implementation of the national initiative to plant 10mn trees, through which the authority seeks to achieve sustainability of vegetation and environmental cover.

"The continuity of work in preserving and maintaining environmental systems in accordance with internationally approved

standards and measures will have a significant positive impact in creating an environmental balance. Everyone needs to contribute and join hands in preserving these systems in order to benefit from them in wise and sustainable ways," Busaidi said.

"The government has paid great attention to the marine environment, and the EA is making continuous efforts to achieve the goals aimed at protecting the marine environment and preserving marine biological resources," he added.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Ministry warns owners to tow vessel stranded in Damaniyat Islands

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has warned the owners of the ship *Shiv Shakti* which has been stranded off the shore of the Daymaniyat Islands since May, to have it towed within a period of one week.

"The ship *Shiv Shakti*, which is carrying the flag of the Republic of India, and is stranded off the shore of Daymaniyat Islands in the wilayat of Barka, must be towed and removed from the current location, no later than one week from the date of publishing this announcement," the ministry said, making the announcement on Monday evening.

In the event of non-compliance within the specified period, the ministry said it would 'take legal measures in accordance with the Law Regulating Maritime Navigation in Territorial



(Supplied photo)

Waters issued by Royal Decree No. 98/81'.

In mid May, the Coast Guard Police responded to a distress call from the vessel after it had run aground close to the Daymaniyat Islands.

The Coast Guard Police boats rescued its eight-member crew and provided them with assistance.

The Marine Security Centre later said that it joined hands with military, security, and other civil departments in the incident of stranding of a wooden vessel crossing Omani waters off Daymaniyat Islands, due to water leakage in the vessel.

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800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

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

WHL/NO 06/493/2021 CR NO 1365452

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	3,981.02
BSE Sensex	52,275.57

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	189.44
Pakistani Rs	404.07
Bangladeshi Taka	220.14
Philippine Peso	124.01
Sri Lankan Rs	514.09

*Rates as on June 08
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

US trade deficit declines slightly

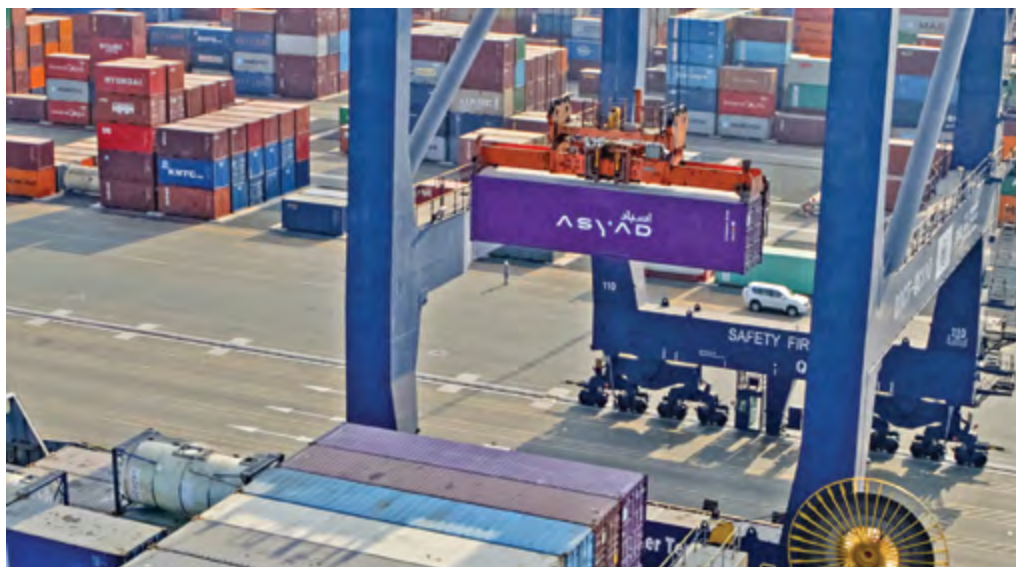
The US trade deficit dialled back in April, as exports rose and imports fell, according to government data released Tuesday.

The US\$68.9bn deficit in goods and services recorded by the Commerce Department was slightly larger than expected and came as the world's largest economy was bouncing back rapidly from the COVID-19 pandemic, aided by nationwide vaccination campaigns.

The trade gap was US\$6.1bn less than in March, which was revised up to US\$75bn, the report said.

Exports rose US\$2.3bn in April to US\$205bn led by goods like aircraft and crude oil, while imports fell US\$3.8bn to US\$273.9bn. The deficit in goods alone with top trading partner China saw a rare decline in the month, falling by US\$7.1bn to US\$32.4bn, mostly due to a US\$6bn drop in imports. The data showed American exports of automotive vehicles, parts and engines decreased in April.

Asyad restructures its business units to focus on key logistics services



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The board of directors of Asyad Group has decided to restructure the group's business units in line with its efforts to focus on key logistics activities, such as port services, free zones, shipping, dry-docks, e-commerce services, and last-mile delivery.

The decision comes as part of Asyad Group's efforts to boost its local and international commercial presence, in light of its plans to grow and enhance its performance.

The restructuring of Asyad's business units will result in dissolution of Oman Roads and

The restructuring of Asyad's business units will result in dissolution of Oman Roads and Transport Management Company (ORTMC)

Transport Management Company (ORTMC), Asyad said in a statement.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology will supervise all transport and road management responsibilities previously assigned to ORTMC according to the ministry's jurisdiction under the new state administrative apparatus.

The dissolution of ORTMC

comes following a review of the company's objectives and its profitability forecasts in the future. The evaluation indicated that the activities of ORTMC do not fall within the scope of integrated logistics activities that the Asyad Group focuses on," the statement said.

Asyad's board of directors has put in consideration that there are no negative impacts on the employees of ORTMC because

of this decision.

The employees of ORTMC will be redeployed across Asyad Group companies, and the employees seconded to ORTMC will return to their respective companies. The contracts related to the existing projects will be automatically transferred to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Highlighting its future plans, Asyad Group said it will focus on embodying the direction of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in cooperating with the private sector.

The group will focus on partnering and integrating with the private sector which constitutes a fundamental pillar of its new operating model. It added that several projects for partnership with the private sector have been identified.

OIA remains positive about the remarkable development in the performance of Asyad Group, which has been achieved during a short period operationally and financially.

OIA emphasises that it continues the implementation of its strategy to maximise the financial and economic returns of its entities by reviewing the organizational and operational structures.



CBO issues treasury bills worth RO158mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 539) was announced on Tuesday by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO158.5mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from today until September 8, 2021. Average accepted price reached RO99.806 for every RO100 bill and minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.805, the CBO said in a statement.

Average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.7770 per cent and 0.7785 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 0.5 per cent while the dis-

count rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 0.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance. Treasury bills provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. The government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

Salalah Port ranks 6th globally in operational efficiency

Muscat - Port of Salalah has been ranked as the 6th most efficient transshipment port globally in the field of handling container vessels, according to the Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) 2020 released by World Bank and IHS Markit, which analyzed the services of 351 ports worldwide.

The World Bank report indicated that the coronavirus pandemic highlighted the role of ports and related logistics chains in the global economy. This is besides a port's impact on the durability of businesses and the improvement of maritime route flexibility, said the report.

In addition to streamlining logistics and maintaining import chains, ports have a significant impact on the performance of economies, the smooth flow of medical supplies, foodstuff, agricultural products, energy supplies and basic services that facilitate economic life in different countries, the report added.

The same view was reiterated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). UNCTAD rated the sultanate's ports as No 1 in the



world in terms of speed of container handling.

Port of Salalah affirmed that the duration of vessels' stay in a port or the speed of dealing with the vessel is determined by a number of factors, the most prominent of which is the speed at which services are rendered by the departments concerned, including maritime service departments at the port.

Mark Hardiman, CEO of Port of Salalah, said, "We are proud, through our efficient port operations, to have contributed to raising the profile of Omani ports on the global stage.

This would not have been possible without the strong commitment and dedication dis-

played by the staff at every level across the organisation and the strong commitment of our customers, stakeholders and business partners which have helped us retain one of the top spots globally."

Scott Selman, CEO of Container Terminal at Port of Salalah, said, "I am happy to see the strong efforts of Port of Salalah team being recognised. The team has done a fantastic job deploying lean tools through our way of working to drive safety and efficiency for our customers. We will continue to collaborate closely with our global customers to deliver world-class service."

ONA

World Bank raises global economic growth forecast to 5.6% for 2021

Washington, US - Fuelled by widespread COVID-19 vaccinations in advanced nations, the world economic recovery has picked up speed, but the upbeat outlook obscures a worrying picture in poor nations, the World Bank said Tuesday.

The global economy is now expected to grow by 5.6 per cent this year, 1.5 points faster than projected in January - the fastest post-recession bounceback in 80 years, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report.

However, the bank warns that many countries, especially poor nations, are being left behind and will take years to return to their pre-pandemic levels.

"The near-term resumption of growth cannot make up for the misery that the pandemic has inflicted on the poorest and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups," World Bank Group President David Malpass said.

"Globally coordinated efforts are essential to accelerate vaccine distribution and debt relief, particularly for low-income



David Malpass

countries," he added.

And while inflation is not seen a major factor, rising prices create another challenge for policymakers, especially in emerging markets, as they try to restore order in their economies and manage rising debt levels.

The World Bank cut its forecasts for about 40 per cent of emerging markets and developing nations, and without the boost from China's massive economy, those countries will expand by only 4.4 per cent.

The report also cuts the forecast for low-income countries for this year and next, and the group is expected to expand by only 2.9

per cent, the slowest growth in two decades other than 2020.

'By the end of this year, more than 100mn people are expected to have fallen back into extreme poverty,' the World Bank cautions.

"This is a tale of two recoveries," World Bank economist Ayhan Kose told AFP, noting that most economies will not return to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 and beyond.

The United States will see growth it has not experienced in decades of 6.8 per cent - more than three full points higher than in January - while China will expand 8.5 per cent and India by 8.3 per cent, according to the report.

"You have countries that have the means to vaccinate, and those that have not made enough progress," he said.

"It's like the best of times for advanced economies and the worst of times for these low-income countries."

The critical piece is ensuring all countries have wide access vaccines, said Kose, head of the GEP group.

So far only 0.3 per cent of people in low income countries have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

"It is going to be absolutely essential to vaccinate, vaccinate rapidly and vaccinate everywhere," he said. "We are really running behind."

But he said global growth in 2022 could speed up if vaccine distribution ramps up, to 5 per cent from the 4.3 per cent currently forecast.

Meanwhile, US inflation has spooked financial markets, as investors worry the spike in prices in the early stages of the recovery could prompt the Federal Reserve and other central banks to move more quickly to raise borrowing costs.

That would have ripple effects throughout the rest of the world, where governments and businesses have seen debt increase and debt ratings fall.

Rising inflation could force emerging markets and low-income economies to raise interest rates as well, before they have fully recovered.

AFP

Muzn wins The Banker's Islamic bank of the year award

Muscat - Muzn Islamic Banking, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, has been named Islamic Bank of the Year - Oman 2021 by globally renowned finance publication, *The Banker*. The award, which has been running for the past nine years and attracts submissions from institutions all over the world, was given to Muzn in recognition of its leading position in Islamic finance in the sultanate, its pioneering role in digital innovation, and its efforts to drive growth in the sector.

Salima al Marzooqi, chief Is-



lamic banking officer at NBO, said, "Despite being a relatively new sector in Oman, Islamic

banking has had impressive growth and has captured significant market share.

As Muzn continues to build on the precedent we have set over the last eight years, we are expanding our portfolio to meet the needs of an ever-evolving market, promoting digital transformation in the industry, and encouraging more people than ever to discover the advantages of Sharia-compliant banking."

Since its establishment in 2013, Muzn has steadily cemented its position as a key player in the sector, and forms a strategic part of the bank's fast-growing business segment.

Continuing to offer innovative,

competitive and quality Islamic banking products and services while ensuring they are accessible to all, Muzn has won a number of awards, which most recently include being named among the Best Islamic Banks in Oman 2020 by Islamic Finance News, the Best Islamic Window - Oman 2020 at the Global Business Outlook Awards, as well as a triple win at the WOMANI awards for three female team members who were named among the top 300 most influential women in Islamic business and finance.

A leading business group in Oman requires following candidates

- Executive Secretary
- Debt Collector

The incumbent should be with a minimum of 5 years' experience in similar position (For Omani National Only)

The interested candidate may send their CV with current and expected remuneration details to: omanjobswithus@gmail.com

MSX rises 0.35% in thin trading

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Tuesday rose 0.35 per cent to close at 3,981.02 points. The MSX30 Index has witnessed continuous increases since the beginning of last week amid increased economic optimism and rising oil prices.

The gains in the main index were supported by all sectoral indices led by Industrial Index which rose 0.78 per cent. Financial Index and Services Index increased by 0.51 per cent and 0.06 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia Index increased 0.25 per cent to close at 568.48 points.

Trading activity decreased on Tuesday as volumes dropped 10.7 per cent at 24.88mn shares compared with 27.87mn shares traded on Monday. Market turnover fell 39.1 per cent to RO2.84mn compared with RO4.66mn in



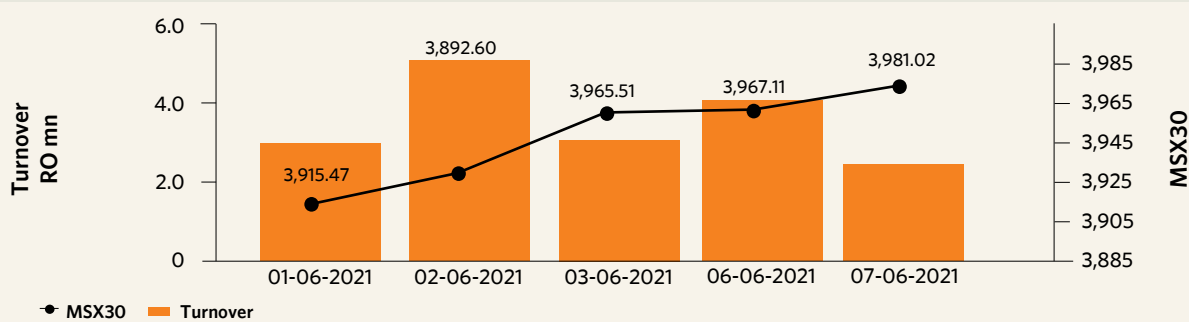
the previous trading session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 21 advancing stocks to 12 decliners. As many as 22 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Global Investment Holding (8.33 per cent), Gulf Interna-

tional Chemicals (8.04 per cent), Al Batinah Development (7.14 per cent) and United Finance (6.12 per cent). Top losers were Al Suwadi Power (-3.45 per cent), Musandam Power (-2.48 per cent), Oman REIT Fund (-2.13 per cent) and Takaful Oman (-1.96 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Apple faces resistance of employees in office return plan: Report

San Francisco, US - Apple is reportedly facing employee resistance to its hybrid plan to bring employees back to the office starting in September.

The iPhone maker, which faces a dilemma similar to other firms seeking to reopen after pandemic restrictions, has called for employees to return three days a week starting in September, according to the tech news site The Verge.

But at least 80 employees have signed a letter calling for more flexibility for employees who have been working remotely for more than a year.

'We would like to take the opportunity to communicate a growing concern among our colleagues,' according to the letter cited by the news website.

'That Apple's remote/location-flexible work policy, and the communication around it, have already forced some of our colleagues to quit. Without the inclusivity that flexibility brings, many of us feel we have to choose between either a combi-



nation of our families, our well-being, and being empowered to do our best work, or being a part of Apple.'

Like its tech peers and many other firms, Apple has allowed employees to work from home or remote locations since the pandemic lockdowns began last year.

Google, Facebook and Microsoft have unveiled similar hybrid schemes for workers, while some firms such as Twitter have

told employees they can work remotely indefinitely.

The Apple letter said the remote system worked well and can offer employees better work-life balance, while accommodating those with special needs and reducing the risk of contagion.

'Not only do many of us already feel well-connected with our colleagues worldwide, but better-connected now than ever,' the letter said.

'We've come to look forward

to working as we are now, without the daily need to return to the office. It feels like there is a disconnect between how the executive team thinks about remote/location-flexible work and the lived experiences of many of Apple's employees.'

Apple in 2017 opened its 'spaceship' campus, one of several multibillion-dollar headquarters buildings designed for Silicon Valley giants.

AFP

Most food spending supports processing, not farmers: Study

Paris, France - Farmers worldwide receive barely a quarter of what consumers spend at the grocery store, and even less for food consumed outside the home, researchers reported Monday.

Beyond the question of whether farmers get their fair share, the multi-step processing from farm to table may not be compatible with sustainable development, according to a study in the journal Nature Food.

"People do not recognise how much of what we pay for in our meals is not the physical food," Cornell University's Chris Barrett, senior author of the study, told AFP by email.

"Most of the value addition in the global food economy is not on farm but rather is the processing, manufacturing, distribution and service activities closer to the consumer."

This highly segmented value chain creates employment and provides convenience for the consumer, whether in the form of bagged salads, frozen dinners or a meal at the mall.

But these consumer advantages should also be measured against the impact on health and the environment, the authors argue.

"Greenhouse gas emissions is a good example," said Barrett, pointing to the carbon pollution generated by all the steps in the value chain. "So is water use."

"There is also the question of



Farmers work in a field on the outskirts of Bangalore, India on Monday

where desirable attributes of foods - such as minerals, vitamins, fibre - and undesirable attributes ('bad' fats, salt, sugar) are added or lost," he added.

"These are all factors that have major public health implications." Building on a method originally applied to the US, the researchers developed a standardised approach to estimate the importance of food value chains between farmers and consumers.

They applied this yardstick to data from 2005 to 2015 on 61 middle- and high-income countries that cover 90 per cent of the global food economy.

They found that, on average, farmers receive 27 per cent of what is paid for foods consumers eat at home.

The study focused on the three-quarters of food that is consumed in the same country where it is produced.

For the other 25 per cent, "the

farmer share of consumer expenditures on imported foods is almost surely even less," said Barret.

The already vast proportion of food dollars going to post-farm activities is only likely to increase, the study concluded.

Farmers in fast-growing economies like China and India will earn more as their populations get richer, but their share of food spending is likely to shrink as demand for convenient consumption grows.

The study points to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - adopted in 2015 and set for 2030 - as a way to measure the impact of the vast and growing food value chain sector.

What happens to food between farm and consumer will be critical to many SDGs including those targeting poverty, hunger and responsible consumption and production.

AFP

German industrial output dips on supply chain upsets

Frankfurt, Germany - German industrial production dipped more than expected in April, official data showed Tuesday, as manufacturers grappled with semiconductor and timber shortages.

Federal statistics agency Destatis said industrial output fell one per cent month-on-month in Europe's top economy, according to figures adjusted for seasonal swings.

Analysts surveyed by Factset had predicted a smaller drop of 0.5 per cent.

Compared with February 2020, the month before the first coronavirus restrictions were im-

posed, April's output was 5.6 per cent lower.

The economy ministry blamed the April upset, which comes after a 2.2 per cent jump in industrial output in March, on 'a shortage of producer goods, especially semiconductors and lumber'.

Like many countries, export powerhouse Germany is struggling with a global computer chip crunch caused by a pandemic-fuelled surge in demand for home electronics.

Germany's crucial car industry has been especially hard hit by the supply chain woes, with giants like Volkswagen and

BMW forced to temporarily trim production in the wait for semiconductors.

Timber is also in short supply on booming post-lockdown demand, which has spurred higher prices and production bottlenecks.

But analysts said the outlook for the German economy remains bright, given factories' full order books.

"April's data suggests that the rebound of the German, and also the eurozone, economy in the second quarter has started with shaky knees," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

AFP

China aims to accelerate expansion in blockchain industry

Beijing, China - China is eyeing to further boost the technological applications and industrial development of blockchain over the next decade, according to a guideline released by industrial development and cyberspace affairs authorities.

By 2025, the country aims to take the comprehensive strength of its blockchain industry to the most advanced level in the world, said a document jointly released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission.

The country's blockchain industry and its industrial standard system shall begin to take shape by 2025, with the blockchain technology applied to multiple economic and social fields, the document noted.

In the next five years, China shall support the establishment of three to five backbone enter-



prises with international competitiveness, as well as a number of innovation-driven enterprises and three to five blockchain industrial clusters.

By 2030, the blockchain industry shall see further expansion in both comprehensive strength and industrial scale, and deepen integration with next-

generation information technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, the document added.

Currently, there are around 75,000 blockchain-related enterprises in China, according to data from corporate information provider Tianyancha.

Xinhua

China warns United States against trade deal with Taiwan

Beijing, China - China on Tuesday warned the United States against pursuing a trade deal with Taiwan after Washington said it would start negotiations with the self-ruled island.

Beijing sees democratic Taiwan as part of its territory and rages at any diplomatic attempts to recognise it as an independent nation.

Chinese social media erupted with fury at the weekend over a visit by US senators to Taipei where they announced that Washington would donate 750,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to the island.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken added fuel to the fire on Monday when he told a congressional hearing in Washington that discussions would begin on a trade deal.



Antony Blinken (AFP)

"I know we are engaged in conversations with Taiwan, or soon will be, on some kind of framework agreement," Blinken said.

On Tuesday, China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian urged Washington to "stop any

form of official exchanges with Taiwan, handle the Taiwan issue cautiously, and refrain from sending any wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces".

Taiwan has accused China of hampering its efforts to secure

coronavirus vaccines, saying it is part of Beijing's ongoing campaign to isolate the island.

Although Washington severed diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1979 to recognise Beijing as China's sole official representative, the United States remains Taiwan's most powerful ally and its top arms supplier.

"We are committed to the proposition that Taiwan must have the means to defend itself, and that is consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act," Blinken said Monday.

"We've continued to provide significant equipment and sales to Taiwan for that purpose. We have real concerns about the increased aggression that the government in Beijing has shown toward Taiwan."

AFP

Bank Nizwa signs agreement with Imam Jabir foundation to support its projects

Continuing its efforts to contribute to social development, Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic bank in the sultanate, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation. The aim of the agreement is to support the charitable endowment shared electronic platform that was launched recently by the foundation.

The initiative is in alignment with Bank Nizwa's commitment to support local communities by forming effective partnerships with various institutions.

The agreement was signed by Khalid al Kayed, chief executive officer at Bank Nizwa, and Eng Ahmed al Rashdi, CEO of Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation.

As per the agreement, the bank will support the charitable

endowment platform that allows individuals and charitable individuals to directly contribute to the foundation's projects through the platform, in addition to presenting endowment gifts to relatives and friends.

Speaking about the partnership, Kayed said, "We are delighted to sign this MoU with Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf foundation that will strengthen our joint efforts.

"This agreement is one of many agreements signed between the bank and the foundation in order to raise awareness about the endowment and support the foundation's projects. The fruitful collaborations with Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf foundation and other entities reflects the bank's endeavors toward contributing to community



development."

"Through its partnerships with various institutions from the public, private and social sector, Bank Nizwa remains at the forefront of financial institutions that aspire to add value to the people of Oman. The bank will work tirelessly in line with national objectives that seek to support the social well-being," he added.

Guided by the principles of Sharia'a and a firm dedication to give back to Omani society, Bank Nizwa's efforts sought to create a sustainable and cohesive society.

This comes in line with Waqf which is regarded as one of the most effective Sharia'a-compliant tools to promote socially responsible activities for the greater benefits to humanity. The impactful partnership with

the foundation is aimed at spreading knowledge about Waqf and its role in building a sustainable society and economy. Furthermore, to raise funds and invest in charitable humanitarian initiatives and assets that is in line with the principles of Sharia'a.

It is notable that Bank Nizwa signed two MoUs previously to boost the foundation's efforts to raise awareness about Waqf and its impact on humanitarian causes and the wellbeing of society at large. Furthermore, support the foundation in preparing reports and give technical advice in the field of IT and communication services. The bank will never cease its efforts to stimulate social development by investing in initiatives that will be beneficial for the greater good.

OAB helps families affected by storm in North Batinah

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has launched an initiative to help low-income families that have sustained damage to their homes by the recent storm in North Batinah governorate. This initiative is conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development.

Commenting on this initiative, Feras al Farsi, sustainability and CSR specialist at OAB, said, "We continuously strive to strengthen our relationship with the community because that is one of the main pillars of our sustainability strategy. We encourage our employees from branches across the sultanate to follow up with any families in need within the areas they serve and to inform us of any critical cases that require immediate support.

"We then review these cases and based on the analysis, take necessary action to support those that are affected. In this particular instance, The regional management of the bank's branches in the governorate has presented a report to the executive management, which includes suggestions as to how OAB can provide support to families in need. This has been approved and we are coordinating with concerned personnel from the Ministry of Social Development for its implementation, alongside local SMEs, enabling them to benefit from this initiative as well."

The OAB initiative will be providing support to low-income Omani families in the governorate by taking care of house repairs via reputable local construction companies. The Ministry of Social Development will identify cases that require immediate support. The initiative will also support affected OAB employees residing within the North Batinah governorate, under the direct supervision of the bank's regional management.

"We always aim to organise our community initiatives in a way that will enhance sustainability and ensure our support reaches those who need it most, in the most effective way possible. OAB has created an integrated framework under which all the bank's sustainability initiatives fall. These initiatives aim to highlight our three sustainability pillars, namely community partnerships, environmental responsibility and financial inclusion.

"This particular initiative is in line with the bank's sustainability objective of enhancing community partnerships and providing support where needed - reinforcing its responsibility as one of the oldest financial institutions in the sultanate," he added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman.



Danube Hospitality Solutions announces the launch of its Master Catalogue

At Danube's Hospitality Summit, on June 1, Danube Hospitality Solutions announced the launch of its most comprehensive, most forward-looking Master Catalogue, offering the widest range of Operating Supplies & Equipment, in order to strategically meet the growing needs of the hospitality sector in the Middle East.

The intelligently-designed Master Catalogue is Danube Hospitality Solutions' pièce de résistance, covering an impressive 10,000 plus products across ten product categories that fulfil the requirements of the modern-day hospitality sector to deliver extraordinary and memorable customer experience.

It was a star studded event where in attendance was the crème de la crème of the FNB and hospitality industry, to set the tone for the months ahead Danube Hospitality hosted a panel discussion where we the insights of Fahad al Gergawi, CEO of Dubai Investment Development Agency (Dubai FDI), Andy Cuthbert, general manager-Jumeirah Creekside Hotel & C&I and Jumeirah Hospitality Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai UAE, Sunjeh Raja, director & CEO, International Center for Culinary Arts (ICCA Dubai) and Rizwan Sajjan, founder and chairman Danube Group.

The massive 700-page Master Catalogue, also available in digital format, developed in partnership with 41 international brands, is presented as a reliable one-stop solution provider for your HORECA & Catering needs. The DHS team have done an outstanding job in developing a bewildering range of new and exciting OS&E products, collected with absolute care and passion, combining Danube's experience

and know-how in sourcing the crème de la crème of China Ware, Glass Ware, Cutlery, Kitchen Ware, Stewarding, Buffet, In-room Dining, Modular Storage Solutions, and Table Accessories.

Shubhojit, group director Retail and Hospitality Solutions, was quoted as saying, "While our OS&E products cover everything a hospitality or food servicing establishment needs for their day to day operations such as state-of-the-art kitchen equipment, refrigeration & storage solutions as well as all the table ware, our FF&E solutions offer the finest aesthetic touch to the interiors. Our strategic partnership with 41 international brands allows us to offer our esteemed clients end-to-end expertise and perhaps the widest imaginable customization options in the furniture, fixtures

and furnishing solutions.

"Danube has already built an impressive collection of satisfied clients which includes the likes of Novotel, Hilton, Radisson Blu, JW Marriott Marquis, The Ritz Carlton, Yas Island, and many more, which speak volumes about the fact that Danube Hospitality Solutions is strategically well-poised to offer the best solutions to the challenges faced by our hospitality industry with professional ease and finesse."

The group managing director, Adel Sajjan said on the occasion, "Danube as a group has seen immense growth over the past decade due to the trust that our customers place on us owing to the stellar products and services we provide across our different verticals. With Danube Hospitality Solutions, we have extended the same quality and service

standards to provide everything that a hospitality establishment needs under one roof."

There is no doubt that the Master Catalogue adds a silver feather and pays tribute to the vision of Danube Hospitality Solutions to become a one-stop solution provider for the entire hospitality services and supplies in the Middle East.

Danube Hospitality Solutions' demonstrable ability to respond to the needs and aspirations of its customers at a rate faster than anybody else is matched by its extensive logistical apparatus and warehousing facilities which are strategically located across the region. Master Catalogue features a number of International brands and manufacturers highlighting and enhancing the ability of DHS to cater to all price points on a spectrum.



Ooredoo achieves 5G record

Demonstrating its technology leadership, and giving customers an amazing online experience, Ooredoo recently recorded downlink speeds of more than 5 Gbps on a commercial 5G Massive MIMO single sector, and it's one of the first in the region to do so.

With drastic improvements in throughput and efficiency, 5G Massive MIMO delivers eight times more capacity for home internet compared to 4G, and 20 times more capacity on mobile. As the latest major milestone in its 5G rollout, the achievement builds on Ooredoo's continual efforts to improve user experience, drive innovation and position Oman as a technologically-advanced society.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah al Abri, chief technology & information officer at Ooredoo, said, "This achievement is a big moment for us as our 5G network continues to take shape. The peak value that 5G technology can offer on a single sector is around 5.7 Gbps and we have managed to achieve 90 per cent of it, one of the highest in the region. This ultimately translates to a considerably improved experience for our users and unprecedented development opportunities for the sultanate."

Continuing to build on its promise to take its customers' Internet experience to a new level, Ooredoo's great value 5G home internet, mobile, and business plans are available now. Users can benefit from improved network coverage, stability with almost zero delay, as well as incredible download speeds. As part of its ambitious roadmap, Ooredoo plans to construct and install around 2,000 5G stations over the next five years.

OOA starts course on sports events management



A course titled 'Organising and hosting sports events' organised by the Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) began online on Tuesday morning.

It will continue until Wednesday, in line with enabling those concerned with hosting sports events in sports bodies to transfer knowledge in the design, management and organisation of various sports events. This comes to enhance practices that facilitate hosting sports events and excel in their design, implementation and production

through the available resources.

The course was attended by Dr Abdul Rahim bin Muslim al Daroushi, assistant professor of Sports Administration and Sports Policies at the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University, with the participation of 15 employees from Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), sports federations and committees, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Military Sports affiliates.

The course includes a number of topics, including the classifica-

tion of sports events, identification of their organisational principles and the concepts of soft power and the legacy associated with them, as well as the use of volunteer management programs in sports events.

It also covers the extraction of appropriate marketing methods for the sports event, the application of qualitative and quantitative evaluation processes and the identification of aspects that can be developed in addition to discussing how to plan to organise an integrated sporting event.

New Tiguan 2021: Sharp style and progressive technology



The global best seller has received a facelift for 2021 and is set to arrive in the Middle East in July. The updated Volkswagen Tiguan starts from US\$23,416+ VAT and features the latest technology with a sharp exterior design and optimised comfort and safety.

The exterior includes a completely renewed front grille, full LED headlights and new Volkswagen logo.

The eye-catching bumpers have also undergone a makeover, looking more rugged

and complementing the 4Motion all-wheel-drive system. The LED daytime running lights and tail-lights come with integrated turn-signal indicators.

The latest generation also comes with larger, redesigned alloy wheels available from 17" to 20". The new Tiguan is successfully bridging the gap between adventure and city lifestyle. Adventure seekers also have the option to include accessories such as bike and kayak carriers.

Known for its iconic style, the Tiguan now comes in ten

colours; Pure white, Reflex silver metallic, Deep black pearl, Night shade blue metallic Dolphin grey metallic, Urano grey, Ginger brown metallic, Moonstone grey, Kinds red metallic and Lapiz blue metallic.

The redesigned SUV comes in four trims for this region – Trendline (1.4lt), Life (1.4lt or 2.0lt), Elegance (2.0lt) and R-Line (2.0lt).

The new interior features a modern design with multi-function touch steering wheel, an 8" touchscreen infotainment system and optional 9.2" with Dis-

cover Pro Navigation.

It also features wired and wireless App-Connect smartphone integration for compatible devices, enabling the driver to use smartphone apps directly on the vehicle display. Multiple phones can be paired and switched to the system with enhanced voice recognition.

The premium Harman/Kardon sound system has 8 speakers meticulously engineered to entertain while driving.

Drawing further on style, the Tiguan features multi-colour am-

bient lighting with up to 30 different colours and redesigned air-conditioning control system with automatic climate control throughout. The panoramic sunroof allows natural light in for an ultra-comfortable driving experience.

In addition, the premium R-Line trim features an optional black style package that includes, 19" Valencia black alloy wheels, black mirror housing, black decorative inserts, and black exterior styling elements.

Victor Dalmau, managing director of Volkswagen Middle East, said, "The Tiguan has been a best seller for Volkswagen globally since its inception. Its versatility attracts those seeking an adventure capable SUV for daily urban-life, which combines the latest technical innovations with optimised comfort and safety."

He added, "As the second top seller in the region, the Tiguan supports the brand focus on family-friendly SUV segment that customers are looking for. Our diverse range of SUVs at valuable prices offer outstanding design, latest technology and connectivity, safety features and exceptional German quality."

Further details around the Volkswagen 2021 Tiguan to follow in the next few weeks.

To find out more about Volkswagen's popular models and prices in your market and to contact your local dealership, please visit www.volkswagen-me.com



Vivo launches Vision+ Mobile PhotoAwards

On June 8 vivo officially launched the Vision+ Mobile PhotoAwards 2021 (hereafter referred to as Vision+ Mobile PhotoAwards), in partnership with *National Geographic*, and announced the opening of all registration channels.

As a pioneer and innovator in mobile imaging, vivo is working with well-known industry partners in countries around the world – including ZEISS and *National Geographic* – to develop a mobile imaging ecosystem through the Vision+ Project. This initiative aims to encourage the joint creation of images, public education and the exploration of aesthetics. vivo's ultimate goal is to encourage more users to embrace the joys of creativity and to accelerate the development and recognition of mobile imaging.

The Vision+ Mobile Pho-

toAwards is an important part of the overall Vision+ Project, aimed at promoting mobile photography. The competition will serve as a platform for global conversations surrounding mobile photography and encourage participation from professionals, enthusiasts and mobile phone users.

"This year marks the second edition of the Vision+ Mobile PhotoAwards. Through the competition, vivo aims to drive innovation in imaging technology while allowing more people around the world enjoy using technology to create eye-catching content," said Spark Ni, senior vice president and CMO of vivo. We will make professional and enjoyable imaging technologies widely available so that more people can enjoy the joys of creativity."



Thrilling summer with beIN Sports

beIN Media group, the global sports and entertainment broadcaster and its flagship sports channel beIN Sports gets set to host a thrilling summer of sports starting with the long-awaited UEFA Euro 2020 and the Copa America 2021 live and exclusively to its millions of viewers and subscribers across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), from Morocco.

The UEFA Euro 2020, which kicks off from June 11 until July 11, is the second biggest international football competition after the FIFA World Cup.

A total of 24 teams will compete for the coveted trophy, including heavyweights England, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Spain. The UEFA Euro 2020 will also be played in 12 cities, including London's Wembley Stadium, Rome's Stadio Olimpico, Amsterdam's Johan Cruyff Arena, and Munich's Allianz Arena.

The Copa America 2021, which was initially set to be hosted by Argentina and Colombia, has now been moved to Brazil and will run from June 13 until July 10. Participating teams in this year's Copa America include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, as well as Colombia,

Paraguay, Venezuela, among others.

The beIN Sports' MAX channels will be the exclusive home in the MENA region of all this summer's UEFA Euro 2020 and Copa America 2021 action. The UEFA Euro 2020 will be available exclusively on beIN Sports' MAX 1 and MAX 2 for Arabic coverage, MAX 3 for English coverage and MAX 4 for French coverage. Copa America 2021 coverage will be available in Arabic and English on MAX 5 and MAX 6.

Commenting on the exhilarating summer of sports on beIN Sports, acting director of Programs for beIN MENA Duncan Walkinshaw said, "The sport never stops on beIN and this summer we have the best of the best. The UEFA Euro 2020, Copa America 2021, Roland Garros, Wimbledon, and Tokyo Olympics. beIN Sports promises its viewers and subscribers a truly remarkable summer of sporting events that will keep them on the edge of their seats until the European leagues kick off again in August. Every kick of every game, in multiple languages across multiple beIN platforms, with the best studio analysis anywhere. No one does it better than beIN."

COVID-19 ranks among the leading risks to life in Mideast

Zurich International Life in the Middle East (Zurich) has revealed some key insights into regional health risk trends, placing renewed focus on the serious illnesses or causes of death across the Middle East, as well as the factors, behind customers' insurance purchase decisions.

Its 2021 Customer Benefits Paid Report revealed that people are giving more consideration to insurance cover, especially since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With COVID-19 the major health story of 2020, the pandemic has had a marked effect on people's behaviour towards financial protection. According to a YouGov survey commissioned by Zurich, only 22 per cent of respondents felt financially prepared for unfortunate family events. Interestingly, more male respondents (65.56 per cent) felt somewhat/well prepared compared to 56.07 per cent of women who felt the same.

Across all age categories, more than half of respondents said that due to COVID-19, they were somewhat likely or ex-



tremely likely to consider purchasing life or critical illness cover, with more than 63.3 per cent of respondents aged 18-34 saying they purchased life insurance since the start of the global crisis.

People in the Middle East are also paying increased attention to the benefits of a healthier lifestyle, with many taking up exercise, yoga and other physical and mental wellbeing activities in a bid to reduce or mitigate the risks of developing long-term, serious illness.

This is especially prescient when considering that the report reveals, of the total amount paid

in benefits, the split between critical illness and life insurance claims was almost equal.

This demonstrates that while people are actually living longer, more and more people are contracting critical illnesses and dealing with the associated financial impact of managing chronic conditions.

In terms of the biggest threats to life, heart attacks and strokes were the biggest risk (43 per cent), followed by cancer (27 per cent), and accidents (10 per cent). COVID-19, while a relatively new illness, was responsible for 5 per cent of all life insurance claims, reveals the report.

Cancer led the list of the gravest critical illness risks followed by heart attacks, various chronic conditions and strokes. A split by gender reveals that heart attacks were the lead critical illness insurance claim for males (53 per cent), while only 5 per cent of females claimed for the same condition.

Cancer led the female benefit claims list (85 per cent), with the illness accounting for only 31 per cent of benefit claims for males.

Sri Lankan envoy meets with Minister of Transport

H E Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, met with H E Eng Saeed bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and discussed areas of mutual interest between the two countries.

They also explored new areas for bilateral cooperation in Ports and Shipping as well as Information and Communication Technology.

H E Ajwad presented H E Maawali a memorial logo that was issued to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Oman, a milestone which is being celebrated this year.

H E Eng Salim bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, Undersecretary in the Ministry for Transport, and Dilini Abeysekara, First Secretary of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat, were present at the meeting.



Thales appoints new vice president for Middle East

Thales has announced the appointment of Emmanuel de Roquefeuil as vice president, Middle East, as of June 1.

In this role, he will be responsible for the strategic growth of Thales in the Middle East across all domains, working with stakeholders to achieve ambitious national visions, with a clear focus on local partnerships, innovation and digital transformation.

de Roquefeuil succeeds Roger Daix who takes up a new role as vice president of Thales in Northern and Central Europe.



"Under Emmanuel's leadership, Thales will continue to work with our partners across the region to build resilient industries, invest in local innovation and fos-

ter local talent, to further embed Thales as a leading contributor to the Middle East ecosystem," said Pascale Sourisse, senior executive vice president, International Development, Thales.

Prior to this appointment, de Roquefeuil was VP and country director of Thales India. He previously served as the VP Sales & Marketing for Optronics and Missile Electronics at Thales.

Earlier in his career, he held key positions in the sales and marketing divisions in France and overseas.

de Roquefeuil is an engineering graduate from Supaero Toulouse, and holds an MBA from INSEAD, Fontainebleau and a Master's degree in Public Law and Industrial Strategy in Defence from Chear Sorbonne, Paris.

Thales (Euronext Paris: HO) is a global leader in advanced technologies, investing in digital and "deep tech" innovations – connectivity, big data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and quantum computing – to build a confident future crucial for the

development of our societies.

The group provides its customers – businesses, organisations and governments – in the defense, aeronautics, space, transport, and digital identity and security domains with solutions, services and products that help them fulfil their critical role, consideration for the individual being the driving force behind all decisions.

Thales has 81,000 employees in 68 countries. In 2020 the group generated sales of €17bn.

Israeli lawmakers to vote Sunday on govt

If the crunch vote hands a majority to the coalition, united by hostility to Netanyahu, it would spell the end of an era

Jerusalem - After weeks of political wrangling the Israeli parliament will vote on Sunday on whether to install a 'change' coalition and end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's record 12 consecutive years in power.

Announcing the date for the confidence vote on Tuesday, speaker Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally, said 'a special session of parliament' would debate and vote on the fragile eight-party alliance.

If the crunch vote hands a majority to the coalition, which is united only by hostility to Netanyahu's rule, it would spell the end of an era.

The divisive incumbent has dominated Israeli politics for more than a decade, pushing it firmly to the right.

Since the coalition was announced last week, Netanyahu has lived up to his reputation as a ruthless political operator, piling pressure on right-wingers within its ranks to reject this 'dangerous leftwing government'.

The anti-Netanyahu bloc includes three rightwing, two centrist and two leftwing parties, along with an Arab Islamic conservative party.

On paper it commands a wafer-thin majority, but Netanyahu has urged his supporters to shame rightwing lawmakers in its ranks into re-



A general view of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in Jerusalem on Monday (AFP)

turning to the fold under his leadership.

If the new government is confirmed, Netanyahu's rightwing opponent Naftali Bennett would serve as Prime Minister for two years, after which the 'change' coalition's centrist architect, Yair Lapid, would take over.

'The unity government is on the way and ready to work on

behalf of all the people of Israel,' Lapid, a former television presenter, said in a statement following the announcement of the vote.

'Let go'

Netanyahu, who faces corruption charges that could result in jail time, has refused to go without a messy fight.

Bitter recriminations within the Israeli right and far right prompted Israeli security services to issue a rare warning against incitement online, which Netanyahu's opponents say was a warning to the prime minister.

Alarm has grown over angry rallies by supporters of Netanyahu's rightwing Likud party, including protests outside the

homes of rightwing lawmakers accused of 'betrayal' for joining the coalition. Security has been stepped up for some of the MPs.

The 71 year old prime minister has rejected allegations of incitement, saying 'there is a very thin line between political criticism and inciting violence'.

Bennett, who served as Netanyahu's aide before turning

If the new govt is confirmed, Netanyahu's opponent Naftali Bennett would serve as PM for two years, after which the coalition's centrist architect, Yair Lapid, would take over

against him, has urged his former boss to 'let go'.

Should 11th-hour defections torpedo the fledgling coalition, Israel would likely have to return to the polls for a fifth election in just over two years.

Controversial flag march

The Israeli political drama is playing out as tensions with the Palestinians smoulder, with police cracking down on demonstrations over the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from homes in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem to make way for Jewish settlers.

And a planned flag march by Jewish nationalists was scrapped after police refused to authorise its contentious route through east Jerusalem citing a

high risk of friction with residents - though some far-right politicians said they would demonstrate anyway.

A top Hamas official, Khalil al Hayya, warned Israel on Monday 'against letting the march approach east Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound'.

"We hope the message is clear so that Thursday doesn't become (a new) May 10," he said, in reference to the start of the 11-day war which Hamas launched in response to tensions at the mosque compound, Islam's third-holiest site, which is also revered by Jews.

Netanyahu convened a late-night meeting on Monday with senior government officials to discuss alternatives that could allow the march to proceed - a move that saw his opponents accuse him and his allies of working to ratchet up tensions as his grip on power grows increasingly shaky.

Public Security Minister Amir Ohana, a Likud member, said the final decision on the march would rest with him, and not the police, according to Israeli media.

Labor MP Gilad Kariv, a supporter of the coalition, called the move 'another chapter in the outgoing government's attempt to leave a scorched earth'.

AFP

'Prisoner unfit for jail dies in Iran'

Paris, France - A man serving a five-year jail sentence on political charges in Iran has died in custody, activists said, accusing the authorities of contributing to his death by neglecting his medical conditions.

Sasan Niknafs had since July 2020 been serving a sentence on charges including disseminating 'propaganda' against the state and Iran's leadership, the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) and Oslo-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) said in separate statements late on Monday.

Both said that they held the head of the Iranian judiciary Ebrahim Raisi responsible for his death, the cause of which was not specified.

Raisi is widely expected to win this month's presidential elections.

Niknafs was imprisoned 'de-



Sasan Niknafs

spite displaying multiple physical and mental health issues', including a history of attempted suicide, the CHRI said.

He was 'unfit to serve his sentence due to multiple illnesses but judicial authorities had refused his release despite numerous requests', said the IHR.

It said Niknafs had been suffering from diabetes, epilepsy and depression.

In a statement carried by the judiciary's news agency Mizan

Online, the Tehran prisons service said Niknafs had been serving a five-year sentence without giving details on his charges.

It said that Niknafs had previously informed the prisons service of his suicidal tendencies and had been receiving medical treatment under the supervision of the prisons service.

According to the prison service, Niknafs said he had taken pills given by another prisoner and subsequently fell ill. He was transferred on Saturday to hospital in Tehran where he died.

His death comes after Behnam Mahjoubi, a member of the Sufi Gonabadi order and described as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, in February also died in custody.

Activists expressed fear Mahjoubi died after authorities failed to take into account med-

ical conditions.

There has also been alarm over the health of dissident filmmaker Mohammad Nourizad who activists say is seriously ill in prison after torture which allegedly included multiple injections of an unknown substance into his genitals.

"This mounting death toll of political prisoners is the result of a decades-long policy of treating critics of the state as less than human, and the judiciary chief's (Raisi's) refusal to protect prisoners," said CHRI chief Hadi Ghaemi.

Mahmood Amiry-Moghadam, director of Iran Human Rights, added, "Ebrahim Raisi and (Supreme Leader) Ali Khamenei are responsible for the arrest, torture and ill-treatment and death of political prisoners in custody."

AFP

UNSC approves Guterres for second term as UN chief

United Nations - The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday approved Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a second term, with conflict resolution set to top his agenda at the world body's helm.

The 72 year old former prime minister of Portugal has held the office since 2017 and faced no competition for the next term in the job.

Around ten other people also sought the post, but they were not formal candidates because none of the 193 UN member states endorsed them.

During a brief closed door session the Security Council voted unanimously to recommend that the General Assembly give Guterres another term,

said the council's current president, Estonian ambassador Sven Jurgenson.

Approval from the General Assembly is seen as a formality and expected to take place soon. During his first term Guterres was forced to concentrate on limiting the potential damage from the unilateral, nationalist and alliance-way foreign policy of then US president Donald Trump.

Now, as he embarks on a new term, Guterres will need 'a battle plan' for all the crises around the globe, one diplomat said. He can point to few major diplomatic victories over the past five years. Wars or conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Mali, for instance, are nowhere near

resolution.

A peace process has begun in Libya, which descended into violent chaos after the death of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, but the UN is mainly seen as playing an accompanying role.

Critics also point to the UN's passivity in the face of Myanmar's military crackdown against the Rohingya people since 2017, which UN investigators have said amounts to genocide.

Guterres said last month that 'key elements' of his work depended on discretion.

"Sometimes to be effective, it needs to be done discreetly, to establish back channels between parties," Guterres said.

AFP

'Butcher of Bosnia' Ratko Mladic faces final genocide verdict

The Hague, Netherlands - Former Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic is on Tuesday hearing the final verdict on his conviction for the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst act of bloodshed since World War II.

UN judges in The Hague will rule on an appeal by the so-called 'Butcher of Bosnia' against his 2017 conviction and life sentence for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity during the 1992-95 Bosnia war.

Mladic, now frail and in his late seventies but still prone to courtroom outbursts against NATO and the West, is expected to be in the dock at the tribunal to hear the judgment read out from 1300 GMT.

The verdict by five judges at the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals - which deals with cases from the now-closed Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal - is final and cannot be appealed any further.

Mothers of some of the 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys

killed when Bosnian Serb troops overran Srebrenica will meanwhile be outside the court in the Netherlands where they have long campaigned for justice.

"We will go to The Hague to look the executioner in the eye once again as he is finally sentenced," Munira Subasic, president of one of the 'Mothers of Srebrenica' associations, said.

Prosecutors have also appealed against Mladic's acquittal on wider genocide charges.

Tribunal prosecutor Serge Brammertz said he was 'cautiously optimistic' about the verdict and 'can't imagine another outcome than confirmation' of at least the original verdict.

'Target of NATO'

Mladic, who spent a decade on the run before his capture in 2011, was the military face of a brutal trio led on the political side by ex-Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

Mladic was found guilty of



This file photo shows Bosnian Serb ex-general Ratko Mladic before the international UN tribunal in The Hague on August 25, 2020 (AFP)

genocide for personally overseeing the massacre at the supposedly UN-protected enclave of Srebrenica as part of a campaign

to drive out Muslims.

Footage from the time showed him handing out sweets to children before they and the

women of Srebrenica were taken away by bus, while the men of the town were marched into a forest and executed.

He was also found guilty of orchestrating a wider campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' to drive Muslims and Bosnians out of key areas to create a Greater Serbia as Yugoslavia tore itself apart after the fall of communism.

The war left around 100,000 people dead and 2.2mn displaced.

But Mladic, who gives his age as 78 but it is 79 according to the court, insisted during an appeal hearing last year that he was a 'target of the NATO alliance' and derided the court as a 'child of western powers'.

His lawyers argued that he was far from the scene at the time of the actual killings in Srebrenica, and that he could not be held responsible for the crimes of his subordinates.

They will be watching for the findings of presiding judge Prisca Nyambe of Zambia, who gave a dissenting opinion in the 2012

verdict of Mladic's righthand man Zdravko Tolimir, which questioned the basis for his genocide conviction.

The appeal hearing was delayed repeatedly after Mladic needed surgery to remove a polyp, and then because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to the court on Tuesday is also limited because of coronavirus measures.

'His work is great'

Mladic is the last of the Serb trio to face justice, with Milosevic dying of a heart attack in his cell in The Hague in 2006 before his trial had finished, while Karadzic is serving a life sentence for genocide in Srebrenica.

Relatives of the victims hoped that the court would also overturn Mladic's acquittal on wider genocide convictions, saying it was necessary for reconciliation between still-divided communities.

"This verdict is not only important for the victims and survivors. It is very important for the

future of our children, of all of us," said Subasic, who planned to be at the court with around a dozen supporters.

For some Bosnian Serbs, Mladic and Karadzic remain heroes.

A few dozen Serbs gathered on the eve of the verdict at Bratunac, near Srebrenica, to watch a film about Mladic, although the turnout was smaller than expected.

"His work is great and should never be forgotten," Vojin Pavlovic, president of the Istocna alternativa nationalist association, told AFP, but added that they were 'pessimistic' about the verdict.

"You just have to be a Serb to be sentenced in The Hague."

Prosecutor Brammertz warned the Mladic judgment would not bring an end to the divisions in the Balkans, saying it was just 'the end of one chapter'.

"Denial of genocide is the last phase of the genocide," Brammertz said.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Over one million Europeans receive health certificate to travel across EU

Strasbourg, France - More than one million Europeans have received the new EU COVID health certificate being rolled out to unlock travel within the bloc, the European Commission said on Tuesday.

EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders announced the figure to the European Parliament ahead of a vote to enshrine the document in law in time for the continent's all-important summer tourism season.

It is expected to be passed by a big majority after agreement between MEPs and the EU's 27 member states on details, with the vote result known early on Wednesday.

The certificate - showing the bearer's immunity to COVID-19 either through vaccination or previous infection, or their negative test status - is to be used for intra-EU travel from July 1, obviating the need for quarantine or further testing for travellers.

But the commission wants as many EU countries as possible to start earlier.

"The more certificates we can already issue, the easier the process will be during the summer - otherwise, we risk a big bang on the first of July, which we cannot afford," Reynders said.



EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders announced the figure to the European Parliament ahead of a vote to enshrine the document in law in time for the continent's all-important summer tourism season (AFP)

Nine countries

As of Tuesday, nine EU countries were already issuing the documents - including the sunny tourist destinations of Greece, Spain and Croatia, as well as the bloc's major source of tourists, Germany.

Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania and Poland were the others.

"More than a million citizens have already received such certificates, and many more will fol-

low in the next weeks and months," Reynders said.

The EU Digital COVID Certificate can be presented either in online form, on a smartphone for example, or printed out on paper.

It features a QR code for verification, which border officials and venue staff can use to check against digital signatures stored securely in Luxembourg servers.

Only minimal data of the bearer are included on the certificates, to prevent identity

skimming, and the EU legislation surrounding their use is due to expire after a year, so that they do not become a fixture with potential Big Brother uses in the future.

EU lawmakers and capitals also agreed that, when it comes to proof of vaccinations, only the jabs authorised by the European Medicines Agency - so far those from BioNTech/Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson - would be

accepted in all EU countries.

But individual countries can also decide to accept, for their territory only, others, such as one produced by China, or Russia's Sputnik V vaccine.

Money and concessions

To prevent discrimination against the unvaccinated - particularly younger Europeans who have not yet been able to access jabs given in priority to the elderly - much emphasis has also been put on testing.

The parliament failed to make COVID tests for travel free of charge, but extracted money and concessions from the European Commission to make them more affordable.

Reynders said work was ongoing to also expand the use of the EU Digital COVID Certificate so that it is accepted beyond Europe.

Talks have been under way with the United States, for some sort of mutual recognition of vaccination status.

But have run up against the problem that there is no single federally backed certificated in the US, only a myriad of state and private vaccination cards almost impossible to authenticate abroad.

AFP



This file photo shows residents queuing up to receive the Sinovac vaccine in Ronggan, in China's southern Guangxi region, on June 3 (AFP)

China allows jab for 3 year old too

Beijing, China - China has approved the emergency use of a COVID-19 vaccine for those as young as three, the drugmaker confirmed on Tuesday, making it the first country to offer jabs to young children.

Since the coronavirus first emerged in central China, Beijing has mostly managed to bring the country's outbreak under control, and has administered over 777mn vaccine doses after a sluggish start.

A spokesperson for Sinovac told AFP its vaccine had been approved for use on children.

"In recent days, the Sinovac vaccine was approved for emergency use in 3 to 17 year olds," the spokesperson said.

But he did not confirm when the young children would be able to start receiving the shots, saying the schedule for the rollout will be decided by the Na-

tional Health Commission 'according to China's current epidemic prevention and control needs and vaccine supply'.

The company has completed early phase trials of the vaccine in children and adolescents, with results to be published shortly in the *Lancet* journal, the spokesperson added.

State broadcaster CCTV reported over the weekend that an unnamed official in the State Council's epidemic response task force had said vaccines had been approved for children, and 'the safety and effectiveness' had been proven.

A spokesperson for China's other major vaccine, Sinopharm, said that experts had demonstrated the effectiveness of its vaccine in children, but didn't confirm whether it had been approved for use.

AFP

Brazil braces for third wave fuelled by vaccination delays, lack of measures

Brasilia, Brazil - Already reeling from one of the highest death tolls in the pandemic, Brazil is bracing for the threat of a third wave of COVID-19, fuelled by vaccination delays and a lack of containment measures.

So far, each pandemic wave has been successively worse in Brazil, peaking at a weekly average of around 1,000 deaths per day in July 2020 during the first wave and 3,000 deaths per day last April during the second.

The curve has since turned down, with an average of around 1,600 deaths per day over the past week, and Brazilians have largely gone back to business as usual. But with the southern hemisphere winter approaching again, experts say

warning lights are flashing, raising fears of a return to overflowing hospitals, mass graves, refrigerator trucks piled with corpses and other gruesome scenes from the darkest days of the pandemic in Brazil.

The sprawling country has been slow to vaccinate its 212mn people, and hasty in lifting state and local stay-at-home measures, epidemiologists say. Meanwhile, risky virus variants - including the 'Gamma' strain that emerged in Brazil itself, plus the first cases of the 'Delta' strain that emerged in India - threaten to accelerate the disease's spread.

COVID-19 has already claimed more than 470,000 lives in Brazil, second only to the



Infectedologist Luana Araujo faces a panel probing the government's handling of the pandemic (AFP)

United States. The South American country's per capita death toll - more than 220 per

100,000 inhabitants - is one of the world's highest.

But many Brazilians seem unconcerned by the threat of a new surge - not least far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who continues to regularly defy expert advice on containing the virus. "Brazil has taken an unprecedented health catastrophe and turned it into something normal. The majority of people are acting like there's no pandemic," said infectious disease specialist Jose David Urbaz.

"That's why predictions are for a very intense third surge."

Some experts say a new surge in Brazil should not even be called a 'third wave', given that the first and second never really subsided.

Pot-banging protests

With around 10.8 percent of the population fully vaccinated, the situation in Brazil could get worse before it gets better.

Bolsonaro faces mounting criticism and a Senate inquiry over his controversial handling of COVID-19, including his refusal of various offers of vaccines.

He vowed last week that all Brazilians would be vaccinated by the end of the year, but experts say that will be difficult.

His announcement, made in a nationally televised address, was met by a chorus of banging pots and pans in many Brazilian cities - a traditional mark of protest.

Bolsonaro maintains his re-

fusal to impose lockdown measures is responsible for Brazil's stronger-than-expected economic growth of 1.2 per cent in the first quarter of the year.

However, experts warn the future of the pandemic recovery in Latin America's largest economy will depend on how well it contains COVID-19.

Last year, Brazil's economy contracted by a record 4.1 per cent.

Mass vaccination way to avert crisis

"If the speed of vaccination is less than the negative impact of relaxing social distancing measures, the third wave could hit Brazil hard," said epidemiologist

Mauro Sanchez of the University of Brasilia.

One experiment has shown the power of mass vaccination.

In the town of Serrana, in Sao Paulo state, public health officials vaccinated 95 per cent of the adult population in a study of the effects of full immunisation.

COVID-19 deaths fell by 95 per cent and hospitalisations by 86 per cent in the southeastern town, population 45,000.

"We controlled the pandemic in Serrana. We can do the same across Brazil," said Sao Paulo Governor Joao Doria, a fierce Bolsonaro critic and leader in the campaign to vaccinate all Brazilians.

AFP

Lightning strikes kill 27 during India monsoon storm

Kolkata, India - Lightning strikes killed 27 people and four passengers on a flight were hospitalised after severe turbulence during monsoon storms in eastern India, officials said on Tuesday.

Lightning strikes during the June-September annual monsoon are fairly common in India.

Officials said West Bengal was hit by thunderstorms late on Monday, with lightning strikes in parts of the state.

"Many of the 27 killed on Monday evening... in the state were farmers and working in the fields," West Bengal disaster management minister Javed Ahmed Khan told AFP.

A flight from the western city of Mumbai to Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, was caught in the storm as it was about to land, officials added.

Eight passengers were injured with four taken to hospital.

"One passenger is still admitted in the hospital. The others have been discharged," the airport's director C Pattabhi told AFP.

"It was a close shave for the passengers."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced financial compensation for the families of the victims and those who were injured.

Nearly 2,900 people were killed by lightning in India in 2019 according to the National Crime Records Bureau - the most recent figures available.

The monsoon is crucial to replenishing water supplies in South Asia, but also causes widespread death and destruction across the region each year.

AFP

Hundreds arrested in 'staggering' global crime sting

The Hague, Netherlands - Police arrested more than 800 people worldwide in a huge global sting involving encrypted phones that were secretly planted by the FBI, law enforcement agencies said on Tuesday.

Cops in 16 countries were able to read the messages of global underworld figures as they plotted drug deals, arms transfers and gangland hits on the compromised ANOM devices.

Mafia groups, Asian crime syndicates, motorcycle gangs and other organised crime syndicates around the world were all monitored using the spiked phones as part of Operation 'Trojan Shield'.

The sting, jointly conceived by Australia and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, prevented around 100 murders, foiled several large-scale narcotics shipments and led to seizures of weapons and cash, they added.

"The results are staggering," FBI Assistant Director Calvin Shivers told reporters at the headquarters of the EU's police agency Europol HQ in The Netherlands.



FBI Criminal Investigative Division Assistant Director Calvin A Shivers speaks at a press conference, in The Hague on Tuesday (AFP)

Shivers said the FBI had provided criminal syndicates in over 100 countries with the devices over the last 18 months 'that allowed us to monitor their communications'.

Europol hailed the 'exceptional' operation, which saw around 12,000 of the ANOM devices distributed worldwide to criminals who thought they were chatting in secret.

"This information led over the last week to hundreds of law enforcement operations on a global

scale from New Zealand to Australia to Europe and the USA, with impressive results," said Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, Deputy Director Operations at Europol.

"More than 800 arrests, more than 700 locations searched, more than eight tonnes of cocaine."

Police also seized 22 tonnes of cannabis, two tonnes of methamphetamine, 250 firearms, 55 luxury vehicles and over US\$48mn in various currencies and cryptocurrencies, Europol said.

'Heavy blow'

Australian police said the supposedly hardened encrypted devices were handed out to operatives within the mafia, Asian crime syndicates, drug cartels and outlaw motorcycle gangs as part of the FBI-led plot.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Tuesday had 'struck a heavy blow against organised crime - not just in this country, but one that will echo around organised crime around the world'. The operation began after global police work in the past two years disrupted two other major encrypted phone networks used by criminals, Encrochat and SkyGlobal.

"The closure of those two encrypted communication platforms created a significant void in the encrypted communication market," said New Zealand police. To fill the void, 'the FBI operated its own encrypted device company, called 'ANOM', the New Zealand police added.

The FBI's Shivers said this enabled them to 'turn the tables' on criminals. "We were actually able to see photographs of hundreds

of tonnes of cocaine that were concealed in shipments of fruit, we were able to see hundreds of kilos of cocaine that were concealed in canned goods," he said.

Showing the massive global scale of the sting, Australia said more than 200 people had been charged already.

Sweden said it had arrested 155 people, Germany detained 70 suspects, the Netherlands 49, and New Zealand 35 as a result of the operation.

Most of the 27mn ANOM messages obtained by the sting were in Dutch, German and Swedish, Dutch police said.

'Criminals assumed that the service was safe and touted it among themselves as the platform you should use, because it would be absolutely reliable. Nothing could have been further from the truth,' Dutch police said.

According to unsealed court documents, the FBI worked with insiders to develop and distribute ANOM devices that are said to have had no email, call or GPS services and could only message other ANOM phones.

AFP

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Carbon diamond
5 German river
10 Due statements
15 Modern phone
19 ____ fixe
20 Declain
21 Dostoyevsky's,
"The ____"
22 Et ____: and others
23 Observe
24 Finer
25 A way to live?
26 Protuberance
27 Missiles
29 Grapeseed or
olive
31 Exposure to air
33 Fruit drinks
34 Birch family
member
36 Bristle
37 Margaret ____
40 Steered
42 Article of furniture
46 Strange
47 Cover
48 A pry
50 Wife of Abraham
in duplicate
51 A row
52 Fireplace stoker
54 The populace
56 Droops
57 Business

abbreviation
 58 Liberty
 60 Kitchen utensil
 62 Wrath
 63 Unnecessary
 65 Social call
 67 Curtained
 69 River islands
 70 French security
 71 Blind
 72 Irish seaport
 75 Weird
 76 Wizards
 80 Equip
 81 Social climbers
 83 Overseas
 85 70's School dance
 86 October
 birthstone
 88 Sag
 90 Stirred
 91 Learning
 92 Asiatic kingdom
 94 Yogi _____
 96 Egyptian pleasure
 god
 97 Hebrew month
 98 Place of nether
 darkness
 100 Alcoholic drink
 102 Strong
 103 To eye
 105 Gastropod
 mollusk
 106 Departed
 107 Steeds

11 Southern union:
abbr.
112 Rashness
116 Scottish-Gaelic
117 Hum
119 An opera
121 Medicinal plant
122 Broadway's Linda
123 Hereditary factors
124 Attempted
125 Principal Roman
meal
126 Turf squares
127 Borders
128 Fur garment
129 Battle of the ____:
1914
DOWN
1 Crooner Crosby
2 Scent
3 Network
4 Adolescent
5 A marvel
6 American Indians
7 Pouches
8 Summer, in
France
9 Wrap again
10 Quartered
11 Mountain on Crete
12 Italian coin
13 Theater boxes
14 Cubic meters
15 Choral
compositions
16 Word of Jesus

from the Cross
17 Italian resort
18 Charge against
property
28 Arabian gulf
30 "American ____"
32 Sweetstop
34 Helped
35 Dream
37 Rich fabric
38 Place in a row
39 Sister's daughter
40 ____ Peak
41 Abdicade
43 Woodland path
44 Tidal flow
45 Ancient chariot
47 Loam deposit
49 Fabulous bird
52 Make believe
53 Wanderer
55 Cut
58 Picnic pet peeve
59 A half note
61 Lively dances
64 Common Indian
ingredient
66 Tea kettle product
68 A labor group:
abbr.
70 Vacation spots
71 Wise men
72 Truant: Scot. var.
73 More mature
74 Love feast

75 Central American trees
76 Vacillate
77 Selected
78 Mohammedan scriptures
79 Exhausted
82 Sphere
84 Swedish philanthropist
87 Manual workers
89 Beatrice or Eugenie
91 Ability to read or write
93 Hauls
95 Collections
97 Not any
99 Heavy hammer
101 Fabled monsters
102 A fragrant unguent
104 Blundered
106 Coupled
107 Letters
108 Ecclesiastical office book
109 Employed
110 Carol
112 Group of three
113 Islands, in France
114 Vocal quality
115 Type of book
118 Born
120 By birth

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 20 You can finally put whatever has been bothering you lately on the back burner. Spend the next few days walking on air, or maybe on water. Wherever you go, others throw themselves shamelessly at your feet. The impossible seems routine to you. You're thrilled at the prospects in front of you and happy to be alive. Go out and do something you never dreamed you'd get the chance to do.	LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22 These days it seems as if the laws of the universe were written to benefit you, and you delight at the prospect of everything going your way. You have the advantage no matter which way you turn, and you aren't one to pass up a golden opportunity when it knocks at your door. Remember to try it out first before you make your final move. Practice inspires confidence.	SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 19 Talking is highly overrated. Instead of describing your feelings, demonstrate them creatively. This is the perfect time to use other means to get your point across. Games like charades may be especially amusing. Friends, co-workers, or clients appreciate your playful mood. For the next few days, you like things that seem to be larger than life.
TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20 Look down at your plate before you go back to the buffet for a second helping. Do you still have perfectly good food in front of you? Well, don't waste it. Does the same apply to certain opportunities you're lingering over? On the work front, a co-worker could use a little help on the other end of the same project, and it's in your best interests to fill them in on what you know.	VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22 If you can't do it yourself, maybe you shouldn't attempt to do it at all. Support may be forthcoming, but it's on someone else's schedule. In the hours that it takes to wait and explain, you could probably handle matters on your own. Organisation is the key to your success. Making sure everything is in its place before you start will save endless time in the long run.	CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19 You may feel like keeping a low profile these days, and it's no wonder. The stars heat things up to a high temperature. Don't be too surprised if something you did in the past catches up with you. There's nowhere to run once it finds you, so you may as well face it. Try to give your attention to a personal challenge that comes up too quickly to be ignored.
GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21 As the stars shift and change positions, you're among the first round chosen for the team. All day long it seems that you're somehow on the right side of the line that separates the insiders from the outsiders. Don't be afraid to ask for something you didn't think was possible yesterday. It's still possible to get in on the ground floor of a new venture if you know how to work it.	LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22 There's really no need to be in such a hurry to prove yourself. The more patient you are, the happier you will be when you finally get your turn. The stars urge you to win your victories one at a time. As the hours wear on, the increasing influence of certain astral aspects leads you to the politics of charm. A romantic issue is beautifully resolved tonight.	AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18 You're a big fan of blunt honesty and the naked truth. If you think it, you're likely to say it without censoring it for your audience. Luckily, you run with a crowd that has a sense of the absurd. Keep in mind that not everyone in the world appreciates your finely tuned sense of humour. If you were to refine this approach, imagine how many more people you could reach.
CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22 New circumstances find you facing your own indifference. It's difficult to make a decision when you just don't have much invested in the outcome, isn't it? At least it's a comfort to know you're not the only one in this situation. Somebody is unable to help you directly, but emotional support goes a long way. The best thing you can do right now is to slow down.	SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21 You need your alone time, and that's a good thing because solitude is on the agenda. Do what you must, because the energy you're giving off is too powerful for most. Your cause may catch fire as it picks up speed further down the road, but for now you struggle with the concept of anonymity. Your strength and determination won't let you fail.	PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20 You got off to such a great start, but you're suddenly feeling fatigued. Don't be surprised when your huge lead slows to a walking pace. Now that you've had your fun, another person gets a chance. Crossing the finish line is what's important, not finishing the race first. The promise you made to yourself is still good. You just don't have the energy to be on all the time.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. **' .MPG' extension refers usually to what kind of file?**

- a. WordPerfect Document file
- b. MS Office document
- c. Animation/movie file
- d. Image file

2. Who developed Yahoo?

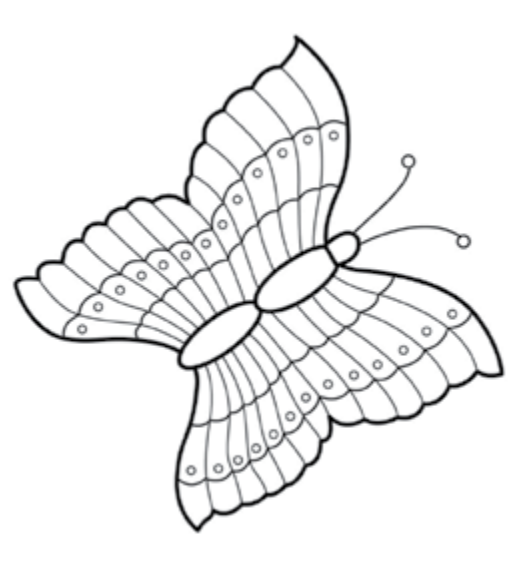
- a. Dennis Ritchie & Ken Thompson
- b. David Filo & Jerry Yang
- c. Vint Cerf & Robert Kahn
- d. Steve Case & Jeff Bezos

3. Made from a variety of materials, such as carbon, which inhibits the flow of current?

- a. Choke
- b. Inductor
- c. Resistor
- d. Capacitor

Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. c

A cartoon ladybug with a speech bubble that says "CLICK TO GET PICTURE FREE". The ladybug is facing right and has a large, oval body with spots. It has small antennae, legs, and a tail. The speech bubble is coming from its mouth and contains the text "CLICK TO GET PICTURE FREE" with a hand cursor icon pointing at the word "PICTURE".



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

		3		1	4			
	8	5				1	4	
	4		9				8	3
6			7		3	9		
3								8
		8	6		5			7
8	2				1		5	
	3	1				8	9	
			4	6		2		

BOGGLER

N	E	S	U
C	S	K	D
A	F	O	H
N	E	B	D

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other.

The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on.

Valid words must be at least three letters long.

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

1	5	9	4	6	2	3	1
4	7	9	4	6	8	2	3
8	2	6	3	9	1	7	5
2	9	8	6	4	5	3	1
3	5	7	1	2	9	4	6
6	1	4	7	8	3	9	2
7	8	5	2	9	5	7	6
9	6	3	8	1	4	5	7
4	3	1	5	7	2	8	9
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4	3	1	5	7	2	8	9
8	2	6	3	9	1	7	5
2	9	8	6	4	5	3	1
3	5	7	1	2	9	4	6
6	1	4	7	8	3	9	2
7	8	5	2	9	5	7	6
9	6	3	8	1	4	5	7
4	3	1	5	7	2	8	9
8	2	6	3	9	1	7	5
2	9	8	6	4	5	3	1
3	5	7	1	2	9	4	6
6	1	4	7	8	3	9	2
7	8	5	2	9	5	7	6
9	6	3	8	1	4	5	7
4	3	1	5	7	2	8	9
8	2	6	3	9	1	7	5
2	9	8	6	4	5	3	1
3	5	7	1	2	9	4	6
6	1	4	7	8	3	9	2
7	8	5	2	9	5	7	6
9</							

**DAILY CROSSWORD
ANSWERS (JUNE 08)**

[illegible]

WORD BUILDER

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

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



QUICK SUMMER MEALS

TOSS & TUCK IN

Spaghetti with Canned Tuna

- Ingredients
- 1 can (200g) solid tuna

2tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1tsp minced garlic

½tsp red chilli flakes or paprika powder

½ cup sundried tomatoes – julienned

400g spaghetti

2tbsp butter

2tbsp chopped parsley

Method

Drain out the brine/oil and empty the solid tuna onto a cutting board. Break it up with

your fingers into small bits – don't shred. Cook the spaghetti in a large pot of salted, boiling water. When al dente , drain and set aside.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium low heat for a minute. Toss in the garlic, chilli, and tomatoes, and cook until the garlic starts to sizzle. Remove from the heat and stir in the tuna with salt to taste. Then add the spaghetti, butter, and parsley, and toss well. Serve warm.



Grilled Chicken Salad

- Ingredients
- 3-4 lettuce leaves – torn to pieces

1 avocado – peeled and chopped

1 cup cherry/grape tomatoes – halved

2-3 breakfast beef strips

1 grilled chicken (from store hot counter)

2tbsp olive oil

2tsp lemon juice

½tsp cracked pepper

A pinch of salt

Method

Toast the beef strips lightly on a non-stick pan for a minute and set aside. Take the breast portion of the grilled chicken and slice it. You may also use the entire grilled chicken, chopped up with the bone in. Take a large plate and place the lettuce leaves over it. Then place the grilled chicken along with the chopped avocado, tomatoes and the toasted beef strips. Drizzle the olive oil and lemon juice and sprinkle salt and cracked pepper. Serve chilled.

Fried Chicken and Coleslaw Sandwiches

- Ingredients
- 4 KFC breaded chicken breasts (ready to eat)

½ cup mayonnaise

½ cup tomato ketchup or mustard sauce

½ cup sliced jalapenos or pickles

4 buns or eight slices of whole-wheat bread

For the coleslaw

1 cup shredded cabbage

½ cup shredded carrot

½ cup mayonnaise

2tbsp honey

1tsp apple cider vinegar

Method

Begin by preparing the coleslaw. Take a large bowl, add the mayonnaise, honey, and vinegar. Whip it up well to get a flowing consistency. Add the cabbage and carrot and mix well. Coleslaw is ready.

Now, slice the chicken pieces into flat chunks and set aside. To assemble, apply a thin coat of mayonnaise on one slice of bread. Place a few slices of jalapenos or pickles and heap up chunks of chicken on it. Add a generous layer of coleslaw and top with a drizzle of ketchup or mustard sauce. Place the covering slice of bread/bun. Enjoy!



Instant Chana Masala

- Ingredients
- 2 cans (200g each) canned chickpeas

1 cup tomato ketchup or tomato-chilli sauce

1 seasoning cube (vegetable or chicken)

1tsp ginger garlic paste

2 green chillies – slit

1 tsp garam masala (all spice)

2tsp butter

1tbsp chopped coriander

Method

Take a microwave-safe glass bowl, add the butter, and heat for a minute. Add the ginger-garlic paste, garam masala, and seasoning cube. Mix well and heat for two more minutes. Add the tomato ketchup and green chillies, and cook covered with foil for two minutes. Drain and add the chickpeas, toss well, and cook for 4-5 minutes. Add some of the liquid drained from the chickpeas, if you need a gravy. Serve hot, garnished with chopped coriander. Enjoy with fresh and warm kubs bread.

MUELLER ON THE MARK

Germany demolish Latvia 7-1 in their final Euro warm-up game in Dusseldorf

Düsseldorf, Germany - Thomas Mueller scored his first international goal for three years on Monday as Germany crushed minnows Latvia 7-1 in their final warm-up friendly in Dusseldorf before the Euro 2020 finals.

Latvia, ranked 138th in the world, rarely got out of their half as Germany tuned up for their opening game of the European Championship against world champions France in eight days time in Munich.

After a two-year exile from international football, 2014 World Cup winner Mueller got on the scoresheet while English Premier League stars Ilkay Gundogan and Timo Werner also found the net in the rout.

"The result wasn't the most important thing, it was more about the way we wanted to play football and implement things," said Mueller, who claimed his first Germany goal since March 2018.

"It felt good, it was a convincing win, but we know that France will be a different proposition, that's clear."

Germany captain Manuel Neuer was applauded onto the pitch by his teammates before kick-off as he became the first goalkeeper to make 100 appearances for the national team.

The 35 year old veteran had one of the quietest nights of his career in Dusseldorf. He was largely untested until Latvia midfielder Aleksejs Savelskijs napping with a consolation goal 15 minutes from time.



Germany's Thomas Mueller (left) celebrates after scoring against Latvia on Monday during their final pre-tournament friendly against Latvia ahead of the Euros (AFP)

The result wasn't the most important thing, it was more about the way we wanted to play football

THOMAS MUELLER

Germany head coach Joachim Loew made four changes from the side held to a frustrating 1-1 draw with Denmark. Chelsea's Champions League winner Antonio Ruediger came into the defence with his club team-mate Kai Havertz, who played the first half, impressing up front.

Manchester City's Gundogan partnered Real Madrid's Toni Kroos in a solid midfield pairing. The Germans wasted little

time. Havertz ghosted through the Latvia defence to set up the opener as left-back Robin Gosens claimed his first international goal, then 86 seconds later Gundogan crashed in the second. Germany were 3-0 up inside 27 minutes when Mueller hit the net for his 39th goal in 102 caps for Germany.

It was 5-0 at the break as Latvia goalkeeper Robert Ozols fumbled the ball into his own net,

then Serge Gnabry volleyed into the top corner just before half-time. Werner replaced Havertz for the second half and fired home between Ozols legs with 50 minutes gone.

The Germans were caught napping when Savelskijs's superb shot flew past the diving Neuer, before Sane made amends for his earlier miss by tapping home Mueller's pass.

The win was a timely

confidence booster on the eve of the Euro 2020 finals, but Germany can expect much harder games against France and reigning European champions Portugal in Group F.

"We've kept things free until the middle of July - anything can happen," joked Mueller, with the Euro 2020 final scheduled for London's Wembley Stadium on July 11.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Netherlands lose Van de Beek for Euro 2020

Manchester United midfielder Donny van de Beek has been ruled out of the Netherlands' challenge for Euro 2020 because of injury, the national team announced on Tuesday. "Van de Beek has to let the European Championship pass by. The midfielder is struggling with an injury. As a result, he is not available in time for Euro 2020," the team tweeted. Netherlands coach Frank de Boer will not name a replacement for the 19-time capped Van De Beek. The 24 year old started just four Premier League matches for United following his US\$49.5mn move from Ajax in September.

Chelsea's Kepa added to Spain training bubble

Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga has been added to Spain's parallel training bubble following Sergio Busquets' positive COVID-19 test, the Spanish Football Federation said on Tuesday. Spain pulled out of their final Euro 2020 warm-up game with Lithuania after Busquets tested positive and are set to field an U21 team in that match. However, the Spanish FA said that all players and staff currently isolating have tested negative. Leeds United forward Rodrigo Moreno and West Ham midfielder Pablo Fornals have also been called into the bubble along with Carlos Soler of Valencia, Villarreal's Raul Albiol as well as Celta Vigo's Brais Mendez.

AFP

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MAIDEN MAIDENS

Pavlyuchenkova and Zidansek reach first Grand Slam semifinals



Tamara Zidansek

WOMEN'S QUARTERFINALS

Paris, France - Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova reached her first Grand Slam semifinal at the 52nd attempt on Tuesday and will be favoured to make the French Open final when she takes on world No 85 Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia, who also reached her maiden Grand Slam semifinal.

Pavlyuchenkova, the world No 32, beat doubles partner Elena Rybakina 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 9-7 in her first quarterfinal appearance at Roland Garros since 2011. "There are so many emotions to reach a Grand Slam semifinal for the first time," said 29 year old Pavlyuchenkova who had fallen at the quarterfinal stage at the majors on six previous occasions since her 2007 debut.

"I always had the tennis. Mentally I'm probably more solid now. Just trying to play smarter tennis. I'm working harder."

Rybakina dumped out Serena Williams in the previous round and raced into a 4-1 lead in the opener. Pavlyuchenkova broke back in the seventh game before the 6ft (1.84m) Russian-born Kazakh dominated the tie-break.

The Russian levelled the tie courtesy of breaks in the sixth and eighth games of the second set. In a tense decider, there were four breaks in the first six games before Rybakina cracked in the 16th game, going down tamely on her sixth double fault.

Earlier, the unheralded Zidansek became the first woman representing Slovenia to advance to the last-four at a Grand Slam after beating in-form



Spaniard Paula Badosa 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

"It feels overwhelming. It's hard to take it in this fast," said Zidansek, who had never gone beyond the second round of a Slam before this year's Roland Garros.

Zidansek recovered from 0-3 and a double break down in the first set and saved three break points at 6-6 in the decider against Badosa, the 33rd seed with the most clay court wins (17) on the WTA tour this season.

The Slovenian took her second match point to continue her dream run. She is two wins away from emulating Maribor-born Mima Jausovec, who won Roland Garros in 1977 while representing Yugoslavia.

Swiatek into quarterfinals

Earlier on Monday night, defending champion Iga Swiatek reached the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Ukrainian teenager Marta Kostyuk.

The eighth seed from Poland has won 22 straight sets at Roland Garros and will take on Greek world No 18 Maria Sakkari for a place in the last-four on Wednesday.

Sakkari knocked out last year's French Open runner-up Sofia Kenin earlier in the day, leaving Swiatek as the highest-seeded player remaining in the draw.

Swiatek, 20, is aiming to become the first woman to defend the title in Paris since Justine Henin won the tournament three times in a row from 2005 to 2007.

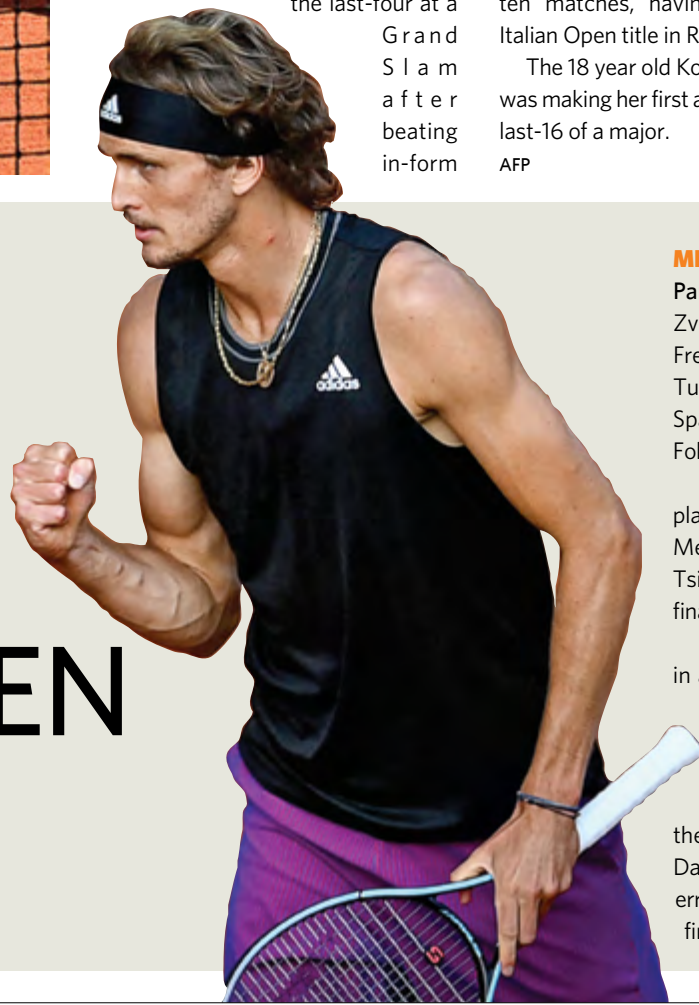
She extended her winning streak to ten matches, having captured the Italian Open title in Rome last month.

The 18 year old Kostyuk, ranked 81, was making her first appearance in the last-16 of a major. AFP



Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova

ZVEREV POWERS INTO FIRST FRENCH OPEN SEMIFINAL



MEN'S QUARTERFINALS

Paris, France - Alexander Zverev eased into his first French Open semifinal with on Tuesday a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 win over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

The German sixth seed will play the winner between Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas for a place in Sunday's final.

Zverev has now won 15 sets in a row after recovering from two sets down against qualifier Oscar Otte in the first round.

He easily brushed aside the 46th-ranked Davidovich who hit 37 unforced errors and only 16 winners in his first major quarterfinal.

"It's nice to be in the semifinals, but just being here doesn't satisfy me," said Zverev, the 2020 US Open runner-up.

Tsitsipas hopes to stay on course for a first Grand Slam final when he meets Medvedev under the lights on Court Philippe Chatrier later on Tuesday night, the last match to be played behind closed doors before the easing of a nationwide curfew.

The Greek fifth seed will try to reach a third successive major semifinal, having lost a thrilling five-setter to Novak Djokovic in Paris last year.

Blocking his path is second seed Medvedev, the Russian who hadn't won a match in four previous visits to the French

Open but has looked increasingly assured on clay over the past week.

Medvedev, a runner-up at the 2019 US Open and this year's Australian Open finalist, holds a 6-1 head-to-head advantage over Tsitsipas.

He beat the Greek in straight sets in the last four in Melbourne in their most recent meeting.

"I feel like I don't have to think against who I'm facing or not, I just have to play my game, let the rest be witnessed," said Tsitsipas.

Medvedev could take over the number one ranking if he reaches the final and Serbian Novak Djokovic does not. AFP

Two Swedish Euro 2020 players test positive

Stockholm, Sweden - Two Sweden players have tested positive for COVID-19, complicating selection decisions ahead of their Euro 2020 opener against Spain next week, the team announced on Tuesday.

Dejan Kulusevski, who plays for Italian club Juventus, 'will not be available for the game against Spain, as it appears today', Andersson told a press conference on Tuesday afternoon. The team's doctor, Anders Valentin, later said that midfielder Mattias Svanberg had also tested positive.

On Monday Sweden are due to face Group E rivals Spain, who



Dejan Kulusevski

find themselves in a similar situation following the withdrawal of team captain Sergio Busquets after he too tested positive for the virus.

"We won't bring in anyone



Mattias Svanberg

else to replace Dejan," Andersson said, adding that he hoped that Kulusevski would be back soon. The announcements come as Sweden reel from the loss of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who

had to cancel his much-touted return to a major international tournament with his country due to a knee injury in mid-May.

Valentin said they believed Kulusevski had contracted the virus at some point during the three days off the players were given after returning from friendly games against Armenia and Finland, both won by Sweden. After Spain, Sweden is set to face Slovakia on June 18 and Poland on June 23. AFP



Fans at England's games to use vaccine passports

London, UK - Fans attending England's opening Euro 2020 match against Croatia on Sunday will be the first at a sporting event in Britain to have the option of using coronavirus vaccine passports.

European governing body UEFA has confirmed that ticket holders based in Britain can gain entry either by providing proof of a negative lateral flow test or by showing

proof of full vaccination - both doses received at least 14 days before the match.

Ticket holders based elsewhere must provide proof of a negative lateral flow test.

There will around 22,500 spectators for England's first two group games, against Croatia and Scotland at Wembley, with the stadium running at 25 per cent capacity.

"All ticket holders aged 11 and older must present evidence that they are at a low risk of transmitting COVID-19

to enter Wembley Stadium. Failure to do so will mean you're unable to attend the match," UEFA said in a statement on its website.

If the vaccine passport system proves successful, it could pave the way for bigger crowds when Wembley hosts matches later in the tournament.

The UK has so far given more than 27 million people two vaccine doses - more than 50 per cent of adults - while more than 40mn have had one dose. AFP



Saad al Sheeb (R) pulls down Khalid al Hajri inside the box

OFA lodges protest

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

The poor refereeing decisions during Oman's game against Qatar in Doha on Monday led to allround protests from Omani fans and officials. Oman Football Association (OFA) was quick to respond by sending an official protest letter to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and the world governing body, FIFA, complaining against the match official from Sri Lanka. There was widespread anger at the refereeing decisions with fans calling the match 'a scandal, shame and farce'. The anger was directed mainly against the match referee for disallowing a clear goal from Oman's substitute

striker Khalid al Hajri in the 90th minute, who was adjudged off-side. The two linesmen for the match were Sri Lanka's Palitha Hemathunga and Iran's Mirzabeigi Ali. Omani twitterati described the refereeing as 'a farce and scandal', and urged the OFA to take a strong stand against the refereeing injustice. Few questioned the AFC role in handing over a high-class game to a referee from Sri Lanka while other fans felt that Oman 'were robbed' of a win. Questions were also asked to the AFC and FIFA as to why VAR technology was not being used during the second round of the FIFA World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers.

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Group E	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Qatar	8	7	1	0	17	22
Oman	6	4	0	2	6	12
India	7	1	3	3	-1	6
Afghanistan	6	1	2	3	-9	5
Bangladesh	7	0	2	5	-13	2

REFEREE CRITICISED AS OMAN LOSE TO QATAR



Action from the Group E 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifier between Oman and hosts Qatar in Doha on Monday night

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP AND 2023 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIER
GROUP E

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

A soft penalty against them, then a goal disallowed, followed by a penalty overlooked. All in 90 minutes as a brave and strong display by the Red Warriors went in vain with Oman left to rue some glaring omissions by the Sri Lankan referee in their 0-1 defeat to the hosts and Asian Cup holders Qatar at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Monday night. Poor refereeing decisions from Sri Lanka's Hettikamkanamge Perera not only destroyed a good game but also left Oman camp and fans fuming, with Twitter exploding with calls for action against the erring official. It was the first major test for Oman's Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic since he took over as national team coach in January 2020, and his team selection and tactics displayed lot of enterprise and enthusiasm against a fancied opponent. Playing the Group E match of joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifier, the narrow win confirmed Qatar's top spot in the group and a place in the 2023 Asian Cup finals. However, the defeat meant that Oman will need to win their remaining games against Afghanistan (June 11) and Bangladesh (June15) to harbour hopes of advancing to the next round as one of the best second-placed finishers.

The only goal that separated the two Gulf rivals came late in the first half when Qatar's Almoez Ali was harshly adjudged to have been fouled by Abdullah Fawaz inside the box and a penalty awarded, much to the protest of Omani players. Qatar skipper Hasan al Haydos converted the spot kick slamming on the wrong side of a diving Oman captain and goalkeeper Faiz al Rusheidi in the 39th minute. Four minutes later Oman's Zahr al Aghbari was brought down on the top of the rival box but the referee overlooked the foul from the Qatari player. Oman fought back in the



Oman coach Branko Ivankovic

second half and threatened the Qatar defence on numerous occasions with a header from substitute striker Khalid al Hajri in the 72nd minute missing the

target narrowly. Oman believed that they equalised in the 90th minute when Hajri shot the ball in after Qatar goalie Saad al Sheeb failed to make a clean save.



Oman's Amjad al Harthi (left) vies for the ball with Qatar's Abdullah al Ahrak during the match on Monday



Hettikamkanamge Perera

However, to the shock and disbelief of all, the referee blew the whistle for an off-side. Soon after the goal was disallowed, Oman had another chance, and this time Qatar's Sheeb pulled back Hajri to the ground inside the box while going for a challenge, and Oman's penalty claim was once again overturned in the dying minutes of the match. The win for Qatar was their seventh in eight games and they concluded their engagements in the group with 22 points while Oman are ten points behind but with two games remaining.

Ivankovic praises his players

Despite the defeat, Ivankovic praised the performance of his players and felt they were worthy of at least a share of the points. "Congratulations to Qatar for their win tonight. They have been the best team in Asia in the last few years and they deserve to be on top of the group," said the Croatian. "Our players performed well and created many scoring chances but we were not lucky today while the weather also affected them. "I expect that we can qualify from the group and we hope to win the last two matches. We will give our best in those matches, and hopefully, we can advance as one of the best runners-up." The coach said that he was surprised that the 'goal from [Khalid] Hajri was declared off-side'. "Even we could see he was clearly on-side. Some of the refereeing decisions were harsh on us including a penalty that was disallowed. May be, we weren't lucky today," said Ivankovic. Qatar's coach Felix Sanchez lauded his side for getting their job done by qualifying for the Asian Cup China 2023 finals. "Qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup is the latest achievement for Qatari football and it's a happy day for us," said Sanchez. "I hope we can continue producing good results with the team. "The match was difficult against a persistent team who tried their best to equalise. At the end of the day we achieved our target, which was to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup. We will give the players a few days of rest and then resume working for the CONCACAF Gold Cup."

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Every day, all day!

