

HM CONGRATULATES TUNISIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Kais Saied of Tunisia on the occasion of the Republic Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to the president, praying to the Almighty Allah to return this and similar occasions on his country's people with achievement of aspirations of further progress and prosperity. - **ONA**



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HM THE SULTAN, IRANIAN PRESIDENT-ELECT REVIEW RELATIONS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik received a phone call this evening from President-elect of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Ebrahim Raisi. During the call, His Majesty and the Iranian President-elect exchanged greetings on the occasion of Eid Al Adha, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this blessed occasion on the two countries and their friendly peoples with blessings and bounties. They also reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and means of promoting them to serve the joint interests. - **ONA**



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A DIFFERENT EID AL ADHA



AN EID OF CONTRASTS: Families celebrated Eid with their loved ones during the four-day lockdown (left), while rescue teams were deployed in Sharqiyah and Batinah regions to help those affected by heavy rain and flooding. **PICTURES BY AZAN RASHID AL ZEEDI AND CIVIL DEFENCE AND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY**

Although everyone was required to stay home from 20 to 23 July, emergency services personnel tirelessly helped those impacted by the heavy rain and flooding

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Few people in Oman would have seen an Eid Al Adha such as this one in all their lives. Eid Al Adha 2021 was one of contrasts: Although everyone in the country was required to stay home during a four-day total lockdown from 20 to 23 July, rescue teams from Oman's emergency services were tirelessly helping those impacted by the

heavy rains and flooding that the country has witnessed over the past few days. Meanwhile, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare staff continue to provide round-the-clock care to patients affected by COVID-19. At the start of the long Eid weekend, there were 21,792 people with the disease. 1,215 patients who were ill with COVID-19 had been admitted to hospital, and 444 of them were in

intensive care. With families unable to meet each other this Eid because of the lockdown, many understood the value of spending time with their immediate members. Some, such as Hajar Al Harassi, chose to pass the time by watching movies, playing games, and preparing traditional Eid dishes with her family. "We missed visiting our relatives and dropping in on our neighbours," said the native of Wilayat Rustaq in South Al Batinah, speaking to *Times of Oman*. "The lack of physical activity, however, meant we were afraid of gaining weight, and understandably, the children were upset because they could not go outside." Adding to this, Abdullatif Al Ma'amari, said he chose not to look at the drawbacks of this Eid, but rather embrace the new

opportunities it provided, primarily the division of household tasks among family members, and spending time together to discover each other's interests. "The most important impact of the movement ban was the social aspect, undoubtedly," he said. "I miss the Eid activities, the usual traditions which begin with the Habta market, where people gather to sell livestock, halwa, toys, sweets, fruits, and vegetables. I miss the Eid prayer, the traditions associated with this festival, and the meeting of family and friends." **Important part** A very important part of Eid is the folk art, which varies from home to home, and the delicious food that is not to be missed, and tastes best when shared with others. Although it was not possible to enjoy these experiences this time, "we ask God that we are able to return to our amazing rituals as soon as possible," said Abdullatif. "We need to adapt to the new variables and challenges we all face," he explained. "Regardless of their scale and impact, it is something we must all prepare for. To adapt to our current conditions is something new that I have learned, and this has made me experience a lot of new things, both personally and at a family level." His family spent Eid by playing indoor and outdoor games, reading books, organising quizzes, and doing puzzles together to while away the hours. Everyone in his family was required to suggest activities that could be done together, which were then arranged into a plan that could be followed during the holidays. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman condoles rain, flood deaths in India

1 Oman's Foreign Ministry has expressed the Sultanate's condolences and sympathy to the friendly Republic of India, for the victims of the torrential rains and floods that swept the state of Maharashtra. **>A3**

WORLD Biden support for Ghani government

2 US President Joe Biden in a phone call to Ashraf Ghani expressed his support for the Afghan government, the White House said. **>A6**

MARKET US inflation worries investors, experts

3 Inflation in the US is reaching decade highs drawing concerns from investors, experts and ordinary consumers, who believe the inflationary pressures are underestimated and the Federal Reserve's inflation management framework is questionable. **>B1**



TRAGIC INCIDENT

Family holds on to fond memories of drowned boys

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The family members of two Omani boys who drowned a couple of weeks ago in a lake near their hometown of Samail, say they continue to have fond memories of them. On July 10, Ahmed Al Jabri (22), and his younger brother, Mahmoud (19), decided to explore the area of Al Najmeiyah with the intention of going to Wadi Qari, about 20 km from their home, along with their cousin, also named Ahmed. The three were busy discovering the area, when they came across a pool of water that was fed by the wadi. The two brothers with their cousin decided to go for a swim, but did not know that recent rains in the area meant the



pool was deeper than usual. The younger brother, eager to dive into the water, jumped in first, but became tired before he could return to shore, and began drowning. Seeing him in danger, Ahmed dove in to rescue Mahmoud, but himself struggled to get back to shore on reaching his brother, resulting in both of them tragically losing their lives. "I still cannot believe they are gone from our lives forever, leaving a pain in my heart that is so hurtful I cannot describe it. I ask God to help me bear this loss - Ahmed and Mahmoud were my life and my soul," said their father, a heartbroken Khaled bin Mohammed Al Jabri.

Respectful and kind "Ahmed had a beautiful smile that never left his face - he was the third son among my male children," he recalled. "Mahmoud on the other hand, had innocent facial features - his eyes and cheeks reminded us of his childhood." The uncle of the two boys, Mohsin Al Jabri, also lamented their passing, saying the boys were greatly loved by everyone in the town, because of their respectful and kind nature. **>A5**



Oman takes part in 2020 Olympics opening ceremony **A8**

CRICKET

Twenty20 World Cup hosts look forward to nail-biting matches in the Sultanate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is expected to hold some nail-biting games when the Twenty20 Cricket World Cup comes to the country in October this year, according to Jay Shah, the honorary secretary of the Board for Control of Cricket in India. Although Oman and the neighbouring United Arab Emirates will hold the games at their venues, the BCCI remains the host of the World Cup, after it was moved from India to the Middle East, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. "As you know, the Twenty20 World Cup is a very exciting tournament," said Shah, who also



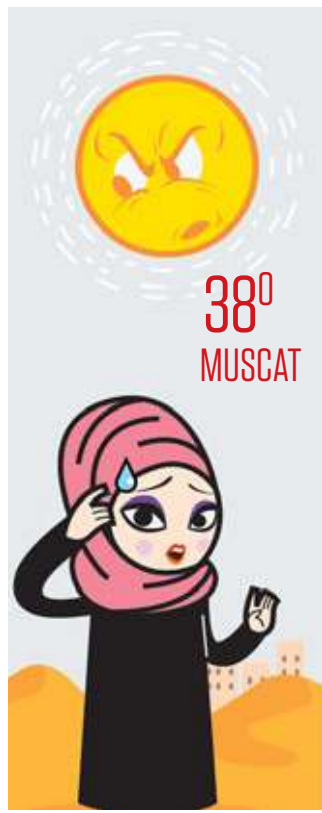
JAY SHAH

I am delighted to be in Oman - this is a proud moment for the people of the country, as well as Oman Cricket

serves as President of the Asian Cricket Council. "We are waiting for some nail-biting games. All things are going well. Earlier, we had planned to hold this tournament in India, but because of the pandemic, we needed to move it

to the UAE and Oman. "I am delighted to be in Oman - this is a proud moment for the people of the country, as well as Oman Cricket," he said, in the context of the country being awarded the joint venue rights to the tournament. "It is a proud moment for me as well, as I have been able to introduce the first event of the International Cricket Council (ICC) to the UAE, as well as Oman." Shah was part of a delegation of top-level representatives from the ICC, global cricket's governing body, and the BCCI, which travelled to Oman on Friday, July 16, to announce the groups of the preliminary rounds of the tournament.

The prelims are split into two groups, each of which are scheduled to be played in Oman and the UAE. Oman will be playing at home, against Papua New Guinea, Scotland, and Bangladesh, while the Netherlands, Namibia, Ireland, and Sri Lanka will be in the other group. The teams that finish in the top two positions in both groups will make it through to the Super 12s, which already features the other leading cricketing nations: India, Pakistan, England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the West Indies, and Afghanistan. Jay Shah was speaking to TFM, the radio station of the *Times of Oman*.





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WE ARE PROUD OF OUR PERFORMANCE

—H.M. THE SULTAN

Muscat : (By our Staff Reporter)

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has said that Oman's achievements over the past six years, have been most remarkable. It is a matter of great pride and jubilation for all of us, His Majesty stated. H.M. The Sultan was addressing the nation on the eve of the sixth anniversary of 23rd July, the day of his accession to throne.

His Majesty said that six years ago it became his destiny to assume, under God's guidance, responsibility for the welfare of the dear country and its people. In reviewing the six years that have passed, he said, our hearts are filled with pride and humility—pride in the victories our Omani people have achieved, and humility in the knowledge that it is God's blessing and protection which has made these victories possible.

Six years ago, His Majesty said, when we set out together on the path of progress we had chosen, we knew our journey would not be easy; we faced obstacles which at times seemed insuperable; and we faced dangers together—dangers which threatened the existence of our Holy faith and the very lives and freedom of our people. These obstacles and dangers might well have daunted the stoutest hearts, H.M. The Sultan pointed out. In those early days it was sometimes hard to conceive that any other country and people had faced challenges of such magnitude. For we not only had to struggle with the gigantic tasks of bringing our beloved country forward from the darkness of stagnation into the sunlight of progress, we had also to grapple with and destroy the menaces of communist terrorism which threatened all we held dear, His Majesty stated.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said that today we can pause for a moment in our labours to draw renewed faith and confidence from the glory of our achievements. After ten years of bitter struggle, the valour and determination of all our people—the armed services, the loyal Firqa, the ordinary men and women—has completely cleansed our land of the communist pestilence.

Referring to the International scene, His Majesty said that our country has earned respect and friendship; in our relations with our sister Arab states we have continued our wholehearted support for Arab aspirations and our loyal cooperation with the Arab League. Giant strides have been made in the development of our dear country. Our people now have hospitals, schools, roads and other modern amenities. Our people enjoy full employment; none who wishes to work need be



without a job. His Majesty emphasized. As promised in the new year speech, priority is being given to the needs of our young people. This summer many of our students are working in our ministries and other public departments during their summer holidays, so that they may learn to accept responsibility and fit themselves for future service to their country, His Majesty added. We take particular interest in this scheme since we have faith that our young people will be worthy inheritors of our national achievements. We intend that they shall have every opportunity to develop their talents in the service of Oman. The recent instructions that a Ministry should be created with special responsibility for youth affairs is a testimony of our faith and pride in our young people and our determination that they shall be brought forward to play their full part, H.M. The Sultan stated.

His Majesty said that with our increasing population, individuals' problems will inevitably tend also to multiply, and said that instructions have been issued to ministers to pay the greatest attention to the problems of the people and to serve the people to their fullest ability in helping to solve them.

And now what does the future hold for our beloved country? We believe that, provided we remain steadfast in our determination to strive together for the freedom and progress of Oman, the future is bright with promise.

We renew to you all, our pledge to dedicate our life to the service of our dear people and country, His Majesty concluded.

NATION CELEBRATES

ANNIVERSARY OF PROPHET'S ASCENT

Muscat : (By our Staff Reporter)

The Sultanate of Oman joins today, the entire Islamic community all over the world in celebrating the anniversary of 'Isra', the nocturnal journey in which, fourteen hundred years ago, the Holy Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) was instantly transported from the Holy Ka'aba to the Holy Jerusalem, prior to his ascent, 'Miraj', to the Seventh Heaven.

The Minister of Diwan Affairs, H.E. Sayyid Hamad bin Hamoud has declared an official holiday today in all the Ministries and the government departments, as a mark of respect for the sanctity of the celestial occasion. The Department of Labour, in a separate directive issued, asked the private establishments and companies throughout the Sultanate to remain closed in obeisance of the most auspicious occasion.

For the people of Oman and, for that matter, for the Muslims all over the world, the Holy Prophet's ascent carries intrinsic significance. Since it served as the terrestrial platform on this memorable sojourn, Jerusalem became the third holy city after Mecca and Medina in the Muslim world. The anniversary of the Prophet's ascent, therefore, is reminiscent to the Muslims that they should stand united and make unstinted endeavours for the restoration of their legitimate rights vis-a-vis Jerusalem.

The anniversary of the Holy Prophet's ascent also brings in the wake of it, a message for the Muslims that in this acme of space and technological advancement, they must not lag behind anyone. The importance of the 'Miraj' has been outlined by the renowned poet-philosopher,

(Continued on page 2)

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FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman condoles rain, flood related deaths in India

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Foreign Ministry expressed the Sultanate's condolences and sympathy to the friendly Republic of India, for the victims of the torrential rains and floods that swept the state of Maharashtra.

A statement issued online by Oman News Agency (ONA) said: "The Foreign Ministry expressed the Sultanate's condolences and sympathy to the friendly Republic of India, the government and people, and to the families of the victims in the torrential rains and floods that swept the state of Maharashtra, and wished a speedy recovery for the injured." A total of 44 bodies have been recovered from the debris of the Mahad landslide in Maharashtra's Raigad district from two different locations.

Updating about the landslide triggered due to incessant rain, the Raigad District Collector, Nidhi Chaudhary said that 35 people who have been injured are under treatment. "Total six locations experienced landslides in Raigad district. At one location, rescue operation still continues. According to officials and staff present at the spot, around 50 more people are feared trapped under the debris," Raigad DC said.

Eight patients have, so far, arrived at JJ Hospital and they are stable now, said the Medical Superintendent of JJ Hospital.

Heavy rains triggered landslides at six locations in the district yesterday. Maharashtra Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation Vijay Wadettiwar informed that 136 accidental deaths have been reported in Maharashtra till last evening due to rain and other monsoon-related incidents.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has announced ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the kin of those who



lost their lives in the landslides caused by torrential rainfall in various parts of the state.

"CM Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray has announced Rs5 lakh each for the kin of those who lost their lives in the landslides caused by torrential rainfall. The state will also incur the costs of treatment for those injured," CMO wrote in a tweet.

After taking stock of the situation, Uddhav Thackeray told reporters, "Due to landslides in Talai village, Raigad around 35 people have lost their lives. Rescue operation is underway at many places. I have ordered the evacuation and relocation of people who are living in areas where there is a possibility of landslide."

"NDRF and other rescue teams are facing problems reaching the flood-affected areas in Chip-lun as the roads and bridges are damaged. The situation remains tense," said the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also announced ex gratia of Rs2 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased. In the wake of big relief work, the Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy has mobilised rescue teams to provide assistance of considerable resources to state and district administrations of affected areas in the large parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Goa reeling under extensive flooding due to incessant rains and consequent overflowing of riverbanks and dams over the last few days.

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

Evening lockdown resumes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The lockdown that runs from 5pm to 4am every night is once again in effect, and will continue until Saturday, 31 July, 2021.

During this period, people are not permitted to move outside their homes, while commercial activities are prohibited from operating.

The new timings for the evening ban came into effect on 16 July, and ran until the 19th, after which a complete four-day lockdown was instituted during the Eid Al Adha holidays. It ended at 4am on the morning of Saturday the 24th.

People are expected to follow the above lockdown timings, now that the long Eid weekend has ended.

"Thank you for your commitment, and we remind you that the evening closure of commercial activities, and the ban on the movement of individuals and vehicles, will continue from five in the evening until four in the morning until July 31," said Oman's Government Communications Centre.



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FAMOUS ANCIENT MONUMENTS IN SUR



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The Wilayat of Sur, located at the centre of the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South has a number of famous ancient monuments including Bilad Sur Castle, Sunaysilah Castle, Al Ayjah Castle, Fanar Ras Al Meel and Ras Al Hadd Castle.

Bilad Sur Castle lies in the middle of Bilad Sur Plain in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism, "It is considered one of Wilayat's biggest bastions. Bilad Sur Castle has four towers: Al Khandaq Tower, JalanTower and

As Souq, while the fourth tower differs from the other three in that it has two storeys, the first of which overlooks the area outside the castle from all sides. The fort wall rises 6 metres." Sunaysilah Castle is another famous monument in Sur which was built on a hill overlooking Sunaysilah Village in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. "The fort's length is 35 metres and is 30 metres wide. It includes four circular towers, three of which have cannons and the fourth was used for surveillance. Sunaysilah Castle has a gate overlooking walls that

stretch for 55 metres and lead to a roofed and open courtyard," according to Oman's Ministry of Tourism. The castle was used to defend the village. Ras Al Hadd Castle lies in Ras Al Hadd area int Sur in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. It is one of Ras Al Hadd historical monuments with a length of 16 metres and a width of 13 metres. It includes two towers and openings for defence and surveillance. The castle also has a number of facilities, the most important of which are the ammunition store and water well.



IMPORTANT DAY



Commemorating World Drowning Prevention Day

An estimated 236,000 people drown every year, and drowning is among the ten leading causes of death for children aged 5-14 years. More than 90 per cent of drowning deaths occur in rivers, lakes, wells, domestic water storage vessels and swimming pools in low- and middle-income countries, with children and adolescents in rural areas disproportionately affected. Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death and the global burden of death from drowning is felt in all economies and regions. World Drowning Prevention Day, declared in April 2021 by UN General Assembly resolution, is held annually on 25th July. This global advocacy event serves as an

opportunity to highlight the tragic and profound impact of drowning on families and communities and to offer life-saving solutions to prevent it. World Drowning Prevention Day highlights the need for urgent, coordinated and multi-sectoral action on proven measures such as: installing barriers controlling access to water; providing safe places away from water such as crèches for pre-school children with capable childcare; teaching swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills; training bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation; setting and enforcing safe boating, shipping and ferry regulations; improving flood risk management.



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‘Committed to social protection in line with Oman Vision 2040’

People and society are in continuous drive to achieve comprehensive development in various fields, the Minister of Social Development, said in an interview

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development has developed legislations and programmes compatible with the social protection system, as represented in the mechanism of targeting families in need of support and social protection and providing financial assistance to achieve adequate standards of living.

Her Excellency Laila Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, confirmed in an interview with the Oman News Agency (ONA)



that the Oman 2040 vision is based on the achievements made over the past decades in various fields, to represent an integrated framework for economic and social policies that must be followed and adopted as a course of action, in order to achieve the aspirations that will boost the image of Oman by the year 2040.

Her Excellency said, “The reality of the Sultanate today is that the people and society are in a great and continuous drive to achieve comprehensive development in various fields, including welfare and social protection. The cohesion and strength of societies, and the achievement of community

peace, requires achieving social justice by maintaining the sustainability and quality of social welfare services, such as health services, education, and the provision of social safety nets that provide a decent livelihood with sustainability for current and future generations alike.”

This requires creating an environment that stimulates social responsibility programmes, civil voluntary contributions, and women and youth support programmes that aim at economic and social empowerment. She indicated that the Ministry is working to achieve this through its development programmes and initiatives, and the

continuing coordination with relevant government and private agencies.

Her Excellency clarified that the promotion of social protection and social responsibility requires organising the efforts of the concerned institutions and social responsibility projects and their governance, defining their principles and areas, managing them effectively and efficiently, and measuring the impact of results in order to provide advanced social services in a way that contributes to achieving sustainable development goals.

Her Excellency indicated that the Sultanate is keen to provide appropriate and cutting-edge services for persons with disabilities. As such the Welfare Act and the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities has been issued under Royal Decree No. (63/2008), and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights Persons with Disabilities according to Royal Decree No (121/2008) will be the legal basis to support the governmental and non-governmental agencies concerned with providing all services to persons with disabilities free of charge, including rehabilitation services, the provision of prosthetic devices and aids, vocational training and other services.

Her Excellency said that providing accurate and complete data on persons with disabilities is one of

the foundations required to work in the field of disability to monitor the current and future needs of persons with disabilities and to develop them from time to time in order to ensure the provision of comprehensive and widespread services in the various governorates of the Sultanate. The National Register of Persons with Disabilities was established in the Sultanate as a strategic priority, because of its importance in providing accurate data on the status of cases of disabilities discovered and covered by services in the Sultanate, ensuring that services reach those who deserve it, and supporting the population census project, population surveys or studies related to persons with disabilities, in addition to implementing the Sultanate’s international obligations towards data and statistics and providing international organisations with the necessary periodic reports and statistics.

Regarding the main challenges facing the Ministry in this sector, Her Excellency explained that there are a number of challenges, such as the lack of specialised national cadres in the field of care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the high financial cost of operating rehabilitation centres and providing services to the centres, and the reluctance of some parents to register their children

in the Ministry’s system, as well as the need for developing early detection and diagnosis programmes and the lack of early intervention services in all governorates of the Sultanate with the exception of Muscat Governorate.

Her Excellency pointed out that civil society institutions are one of the pillars of social development in the country, as it is an important sector that contributes to development in all its forms, and that the integration of the three sectors of the state, the government, the private sector, and the civil sector increases the effectiveness of development.

With regard to the next stage of the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in society and the Civil Associations Law, Her Excellency explained that this sector will have a more prominent and effective role. She added, “through our repeated meetings with civil society institutions, we have sensed a firm desire and great ambition to interact with national trends aimed at achieving indicators and great development within the Oman 2040 vision, which outlines courses of action and highlights the desired national goals by contributing to the national economy and real partnership in supporting national development.”

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

EID HOLIDAYS

< FROM A1 CDAA teams engaged in relief operations

“We assigned roles to the entire family over what they needed to do, during Eid, so that we could gain the most fun from the activities we have planned,” he recalled. “Happiness and joy, after all, come from within. On the first day of Eid, we set up a virtual family chat room, and wished each other for Eid, while showing off the various clothes we had bought. This really helped ease the mood, and it felt like we were all together.”

Abdullatif and their family members then began the traditional sacrifice and the preparation of the Eid feasts in their own homes, sharing their achievements with each other through this WhatsApp chat group.

“We were chatting and joking with each other throughout,” he said. “That evening, my daughter organised an event for all of us. It was great fun for all of us to attend.”

While families found ways to

keep themselves occupied during the Eid holidays, teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) were engaged in relief operations in areas such as the Sharqiyah and Batinah regions, which had been strongly impacted by heavy rains, and had organised search parties to track down people who had been reported missing during the subsequent flooding.

Many homes in rain-hit areas suffered damage, while others collapsed, requiring the people within to be evacuated to shelters. Fast-flowing waters continue to flow through a number of wadis in the country, prompting the authorities to issue regular warnings reminding people not to cross them, either on foot or in vehicles. Those who do attempt to cross them could risk severe injuries and/or drowning.

On Saturday, 24 July, CDAA teams entered the ninth day of

searching for persons reported missing in Sur. They continued to expand the area of their search, continuing to carefully comb their search zone for signs of the missing. Their attempts required personnel to use a combination of equipment, including inflatable rafts and drones, to access hard-to-reach areas.

Meanwhile, emergency service teams were deployed to the northern parts of the country along with water tankers, to clear flooded roads and debris to make them passable for people once again.

So that people affected by the rains could stock up on additional supplies, and help those requiring assistance, stores stayed open between 7am and 5pm, on 22 and 23 July.

To assess the damage caused by the flooding, Rashid bin Ahmed Al Shamsi, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development, accompanied by members of the

Oman Charitable Organisation, visited stricken areas to see how rebuilding can best be done.

On a visit to Falaj Al Qabail in Wilayat Sohar, he also “learned about efforts made by field teams in charge of assessing the damage to homes, met the affected families, and discussed efforts being made for them to return their homes and to provide them with the necessary assistance,” said the ministry in a statement.

Until 31 July, Oman will continue to be under partial lockdown, which runs every evening from 5pm to 4am. During this period, the movement of people, and the operation of businesses are prohibited.

More rain is expected over areas of Ash Sharqiyah, A’Dakhiliyah, and Adh Dhahirah over the coming days, and people are asked to once again avoid venturing close to wadis and other flood-prone areas.

NCSI JUNE DATA

Inflation in Oman rises marginally

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate in June 2021 increased by 1.25 per cent compared to the corresponding month, last year, according to statistics on the standard figures for consumer prices issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The inflation rate also increased by 0.02 per cent compared to May 2020, according to the same statistics.

The increase of the price index in June 2021 compared to the corresponding month in 2020 is ascribed to the increase in prices in the main groups such as transport, which increased by 5.72 per cent, increase in varied commodities and services group by 3.30 per cent, tobacco group by 2.96 per cent, culture and entertainment



group by 1.61 per cent, garments and shoes group by 0.31 per cent, education and health group by 0.08 per cent, residence, water, electricity, gas and other fuels group by 0.07 per cent. — ONA

FOND MEMORIES

< FROM A1 Both the brothers were pursuing their higher education

“The lives of their loved ones ended when Ahmed and Mahmoud died,” he lamented. “Their family members are now just bodies that move, with no souls inhabiting them. There is no sense they feel within, except the pain of parting.

“So severe is their sadness that we have been deprived of sleep, and even of tears,” admitted Mohsin. “We wish that tears would flow from our eyes, so that our pain would ease a little bit, and we

could rest a little, but it is useless to think that way.” “Every place we went with them, and every street we crossed with them, has now become like an arrow piercing our hearts and our souls,” he said.

“We therefore try to avoid anything that reminds us of them. But this is in vain, for we hear them everywhere, even in the form of words spoken by passers-by on the streets.

“Everyone tries in vain to

chase the shadows of Ahmed and Mahmoud, because you were such an important part of their life.”

The two brothers were part of a group of friends, along with their cousin Ahmed, who would regularly explore parts of the rich and varied landscape around their home. Ahead of their trip to Wadi Qari, they had asked many of their own friends and family members to join them, but the others were against it, advising them to go after

the Eid Al Adha holidays instead.

When their cousin Ahmed saw the brothers drowning, he pleaded with them to hold on, the laughter he had shared with them a few minutes ago turning into despair. Eager to get them help, he came across a group of expatriates in the area, but they too were cautious of the lake’s depth, and asked him to call rescue services.

With there being little cellphone coverage in the area, Ahmed went

a little further away and called emergency services as soon as he could, from his cousin’s phone. He then called his father, telling them of the tragedy, shouting, “dad, dad, please help me! Ahmed and Mahmoud have drowned. They departed before my very eyes! I cannot believe it...please dad, bring the rescue teams, I am sure we can still save them!”

Try as they might, teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance

Authority were unable to save the two young men.

Mohsin and Khalid were on their way to the wadi, when they heard of the passing of Ahmed and Mahmoud.

Both brothers were pursuing their higher education, when this tragedy occurred: Ahmed was in his final year at the Higher College of Technology in Muscat, while Mahmoud was enrolled at the Middle East College.



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RESCUE OPERATIONS: Rescue operations were underway as teams struggled to get through sludge and debris to reach homes submerged under water. — DW

125 killed in India due to heavy monsoon rains

The western state of Maharashtra is the worst-affected as it recorded the heaviest July rainfall in over four decades.

MUMBAI: At least 125 people have been killed after torrential rainfall caused flooding and landslides in western parts of India, officials said on Saturday. The figure was more than treble the 36 deaths reported on Friday.

Rescue operations were un-

derway as teams struggled to get through sludge and debris to reach homes submerged in the monsoon.

The western state of Maharashtra is the worst-affected as it recorded the heaviest July rainfall in four decades.

Various regions

“Rainfall in various parts of the state often coinciding with high tides and also discharge from dams led to various regions... getting inundated,” the Maharashtra state government said in a press release.

With downpours lasting several days, dozens of people were reported missing near Mumbai, India’s financial center. The coastal state of Goa has reported the worst floods in decades.

Four more bodies were recovered in Taliye, southeast of Mumbai, after landslides flattened most homes in the village. The

state’s chief minister is set to visit Taliye on Saturday after a total of 42 deaths were been recorded in the village.

“About 40 people are still trapped. The possibility of rescuing them alive is thin as they’ve been trapped in mud for more than 36 hours,” a senior official in the state said on conditions of anonymity.

Rescue groups were searching for victims in four other places in Maharashtra after largescale landslides.

“Around 90,000 people were rescued from flood-affected areas,” the state government said in a statement, as authorities were forced to release water from overflowing dams.

While flooding and landslides are often reported during India’s severe monsoon season, harsh weather has impacted several parts of the world in recent days.

Heatwaves have hit parts of North America, and China and western Europe, including Germany, have seen largescale flooding.

According to a report from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) published in April, climate change is making India’s monsoons stronger.

The report warned of potentially serious consequences for food, farming, and the economy.

“Since Indian society is overall affected by the monsoon in a very strong way, stronger variability produces problems for agriculture, but also for the organisation of public life,” Anders Levermann from PIK and Columbia University said.

Indian environmentalists have also issued warnings that climate change, in conjunction with indiscriminate exploitation of fragile coastal regions, could lead to more disasters in the area. — DW



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CLIMATE CRISIS

Has Angela Merkel lived up to her ‘climate chancellor’ aspirations?

BERLIN: The death toll from catastrophic flooding in parts of western Europe last week has now surpassed 200. Here in Germany, images of coursing water, devastated houses and rescue operations have dominated the news as experts warn that extreme weather events such as this one will only happen more frequently with climate change.

With just under two months to go before the federal elections, attention to the issue of climate policy has been cranked up another notch. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s visit this week to the town of Bad Münstereifel, one of the hardest hit by the floods, echoed an older image of her at the site of a different type of climate disaster. Back in 2007, Merkel posed aboard a boat in Greenland, the scarlet of her jacket bright against a melting wall of glittering glacier. The famous photo helped seal her reputation as “the climate chancellor.” She had already urged real action on the climate crisis during her time as environment minister, when she wrote a book on the subject called “The Price of Survival.”

Since she was first elected to Germany’s highest office in 2005, Merkel has overseen the signing

of landmark environmental policies like the 2015 Paris Agreement. She has also shaped legislation to take her country out of nuclear and coal, policies which have never previously been part of the manifesto for her party, the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

But have her policies actually been successful — and has she lived up to her nickname?

A physicist by training, Merkel was outspoken on climate change far earlier than most global leaders and has repeatedly insisted on the need for scientific findings to guide the political debate.

Early in her chancellorship, during the same year as the glacier visit, Germany enjoyed a double whammy of presidencies: that of the Council of the European Union and that of the G8. Merkel was credited with making the climate crisis a focus of both and with ensuring important steps were taken towards establishing international goals for reducing emissions. However, international impetus stalled as the 2008 global financial crisis struck, with key players such as the US and China losing enthusiasm for climate goals in favour of prioritising economic growth. —DW

PHONE CALL



HELPING HAND: The Biden administration on Friday authorised up to \$100 million (€85 million) in aid to help migrants in Afghanistan. — DW

Biden pledges support for Afghanistan government

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden expressed his support for the Afghan government during a phone call with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, the White House said in a statement.

Biden said his administration would continue giving the Afghan people humanitarian and development aid, along with financial assistance for the Afghan security forces.

Biden and Ghani also reportedly criticised the Taliban’s ongoing offensive in the country.

“President Biden and President Ghani agreed that the Taliban’s current offensive is in direct contradiction to the movement’s claim to support a negotiated settlement of this conflict,” the White House read-out of the call said.

Gaining territory

The Taliban have been rapidly gaining territory from the Afghan government, as the US and NATO allies completely withdraw troops from the country.

Afghan officials raised concern on Friday that the Afghan air force is not sufficiently equipped amid the offensive. Biden also discussed this issue with Ghani during the call.

In addition, the Biden adminis-

tration on Friday authorised up to \$100 million (€85 million) in aid to help migrants in Afghanistan.

The US is currently evacuating some Afghans out of the country because they worked with the US government and face danger due to their cooperation. These Afghans receive special immigration visas to live in the US.

Victims of conflict

The money from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Fund is “for the purpose of meeting unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs, victims of conflict, and other persons at risk as a result of the situation in Afghanistan.”

The US State Department criticised the Taliban’s attacks on Afghan translators on Friday and also condemned the “destruction of vital infrastructure” by the group.

Although the US supports Ghani’s government, the Taliban told the AP news agency on Friday that the current Afghan leader must go if there is to be lasting peace in the country.

The group says it will only stop its offensive if there is a new negotiated government and Ghani’s administration dissolves.

“I want to make it clear that we do not believe in the monopoly of

power because any governments who (sought) to monopolise power in the past, were not successful governments,” Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen said. “So, we do not want to repeat that same formula.”

Taliban negotiators have been meeting with Afghan government officials in the Qatari capital of Doha for talks, but so far no concrete political settlement has been reached.

A top US general, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley, said on Wednesday that the Taliban had “strategic momentum” and added that the group now controls about half of the 419 districts in Afghanistan.

The Pentagon said Thursday that it recently conducted airstrikes on Afghanistan to push back a Taliban attack.

Critics of the US pullout believe the Taliban could potentially take over Afghanistan completely after troops leave and roll back the advancement of civil liberties and women’s rights in the conservative country. The US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to combat Al-Qaida. The US, with the help of NATO allies, ousted the Taliban from power during the invasion, and began training Afghan security forces. —DW

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“It’s really a dream come true for me. I would like to dedicate this medal to my country and would like to thank the billion prayers of all Indians which were with me during this journey. I like to thank my family especially my mother for a lot of sacrifices and believing in me.”

Mirabai Chanu, Indian weightlifter





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Top 20 as of 6PM
(Oman time)

Rank		G	S	B	T
1	PR China	3	0	1	4
2	Italy	1	1	0	2
2	Japan	1	1	0	2
4	Republic of Korea	1	0	2	3
5	Ecuador	1	0	0	1
5	Hungary	1	0	0	1
5	Iran	1	0	0	1
5	Kosovo	1	0	0	1
5	Thailand	1	0	0	1
10	ROC	0	1	1	2

Rank		G	S	B	T
10	Serbia	0	1	1	2
12	Belgium	0	1	0	1
12	Spain	0	1	0	1
12	India	0	1	0	1
12	Netherlands	0	1	0	1
12	Romania	0	1	0	1
12	Chinese Taipei	0	1	0	1
12	Tunisia	0	1	0	1
19	Estonia	0	0	1	1
19	France	0	0	1	1

Tokyo’s youngest Olympian hopes to inspire others despite exit



SYRIAN TABLE TENNIS player Hend Zaza hopes her story can inspire people from war-torn countries despite a first round defeat. At just 12 years old, Zaza is the youngest Olympian to feature at the Tokyo Games.

Tokyo 2020’s youngest Olympian, 12-year-old Syrian table tennis player Hend Zaza, may have exited in the first round of the women’s singles, but she hopes her story can inspire others to overcome adversity around the world.

“My message to anyone who wishes to [reach the Games]: Fight for your dreams,” she told reporters after her defeat to experienced Austrian player Liu Jia, now competing in her sixth Olympics.

Zaza grew up in war-torn Syria, and admits overcoming “many different experiences” to reach the competition. She was handed the honor of carrying Syria’s flag at the opening ceremony and had hoped to go further in order to inspire as many people as possible.

It wasn’t to be, however, and as Zaza lost the final point in her straight-sets exit, she shed a tear before being embraced by an opponent 27 years her senior.

“I had maternal feelings,” winner Liu, who has a 10-year-old daughter back home, admitted after the match. “It was less about the sport and more the human side. I had to remind myself not to underestimate her. She’s a great talent.”

Zaza, who started playing table tennis aged five, explained how finding a place to train with electricity had been a challenge in the lead up to the Games, and also claimed jet-lag had added to the difficulties coming into this match. It would have been tough to tell, however, as her enthusiasm and the pride of representing her nation shone through.

“I was hoping for a winning match and for better play, but it was a tough opponent so it’s a good lesson for me,” Zaza said. “I will work hard to get a better result next time.”

Liu asked Zaza for a selfie after the match, which isn’t something many winners across the Olympics will request over the coming weeks. Then again, not many vanquished opponents are as inspirational as 12-year-old Syrian Hend Zaza. -**aw**

TOKYO: With the delayed Tokyo Olympic Games inaugurated on Friday night, here is a look at six key themes of this most unique and unusual Games.

1. Pandemic
This is a word that cannot be neglected by anyone across the globe. The sports world has also felt the influence inflicted by the pandemic, as organizers announced on March 24, 2020 that the Tokyo Olympic Games, originally scheduled to be held between July 24 and August 9, 2020, had to be postponed.

It was announced several days later that the Games would be re-scheduled between July 23 and August 8, 2021, marking the first time that the Olympics has been postponed in its 124-year history.

Organisers have made tremendous efforts in pushing the Games ahead, and stringent anti-virus measures are in place to ensure all participants’ health and safety.

As the Olympic Games are staged amid Tokyo’s fourth state of emergency, no spectators are allowed to watch events at the Fukushima Azuma Baseball Stadium and the Sapporo Dome, after organizers decided to host the entire Olympics without fans at venues in Tokyo and the three surrounding prefectures of Chiba, Kanagawa and Saitama. Only events staged in Miyagi, Ibaraki and Shizuoka prefectures will feature spectators.

According to the third and final edition of the Tokyo 2020 playbook published on June 15, athletes in violation of COVID-19 protocols may face exclusion from the Games, disqualification or financial sanctions.

2. New sports
The Tokyo Olympics will feature a record 33 sports and 339 events. In 2016, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved five new sports for the Tokyo Olympic Games, namely baseball and softball, karate, skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing.

Unlike the other four sports that are set to make Olympic debut in Tokyo, softball and baseball are returning to the Olympic



5. First gender-balanced Games
On International Women’s Day, the IOC announced that according to its quota allocation, almost 49 percent of the athletes participating in Tokyo 2020 will be women, making it the first gender-balanced Games in history.

For the first time ever, all NOCs are required to have at least one female and one male athlete in their respective Olympic teams.

All 206 NOCs and the IOC Refugee Olympic team will be encouraged to have their flag carried by one female and one male athlete at the opening ceremony.

stage after an absence of 13 years.

3. Largest delegation
206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the IOC refugee Olympic team will participate in the Tokyo Olympics.

“The Olympic flame can be a light at the end of this dark tunnel.” As IOC President Thomas Bach hoped, several sporting powerhouses responded to this pandemic-ravaged era by sending a record number of participants to Tokyo.

China has dispatched a 777-member squad to Tokyo 2020, the largest ever Olympic delegation that it has sent for an overseas Games. A total of 431 athletes will compete in 225 events in Tokyo.

The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee announced a 613-member Olympic team to compete at Tokyo 2020,

6. A green Games
According to a pre-Games sustainability report, the Tokyo Olympic Games will be powered by electricity produced from 100 percent renewable energy.

The Tokyo 2020 medal podiums are made from post-consumer plastic packaging collected throughout Japan and will “be utilized” after the Games.

The medals of both Games are made from metals from recycled electronics that have been collected all over Japan since April 2017.

Bed frames in the Olympic village are made from recyclable cardboard, with mattresses formed of polyethylene materials that will be reused for plastic products after the Games. - **xinhua**

Oman’s delegation takes part in Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

A historic moment that will remain in my memory forever: Omani swimmer Issa

ADIL AL BALUSHI

TOKYO: Oman's delegation participated in the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games on Friday at the National Olympic Stadium.

Oman's promising swimmer, Issa Al Adawi, expressed his gladness at being the flag bearer of the Oman contingent during the march past at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

"It is a historic moment for any athlete to carry the national flag. These moments will remain in my sporting memory forever. I am proud of myself over this debut presence in Tokyo 2020 and will do my level best to deliver top technical performance," he said.

Japanese Emperor Naruhito announced the opening of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics in the presence of top delegates, including top dignitaries, officials from the Japanese government and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and representative from each National Olympic Committee (NOC). The opening ceremony, which lasted for four hours, highlighted the history and culture of Japan. Japan's tennis player Naomi Osaka lit the Olympic cauldron to mark the start of Tokyo 2020.

Issa in third heat

The national swimmer Issa Al Adawi will compete in the third heat during Men's 100m freestyle competition. He will be in the seventh line in the Olympic swimming pool at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. The 22-year-old will kick off the Sultanate's campaign in Tokyo 2020 as the first athlete on Tuesday.

Besides Issa, the heat 3 will feature swimmers: Miguel Mena



OPENING CEREMONY: Oman's promising swimmer, Issa Al Adawi, expressed his gladness at being the flag bearer of the Oman contingent during the march past at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.



(NCA), Jean-Luczepphir (Lca), Yousuf Al Matrooshi (UAE), Stefano Mitchell (ANT), Andrew Chetcuti (MNT), Kledi Kadiu (Alb) and Danilo Rosafo (Ken).

There are nine heats in the preliminary qualifiers, after which 16 swimmers will advance to semis in the following days. The finals will take place on Thursday where the medals will be delivered to the top three winners. The domestic swimming star will seek to confirm his top show in competing with other opponents from different part of the world.

Coach Ayman arrives

The Sultanate's head swimming coach, Ayman Al Kulaibi, arrived in Tokyo on Friday. He joined the swimming team and began supervision of Issa's training in the training pool at Tokyo International Aquatics Centre. The local coach and Japanese coach Kenta will direct swimmer Issa during the daily training sessions until commencement of the competitions.

National coach Ayman said that attendance in the Olympic Games is a great opportunity for everyone. "As a coach I will try to gain the required experience from this global sporting event. From this partici-



Dr Mohamed bin Said bin Khalifa Al Busaidi, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Japan.

ipation at Olympic Games, we are working to enhance the technical performance and shape the swimmer to compete in the regional and international levels," he added.

Commenting on Issa's performance during the last few years, the former Sultanate's swimmer champion responded, "Issa has strength and technical points which will assist him easily to reach the standard and international level. Moreover, reaching to the top technical level needs sustainability and continuity in training and having the right expo-

sure at regional and international championships. I hope we can have all these facilities that will help us to develop our swimmers' performance."

Global attendance

Dr Mohamed bin Said bin Khalifa Al Busaidi, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Japan, affirmed that the Sultanate's participation in this significant sporting forum of the Summer Olympics "Tokyo 2020", confirms the Sultanate's commitment and presence in various international forums, as Oman is an important member of the international community.

The Ambassador pointed out that Omani sports has witnessed great developments during the modern Omani renaissance under the leadership of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour - may God rest his soul - and that sports and youth sectors in the Sultanate continue to develop and receive the highest attention and care under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik - may God protect him.

He indicated that the future is looking confident and bright for Omani youth and sports, especially with the diversity of plans and strategies that have been de-

veloped in this framework and in line with the directions of Oman Vision 2040.

The Sultanate's ambassador to Japan conveyed his greetings to all members of the delegation and athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, adding that he and all members of the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Tokyo are very proud to see representatives of Omani sports competing in the most important international sporting event, wishing them all a successful participation and hoping that they succeed in achieving advanced and honourable results for the Sultanate.

Oman has many enthusiastic friends in Japan including the Japan-Oman Society, the Japan-Oman Club in Tokyo, the Japan-Oman Friendship Association in Hiroshima and the Japan-Oman Friendship Association in Nara who are all looking forward to cheering Team Oman and were actually ready to receive them and support them during this great sporting event, but couldn't due to COVID-19 restrictions and the counter measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

He concluded that "we fully understand and respect the strict counter measures in place and all our Japanese friends will continue to support Team Oman even if they cannot attend in person."

The Ambassador explained that Japan is a unique country in all fields, including sports, as Japanese are considered among the top most competitive countries in various individual and team sports.

They are never defeated as they have the aspiration and determination to achieve their goals, and the Japanese public always stands united by their teams whatever the outcome. The Japanese people will unconditionally continue to support and believe in their teams until they achieve victory in the end.

He added, "Likewise all of Oman will continue to support our teams and the Omani athletes participating in this important sporting event."

The Ambassador concluded his statement that next year will be an important year for Oman-Japan relations, as it will mark 50 years of modern diplomatic relations between the two nations.

He explained that the historical relations between the two countries actually extend to over 400 years, demonstrating the strength and commitment of our relations, and that we continue to seek to grow and expand it even further.

WOMEN'S 10M AIR RIFLE

Chinese shooter Qian wins first gold of Olympic Games

TOKYO: Chinese shooter Yang Qian claimed the first gold medal of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games with a victory in women's 10m air rifle here on Saturday.

Russian markswoman Anastasiia Galashina took the silver and Nina Christen of Switzerland bagged the bronze.

Yang, who was ranked sixth in the qualification, scored 251.8 points in the final, beating Galashina's 251.1 points to set off Team China to a fine start at the postponed Tokyo games.

Trailblazing by a mere 0.1 point ahead of the two final shots, Yang saw the gap widened despite a 107-point shot, as her rival made an impressive 10.8.



However, when it came to the last shot that would define the eventual champion, Galashina surprisingly shot for 8.9 points, and conceded the Olympic title to Yang, who had a sub-par 9.8. -Xinhua

TOKYO OLYMPICS

Judoka claims Japan's first gold medal

TOKYO: Japanese judoka Nao-hisa Takato and Distria Krasniqi of Kosovo dominated on day one of the Tokyo Olympics judo competition in Nippon Budokan on Saturday.

In men's -60kg semifinal, Takato defeated Yeldos Smetov of Kazakhstan in a struggling match with a seven-minute golden hour, his opponent in the final, Yang Yung-Wei of Chinese Taipei, also went through a long battle. But Yang suffered a match-deciding penalty in the final, surrendering the gold medal to the Japanese.

Yeldos Smetov of Kazakhstan and French judoka Luka Mkheidze bagged bronze medals in men's 60kg category.

In women's 48kg, after beating world champion Daria Bilodid of Ukraine in the semifinal, home favourite Funa Tonaki encountered Distria Krasniqi of Kosovo in the final and was defeated by a waza-ari in three minutes and 41 seconds, which marked Kosovo's first gold medal in the Tokyo Olympics.

The 19-year-old Daria Bilodid and Urantsetseg Munkhbat of Mongolia earned bronze medals in women's 48kg category.

Chinese judoka Li Yanan finished 9th in women's 48kg. She beat Rio Olympics bronze medalist Otgontsetseg Galbadrakh of Kazakhstan by an ippon in the round of 32 but lost to Portuguese Catarina Costa in the same way in the next round.

The 27-year-old told Xinhua that she was not satisfied with the result despite Costa's world ranking being much higher than hers.

"I did well in the first round, but was overwhelmed by the European judoka in the second round, she was stronger than me," said Li. -Xinhua

TOKYO OLYMPICS

PM Modi speaks to Mirabai, greets her on winning medal



PROUD MOMENT: Mirabai Chanu opened India's medals tally on Saturday as she bagged a silver in the Women's 49kg category at Tokyo Games.

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday spoke to weightlifter Mirabai Chanu after she won a silver medal at the ongoing Tokyo Olympics.

Mirabai Chanu opened India's medals tally on Saturday as she bagged a silver in the Women's 49kg category at Tokyo International Forum. "Prime Minister @narendramodi spoke to the remarkable@mirabai_chanu and congratulated her on winning the Silver Medal at @Tokyo2020. He wished her the very best for her future endeavours. #Tokyo2020," tweeted the official handle of PMO India.

Chanu lifted a total of 202 kg (87kg in snatch and 115kg in clean and jerk) during her four successful attempts across the competition. China's Zhihui Hou bagged gold with a total of 210kg and created a new Olympic Record while Indonesia's Windy Cantika Aisah grabbed bronze with a total of 194kg.

With this monumental silver medal, Chanu has become the second Indian weightlifter to win

an Olympic medal after Karnam Malleswari bagged bronze in the 69kg category at the 2000 Sydney Games when the weightlifting arena was opened to women for the first time.

After winning a silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics, weightlifter Mirabai Chanu on Saturday said this is a dream come true and also thanked the entire country for praying for her victory.

"It's really a dream come true for me. I would like to dedicate this medal to my country and would like to thank the billion prayers of all Indians which were with me during this journey. I like to thank my family especially my mother for a lot of sacrifices and believing in me," said Chanu in a statement posted on her Twitter account.

"Also special thanks to our government for supporting me, Ministry of Sports, SAI, IOA, Weightlifting Federation of India, Railways, OGQ, sponsors, and my marketing agency IOS for their continuous support in this journey," she added. -ANI

OLYMPIC GAMES

Ecuadorian cyclist wins men's road race; South Korea takes archery gold

TOKYO: Ecuadorian cyclist Richard Carapaz won the gold of the men's cycling road race of the Tokyo Olympic Games here on Saturday.

Carapaz demonstrated his endurance and dashed out in the last two kilometres to clock a winning time of six hours five minutes and 26 seconds for the glory.

Wout Van Aert of Belgium took the silver, while the bronze went to Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia. The route for the Tokyo Olympic men's cycling road race is 234 kilometres in length as it begins in Tokyo's Musashinomori Park and ends at the Fuji International Speedway in the Shizuoka Prefecture, and 128 cyclists competed in the race.

Traditional archery powerhouse South Korea won the first



gold medal in the sport at Tokyo 2020 on Saturday when An San and Kim Je Deok paired up to defeat their Dutch opponents in archery's mixed team final.

They held off Gabriela Schloesser and Steve Wijler of the Netherlands by a tally of 5-3 to take the gold. Mexico won the bronze.

South Korea has now captured 14 of 17 gold medals in archery team competitions since it was introduced to the Olympics in 1988. -Xinhua

\$26 BILLION SETTLEMENT
A group of US state prosecutors on Wednesday unveiled a landmark settlement with large drug companies over the deadly nationwide opioid crisis. The proposed \$26 billion agreement is the second-largest cash settlement ever after the \$246 billion tobacco agreement in 1998.

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INVESTORS EYE COVID SPREAD

A rally in the US dollar has investors looking at a broad range of factors - from global COVID-19 infections to yield gaps - to determine whether the greenback will continue appreciating.

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Inflation in US draws concerns from investors

High-flying inflation in the country in the last few quarters not only made many people delay big-ticket purchases but also drove investors into assets to hedge inflation risks



REPORT: Consumers' complaints about rising prices on homes, vehicles, and household durables have reached an all-time record, said the University of Michigan in a recent report on consumers' survey.

NEW YORK: Inflation in the United States is reaching decade highs, and drawing concerns from investors and experts as well as ordinary consumers, who believe the country's inflationary pressures are underestimated and the Federal Reserve's inflation management framework should be questioned. High-flying inflation in the country in the last few quarters not only made many people delay big-ticket purchases but also drove investors into assets to hedge inflation risks. "Now the higher inflation is beginning to create explosions and affect economic decision making. And so I think it's a problem right

now," said Mickey D. Levy, chief economist for Americas and Asia with Berenberg Capital Markets. Levy said the Fed is missing the point on the impact of inflation and "the higher inflation is gonna start digging into disposable income. So we have to really start thinking about these real effects." Consumers' complaints about rising prices on homes, vehicles, and household durables have reached an all-time record, said the University of Michigan in a recent report on consumers' survey. The index of consumer sentiment dropped to 80.8 in July from 85.5 in June, according to preliminary results of the survey. Meanwhile, 57 per cent of re-

spondents believe inflation would accelerate in the next 12 months, with 35 per cent of respondents seeing flat inflation, according to the latest quarterly survey of 900 US investors each with at least \$1 million of investable assets by Swiss banking giant UBS. The share of US investors believing inflation would speed up in the next 12 months is higher than 39 per cent in Latin America, 38 per cent in Asia, 46 per cent in Switzerland and 48 per cent in other parts of Europe, according to the survey issued by UBS. As many as 58 per cent of US investors said they were personally impacted by inflation in the last six months, according to the survey by UBS. -Xinhua



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VOLTAMP ACHIEVEMENT

Voltamp Power Transformers has successfully manufactured and tested its 500 MVA / 220 kV transformer to be supplied to Oman Electricity Transmission Company.

This is first of its kind in the GCC region, which puts Voltamp at the forefront and amongst the major producers from international companies.

Voltamp is looking forward to develop its national products and working on new technology in the Sultanate, GCC and in the Middle East region.

Voltamp also extends its thanks and appreciation to the Oman Electricity Transmission Company and the Oman National Engineering and Investment Company for their confidence and continuous support that contributed to this achievement.



MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY

5,779 applications for trademarks, patents received in past 6 months

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said that 5,779 applications for trademarks, patents and copyright were received in the past six months of 2021. The number of applications submitted between January and June 2021 saw an increase of 32.24 per cent compared to 4,370 applications registered during the same period in the year 2020. Statistics issued by the National Intellectual Property Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) indicated that these applications consisted of 5,445 applications for national and international trademarks, 260 national and international applications for patents and 78 applications for copyright. The ministry confirmed Ministerial Resolution No. (206/2018) regarding the reduction of fees for students and researchers by 90 per cent and 50 per cent for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This acted as a catalyst for the registration of national patent applications, as this facilitated the submission and registration

of the application, as the inventor was able to benefit from this reduction in spending and develop innovations. In addition, the role of patent examiners in the National Patent Office, help in assisting inventors in drafting applications and initial searches and advising them on the importance of registration and protection. It should be noted that copyright is a legal term describing the rights granted to creators in relation to their literary and artistic works, as copyright covers a wide range of works from books, music, oil paintings, sculptures and films to computer programmes, databases, advertisements, geographical maps and technical drawings. The importance of protecting intellectual property lies in allowing rights holders, whether the creator or the owner of the patent, trademark or copyright, to benefit from his work and investment and the establishment of local industries based on these rights, encouraging and attracting foreign investments, providing the necessary protection, and limiting the spread of counterfeit works.

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MARKET

Golden Cross to gauge US dollar trajectory

The dollar is up 4 per cent from its lows of 2021 and is among the world’s best-performing currencies this year, boosted by last month’s hawkish shift from the Federal Reserve, burgeoning inflation and safe-haven demand driven by COVID-19 worries

NEW YORK: A rally in the US dollar has investors looking at a broad range of factors - from global COVID-19 infections to yield gaps - to determine whether the greenback will continue appreciating.

The dollar is up 4 per cent from its lows of 2021 and is among the world’s best-performing currencies this year, boosted by last month’s hawkish shift from the Federal Reserve, burgeoning inflation and safe-haven demand driven by COVID-19 worries, Reuters reports.

Global financial system

Because of the dollar’s central role in the global financial system, its moves ripple out towards a broad range of asset classes and are closely watched by investors.

For the United States, a period of sustained dollar strength would be a double-edged sword, helping tamp down inflation by increasing



CENTRAL ROLE: Because of the dollar’s central role in the global financial system, its moves ripple out towards a broad range of asset classes and are closely watched by investors. - BNA

the currency’s buying power while denting the balance sheets of exporters by making their products less competitive abroad.

Dollar strength

On the other hand, dollar strength would continue pushing down currencies such as the euro and British pound, potentially giving a boost to the recoveries in those countries.

Here are several things investors are watching to determine the dollar’s trajectory.

The Delta variant

Some investors believe the dollar - a popular safe haven during uncertain times - will rise if the Delta variant of COVID-19 spreads and risk aversion grows in markets.

COVID worries have already helped the dollar notch gains against the currencies of countries where the Delta variant is proliferating, including the Australian dollar and the British pound. Those gains could fade if coronavirus concerns ebb in the coming months, however.

“We’re seeing a lot of risk factors and uncertainty across assets, said Simon Harvey, senior FX market analyst at Monex Europe. “Investors are looking at all these and

saying that they’re going to find refuge in the dollar.”

Global growth

While some investors are concerned the US rebound is slowing, it still outpaces the bounce seen in Europe and other regions.

That gap in growth, illustrated by such metrics as stronger manufacturing sector growth and inflation, is among the factors putting upward pressure on the dollar, said Morgan Stanley’s James Lord in a recent podcast.

“There is a case still for the dollar to strengthen as we do see more divergence,” he said.

Yield gap

Though Treasury yields have recently slid, the gap between real yields on US government debt and some foreign bonds has widened, raising the allure of dollar-denominated assets. Real yields represent the cost of borrowing after stripping out inflation effects.

The spread between the real yield on 10-year Treasury Inflation Protected Securities at “constant maturity” and those on their German counterpart, for instance, stood at 72 basis points late Thursday, up from 63 basis points two months ago.

Positioning squeeze

Speculators’ net short positions on the US dollar fell to their lowest level since March 2020 last week, according to calculations by Reuters and US Commodity Futures Trading Commission data released on July 16.

“The most crowded trade in the world through the first quarter was the short dollar. We had, unquestionably, a squeeze on the way back,” said Karl Schamotta, chief market strategist at Cambridge Global Payments in Toronto. The dwindling bearish sentiment could mean there is less fuel for further dollar gains. At the same time, “the dollar and other currencies do tend to overshoot when they are correcting, in both directions,” Schamotta said.

Golden Cross

The Dollar Index’s 50-day moving average is close to crossing above its 200-day moving average and forming a chart pattern known as a “Golden Cross” that is seen as a bullish signal by those who follow technical analysis.

A Golden Cross “could herald another leg higher for the greenback,” said Joe Manimbo, senior market analyst at Western Union Business Solutions. -BNA

LANDMARK SETTLEMENT

Large US drug firms agree on proposed \$26bn settlement

WASHINGTON: A group of US state prosecutors unveiled a landmark settlement with large drug companies over the deadly nationwide opioid crisis.

The proposed \$26 billion (€22.4 billion) agreement is the second-largest cash settlement ever after the \$246 billion tobacco agreement in 1998.



What are the details of the deal?

Three drug distributors, McKesson, Cardinal Health and Amerisource Bergen, are expected to pay a combined \$21 billion. Drug-maker Johnson & Johnson (J&J) would pay \$5 billion.

The distributors will pay their share over the next 18 years. J&J will pay over nine years, with up to \$3.7 billion paid during the first three years.

The companies said that while they “strongly dispute the allegations made in these lawsuits,” the settlement agreement and process were “important steps” toward resolution.

According to the proposed agreement, the payout would resolve 4,000 claims, as well as finance prevention and treatment programs, said New York Attorney General Letitia James.

Almost \$2 billion of the funds will be reserved for private lawyers hired by governments to work on their suits against the opioid industry. State attorney general offices could also get a share.

What did prosecutors say?

James said the deal was meant to hold companies “accountable” and infuse “tens of billions of dollars into communities across the nation.”

“The numerous companies that manufactured and distributed opioids across the nation did so without regard to life or even the national crisis they were helping to fuel,” James said in a statement.

Connecticut Attorney General William Tong said that there was “not enough money in the world frankly to address the pain and suffering,” but the payout would “help where help is needed.”

Besides New York and Connecticut, North Carolina, Delaware, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Tennessee back the agreements. Local governments will have four months to sign on after states approve the proposed deal.

Did other states object?

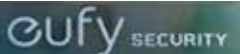
Prosecutors from at least two states criticised the agreement and pledged to continue litigation.

Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said the proposed \$527.5 million payoffs to his state over 18 years was “not a transformative amount of money, and is not sufficient to address the opioid’s crisis’ devastation.”

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, whose state has already settled with the companies but could receive more through the deal, said he did not support the agreement.

Morrisey said the deal “shortchanges” smaller states by apportioning funds on the basis of population rather than “the intensity of the opioid crisis.”

In the last 20 years, the opioid crisis has caused more than 500,000 deaths and imprisoned millions of Black people across the US. -DW



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IN DUBAI

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DUBAI: Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) has commissioned three new substations with a conversion capacity of 450 megavolt-amperes in addition to 132 kV ground cables that extend on 35 kilometres and are connected to the main transmission network.

This is part of DEWA’s efforts to provide electricity and water services according to the highest standards of availability, reliability,

and efficiency. The total cost of the projects that were commissioned in May and June was over AED 430 million. The new substations supply Al Barsha 1, Mirdif, and Wadi Al Safa 2. Completing these stations required 4 million safe working hours using world-class technologies to ensure the highest levels of safety and security.

“Inaugurating the new substations is part of DEWA’s efforts to

increase the capacity, efficiency, and readiness of the electricity transmission network in Dubai to meet the future needs of customers, developers, and the business sector, while providing a convenient margin using the latest smart technologies. “This supports DEWA’s efforts to digitally transform all its operations and services,” said Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD & CEO of DEWA. -WAM



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CHINA-SINGAPORE

Land-sea trade corridor connects 106 regions and countries

CHONGQING: A China-Singapore land-sea trade corridor has expanded its reach to 304 ports in 106 countries and regions worldwide, better connecting the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road.

The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor is a trade and logistics passage jointly built by Singapore and provincial-level regions of western China. Chongqing Municipality is the centre of operation for the corridor.

Goods are transported via various modes including railways, highways and water routes to the Beibu Gulf in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region before being shipped to other parts of the world along the sea routes. The corridor offers a faster alternative for western Chinese provinces and autonomous regions other than transporting goods via the east coast.

From January to June, the corridor’s domestic section of the land-sea freight route transported 47,880 twenty-foot equivalent units of cargo, a notable year-on-year increase of 147 per cent, according to data from the corridor’s logistics and operating centre. -Xinhua

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Krushank Rajesh Gandhi (holder of Indian Passport No. S5801665) D/o S/o Rajesh Chandrasinh Gandhi having permanent residence in Bhawna E5 S V Road, Kandivali W Mumbai 400067 and presently residing at Muscat Post Box. No. 344 Postal Code 117, Sultanate of Oman, intend to marry **Ms. Khushboo Vijay Mandaviya** (Holder of Indian Passport bearing No. J7417666) D/o Vijay Kumar Hemchand Mandavia having permanent residence in Raja Nagar RNO 25 Tulinj Malasopara Dt Thana Ms at Embassy of India, Muscat. I swear that I am marrying him at my own free will and not under any duress and intimidation. Any objection towards this marriage may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.O. Box No. 1727, Postal code No. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman within 30 (thirty) days of this newspaper advertisement.

MECHANICAL/TECHNICAL

HSE OFFICER with valid Oman D/L. 7 years experienced in Oman. Contact 94743007 (Oman), +917902565053 (Indian), Email: ajeesh4god@yahoo.com

*Classified Advertisement space booking with text, should be done till 12.00 noon for next day's publication.
* Subject to space availability

SALES/MARKETING

Sales Executive, B.Com with 10 years experience in food products in Oman looking for job. Have Oman D/L & Visa. Contact 78273463

26, Indian male born in Oman, with 3years of experience, having valid D/L, looking for suitable placement in Engineering Sales/Marketing Field Holder of Bachelors in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering. Contact 98914229

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Indian National, 18 Yrs. of work experience, Graduate Civil Engineer, Master's in Construction Project Management; Construction Law & Dispute Resolution from UK. Having expertise in Project, Contract & Claims Management. Experienced in Handling High End Hospitality, Residential & Commercial Projects from initiation till completion. Seeks Placement as Clients or Consultants representative in Oman.

Please contact - 78022980

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Contact on Tel : 95803522

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Contact 79848875

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Indian National, Mechanical Engineer having 14 years of experience including more than 8 years in Oman as Sales & Purchase Manager for Scaffolding; having good knowledge & experience in Fasteners & Steel wires as well.

Valid Oman D/L & release available for immediate recruitment.

Contact: 96497864
Email: taranrajpal@gmail.com

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Having a strong interpersonal, communication skills (verbal, written), can speak both Arabic & English languages, having basic knowledge of Microsoft Office application, ability to work on team, a very fast learner.

Contact 94887879
Email: amani.alhaj94@gmail.com

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Email: siyabi1430@gmail.com

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Contact 79830312

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Contact 98921022
akhtarmahmood3137@gmail.com

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GSM: 96409439
Email: farhansiddiqi2014@gmail.com

FINANCE MANAGER

Indian Male B. Com, MBA having 14 yrs Exp in Accounts/Finance & Admin, upto finalisation, OODO, ERP, Tally & Online Softwares. Oman D/L, Noc/Release Available.

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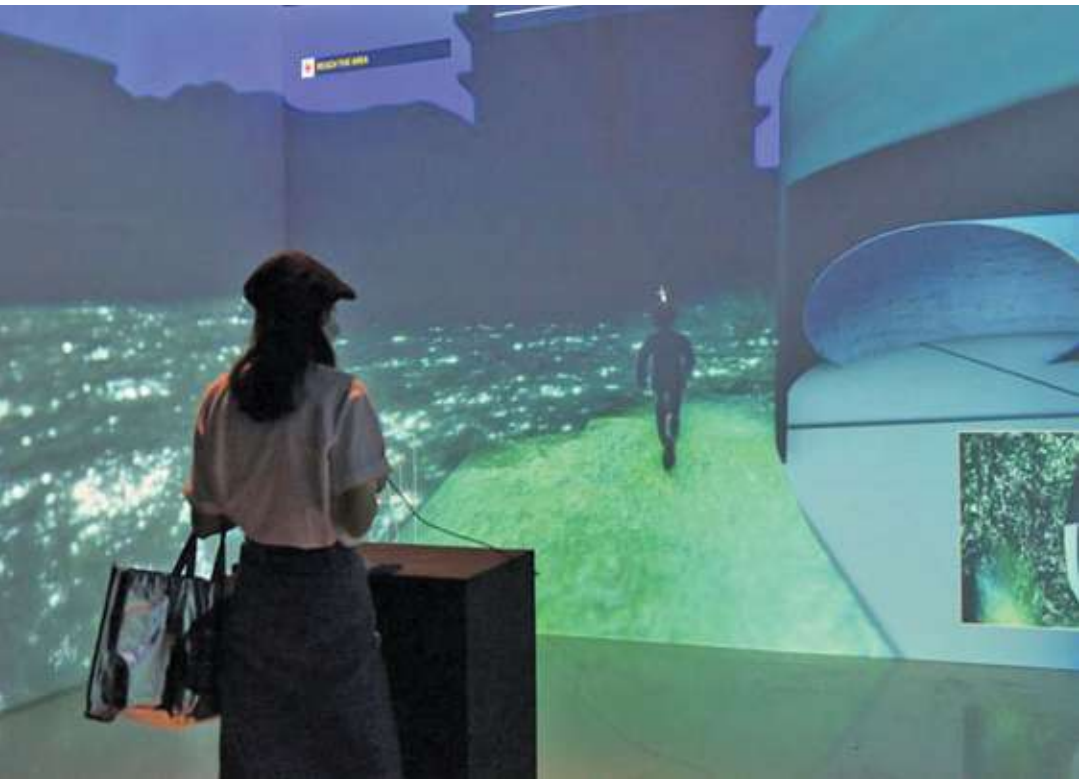


2021 ASIA DIGITAL ART EXHIBITION OPENS IN BEIJING

Visitors interact with a digital art installation during the 2021 Asia Digital Art Exhibition at the Times Art Museum in Beijing, capital of China. The exhibition, which opened on Friday and will

last till August 31, showcasing more than 50 digital artworks created by over 60 artists and groups from seven countries and regions.

-Xinhua/Cao Mengyao





ROUND-UP

INFINITI QX60 now available on special price of OMR16,900

INFINITI QX60's innovative design gives it both luxurious versatility and visual appeal, besides its improved interior design with a suite of assistive and intuitive technologies that provide versatility precisely tailored to the needs of every guest



curve by bringing a unique offering to the segment. Only something stunning and intelligent could bring life and luxury together."

Amazing three-row luxury crossover

INFINITI QX60 is one such car where family-first versatility and generous comforts form a vibrant collaboration. There is no other seven-passenger crossover like this incredible model.

While it impresses auto enthusiasts with its array of features, INFINITI QX60's intelligent technology, advanced performance, and leading-edge craftsmanship has brought it new fans too.

Inside INFINITI QX60 rich leather appointments are naturally soft yet durable enough for beach days. A dual-screen rear entertainment system keeps kids happy, while drivers can enjoy music or conversation upfront. When a premium crossover is as practical as it is elegant the owners get the best.

Dynamic lines

The dynamic lines and muscular shapes are the best part of INFINITI QX60. Owners can sense the possibilities from the rugged roof rails up top and the LED signature headlights and taillights, through to the 20-inch wheels at ground

level. One can feel the power from a 3.5-litre V6 engine with 295 hp transform to confidence with the added traction of intelligent All-Wheel Drive that adapts instantly to changing conditions.

Easy access

Choose the QX60 and one can load and unload passengers of all sizes in three rows. Tilting and sliding second-row creates a wide opening for easy third-row access. If second-row passengers need more legroom, the seat slides back for an extra 5.5 inches of space. To fit tall passengers in the third row you have to just slide the seat forward and you will gain valuable inches.

Motion-Activated Liftgate

With QX60 one has to simply swing your foot under the rear bumper and the Motion-Activated Liftgate automatically opens. Enjoy hands-free entry as well as the convenience of power return for folding third-row seats. With the push of a button, seatbacks easily return to their upright position.

Advanced automotive technology

As automotive technology becomes more advanced, INFINITI QX60 has found new ways to anticipate the dangers around

you. When you select the Proactive Package, you get INFINITI world-first technologies that automatically respond to vehicles you might have missed. Technologies like Backup Collision Intervention, which alerts you to and helps brake for crossing traffic detected when reversing. Blind Spot Intervention uses sensors to help detect cars in your blind spot area and can intervene to help avoid a collision.

Room for 7 personalities

Optimism is everywhere in the QX60. Created for family and friends, it welcomes all possibilities. It brings three rows of space and the versatility to configure seats to individual needs. Seven seats are a good fit for bold and imaginative personalities.

Colours

It is available in majestic white (QAB), deep Bordeaux (NBM), mocha almond (CAS), black obsidian (KH3), graphite shadow (KAD), liquid platinum (K23), Hermosa blue (BWS), imperial black (GAL).

A 360° view

See all around your QX60 with the proactive Package. An INFINITI world first, the Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection uses four cameras to give you one

virtual composite 360° view from above as you park. Combined with the Front and Rear Sonar System, the system makes it easy to manoeuvre in tight spaces.

QX60 Luxe

The QX60 Luxe version boasts of 3.5 litre V6 engine, Intelligent All-Wheel Drive (AWD), Continuously Variable Transmission with manual mode, Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake force, Distribution (EBD), Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC) and Hill Start Assist, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), Cruise Control, INFINITI Intelligent Key with Illuminated Push Button Ignition, Front LED headlamps with clearance lamp, Daytime Running Lights, Front LED fog lamps, LED rear brake lights and centre high-mounted stoplight (CHMSL), Exterior mirror in body colour, electrically folding and adjustable, heater, memory, reverse synchro, camera for AVM, Power tailgate with auto-close function, Electric sunroof, Roof rails, Front chin and rear roof spoiler, 20-inch aluminium alloy wheels, sequential welcome Lighting illuminated entry system 4-spoke multifunction leather steering wheel, power tilt & telescopic adjustment, Dual-zone climate control front and rear full auto, pollen filter, Leatherette-appointed seating, driver 8-way memory and power adjustable with heated seats, Passenger 6-way memory and power adjustable with heated seats, 40/60 split folding, sliding second-row bench seat, 50/50 split third-row seat with manual recline and folding, multi-mode second-row seat for easy third-row entry/exit, including ability to access the third row even with child seat installed, ISO-FIX rear seat mounting with tether and INFINITI InTouch with 8-inch colour touchscreen display 4.5, Radio, DVD, MP3, USB, AUX.

QX60 luxe sensory

The QX60 luxe sensory includes all standard features of QX60 Luxe, plus INFINITI Intelligent Key with remote start engine, leather seats, driver - 8-way mem-

ory and power-adjustable with climatized seats, passenger - 6-way memory and power-adjustable with climatized seats, third-row seatback power return, dual-zone auto climate control, front and rear full auto, grape polyphenol filter, dustproof function, deodorisation function, high allergy, INFINITI InTouch Navigation System with 8-inch colour touchscreen display, Bose Premium audio system with 14 speakers, Rear entertainment system with wired headphone, HDMI, USB, remote control, Power tailgate with hands-free function (Motion-Activated Liftgate).

Options and packages

The Proactive Package includes exterior mirrors in vehicle colour, electrically folding and adjustable, with memory and automatic anti-dazzle functions, reverse synchronisation, turn signal and camera for AVM, Steering switch w/ illumination on audio, ICC, LDP, DCA, HFP, Navi, and meter display, Backup Collision Warning and Backup Collision Intervention (BCI), Intelligent Cruise Control (ICC) with Distance Control Assist (DCA), Lane Departure Warning (LDW) and Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), Blind Spot Warning (BSW) and Blind Spot Intervention System, High Beam Assist, Cross Traffic Alert, Forward Emergency Braking (FEB) with Pedestrian Detection, Forward Collision Warning, Predictive Forward Collision Warning (PFCW), Cancel switch, Active Trace Control, Limited Slip Differential, Hill Start Assist, Pre-crash seat belt, eco-pedal.

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting INFINITI Oman's growth in the Sultanate through a major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman. With a national network of more than 40 showrooms, service centres and parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

FOR ITS STAFF

Golden Tulip Nizwa Hotel begins vaccination drive



MUSCAT: Golden Tulip Nizwa Hotel launched the vaccination campaign for its team members where 70 per cent of the total workforce has already been vaccinated to date. The hotel affirms its commitment to guest safety as a priority and planning to complete vaccination for its 100 per cent workforce in future.

The inoculation was conducted in a banquet hall area of the hotel,



following all the protocols of the health and safety programme.

Golden Tulip Nizwa has always been committed to support society and contribute wherever possible to the wellbeing of its stakeholders. Sandeep Jaitly, general manager said, "Our team is committed to welcome our guest at the property with the best services provided in the safest environment at Nizwa destination."

He further mentioned that the vaccination of all the employees in a key destination like Nizwa fills us with satisfaction both as a company, as it represents a crucial step forward for the health and safety of our customers and employees, as it will give confidence and surety to our customers about their health safety as a priority of the management by being served through the inoculated and safe team members.

TOURISM GROWTH

Qatar Airways, Visit Maldives launch strategic partnership

DOHA: Qatar Airways and Visit Maldives have agreed to a strategic partnership to further grow international tourism to the tropical island getaway. The agreement brings together an airline and destination that have been leaders throughout the pandemic in providing safe, reliable and luxurious travel experiences despite the many challenges.

The strategic partnership will see the two organisations collaborate on marketing activities in several markets around the world to further grow international visitor numbers to the Maldives, maximising the opportunities provided by Qatar Airways' extensive global network of over 140 destinations.

Less than a year after being the first international airline to resume services to the Maldives in July 2020 with daily flights, Qatar Airways expanded operations to four daily on 1 July 2021. Passengers travelling to the Maldives can enjoy the airline's renowned 5-star service on board a mix of the airline's state-of-the-art Airbus A320 and Boeing 777 aircraft. Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Akbar Al Baker said: "The

Maldives has always been a strategically important destination in our network, as demonstrated by our airline being the first to resume international services and our rapid expansion of flights from daily to four days in less than 12 months. This partnership with Visit Maldives is a natural next step in achieving both of our organisations' long term objectives for this route and we look forward to working closely with Visit Maldives to help further grow international tourism to the Maldives."

Managing Director of Visit Maldives, Thoyyib Mohamed said, "I am delighted that Qatar Airways has increased flights to the Maldives! This increase is an indication of Qatar Airways' continued trust and support in the future of Maldivian tourism. Qatar Airways have always supported us at Visit Maldives, the tourism marketing body of Maldives, with our global marketing campaigns. We appreciate the immense support given by Qatar Airways during this challenging period in history. The increase in flight frequency from Qatar Airways gives confidence to travellers across the world that the Maldives is one

of the safest destinations to travel to during this time.

"With regular joint webinars conducted for key markets, launching of special packages such as "safe travel bubble package" last year, and with an exciting joint campaign targeting 14 markets in the pipeline, Qatar Airways is instrumental in the marketing campaigns undertaken by Visit Maldives to promote the Maldives as a safe haven. We are extremely excited about this decision by Qatar Airways, and we look forward to seeing the success of this new development."

Adding to that, the Maldives Minister of Tourism, Dr Abdulla Mausoom said, "Qatar Airways was there to reopen the Maldives borders and restart tourism. The touchdown of Qatar Airways flight QR672 from Doha to Male on July 15, 2020, with 129 passengers was a new beginning for the airline as well as the Maldives. Since then the presence and frequency of flights have been increasing. Being amongst the top three passenger carriers to the Maldives, we appreciate the support and engagement of Qatar Airways in the Maldives tourism recovery."

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