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OMAN TAKES PART IN GCC MINISTERIAL MEET
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Call for streamlining vaccination centres

Situation prompts questions about the planning behind the ongoing COVID-19 immunisation campaign

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

Despite scepticism and concerns over the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination centres in Muscat have been seeing large turnouts of individuals of target groups. Huge crowds continue to build up outside vaccination centres which has left many asking for a quick solution as the numbers swell in soaring temperatures awaiting their turn to be immunised.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is continuing a nationwide vaccination campaign for the second dose of some target groups as well as the first dose for government employees. *Muscat Daily* witnessed a good turnout of people awaiting their turn in the vaccination centres in Muscat - a



(Muscat Daily)

good sign of vaccine acceptance - but also an indication of the urgent need for proper conduct of the immunisation drive in the country.

"As the country tries to vaccinate the maximum number of people, it's important to use the available data of all those willing to be vaccinated, and contact those specifically interested and schedule appointments. The best solution to avoid crowds is to create a platform for people, and they will be able to find suitable slots - locations, date and time - and proceed accordingly," Khalid al Taie, a self-employed

How will we meet our vaccination targets if key centres run out of vaccines by 1.15pm?

HANAN ASKALAN

entrepreneur, told *Muscat Daily*.

"That said, people working in companies have proved that such a process succeeds. Vaccination centres can open everywhere, not just health centres. It

Daily count crosses 2,000 mark again

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday reported 2,142 new cases of COVID-19 and 26 related deaths. With this, the total number of cases in Oman has reached 240,708, including 2,591 deaths.

In a clear indication of rising infections, recovery rate has been decreasing and as of Wednesday, it was 88.4 per cent. 'On Wednesday, 744 individuals recovered taking the total number of recoveries to 212,808,' an MoH statement said.

Eighty-seven people were admitted to hospitals on Wednesday, accounting for a total of 1,282 inpatients, including 383 in ICUs.

Those concerned about the situation have raised questions about the planning behind the vaccination drive given the fact that there was ample time to plan. Hanan Askalan, managing partner at iAngelME, an early stage tech investments and advisory firm, asked, "How will we meet our vaccination targets if key centres, such as Bausher stadium, run out of vaccines by 1.15pm instead of operating until late? By now we should have already prepared for 12-15 hours daily in all public health centres. We had time to prepare."

We can always extend hours until evening. We can work on the weekends; volunteers are here to help and everyone else is willing to help," he said.

can be at SQU for students and faculty, and shopping malls for visitors and employees," he added.

Taie believes the government can conduct the immunisation

campaign for Omani citizens without engaging private hospitals. "We are in a pandemic; we will need to work extra hours to fight the coronavirus. Clearly, it is not enough to work until

lunchtime to vaccinate people.

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34 flights brought 141 passengers from India in a week: CAA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Wednesday said that flights between Oman and India are operating in accordance with the decisions of the Supreme Committee on COVID-19.

The authority said that 34 flights were operated to ferry 141 passengers from India to Oman from June 7 to 13, flying in people exempted from the travel ban.

A statement issued by the CAA said, 'The flights are operated for the purpose of allowing Indian nationals to return to their home country, shipping health supplies, goods and essential merchandise and facilitating the return of citizens, diplomats and health workers from India to the sultanate.'

The competent authorities in the sultanate, represented by the CAA, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Health, are keeping



an eye on the small number of in-coming travellers, including healthcare workers and diplomats, it said.

'They must undergo tests before travelling and upon their arrivals in the sultanate, in addition to quarantine as per the regulations. Tests are conducted for the third time on the last day of the quarantine period.'

The CAA added that Oman Air operated 14 flights to bring in 58 passengers - 14 citizens and

44 expatriates - on an average of five passengers (from exempted categories) per flight from June 7 to June 13.

SalamAir operated one flight with two Omanis. Air India operated eight flights with a total of 34 passengers - one citizen and 33 expatriates - on an average of less than five passengers per flight, while Air India Express operated 11 flights with 47 passengers, including two citizens and 45 expatriates.

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES SAUDI AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received H E Abdullah Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia appointed to the sultanate, in the former's office at Al Murtafaa Camp on Wednesday. The meeting reviewed the fraternal relations between the two countries. The two sides also exchanged views on matters of common interest (ONA)

Expat exit scheme extended to August 31: MoL

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The special amnesty programme announced by the government for expatriates residing in Oman even after the expiry of their residence cards has been extended until August 31 to leave the country without facing any punitive

The Ministry of Labour has urged all who have not registered to come forward and make use of the scheme

action.

The scheme first announced on November 15 last year was to expire on December 31, 2020. It was then extended till March 31 this year and till June 30 in a subsequent extension.

This period allows all undocumented workers living in Oman to exit the country without any

fine or legal implications. The Ministry of Labour has urged all who have not registered to come forward and register online and to make use of the scheme.

All undocumented workers and overstaying visitors can register at the ministry's website <http://www.mol.gov.om> or through Sanad Offices.

Education, economy ministries focus on strategic policies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) affirmed its preparedness to put into action the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on upgrading technical and vocational education in the post-basic education stage.

The ministry on Wednesday said it valued the Royal Directives which reflect His Majesty the Sultan's personal attention to improve the quality of education at all levels and harmonise its outcomes with labour market needs.

Hailing the Royal Directives on employment of Omani job-seekers, the Ministry of Economy released a statement on proposed policies and procedures to achieve the strategic objectives of labour market.

Steps that need to be taken

► Adopting clear labour policies that focus on productivity and efficiency. Attract talents through lucrative benefits, flexible employment terms and through policies on ease of doing business that enable knowledge transfer to Omanis

► In partnership with the private sector create training and employment programmes that are aligned with international best practices and meet the current and future needs of this vital sector, especially in technology-intensive industries

► Developing legislation that protect worker's rights, narrow the wage gap between the government and private sectors, promote a performance based culture through incentives and ensure a robust social and health protection systems

► Launch more on-the-job training and self-employment programmes, and support entrepreneurship and innovative initiatives. Develop a mechanism for increased coordination between small and large enterprises to ensure SMEs participation in the chain

2020 census data shows 42,304 people with disabilities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In 2020, there were 42,304 citizens with disabilities, 1.55 per cent of the total population, according to the Electronic Census data.

The average rate of persons with disabilities was about 15.5 per thousand of the Omani population - the highest rate found to be in Dhahirah governorate (18.5 per thousand), and the lowest in Al Wusta at 10.1 per thousand, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

About 36.6 per cent of people with disabilities lived in several wilayats, including Seeb, Sohar, Suwaiq, Ibri, Saham, and Rustaq.

Hearing disability is the most common in all governorates, except for Dhofar, where physical disability topped with 31.4 per cent of the people with disabilities in the governorate.

The data of the eCensus 2020 also indicated hearing disability as the highest among all age groups except for the youngest group of ten years, and the category (40-44) years, while physical disability constituted the largest number in the two categories. Autism spectrum disorder came in the lower age groups from 20 years old, at a rate of 95 per cent.

'Committed' Chedi Muscat hotel reopens

Muscat - The Chedi Muscat hotel with the guidance of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism it reopened on Tuesday and is welcoming back guests with reinforced safety measures.

"We remain committed to delivering a safe environment with maximum hygiene standards to protect our guests and team members," said Thomas Guss, general manager of the hotel.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism earlier announced the closure of the hotel 'for an approved time period' for failing to comply with the COVID-19 regulations. "The health and safety of our guests and colleagues is the number one priority. We have strengthened our existing safety measures and are looking forward to welcoming back guests and creating unforgettable experiences," Guss added.

All employees at the hotel have undergone PCR tests and are currently in the process of being vaccinated, the hotel said. 'Special leave has also been granted to all pregnant employees until their delivery to ensure the safety of them and their babies,' it said.

The hotel has implemented full-scale enhancements to its 'already robust procedures' to protect all colleagues and guests.

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Oman takes part in GCC ministerial meet

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The sultanate, represented by the Foreign Ministry, participated in the 148th session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held on Wednesday in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Oman's delegation was headed by H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Bussaidi, Foreign Minister.

The council examined a number of reports following up on the implementation of the decisions of the Supreme Council issued by the Summit of Sultan Qaboos and Sheikh Sabah held in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia, in January 2021 and reviewed the reports submitted by the ministerial and technical committees and the

General Secretariat Cooperation Council.

The meeting also discussed the latest developments in relations between the GCC countries and the world at large, in addition to exchanging views on the latest regional and international developments.

ONA

Bidiyah records 50.5°C - year's highest temperature

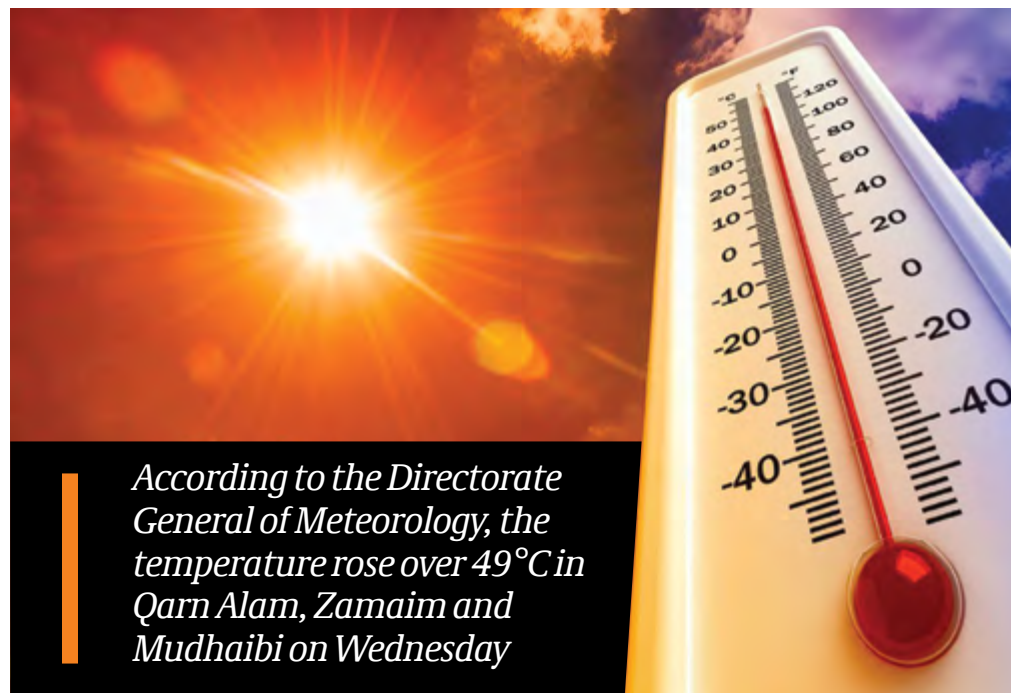
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Temperature records for the year are breaking with each passing day. After Qarn Alam in Dakhliyah governorate witnessed 50.3°C on Monday, a new high of 50.5°C was recorded in Bidiyah in North Sharqiyah on Tuesday.

Mudhaibi in North Sharqiyah and Mahout in Al Wusta saw the mercury touching 50°C on Wednesday.

According to the Directorate General of Meteorology, the temperature rose over 49°C in Qarn Alam, Zamaim and Mudhaibi on Wednesday.

The Met office predicted clear to partly cloudy skies on the coast of Dhofar governorate and the surrounding mountains for Thursday. In the other parts of the sultanate, the Met office expects mainly clear skies with chance of medium cloud advec-



According to the Directorate General of Meteorology, the temperature rose over 49°C in Qarn Alam, Zamaim and Mudhaibi on Wednesday

tion over the northern governorates.

There are chances of dust rising winds over deserts and open areas and late night to early

morning low-level cloud formation along parts of the coast of the Arabian Sea.

The seas will be rough along the coast of the Arabian Sea with

maximum wave height of 4m and slightly moderate along the rest of the sultanate's coasts with maximum wave height of 1.25m.

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Preventive measures set for tailor shops

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has set up guidelines for tailoring shops to curb COVID-19.

The municipality has stated that as preventive measures in male and female tailoring shops, temperature checks and wellness screening of workers for any signs of illness must be conducted, hand sanitiser stations must be set up to provide hand

sterilisers containing at least 70 per cent alcohol, and entry prohibited to customers not wearing masks and having body temperature over 37°C.

The guidelines also state that appropriate social distancing - 2m - should be maintained all the time. 'Keep details and contact information of customers, like ID, phone numbers and place of residence to help competent authorities do quick contact tracing,' the municipality stated.

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Call for streamlining vaccination centres

Continued from Page 01

Hanan urged authorities to use the national database to schedule vaccinations. "We have our national database with everybody's IDs. Why isn't this used to schedule vaccination based on set categories? The system will be able to distribute people based on address and nearest centres and manage centre capacities. Every eligible citizen and resident has mobile phones these days. It is a basic automation process and such systems are available and may be customised. Again, we had time to get ready."

"Why are we differentiating based on work - private or public outside the medical field? Omanis in the public sector are not more exposed than Omanis in the private sector. All this is creating confusion and frustration. Involving private clinics and the private sector to start vaccinating is a sound approach but expense on the private sector should be addressed with tax exemptions - for most companies this is not a small expense after more than a year of business stagnation. This will push everyone to embrace it and get it done. Again, time is of the essence," she added.

Hanan is worried the current approach will make vaccination centres yet another source of spread of the virus. "This will also deter people from getting vaccinated. I personally made a U-turn three times so far. I will not go into such crowded places. This again will delay the country from opening up and getting back to normal. It'll have serious economic and social implications. At this stage, getting ourselves out of this critical pandemic within a maximum of three months is our utmost national priority."



A young man who was at the Bausher vaccination centre with his mother in a wheelchair, said, "It is a very unorganised way of running a vaccination drive. I suggest an online registration process; the appointment can be sent via a mobile or email alert with the time slot mentioned. In this way, there will be less problem with crowding and parking." He said such a process will be easy for senior citizens. "It's the peak of summer and such steps are necessary for easy, fast and smooth flow of work. My mother is touching 60 and is in wheelchair. It is painful to take her in this heat and wait for her turn, even if security has been fast in taking her in. I see many senior men and women who are standing in the heat. The online registration is a must to streamline the process," he added.

Excellent turnout

The other wilayats too have been witnessing large turnouts. Dr Talal al Khawaldi, head of the vaccination centre in Khabourah, said, "Turnout of individuals from target groups has been excellent since the first day."

Volunteers have also been on hand to help when required. Dr Abdullah bin Khalid al Salmi, head of the Supervising Commit-

tee of the Immunisation Campaign in the wilayat of Suwaiq, said, "We appreciate the role of the retired healthcare workers who took the initiative to participate as volunteers."

Khamis al Jaafari, a citizen keen to be vaccinated, said, "Vaccination centres should work around the clock. I hope the authorities open more centres, including the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre which is more spacious. More vaccination centres will speed up the immunisation process."

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Health announced that a vaccination centre will open in Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre starting June 20, 2021. Vaccines will be administered 8am to 2pm and 3pm to 9pm Sunday to Thursday, and 4pm to 9pm on Friday and Saturday. The ministry will announce a registration mechanism for the centre soon.

As many as 535,578 individuals - 15 per cent of the total target groups - have been vaccinated in the sultanate since the launch of the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 until June 15, 2021. The total number of recipients of the first dose is 350,957, or 66 per cent of the total vaccinated, while those who got both doses is 184,621.

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Four Omani banks in Forbes' top 50 Middle East list

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Four Omani banks – Bank Muscat, BankDhofar, National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Sohar International Bank – have been ranked among the top 50 lenders in the Middle East by *Forbes* magazine.

Forbes Middle East on Wednesday unveiled its 'Top 50 Banks In The Middle East' list featuring the region's banking powerhouses that help drive the economy.

To construct the list, *Forbes Middle East* gathered data from listed stock exchanges in the Arab world and ranked the banks based on sales, profits, assets, and market value. Qatar's QNB Group, with total US\$13.5bn sales and US\$3.3bn annual profits, leads the pack at the top spot, *Forbes* said in a press statement.

UAE's First Abu Dhabi Bank, with total sales of US\$7.6bn and US\$2.9bn in profits, came at the second spot among top 50 banks in the Middle East region. Saudi National Bank, with its US\$6.6bn annual sales and US\$3.1bn profits, occupied third position in the list.

As of June 6, 2021, the banks that feature on *Forbes Middle East's* list of the 'Top 50 Banks In The Middle East' had a total value of US\$513.6bn and assets worth US\$2.5tn. That is more than three times the GDP esti-



mate of Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy.

With 10 entries each, Saudi Arabia the UAE have the most banks on the list, followed by Qatar with eight, and Kuwait with six.

From Oman, Bank Muscat, the biggest financial institution in the sultanate, achieved 23rd rank among the top 50 banks listed by *Forbes Middle East*.

As per the list, Bank Muscat

recorded annual sales of US\$1.7bn, profits of US\$424mn and assets of US\$32.3bn for the year 2020. BankDhofar was ranked at 41st position by *Forbes Middle East* with annual sales of US\$600mn, profits of US\$80mn and assets of US\$11.1bn in the year 2020.

NBO has been named 44th among top 50 banks in the Middle East. *Forbes Middle East* recorded NBO's annual sales at



US\$515mn, profits at US\$47mn and assets at US\$9.4bn for the year 2020.

Fourth Omani bank featured in the *Forbes Middle East's* list is Sohar International Bank which has been ranked 47th in the list of top 50 banks.

The magazine recorded Sohar International Bank's annual sales at US\$434mn, profits at US\$60mn and assets at US\$9.4bn for the year 2020.

According to a press statement, three of the Middle East's top four banks and five of the top 10 banks have achieved their scale due to mergers.

'The region's banking industry is in the midst of a consolidation phase, where some of the largest banks are merging to create larger banking groups. By doing this, banks reduce competition and increase their expertise,' *Forbes Middle East* said.

H E Saqri, OCCI board members discuss economic stimulus initiatives

Our Correspondent
Muscat

HE Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, on Wednesday met with OCCI board members and discussed the role of economic stimulus initiatives and public private partnership in economic recovery.

'Within the efforts made to activate public private partnership, H E Saqri met with a number of OCCI board members and reiterated the role of the economic stimulus initiatives to promote financial stability and economic recovery,' the Ministry of Economy announced in a tweet.

In his meeting with the OCCI board members, H E Saqri reviewed the importance of the Fiscal Balance Plan that contributed to maintaining the value of Omani rial. 'The plan was a necessary and important move,' the ministry said.

It said the government's Economic Stimulus Plan included a number of initiatives that contribute to achieving medium and long-term financial sustainability.

The Ministry of Economy said it formed last year a team for Economic Stimulus Plan and the team is currently monitoring and evaluating the effects of the economic stimulus initiatives.

'The government initiated a number of economic stimulus programs in 2020, in addition to



HE Dr Said al Saqri

the announcement of new stimulus initiatives last April. The initiatives included reducing the SMEs income tax from 15 per cent to 12 per cent,' the ministry said.

The ministry further said that food security plays an important role in diversifying Omani exports in agriculture and fisheries fields with more emphasis on agriculture products that generate high yields at lower cost.

The minister reiterated the importance of having stable policies that should prevail throughout the lifetime of investment projects. 'This meeting reflect the joint cooperation between public and private sectors. There are very valid proposals which we can capitalize on to overcome the challenges facing the national economy,' the Ministry of Economy said.

The ministry added that the government is currently considering energy issues including the elimination of power subsidy and the impact of the same.

Bank Dhofar closes \$250mn term facility

Muscat - BankDhofar on Wednesday announced that it has successfully raised US\$250mn syndicated term facility. The facility will be utilized by the bank for general corporate purposes.

The syndication, launched on May 2, 2021, was oversubscribed multiple times on the back of very strong participation from regional and international banks from the GCC, Europe and Asia, BankDhofar said in a press statement.

Abdul Hakeem al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, said, "Despite continuing challenges in the market, the success and oversubscription of this transaction is an evidence of the confidence in BankDhofar and sovereign by international and regional banks, as well as the long term credit strength and continued growth of the Omani economy."

"We will use the proceeds of this facility to finance nationally important projects and continue to support and contribute to Oman's economy," the bank's CEO said.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH, Muscat, Hereby
Give Notice Of Tenders For The Following Projects

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Fees R.O	Grade In Tender Board Registration
7/2021	Consulting Offices	Consultancy Service To Make Entire Study On Existing Chillers & Air Handling Units And Replacing With Latest Technological Units At Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex At Bausher	25/- OMR	First Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 03/07/2021.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 10:00am 26/07/2021

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone **24166670** or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

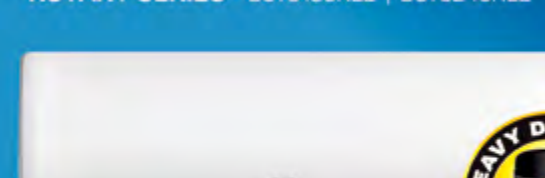
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We live for Müesli. 

MSX rises 0.55%; volumes up

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Wednesday rose 0.55 per cent to close at 4,071.19 points.

The MSX30 Index has been witnessing continuous increases since the beginning of this month amid positive economic outlook and rising oil prices.

The gains in main index on Wednesday were supported by all sectoral indices led by Services Index which rose 0.85 per cent. Financial Index and Industrial Index increased 0.73 per cent and 0.76 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia Index increased 1.07 per cent to close at 581.62 points.

Trading activity increased on Wednesday as volumes rose 16.6 per cent at 48mn securities compared with 41.1mn securities traded on Tuesday. Market turnover rose 8.2 per cent to RO6.01mn



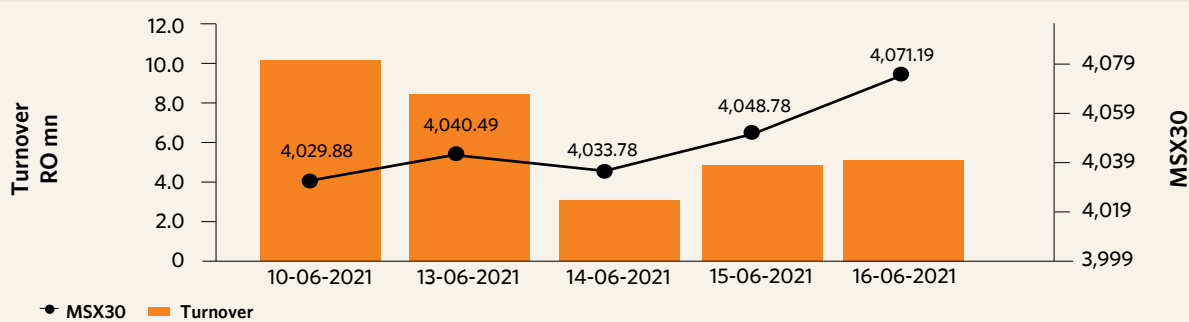
compared with RO5.55mn in the previous trading session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 30 advancing stocks to nine decliners. As many as 33 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Takafal Oman (10 per cent), Oman Qatar Insurance (9.9 per

cent), Vision Insurance (8 per cent), United Finance (7.14 per cent) and Oman Investment and Finance Company (6.6 per cent). Top losers were Muscat Thread Mill (-8.86 per cent), Sohar Power (-2.17 per cent), Al Jazeera Steel (-1.51 per cent) and Al Anwar Ceramic (-1.28 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



EU chief launches vast recovery fund

Lisbon, Portugal - European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday gave Portugal the first green light for its recovery plan seeking funding from the bloc's multi-billion-euro coronavirus rescue fund.

In visiting Portugal, Von der Leyen began activating the landmark E750bn (US\$910bn) recovery plan, Next Generation EU, which was drawn up nearly a year ago.

"It is the first national plan endorsed by the Commission, here in Portugal," she said in Lisbon alongside Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa whose country currently holds the EU's six-month rotating presidency," she said. She will now fly to Madrid then to Greece and Denmark on Thursday, and Luxembourg on a tour that will take her to most of the European Union's 27 member states.

The choice to start in Portugal and Spain is symbolic.

Portugal was the first country to submit its own plan back in April and is set to receive E16bn in funding. As holder of the rotating presidency, it has made the rapid adoption of these recovery



Ursula von der Leyen (left) and Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa share a toast during a meeting in Lisbon, on Wednesday (AFP)

plans a priority following their recommendation by the commission. Spain is also a significant choice in that it will be the second-largest beneficiary of the rescue fund after Italy, with Madrid to receive E140bn, half of which will take the form of direct grants and loans.

Von der Leyen arrived in Lisbon travelling for the first time on her 'Covid passport', the European health certificate which Bel-

gium began using Wednesday and which will become operational across the EU on July 1.

"Two southern European countries that previously did not feel supported within Europe have now benefitted from the extraordinary support and generosity of their northern partners," said Toni Roldan, head of research at the Esade Centre for Economic Policy (EsadeEcPol) in Madrid.

Spain was particularly hard hit when the pandemic first erupted in early 2020, while Portugal suffered a major surge in cases at the start of this year.

With both countries hugely dependent on tourism, their economies have been significantly affected. Since the eurozone debt crisis which began in 2011, Lisbon and Madrid have often been in the firing line with Europe's more 'frugal' members frustrated at having to fork out money to subsidise spending in what they have seen as the somewhat less virtuous south.

Although some of the conditions attached to the stimulus packages remain vague, Spain and Portugal could have shown "greater reformist ambition" in using the money, particularly in the area of education, Roldan told AFP. Since the end of April, 23 governments have submitted investment and reform plans to Brussels for approval. The commission has two months from the date of submission to give its opinion after which the European Council must give its approval within a month.

AFP

'GCC chemical industry needs bold leadership'

Dubai, UAE - Securing a bright future for the GCC's chemical industry will require bold leadership that adapts to the new trends emerging in the post-pandemic reality, said speakers at the inaugural edition of the Gulf Petrochemicals & Chemicals Association (GPCA) Leaders Forum held on Wednesday at the Habtoor Palace Dubai, LXR Hotels & Resorts.

Delivering the inaugural address at the forum, Yousef al Benyan, chairman of GPCA and vice-chairman and CEO of SABIC, said industry leaders would need to change how they think about growth, innovation and their operating models. He highlighted a major acceleration - during the pandemic - of already established trends such as digitalisation, a re-energized focus on sustainability and innovation, circular economy, the move towards decarbonisation and renewable energy, as well as the energy and materials transition among others.

The pandemic emphasized the power of collaboration, without which, the world would not be anywhere near global recovery, Benyan remarked.

The industry's challenge now shifts to building a new ecosystem that allows us to thrive in the long run, he added, expressing



Yousef al Benyan speaks at GPCA Leaders Forum

his confidence in the industry's ability to emerge even stronger from this period of change.

Buoyed by a gradual economic recovery within the region and its largest export market - China, the GCC chemical industry is well positioned for long-term growth. Real growth in the GCC region is expected to be at 2.5 per cent between 2021-2023, while China is targeting 6 per cent growth in 2021.

This may be a welcome development but comes with its own challenges, as the Asian country accelerates its move towards self-sufficiency in chemicals which will reduce demand for imports from the GCC region.

Khalid bin Saleh al Mudaifer, Vice Minister for Mining Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia, said, "Identified by Saudi Vision 2030

as the third pillar of Saudi industrial growth, alongside petroleum and petrochemicals, the mining sector is an important part of Saudi Arabia's economy.

The pandemic sharpened our focus on the sector's resilience and today, Saudi Arabia is in a prime position to support the expected increase in demand for minerals - domestically, regionally and around the world."

Dr Abdulwahab al Sadoun, secretary general of GPCA, added, "Chemical industry leaders must leverage the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and lead with a renewed sense of purpose to create value for its shareholders, costumers, society and our planet.

The next decade will require companies to embrace people centricity, innovate and adopt agile decision making.

To succeed, the industry would also need to drive customer collaboration and formulate effective partnerships. It would need to develop products that meet the future needs of our times and demonstrate leadership in the digital transformation."

The inaugural edition of the GPCA Leaders Forum, an exclusive c-suite event, attracted 83 senior industry leaders from 58 companies.

PwC plans \$12bn hiring push

New York, US - PwC announced Tuesday it plans to invest US\$12bn and create 100,000 new jobs globally over the next five years as it repositions itself for the post-pandemic economy.

Dubbing the strategy 'The New Equation,' the accounting giant said the hiring spree would pivot the company as technological disruption accelerates and clients across the private and public sector focus more on climate change and other public policy priorities.

The new hires will be focused on growth areas such as artificial intelligence and environmental, social and governance issues (ESG), the company said.

In Britain, the company will invest US\$1.2bn over the next three to four years in topics such as ESG and technology, a



spokesperson said.

The initiative is predicated on the idea that 'fundamental shifts' are needed to rethink organizations to build trust with stakeholders and keep up with shifting public expectations of organizations. "There is a strong need for stakeholders from across society to work together," said PwC global chairman Bob Moritz.

"Whether it's the pandemic, climate change, social injustice or the digital divide, there is a growing expectation that busi-

nesses have a role to play in addressing broader societal issues. Our new strategy is about helping clients address their toughest challenges and delivering for society and the planet."

The drive includes building new leadership institutes at PwC and a 'global ESG Academy, which will enable all of our partners and staff across the network to integrate the fundamentals of ESG into their work,' the company added.

AFP

Singapore exchange aims to boost tainted carbon markets

Singapore, Singapore - A financial exchange offering carbon credits and investments in conservation projects is set to launch in Singapore, but it may struggle to convince sceptics of the value of controversial carbon offsets.

Climate Impact X (CIX), backed by the Singapore stock exchange, the city-state's main investment fund and biggest bank, aims to help the growing number of firms seeking to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

From oil majors to tech giants and airlines, companies are lining up to make net-zero pledges, but face challenges to hit their targets. Firms sometimes turn to buying 'carbon credits' - which allow them to keep polluting in exchange for reductions made elsewhere or investing in projects like protecting rainforests - to offset emissions.

But such methods are controversial as environmentalists accuse big business of paying for a

quick fix rather than seeking to truly overhaul their operations, while some botched offset projects have failed to deliver.

Nevertheless demand for offsets is skyrocketing, leading to greater efforts to boost carbon markets - and fix their poor reputation. CIX, which is expected to launch by the end of the year, joins a small number of such exchanges that have sprung up in recent times.

But it is betting on Singapore's status as a leading financial hub, as well as its location in Asia, to boost its chances of success.

The region still relies heavily on coal for power, making a high-quality carbon market vital for emissions reductions, said Monetary Authority of Singapore managing director Ravi Menon, as the CIX was announced last month. "In addition, Southeast Asia is fertile ground to harness the potential of nature-based solutions, with abundant man-



This photograph shows people sitting next to a pond with the view of the skyline in Singapore (AFP)

groves, and large areas suitable for re-forestation," he added.

The exchange will offer investments in certain conservation projects, as well as trading in carbon credits - one credit represents a reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide emissions.

Mindful of criticism that it is notoriously difficult to police

whether such transactions are getting carbon out of the atmosphere, CIX will use technology such as satellites and blockchain to monitor their system.

Offset horror stories

The exchange is part of the so-called 'voluntary' carbon markets, as opposed to mandatory

initiatives such as the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme, where caps are set on certain industries.

Voluntary markets have boomed in the past year, but industry figures say they will have to grow faster to support investment required to meet the goal in the Paris climate accord of capping global warming at 1.5

degrees Celsius. A private-sector taskforce established last year to boost voluntary markets, unify them and strengthen oversight, estimates they will need to expand 15-fold by 2030. But scepticism abounds, with critics questioning whether playing the financial markets can help. "Trading a carbon credit back and forth does not benefit the climate," Gilles Dufrasne, policy officer from non-profit group Carbon Market Watch, told AFP.

"Speculating on carbon credits - acquiring credits and holding them with the plan to sell them in the future - does not benefit the climate." Investing in conservation projects to offset emissions is also "far from ideal" as it can be "extremely difficult" to measure their true impact, he said. Adding to concerns, there have been myriad horror stories of projects aimed at offsetting emissions that critics say ended up doing more harm than good.

These range from a Ugandan forest planting initiative that blocked villagers' access to vital land, to Latin American hydro-electricity projects that worsened conflicts over land rights, according to a study by Carbon Market Watch. Still, some experts believe carbon offsets can contribute, particularly for polluting industries struggling to hit net-zero targets - but only combined with serious efforts to overhaul business models.

Benjamin P Horton, director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore at Nanyang Technological University, said investing in conservation projects could contribute to combating global warming. But he warned this should be "not instead of, but in addition to, a lot of hard work that needs to happen to decarbonise energy, transportation, agriculture and other sectors of the economy".

AFP

MG Motor Festival of Winning extended

In response to popular demand, MG Motor has extended its exciting Festival of Winning offer. Till June 26, on buying any MG car from its 2021 range, the buyer will get a chance to instantly win mobile phone bundles or fuel card or up to 200,000 service packages. Not just this, the buyers will also stand a chance to win their car back every week.

Elaborating on the offer, a spokesperson of MHD, the sole distributors of MG Motor in Oman, explained, "After the success of the offer during Ramadan, we have extended Festival of Winning scheme to cater to our customers' wishes. Under this offer, the customers will get a scratch and win card on buying a MG 2021 car and instantly win mobile phone bundles or fuel cards or up to 200,000 free service packages. These are in addition to the free



insurance, free registration and free window tinting that we offer to our customers for their convenience. The most exciting part of the offer is the weekly lucky draw in which the lucky winner can win his/her car back every

week. What more can one ask for?"

"Festival of Winning is an extension of MG Motor efforts to 'Do More' for its customers. Our brand is unique in more ways than one and we are hoping to

see the overwhelming response once again in this festival of winning," the spokesperson added.

To avail this offer, customers can choose from the latest 2021 range of MG's stylish, exceptionally well-equipped and great

value cars, all of which come with a best-in-region manufacturer warranty of six years or 200,000km. In this range, MG Motor proudly presents the sleek and stylish MG 6 and the lively and exciting MG5 sedan.

In the SUV segment, MG Motor offers the power-packed performer MG ZST, the seven-seater perfectionist MG RX8, the smart and practical MG HS and the versatile and highly capable MG RX5.

MG is a British-born automotive brand established in 1924, known for its historic models, awards and achievements throughout the past 97 years.

MG was founded by William Morris and Cecil Kimbers and has one of the oldest car club in the automotive industry. Best known for its two-seat open sports cars, MG also produced saloons and coupes. Since its acquisition of MG, Saic Motor, as a Global Top 500 company, has opened a new chapter for this British icon. MG is at the forefront of the introduction of innovative technologies and new energy vehicles for car buyers.

MG Motor showrooms in Oman are located in Wattayah, Azaiba, Al Manuma, Bidayah, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, Sur, Ibra and Ibri. For more information, to book a test drive and to purchase a car online, visit <https://mg-om.com/>



Unleash power of 5G with Ooredoo

What's better than uninterrupted Internet around the clock? Ooredoo's 5G Super Data plan does exactly that for only RO15.750 a month.

Offering the ultimate speed and reliability, users can get a massive 150 GB of data per month, with 138GB of data to use in the most popular hours between 11pm and 11am, plus 12GB to use between 11am and 11pm. Available as a data add-on for Shihry Omanuna and Endless plans, or as a base plan for data-only packages, users can now chat, surf, play and browse all day and night without worrying about running out of data.

Ooredoo's postpaid Shihry Omanuna and Endless plans offer amazing value and choice to suit all budgets. With a range of prices and up to unlimited data, customers can buy exactly what they need each month and all without a contract. Coupled with Ooredoo's superfast 5G, which offers improved network coverage and stability with almost zero delay, as well as incredibly fast download speeds, there's no better time to enjoy the Internet.

Nokia 105 4G - stay connected with most affordable phone

HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, announced the newest and most affordable 4G Nokia feature phone yet. With VoLTE HD voice calls, Nokia 105 4G makes catching up with loved ones as seamless as if they were in the same room.

Florian Seiche, CEO, HMD Global said, "As a market leader in feature phones, our experience over the years has given us invaluable insights into what people need to stay connected every day. It is more important than ever to ensure our phones support 4G connectivity, and this phone is ready for the future."

"You will love the Nokia 105 4G for just that, at an accessible price point so you can stay in touch with your family and friends. And, with a new modern design, undeniable durability and long-lasting battery life, the Nokia 105 4G will be an investment you can trust and keep for longer."

A feature phone has never been so easy to use. Zoomed menus make icons larger, fonts bigger, and navigation simpler so you can find your app of choice in no time. With the readout text-to-speech feature, the Nokia

105 4G is able to read out your text messages to letting you know which app you're using making navigating through your phone a whole lot simpler. 4G connectivity ensures that this feature phone receives fast speeds, and, with VoLTE HD calls, your conversations will be crystal-clear; no longer will you find yourself shouting to be heard and with calls so crisp and clear, you will feel even closer to your loved ones.

Making technology simple, Nokia 105 4G aspires to be one of the most helpful and accessible feature phones on the market.

Quality you can trust

Nokia 105 4G lives up to the standard that Nokia phones customers have come to expect, with its reliable 1,020mAh battery and blend of classic design with a modern twist that is built to last.

Nokia 105 4G comes in three different stylish colour variants, Blue, Red and Black. Although it is small enough to slip into your pocket when needed, Nokia 105 4G is a phone you won't want to hide away.

Features to keep you coming back

With both wireless and wired FM radio and a 3.5mm audio jack, you can listen to your favourite radio shows on the go.

It is a device that will keep you smiling, with games your whole family can enjoy, including Snake!

Thanks to the Nokia 105 4G's bright torch, you will have light whenever you need it - from losing your keys behind the sofa to walking home after work. Nokia 105 4G is more than just a phone; it is packed with the modern essentials you want and nothing you don't.

Pricing and availability

The Nokia 105 4G is available in Oman from July in Blue and Black starting at a retail price of RO9.9.

Drive-thru school graduation ceremony held in Muscat

The ongoing pandemic did not deter Knowledge Gate International School (KGIS) in ensuring that the many wonderful achievements of their Grade 12 students were honoured and celebrated as their school careers formally end, and they prepare for the next stage in their educational journey.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has kept schools closed since March, it has not stopped students from continuing their education or experiencing their graduation. The restrictions on large gatherings means that graduation ceremonies have been different from others before them: virtual or drive-thru. The graduation ceremony that traditionally takes place in a large indoor space with graduates walking across a stage to accept their certificates, has been uniquely and creatively re-designed by KGIS to retain the enthusiasm, atmosphere and energy much loved by all participants.

KGIS executive principal, Liz Stanley said, "We wanted to make sure that our students' successes were properly acknowledged and celebrated. The graduating Class of 2021 will absolutely go down in history with the majority of their senior years being dominated by a global pandemic. But rather than being victims of this pandemic, they have emerged triumphant and resilient, they have conquered every challenge that they have faced and have shown that they are the most skilled problem solvers. They have worked tire-



lessly to ensure that they gain the university places they deserve, and to deliver what promise to be the best examination results in the history of the school.

"As a result of the pandemic, the Class of 2021 go out into the world better equipped to navigate life beyond school better than any of their predecessors."

At the ceremony, students and their families lined up in rows of well-spaced vehicles in front of the Main Stage set up on the roof top car park at the Crowne Plaza (OEOC), set against the stunning backdrop of the Muscat skyline. Families decorated their cars, waved flags and held signs congratulating their offspring. The main ceremony was preceded by a drive by parade with students standing out of sunroofs as school staff and hotel guests clapped and cheered.

The full ceremony was live-streamed so that families could see and hear everything from the comfort and safety of their own vehicles maintaining appropriate social distancing from others.

One by one the students, dressed in traditional gowns and caps with the addition of their face mask, left their car to receive their certificates to the cheers of encouragement from their relatives. They greeted the school principal and head of secondary from a safe distance and had their photo taken before returning to their vehicle. The evening ended with a box of refreshments being delivered to each car before pyrotechnic fireworks lit up the sky in a finale.

Liz added, "We considered running a virtual graduation but after speaking to our students it became clear that togetherness was the most important thing to them. They wanted the opportunity to celebrate with their friends and family in a safe but exciting way and this is exactly where the drive-thru concept came from." Integral to the huge success of the event, and the development of the drive-thru concept was the team at the Crowne Plaza Hotel itself, working in collaboration with Titan Events & Entertainment.

Book test drive for Nissan cars from comfort of your home

Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA)'s 'book a home test drive' service has garnered great response from prospective customers. The service enables potential customers to schedule their test drive online as per their convenience.

The 'book a home test drive' service is applicable only in the Muscat governorate. While customers will be charged RO5 for home test drive service, upon sales conversion a sum of RO10 will be passed on to them as cash gift.

A senior official of Nissan Oman said, "Our book a home test drive' service has been appreciated by prospective customers. To avail our home test drive service, customers have to just let us know what vehicle they are interested in, and we will

it take it to their homes."

He added, "We are adhering to strict safety procedures with regards COVID-19 and we are adjusting our daily operations to fit within the new normal. All test drive vehicles are completely sanitised before delivery at customers' homes for test drives."

Nissan is committed to extending outstanding pre-sales services to its customers.

This is yet another unique move from Nissan Oman to make the experience of buying Nissan cars more convenient.

An interested customer can schedule a test drive of Nissan models from the comfort of their homes simply by logging on to the official SBA Nissan Oman website on the link [https://en.nissanoman.com/services/book-home-test-](https://en.nissanoman.com/services/book-home-test-drive.html)



drive.html.

Home test drive can be booked through customer service toll free number 80050011 as well.

Awards for Nissan

In 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, Nissan was conferred with 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' award across categories includ-

ing SUV, crossover, 4WD and mid-size Nissan, considered a premium and trusted name in the market, was the only brand to have won the recognition for

four times in a row in the automobile category. The award is instituted by Apex Press and Publishing.

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting Nissan's growth in the Sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

With a national network of 12 showrooms, 17 service centres and 24 spare parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

Like Nissan Oman on Facebook

Customers can also get unlimited access to Nissan's prestigious vehicle line-up at the

comfort of their homes or offices on Nissan Oman's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/Sbanissanoman>.

Nissan Oman on Instagram

Instagram users can follow Nissan Oman at <https://www.instagram.com/sbanissanoman/>

After sales service

Every customer purchasing a Nissan vehicle can be assured of Nissan's top class after sales service, which guarantees the advantage of factory-trained experts.

Nissan's impressive vehicle line-up

Nissan has built up its reputation through innovative technology, and a broad product line-up.

NBO customers pocket RO290,000 with Al Kanz

National Bank of Oman (NBO) has concluded its May Al Kanz Savings Scheme draw, with 63 customers walking away with a total of RO290,000 in cash prizes.

Held at the bank's headquarters in Azaiba, the event included the quarterly exclusive draws, giving RO25,000 each to six winners from various governorates across the country; the Sadara draw, giving RO25,000 each to three winners; the Mazaya draw, giving RO10,000 each to four winners; and the monthly Salary Transfer draw, giving ROS00 each to 50 winners.

Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO, said, "We're almost halfway through our 2021 Al Kanz Savings Scheme, which we're glad to say



has been bigger and better than ever. Under our theme 'Saving for a better tomorrow', it's our

pleasure to be part of our customers journey towards leading more financially secure lives.

"The best part of it is, all they have to do is save with us to stand a chance to gain life-changing rewards."

Customers are eligible to win in the Al Kanz Savings Scheme by maintaining an average minimum balance of RO100 in their Al Kanz Savings account.

Every RO100 provides an extra chance in the draw, so the more money kept in the account, the more the chance of winning.

Meanwhile, customers simply have to transfer their salary to NBO to be in for the chance of winning in the monthly Salary Transfer draw.

Next month, two lucky winners will have the opportunity to win RO250,000 each in the half-yearly Mega Draw.

The Zubair Corporation launches vaccination drive

The Zubair Corporation recently launched a vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

This initiative is in line with the efforts undertaken by the corporation through the vaccination campaign at the group companies level in order to limit the spread of the virus, maintain the health and safety of employees and provide a safe work environment for all in the corporation and its subsidiaries.

The campaign commenced as per the guidelines and protocols approved by the Ministry of Health and in cooperation with Badr al Samaa Hospitals, which are spread across the various governorates of the sultanate.



Hilal al Siyabi, chief corporate services officer at the Zubair Corporation stated, "We have launched a vaccination campaign with the Pfizer vaccine for all employees of the Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries and we aim through this campaign to encourage them to take the vaccination in order to return to normal work life. The only way to limit the spread of the COVID-19

virus is vaccination, adhering to all health instructions, including wearing a face mask, sterilisation and maintaining distance in the work environment."

He added, "The safety of employees in the work environment is one of our top priorities and that this campaign is the only way to preserve the health and safety of all employees of the Zubair Corporation subsidiaries."

Majid al Futtaim and RELEX tailor on-shelf inventory

Majid al Futtaim, the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, has partnered with RELEX Solutions, provider of unified retail planning solutions, to optimise on-shelf inventory for individual stores based on local demand via automated store-specific planogramming.

Through this partnership, RELEX will service all of Carrefour's 350 stores across 17 countries that are part of Majid al Futtaim Retail's growing regional portfolio.

RELEX's advanced, automated planogramming solution allows Majid al Futtaim to save time and optimise their processes to align with local demand patterns and fixtures. With RELEX, Majid al Futtaim will be able to improve store efficiency while boosting sales and cus-



tomers satisfaction, and customers will always find the right items at the right time in the right location.

Initially, RELEX will be rolled out to Carrefour stores in the United Arab Emirates.

The solution will be expanded to support Majid al Futtaim's other markets as the project

continues.

"We are excited to support Majid Al Futtaim in their mission to improve Carrefour customer experience through localised assortments," says Bertrand Henry, senior account executive at RELEX Solutions.

"We look forward to accompanying them in their journey toward automated and unified planning processes."

"Through this partnership, we are looking forward to helping Majid al Futtaim realize their vision of improved efficiency and customer service through the use of our state-of-the-art technology," says Franck Westrelin, VP Sales Southern Europe & MENA at RELEX Solutions.

"Our experience in grocery retail and the flexibility of our solution are key factors in Carrefour's mastery of optimisation in multi-ple markets."



OOC president meets OHA, OCC bosses

Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidi, president of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), received in his office on Wednesday, Capt Talib bin Khamis al Wahaibi, president of Oman Hockey Association (OHA), in the presence of Taha bin Sulaiman al Koshary, OOC secretary general.

OOC president congratulated OHA on winning the host of the World Hockey Pentathlon, which will be held in 2024, after winning the confidence of the members of the Executive Office of the International Hockey Federation receiving 13 votes out of 16. OOC president praised the great efforts made by OHA and the

board members during the last period, stressing the keenness of OOC to fully support OHA for the success of hosting the event, and wishing the national hockey team all success in achieving the desired results in the tournament.

Moreover, the OOC president met with Pankaj Khimji, presi-

dent of Oman Cricket Club (OCC), at OCC headquarters in the wilayat of Amerat on Wednesday evening.

They reviewed the status of the game in Oman and future plans for the development and spread within the framework of the future vision of Oman sports.

Arrive in style with all-new Mitsubishi Montero Sport

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, in its first ever online only event, officially launched the all-new Mitsubishi Montero Sport in July 2020 in Oman. The new model is designed with a more robust powerful appearance providing the vehicle a tougher look while complemented with a refreshed interior that delivers a luxurious and comfortable feel.

The all-new Montero Sport adopts a more powerful yet refined exterior design. Mitsubishi's signature Dynamic Shield front view design concept has been further evolved from its predecessor on the new Montero Sport to secure better visibility. It also emphasises the sense of wideness with the headlights continuing from the front grille and the combination lamps at the bumper corners. The higher bonnet of the vehicle exhibits a deeper front face, while a more solid, powerful chrome part design projects a more refined, sophisticated appearance.

Commenting on the Montero Sport, Zuwaina al Azri said, "In addition to its new exterior and interior design, the Mitsubishi Montero Sport is also equipped with some of the most advanced features ever in a Mitsubishi, both for convenience and safety. With these combined enhancements, the Mitsubishi Montero Sport has been specifically designed to appeal to every driver's desire for exploration and adventure while elevating their journey



to new heights as well as ensuring the drive experience is always fun and worry-free."

The Montero Sport's bold exterior is complemented with a refreshed interior that delivers high quality and comfort, together with advanced functionality. The entire floor console has been refreshed and soft padded interior door handles enhance the overall interior look with quality and comfort.

The storage tray that sits under the floor console can now be accessible from both, the left and right sides. A new power outlet has also been added on the existing USB plug on the rear console panel offering improved usability for all passengers.

The Montero Sport is also brimming with technology, thanks to several advanced and convenient new features. These include the new easy-to-read 8-inch colour digital dash as well as Mitsubishi's 8-inch Smartphone-Link Display Audio (SDA) system.

Also included is the Mitsubishi Remote Control - a smartphone application that offers several functions that facilitate ease of access and added security. It will send a notification to the driver's smartphone to lock the doors via the app when the driver leaves the vehicle with the doors unlocked. The Power Tailgate can be opened or closed by smartphone. In addition, the

tailgate reservation system can be pre-set by smartphone anywhere, which enables the driver to open or close the tailgate automatically when he/she approaches or leaves the vehicle.

This keyless operation system is effective within Bluetooth operating range. The aforementioned Power Tailgate brings another new hands-free feature that allows owners to open the tailgate by placing the foot under the rear bumper.

"Even with its refined and high-quality exterior design and comfortable interior, the Montero Sport remains a full-feature off-road SUV that retains the best aspects of Mitsubishi's renowned SUV prowess; while

bringing with it a higher level of performance thanks to a number of improvements and new technologies incorporated throughout the vehicle," added Zuwaina.

Despite being infused with sedan-like comfort and functionality, the Montero Sport inherits Mitsubishi's renowned off-road capability, reliability, and durability. Powering the Montero Sport is a 3.0lt MIVEC V6 gasoline engine that produces 215hp@6,000rpm and 285Nm @4,000rpm; all the power that one may require of a rugged SUV to accomplish every mission with smooth, efficient ease.

This is mated to Mitsubishi's 8-speed automatic transmission that delivers a smoother, more

luxurious ride and improved fuel efficiency. It even features Sporty paddle shifters that allows the driver to shift gears with just a press, and without having to remove either hand from the steering wheel.

The Montero Sport also retains the Super-Select 4WD-II system that delivers optimal traction regardless of driving surface together with confidence-inspiring handling characteristics.

This is further complemented by other advanced features such as Hill Descent Control, selectable 2WD and 4WD modes, intelligent assistance in challenging conditions, and an Off-road Mode that enhances traction and

provides even better all-terrain performance and stability on demanding surfaces.

The Montero Sport also comes with a very comprehensive list of active and passive safety features.

Mitsubishi's own RISE (Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution) body design and a total of up to seven SRS airbags provide occupants with outstanding passive safety. Active safety features include a Forward Collision Mitigation system (FCM), which helps prevent a frontal collision or reduce damage if the collision becomes unavoidable; Blind Spot Warning system (BSW), together with Lane Change Assist (LCA), that uses ultrasonic sensors to detect vehicles in rear blind spots with warning indicators on either side mirrors; Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), that uses sensors to detect rear cross traffic when reversing and warns the driver of an impending collision; and the Ultrasonic mis acceleration Mitigation System (UMS), that helps prevent collisions while parking by sounding a buzzer and displaying a warning if the front or rear sensors detect a nearby obstacle in your path, going so far as to even control engine output if the driver suddenly accelerates by accident.

The Montero Sport also now includes a Multi-view camera system that limits blind spots when parking the vehicle. The Mitsubishi Montero is available at all GAC showrooms.

Iranians to elect new president tomorrow

Vote comes at a time when Iran is in talks with world powers to revive nuclear deal and end US sanctions

Tehran, Iran - Iranian voters are to elect a new president on Friday, with the ultraconservative Ebrahim Raisi expected to replace the moderate Hassan Rouhani after a host of candidates were disqualified.

The vote comes at a time when the recession-hit country is in talks with world powers to revive a battered 2015 nuclear deal and at pains to end a punishing US sanctions regime.

Buzz has been minimal in Tehran, where campaign posters are sparse, as observers expect no major surprises and country-wide turnout is predicted to hit a new low among an electorate exhausted by social and economic crisis.

The field was further reduced to five candidates on Wednesday when one of only two reformists allowed to run, former vice president Mohsen Mehralizadeh, dropped out, while conservative candidate Alireza Zakani withdrew from the race.

Ultimate power in Iran, where a 1979 revolution toppled the monarchy, lies with the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but the president has significant influence on issues from industrial policy to foreign affairs.

The landmark achievement of Rouhani's two consecutive terms, the maximum allowed, was the accord under which Tehran accepted limits on its nuclear programme in return for relief from international sanctions.



Young Iranians chit-chat ahead of the June 18 presidential elections, in northern Tehran on Monday (AFP)

But hopes Iran would reap the benefits were dashed in 2018 when then-US president Donald Trump ripped up the deal and launched a 'maximum pressure' campaign aiming to diplomatically and economically isolate it.

The country of 83mn, blocked by the US from selling its oil to and trading with much of the world, was plunged into recession while Rouhani and his camp were harshly criticised by ultra-

conservatives for having trusted the West.

Iran saw anti-government unrest in the winter of 2017-18 and again in November 2019 - harshly put down both times - before the COVID-19 pandemic came and hit Iran harder than any other country in the region.

Ending sanctions

Raisi, aged 60 and the former head of the country's judiciary, belongs to the ultraconservative

camp that is distrustful of the West and often labels the US the 'Great Satan' or the 'Global Arrogance'. Some Iranian media see him as a possible successor to Khamenei (82).

A Raisi victory would mean that, months after US President Joe Biden ousted Trump, with his uncompromising stance on Iran, from the White House, the pendulum would swing the other way in Tehran.

Analysts however point out

that this would be unlikely to derail ongoing talks in Vienna between Iran and the other remaining parties to the nuclear deal - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - which have been indirectly joined by the United States.

The pain of Trump's ramped-up sanctions, which sparked a currency collapse, galloping inflation and spiralling job losses, is the unifying electoral theme, and all candidates agree Iran should

Two candidates pull out

Tehran, Iran - Two days before Iran's presidential election, two of the seven men vying for the post pulled out of the race on Wednesday.

Conservative lawmaker Alireza Zakani withdrew hours after reformist Mohsen Mehralizadeh had also thrown in the towel ahead of Friday's vote, Iranian media reported.

That leaves five hopefuls in the race, in which ultraconservative judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi (60) is seen as the clear favourite after other prominent politicians were barred from running.

Zakani (55) was quoted as saying of Raisi to a state television reporter, "I believe him to be qualified and will vote for him, and I hope that funda-

mental reforms take place in the country with him being elected."

Last-minute withdrawals by candidates, often in return for government postings from the eventual winner, are not uncommon in Iran.

Hours earlier, the former vice president Mehralizadeh (64) had also pulled out, the IRNA and ISNA news agencies reported without giving a reason.

Mehralizadeh had been one of only two reformists permitted to run to replace President Hassan Rouhani.

His departure leaves just one candidate who is considered a reformist in the race, former central bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati (66).

AFP

Twitter not adhering to rules: India

New Delhi, India - India's battle with Twitter escalated on Wednesday with the government accusing the US firm of deliberately defying new IT rules, as reports suggested it can now be prosecuted for users' tweets.

On Wednesday IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that the

firm was still not in adherence.

"It is astounding that Twitter which portrays itself as the flag bearer of free speech, chooses the path of deliberate defiance," Prasad said.

He stopped short of saying whether Twitter had now lost its protection from prosecution,

however. He said the new rules were aimed at tackling the 'menace of fake news'.

The Times of India reported that Twitter has now lost its so-called 'safe harbour' immunity from prosecution for 'unlawful' or 'inflammatory' tweets.

AFP

Yemen rebels publicly execute three men

Sanaa, Yemen - Hundreds of people gathered in Yemen's rebel-held capital on Wednesday to watch the execution of three men - two convicted of child rape and murder, and one of killing his daughters.

It was Sanaa's first public execution since August 2018, when the rebels shot three men and hung their bodies from a crane for raping and killing a child.

On Wednesday, the three convicts in blue prison uniforms were escorted to the central Tahrir (Liberation) Square where an executioner in green army fatigues and black gloves laid each face down on a red sheet before shooting them in the back.

The Iran-backed rebels have



Yemeni security forces stand guard at the site where three men were executed for heinous crimes, in Sanaa on Wednesday (AFP)

made much of their crime-fighting efforts in areas under the control, which include most of the north of country.

Those executed on Wednes-

day had been convicted of particularly heinous crimes.

Ali Abdullah al Noami was found guilty of leaving his three daughters to die in a water tank

after a disagreement with his wife.

The two others put to death, identified by Yemeni media as Abdullah Ali al Mukahali and Mohammed Abdullah Arman, had been convicted of raping and killing an eight year old boy.

The Huthi rebels have retained control of swathes of the north despite a six year old military intervention by neighbouring Saudi Arabia and its allies in support of the beleaguered government.

The conflict has pushed the country to the brink of famine in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

AFP

Israel strikes Gaza as fighters send incendiary balloons

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

- Israel carried out airstrikes on the Gaza Strip early on Wednesday after fighters in the Palestinian territory sent incendiary balloons into the south of the country, in the first flare-up between the two sides since a major conflict in May in which hundreds were killed.

The strikes were the first under the new coalition government headed by Naftali Bennett, who took over on Sunday after ousting former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

And they come as more than a thousand ultranationalist demonstrators bearing Israeli flags poured into Jerusalem's flashpoint Old City on Tuesday, with scores of police deployed and international monitors urging calm.

According to Palestinian sources, Israel's air force targeted at least one site east of Khan Yunis in the south of the Gaza Strip, which is home to some two million people.

An AFP photojournalist in Khan Yunis saw the explosions.

The Israeli Defence Force said that in response to the 'arson balloons', its 'fighter jets struck military compounds belonging to the Hamas terror organisation'.

It added that 'facilities and meeting sites for terror operatives' in Khan Yunis were targeted. There was no indication of casualties so far.

The IDF added that it was 'prepared for any scenario, including



Israeli security forces inspect a car following an attempted vehicle-ramming attack in the West Bank village of Hizma, on Wednesday (AFP)

a resumption of hostilities, in the face of continuing terror activities from the Gaza Strip'.

Local firefighters said the incendiary balloons caused around 20 fires in southern Israel.

The violence is the first flare-up between Israel and Palestinian militants since a ceasefire came into place in May, ending 11 days of heavy fighting that killed 260 Palestinians including some fighters, the Gaza authorities said.

In Israel, 13 people were killed, including a soldier, by rockets and missiles fired from Gaza, the police and army said.

In annexed east Jerusalem, more than one thousand people took to the streets in a delayed and controversial march by nationalist and far-right activists.

The US and UN had called for restraint before the march, which Bennett's new administration had authorised.

Palestinian woman shot dead

The demonstration triggered protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and prompted rebukes and warnings from Israel's allies.

A Palestinian woman was shot dead in the West Bank on Wednesday after attempting to ram Israeli soldiers with her car and attack them with a knife, the army and Palestinian health ministry said.

The Israeli army said 'an assailant arrived in her car and attempted to ram into a number of IDF soldiers' near Hizma, south of Ramallah, before she 'exited her vehicle with a knife drawn'.

"The soldiers responded with fire towards the assailant and neutralised her," it said.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the woman died of her wounds.

AFP

Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo hints at bid to be France's first woman president

Paris, France - Paris' Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo has hinted she is planning to stand in 2022 presidential elections, saying that having a woman as president for the first time would change the relationship of the French with those in power, in an interview published Wednesday.

If she declares her candidacy, Hidalgo would be entering an increasingly crowded field but one that is dominated by figures on the centre and right, with centrist President Emmanuel Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen expected to duel in a run-off.

But the Socialists have so far failed to make any impact on the race, still suffering after the single 2012-2017 term of France's last Socialist president Francois Hollande that left him so unpopular he did not bother to seek re-election.

Asked about her intentions in 2022 by the Le 1 weekly, Hidalgo said, "If strong actions are not taken now, neither our children nor our grandchildren will be allowed the ability to plan the world they want."



Anne Hidalgo (second from right) with French MP Hugues Renson (left), Mayor of Paris' 15th district Philippe Goujon and president of Universcience Bruno Maquart (right) takes part at an event, in Paris on June 8 (AFP)

She said the disengagement of the middle class from politics risked aiding the rise of populism and eroding democracy.

"This invites me to act for my country, in order to make another voice heard, to propose another political offer," Hidalgo said.

She added, "I am convinced that a woman can change the relationship with power. That would be a complete break."

Mayor of Paris since 2014, Hidalgo has sought to make the clogged French capital a cleaner and greener place to live, making environmental policies her call-

ing card.

Last month a plan was announced to ban most vehicles from the city centre from next year while the city hall said this week owners of motorbikes and motorised scooters will have to pay to park their rides in Paris.

AFP

Biden pushes Putin for stable 'great powers' relationship



US President Joe Biden (left) meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin (second from right) at the 'Villa la Grange', in Geneva on Wednesday (AFP)

Geneva, Switzerland - President Joe Biden pressed Vladimir Putin at their summit on Wednesday to replace the combustible US-Russian standoff with a more 'predictable' relationship between 'two great powers' capable of agreeing to disagree.

The two leaders shook hands, striking cautiously positive notes at the elegant Geneva villa chosen for their first summit.

Huge motorcades of limousines, communications equipment and armed guards snaked through the park on the shore of Lake Geneva, disrupting the normally idyllic setting before the pair sat down.

And chaos briefly erupted when a scrum of journalists battled for position, just metres from the two leaders, prompting shoving matches and shouts from security officials.

But Biden quickly got to the point: his desire to take US-Russian relations off their in-

creasingly unstable trajectory, in which Washington accuses the Kremlin of everything from meddling in elections to cyberwarfare.

"It's always better to meet face to face," he told Putin in a book-lined room in the villa, with a globe of the world placed between them.

"We are trying to determine where we have a mutual interest, where we can cooperate, and where we don't (to) establish a predictable and rational way in which we disagree - two great powers," Biden said.

Putin noted that 'a lot of issues' need addressing 'at the highest level' and that he hoped the 'meeting will be productive'.

Biden's apparent offer of an understanding - if not necessarily a friendly relationship - went a long way toward what Putin is reportedly seeking: Increased respect on the world stage.

The reference to the United

States and Russia as 'two great powers' was sure to please the Kremlin leader, who has dominated his country for two decades, infuriating the West with invasions of Ukraine and Georgia, and often brutal crushing of political dissent.

Cold War, new problems

Expectations were low for more than a modest thaw in relations.

Illustrating the frostiness, no meal was planned during the scheduled five hours of talks, initially also attended by the two countries' foreign ministers and later by an expanded group of officials.

"There will be no breaking of bread," a senior US official said.

The choice of Geneva recalled the Cold War summit between US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the Swiss city in 1985.

The summit villa, encircled with barbed wire, was under intense security. Grey patrol boats cruised along the lake front and heavily-armed camouflaged troops stood guard at a nearby yacht marina.

But in contrast with 1985, tensions are less about strategic nuclear weapons and competing ideologies than what the Biden administration sees as an increasingly rogue regime.

From cyberattacks on American entities and meddling in the last two US presidential elections, to human rights violations and aggression against Ukraine and other European countries, Washington's list of allegations against the Kremlin runs long.

Putin came to the summit arguing that Moscow is simply challenging US hegemony - part of a bid to promote a so-called 'multi-polar' world that has seen Russia draw close with the United States' arguably even

more powerful adversary China.

In an interview with NBC News, he scoffed at allegations that he had anything to do with cyberattacks or the near-fatal poisoning of one of his last remaining domestic opponents, Alexei Navalny.

'Worthy adversary'

Biden, ending an intensive first foreign trip as president, arrived in Geneva after summits with NATO and the European Union in Brussels, and a G7 summit in Britain.

While in Brussels, he said he would detail his 'red lines'.

"I'm not looking for conflict," he said, but 'we will respond if Russia continues its harmful activities'.

However, Biden, who had previously characterised Putin as a 'killer', upgraded the Russian leader to 'worthy adversary'.

And for all the rhetoric, the White House and Kremlin both say they are open to doing business in a limited way.

Officials point to the recent extension of the New START nuclear arms limitation treaty as an example of successful diplomacy.

According to Russian and US officials, one possible baby step might be a quick reinstatement of the two countries' ambassadors, who returned home this year in response to tensions.

Unlike in 2018, when Biden's predecessor Donald Trump met Putin in Helsinki, there was to be no joint press conference at the end of the summit.

The US side clearly wanted to avoid the optics of having Biden sharing that kind of platform with the Russian president.

AFP



This file photo shows man rests in bed in his home, after he was shot in the leg while taking part in a demonstration, in Yangon on May 28 (AFP)

Injured Myanmar protesters avoid junta hospitals fearing arrest

Yangon, Myanmar - Protesters shot during rallies against Myanmar's military regime are avoiding treatment for their wounds, fearing arrest if they visit junta-run hospitals and searching desperately for sympathetic doctors to operate on them in secret.

Security forces have fired on civilian protests with sniper rifles, machine guns and mortar rounds in the months since the February coup that ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Over 800 people have been killed and thousands of others wounded in a running crackdown on opposition to the military regime, rights groups said.

Maung Win Myo - his name and others have been changed for safety reasons - used to scratch a meagre living as a trishaw driver, ferrying people around the bustling commercial capital of Yangon.

But the 24 year old hasn't worked since March, when he was shot in the leg while on the frontlines of an anti-junta protest.

"I can't even sleep properly at night," he told AFP, wincing on a mattress on the floor of the one-room apartment he shares with his wife and two children.

It would cost about US\$950 to pay for a second operation at a private hospital to set the steel in his broken bone, he said, but he will have to keep on suffering for now. "I don't have any money as I cannot work," he said, adding that he was relying on donations from neighbours to feed his family.

One costly visit to a private clinic has already left Maung Win Myo out of pocket. "We didn't dare to go to military hospital, that's why we went to a private hospital, even though we don't have money," his wife said.

Many others with serious injuries are scared to seek free treatment at military hospitals, for fear their wounds will betray their involvement in anti-coup protests.

AFP

"Not everyone is willing to go," Marjan Besuijen, Head of Mission for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Myanmar, said.

"They fear arrest."

In a report last month, MSF also said its partners in Myanmar had witnessed junta raids on organisations 'providing first aid to injured protesters, and seen their supplies destroyed'.

'I don't know how to survive'

Military hospitals are not normally open to the public but the junta has expanded their operations after many doctors walked off the job after the coup.

The strike, also joined by huge numbers of civil servants and other government employees, has forced the closure of almost all public hospitals in the country.

It has also crippled the economy and put a huge strain on the banking system.

Those lucky to still have jobs and savings face day-long queues at ATMs to withdraw a maximum of US\$120 per week, leaving many struggling to pay for food and rent - let alone surgery.

Ngwe Nu Nu's husband was shot in the eye by security forces on his way to work at a rice broker's in the central city of Myingyan in late April.

The main breadwinner in the family, he was taken to Mandalay for treatment, but died in hospital a few days later, leaving Ngwe Nu Nu alone and indebted for his treatment.

"I tried my best to save his life," she said. "Now I don't know how to survive without him."

As the coup enters its fifth month - and with customs officials among those striking - sourcing medicine is also getting harder. For the last month 'we have had difficulties in getting some medical materials for operations', as stockists run out, one doctor treating wounded protesters in Mandalay said.

AFP

China accuses Belgian lawmaker of 'lies' over Xinjiang

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday accused a Belgian lawmaker of spreading 'lies and false information' after parliamentarians in Brussels approved a resolution warning of 'serious risk of genocide' against the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang.

The motion, authored by MP Samuel Cogolati, was approved by the Belgian parliament's foreign relations committee and will be confirmed by a plenary session on July 1.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Wednesday hit back at the resolution as an attempt to 'undermine social stability in Xinjiang



China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian

and contain China's development'. Zhao said Cogolati 'maliciously spread lies and false information, seriously damaging China's sovereignty and inter-

ests', and warned Belgian lawmakers against 'harming the overall state of China-Belgium relations'.

China has faced mounting in-

ternational criticism over its policies in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, where the United States says Beijing is committing genocide.

At least one million people from mostly Muslim minorities have been held in camps in the region, according to rights groups who also accuse authorities of imposing forced labour.

Beijing has hit back at the accusations, touting its counter-terrorism and economic achievements in Xinjiang, applying tit-for-tat sanctions, and supporting lawsuits against its loudest critics.

The Belgian resolution would make it the sixth democratic par-

liament after Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and the Czech Republic to denounce 'crimes against humanity' against the Uyghurs.

G7 leaders on Sunday called on China in a joint statement after their meeting 'to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially in relation to Xinjiang'. A report from rights group Amnesty International last week accused Beijing of 'systematic state-organised mass imprisonment, torture and persecution amounting to crimes against humanity' in the northwestern region.

AFP

Taj Mahal reopens as India eases pandemic restrictions

Agra, India - The Taj Mahal reopened to visitors on Wednesday, as Indian authorities loosened restrictions following an easing in the country's devastating recent coronavirus surge.

Infections and deaths soared to record levels in April and May, overwhelming health services in some places and prompting lockdowns and other curbs.

Cases have declined in recent weeks, with several major cities including New Delhi and Mumbai easing many restrictions.

In Agra, where the Taj Mahal is located, tourist guides and shopkeepers were upbeat as India's top tourist attraction sprung back to life on Wednesday.

The 17th-century monument of love built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan was shut in March last year, reopened in September

and closed again in April.

Crowds were thin on the first day of the reopening, with authorities restricting visitor numbers to 650 per day.

COVID-19 precautions meant visitors were not allowed to touch the shining marble mausoleum, but those making the pilgrimage to one of the New Seven Wonders of the World were still delighted.

"I am very glad I got to see it, it is amazing," gushed Brazilian visitor Melissa Dalla Rosa (40).

"I cried when I first saw, oh my God... (it was) a very special experience," she told AFP.

Lucky Feizan (20), a shopkeeper, said the lockdown had squeezed hard those dependent on the Taj Mahal for their livelihood.

"This (was) the second wave of COVID. (With a) third I am



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal after it reopened for visitors following authorities easing the COVID-19 restrictions in Agra, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday (AFP)

I am very glad I got to see it, it is amazing. I cried when I first saw, oh my God...

MELISSA DALLA ROSA

finished," he told AFP.

India on Tuesday reported 62,224 new COVID-19 infections over the past 24 hours, compared with around 400,000 per day in April and May.

The total caseload now stands at almost 30mn with 380,000 deaths, although many experts say the true toll could be over a million.

Photos widely shared on social media last weekend showed

busy shopping malls and markets in the capital New Delhi, raising fears that cases may rise again.

Kerala, one of the worst-hit states, said on Tuesday it will allow public transport to resume while Madhya Pradesh in central India permitted shopping malls and gyms to reopen.

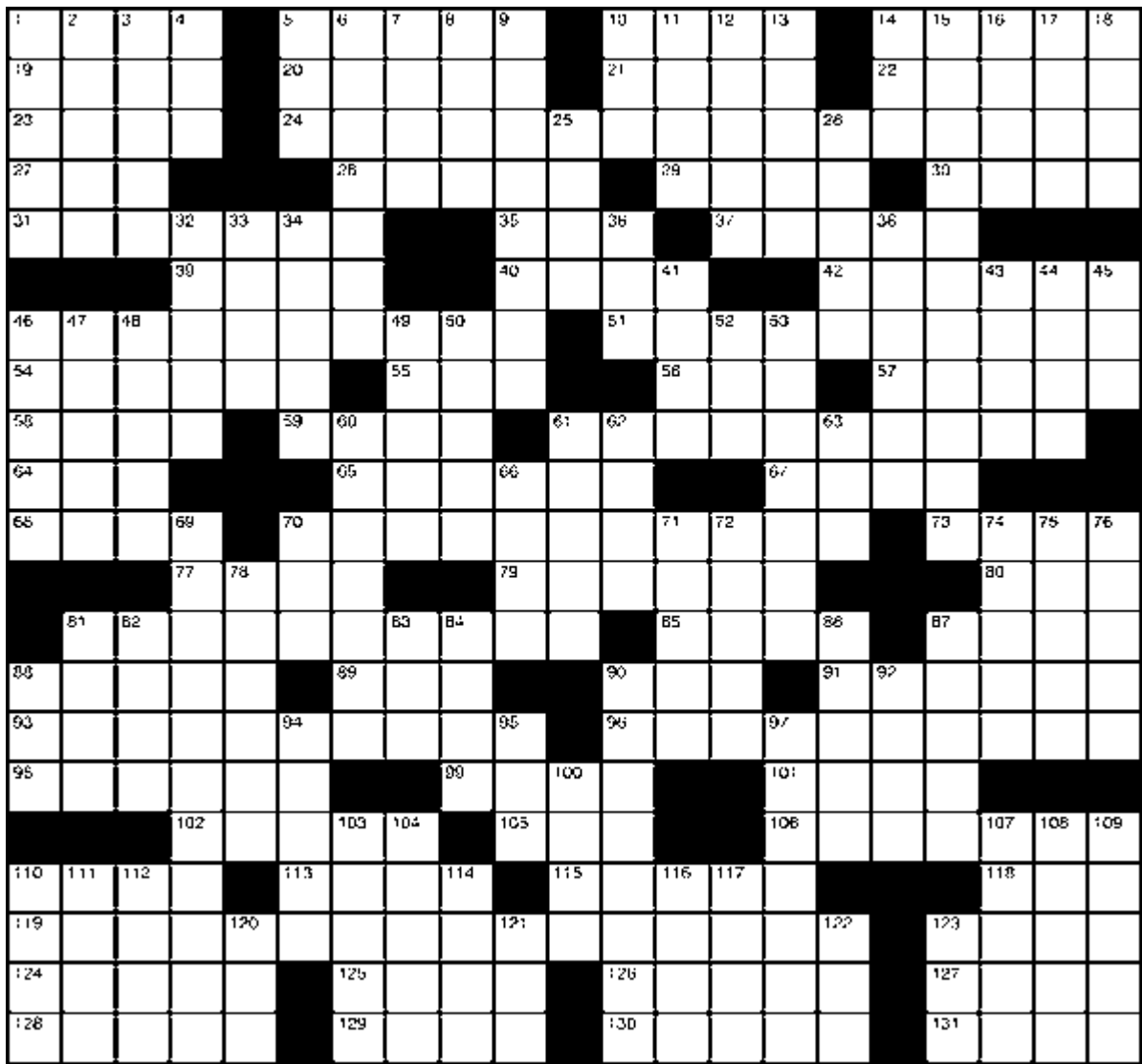
Cases of a usually very rare but deadly infection known as mucormycosis, or 'black fungus', in coronavirus patients have also declined in many areas.

The western state of Maharashtra still has more than 7,000 active cases, however, according to reports.

The rise in these fungal infections, contracted by several thousand people, has been blamed on the excessive use of steroids to treat COVID patients.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

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- 123 London gallery
- 124 Exhausted
- 125 Too bad!
- 126 "Harry Potter" wizard
- 127 Region
- 128 Broadway lights
- 129 De-ice
- 130 Billiard ploy
- 131 Exploited
- DOWN**
- 1 ____ in: collapsed
- 2 "A whale of ____"
- 3 Stampede starter
- 4 WSW minus 180
- 5 Beethoven op.
- 6 Less refined
- 7 Gumbo ingredient
- 8 Volstead Act
- opponents
- 9 Losing traction
- 10 New Deal agcy.
- 11 Santa's sound
- 12 Mature
- 13 Truncated warship
- 14 Gib. or Luz.
- 15 "My Blue Heaven" star
- 16 Moa's cousin
- 17 "... to tell ____"
- 18 Prepares flax
- 25 Moscow negative
- 26 Automaton, in a sense
- 32 Vast chasm

- 33 Musical Auntie
- 34 A Lady Gaga instrument
- 36 Sleep stage
- 38 Hard breather
- 41 Femme's spouse
- 43 Asian servant
- 44 Young butters
- 45 Full of: suffix
- 46 Gogol's "____ Bulba"
- 47 Pontificate
- 48 River of 42 Across
- 49 Bathroom finisher
- 50 Motionless
- 52 Actress Russell, for short
- 53 Beverage services
- 60 Percy or Stewart
- 61 Heating devices
- 62 "____ we forget"
- 63 Outlaw
- 66 "____ Misbehavin"
- 69 1977 Yankees manager
- 70 Spoil
- 71 ____ Selassie
- 72 Plural of ens
- 74 Separately
- 75 Circle lines
- 76 Unsullied
- 78 Appeared
- 81 Ice-cream thickener
- 82 Italian notes
- 83 Svgs. income
- 84 Recipe direction

- 86 ____ Semple
- McPherson
- 87 "Salome" tenor
- 88 Hi-fi component
- 90 Chinese character
- 92 Pearl Jams's group
- 94 Madison Ave. worker
- 95 Cribbage jack
- 97 "____ an island ..."
- 100 Highlands hillside
- 103 Mideast religion
- 104 Greenland air base
- 107 Edward, Norman and jet
- 108 Cosmetician
- Lauder
- 109 Situation
- 110 Fed
- 111 "Dark Knight's" Christian
- 112 Woody's son
- 114 Cousin of etc.
- 116 Neighbor of Kans.
- 117 Manipulates fraudulently
- 120 Incumbents
- 121 FDR successor
- 122 Equine directive
- 123 Sigma follower

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You have a calling, and signs are emerging around you that reinforce that fact. People are giving you feedback that is genuine. They're not just praising you for the heck of it! Have faith in yourself and understand that you're capable of amazing things. The worst mistake you can make today is limit yourself. This applies to new relationships and career challenges.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

No one has better instincts than you, as you will so handily prove today when you whip off the mask of someone who's all talk and no action. Be generous when you reveal their true identity. Chances are they were just trying to impress you anyway. There are many mixed signals coming from a friendship you thought was solid. Trust your instincts on this.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Few things feel as good as a renewed sense of confidence, and you're enjoying a strong energy in that area. Things are picking up in your romantic life, so you're in the perfect position to build something bigger. Build a partnership that will last. A surprising boost to your ego can result if you spend more time around the people who stimulate your mind.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Everything you need will be right at your fingertips today: the perfect answer, the sassiest comeback, the energy to go the last mile. In fact, you'll be so on top of things that you'll find yourself with plenty of free time on your hands. Use this spare time any way you see fit. Let your mood guide you. If you want to make some headway on a side project, this is the perfect opportunity.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your relationships are going through a shift right now. You could find yourself drawn to certain people more than others. This is natural, so don't feel guilty if you suddenly want to spend more time with a new person. Just be sure to honour all your current commitments. Rescheduling or cancelling a date at the last minute sends the wrong message.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've been dispensing excellent advice and you should admit to yourself that you've played a key role in other people's success. You've also been doing a wonderful job of walking the line between helping people find their own answers and telling them what the answers are. Everyone must arrive at conclusions on their own schedule, as slow as it may feel.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

As today moves forward, it's essential for you to reach down inside and wake up your snoozing ego. You have some ideas that people should know about. At work, send an e-mail to someone in control who has always been supportive. Let them know you're ready to roll up your sleeves and get deeper into the action. Your timing will help you edge ahead of your competition.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You have so many wonderful things in your life already, so avoid taking on any more responsibilities today. Many of the opportunities being dangled in front of you are not doable, so don't let your ambition put you in a position where success is all but impossible. Let these challenges pass on to someone who isn't quite as wise as you. Enjoy the certainty of where you are now.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Are you missing something important today? You'd better check. Details like that could throw you off track. Make sure you're good with your correspondence, because someone has been waiting for your answer and they may be losing patience. A quick message or phone call should calm any stormy waters and lay the groundwork for future commitments.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The sun is shining just a bit more brightly today and your heart is just a bit lighter. Do you feel the tide turning? Hope is a powerful thing, and you've been able to hold on to enough of it to make a real difference. Blue periods can be tough, but they always result in more self-awareness and contentment. Slowly, you're entering a positive phase of strength and confidence.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Oops! Looks like you've sprung a leak today, a financial leak, that is. There's some money going out and you don't know where it's going. Check through recent bills. There's a chance that something has been overlooked. While you're in editing mode, look for areas in your life where you can trim back, and not just monetarily. You might have too many commitments.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Despite what the calendar says, you've still got plenty of time to reach the goal you've given yourself. Do not give up just because you think you won't make it! Most of what you need to do is already done, so pace your day and keep things at an easy, controlled tempo. There's no telling what other people are up to, so if you're dying to find out, ask!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. R K Laxman is a renowned

- a. Dance master
- b. Writer
- c. Cartoonist
- d. Journalist

2. The first woman in space was

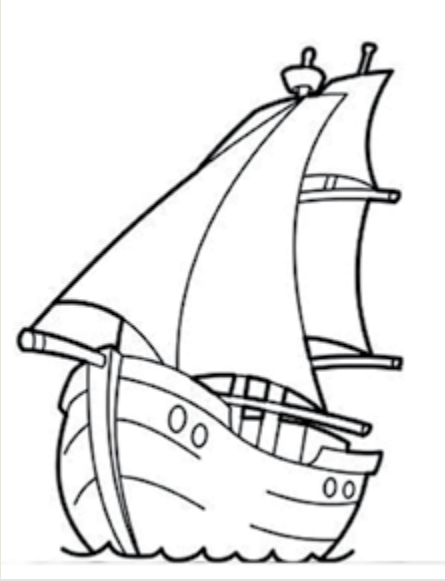
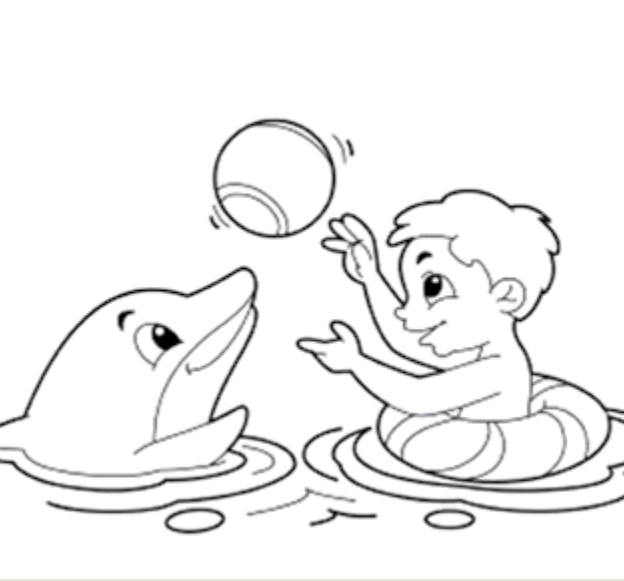
- a. Valentina Tereshkova
- b. Sally Ride
- c. Naidia Comenci
- d. Tamara Press

3. Sham Lal has done com-mendable work in the field of?

- a. Journalism
- b. Politics
- c. Socail Service
- d. Trade Unionism

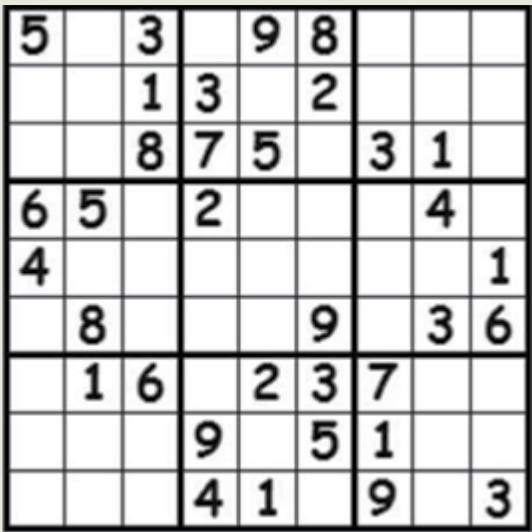
Answers: 1.c 2.a 3.a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



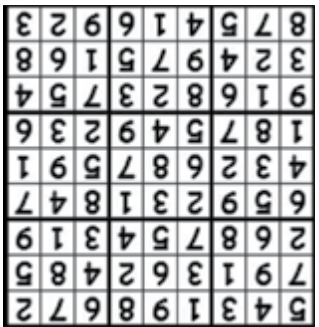
BOGGLER



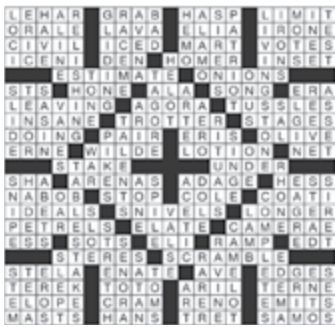
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 16)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



WRIST PAIN

HAND

IN HAND

In the current age, when using smartphones, video game consoles, computers, keyboards and mice has become an integral part of everyday life, pain in the hand and wrist is a very common problem among people of all ages. Are you taking care of your wrist or laying avoidable strain on them?

A common myth about hand and wrist injuries is that if you can move it, it's not really broken. That's simply not true. And if you continue laying stress on your wrists after experiencing pain due to certain repetitive activity, you are actually complicating what could've healed with a little timely care. So, don't get robotic and take your wrists for granted.

There are many things you can do to ward off hand and wrist pain. Try to keep your bones strong by getting enough calcium and vitamin D, which your body needs to use the calcium. Avoid repeated movements that can lay additional stress and strain on some portions of your hands, especially the fingers and wrist. Rest your hands after over use and stay away from gadgets till the pain or strain has subsided.

Hands and wrists, which are made of dozens of small bones can easily get sore. The wrist alone has eight bones lined up, four on top, four below. All eight bones are connected by ligaments that keep the joints together, while giving a wide range of motion for our hands. There are also many tendons that pass the wrist. These control the motion of our wrist, fingers, and thumb. Because each of those parts serves a purpose in movement, if even one area in the wrist gets inflamed or injured, you're going to feel it.

Injuries or conditions affecting the hands can make tasks that were once simple feel extremely painful and difficult. Something as mundane as lifting a coffee cup or brushing your teeth can shoot pain through your arm. The pain may even cause you to change the way you do simple things, such as buttoning a shirt, tying a shoelace and even signing your name.

Some of the most common causes of such conditions are arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, ganglion cysts and injuries. Developing any of these conditions, especially carpal tunnel syndrome, is possible for almost anyone and the treatment options could range from icing it at home to surgery in a hospital.

MOST COMMON PROBLEMS

De Quervain's Tendinitis

This condition is characterised by pain on the thumb side of the wrist. The pain may develop gradually or start suddenly. It can travel the length of the thumb and up the forearm. If you have this condition, it can be

painful to turn your wrist, make a fist or grasp objects easily as the pain results from irritation or inflammation of the wrist tendons at the base of the thumb. Repetitive activities and overuse are often responsible for de Quervain's. Most patients get relief from using a splint to rest the thumb and wrist, anti-inflammatory medication, and sometimes cortisone injections.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

This is one of the most common nerve disorders of the hand which causes pain in the palm and some fingers, wrist, and forearm. Often the pain is worse at night and it can cause weakness, a tingling sensation or numbness in the thumb, index finger, and middle finger. The discomfort happens when swelling constricts the median nerve which controls sensation and muscle impulses in the thumb and most of the fingers.

Common treatments include resting the hand and wrist, anti-inflammatory medications, wrist splints, steroid injections as well as physiotherapy.

Diagnosis

After a physical exam and symptom review, a doctor may also diagnose wrist pain and the underlying condition by:

Imaging scans - like an X-ray, CT scan or MRI

Arthroscopy - involv-

ing introducing a small instrument via a cut on the wrist to view internal images of the damage.

Nerve conduction studies - these measure how fast nerve impulses travel through the carpal tunnel region of the wrist.

Typically, invasive diagnosis techniques are only used after rest and recovery from injury have been unsuccessful.

Treatment options

Home treatment - often simply resting the wrist as much as possible to allow it time to heal is effective. Pain medication and ice may also be recommended to reduce inflammation and pain.

Splints - in some cases, wearing a wrist splint can help. Splinting may prevent certain wrist movements that cause irritation. A splint might also reduce squeezing of the nerve.

Exercises - depending on the type of pain, wrist exercises may work. Certain exercises can be prescribed to stretch and lengthen muscles and tendons.

Steroid shots - cortisone injections, which decrease inflammation and reduce pain can be effective in some cases.

Surgery - only used if less invasive treatments have not worked. The type of surgery performed depends on the cause of the pain.



TFCC

TEAR

The Triangular Fibrocartilage Complex, or TFCC, is an important structure in the wrist. The TFCC is made of tough fibrous tissue and cartilage. This tissue supports the joints between the end of the forearm bones (radius and ulna), adding to their stability. The TFCC also helps

connect the forearm with the small bones in the ulnar side (little finger side) of the wrist. There are several different tissues that form the TFCC, and they blend together to stabilise the ulnar side of the wrist.

The TFCC also acts as a cushion between the end of the ulna and small bones of the wrist. In patients whose ulna is longer than the radius at the wrist, the TFCC is usually thinner and more likely to tear.

A TFCC tear can happen in two different locations and is usually caused by different problems. The first type of TFCC tear is due to natural wear, and the other is usually from injury. Tears due to wear are the most common and are usually

not seen in younger people. They become more common as one gets older.

Tears from injury can come from a fall on the hand or wrist, a twisting injury (like a drill bit catching, causing a twist of the arm) or a fracture at the end of the radius.

Causes

- Falling onto an outstretched hand.
 - Repeated impact on an outstretched hand (i.e. gymnastics).
 - Excessive torsion forces on the wrist (as in racket sports).
 - Sudden traction of the wrist.
- For some, a TFCC tear may not

cause any pain or instability problems in a wrist. Often, MRI studies show tears in people with no pain or problems using the wrist. Others may experience either a clicking or popping while turning the forearm or moving the wrist from side to side or pain, weakness and limited motion.

Treatment

Treatment options that may give relief include use of splints, change in activity, anti-inflammatory medicines, and steroid injections. If these don't help, there may be surgical treatments depending on the specific, underlying TFCC injury.

Al Faisal confident of a good outing at Spa

Lechner Racing team to compete in second round of 2021 GT Open Series

Our Correspondent
Muscat

It has been a month since Al Faisal al Zubair of Oman and his teammate, Andy Soucek of Spain, made a memorable start to their campaign in the 2021 International GT Open Series at Circuit Paul Ricard in France.

The Lechner Racing duo surprised their much-experienced rivals in the double-leg opener by clinching a podium (third place) in race two of the opening round on May 16 after finishing fourth in the first race a day earlier.

Racing in a Porsche GT3-R, the 23 year old Al Faisal was satisfied with the opening round performance and is now looking ahead to better that display in the second round of the seven-leg series, which will be held at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Belgium from June 18-20.

Ahead of the second round, Al Faisal said, "It was a great experience at Paul Ricard the first round of my debut championship series. The results, myself and Andy have achieved, in the opening round have given us the confidence to aim for better results in the series ahead."

The former double Porsche Middle East Challenge Series champion admitted that 'the GT Open is one of the toughest championships in endurance racing with the world's leading teams competing in it'.

Backed by Oman-based Al Manar Financial Investments, Al Faisal said that their 'team is



The plan is to give our best and pick up as many points possible in each round

AL FAISAL
AL ZUBAIR

now looking to capitalise on their good start to the series'.

"Our goal is to aim for more championship points and be as consistent as possible," he said.

The pair has garnered 18 points after the first two races and is placed third in the championship standings, just three points behind the leaders -

Frederick Schandorff-Michele Beretta of Vincenzo Sospiri Racing. Team Lazarus Bentley pair of Jordan Pepper and Ivan Peklin is second, also with 21 points.

"This is our debut campaign and we are not pushing for lofty targets but we will attempt to take each round as it comes. The plan is to give our best and pick up as many points possible in each round. We have a long championship ahead and getting on more podiums will be the key to our campaign," said Al Faisal.

The Omani driver expressed optimism on an improved display at Spa as he has competed at the circuit quite a few times in the past. Al Faisal has sweet memories of his

participation in the Porsche Mobil 1 Super Cup from 2017-2019 and believes that the track time spent in the past will give him a bit of comfort.

Al Faisal said that 'finishing on the podium at Circuit Paul Ricard on debut was a great feeling' and feels that the start to their campaign has been great along with the Spanish former Formula 2 champion Soucek.

"To achieve the results in Pro class with a new endurance series team of Lechner Racing was really special," he added and hoped that they would give many more reasons to celebrate in the series ahead.

The duo will have their opening free practice session on Friday before the first qualifying

session is held on Saturday morning followed by the opening 70-minute race. The second race will be held on Sunday with the qualifying session in the morning.

Championship standings:
1 Frederick Schandorff-Michele Beretta (Vincenzo Sospiri Racing, 21 points), 2 Jordan Pepper-Ivan Peklin (Team Lazarus Bentley 21 pts), 3 Al Faisal al Zubair-Andy Soucek (Lechner Racing 18 pts).

Al Faisal al Zubair

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BIRTHDAY WISHES



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June 19

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Wishing you happy and healthy long years.
With love: Amma, Appa, Avani and Paatti

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EURO2020



Russia's Aleksei Miranchuk celebrates after scoring against Finland in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on Wednesday (AFP)

RUSSIA OFF THE MARK

Saint Petersburg, Russia - A special goal by Aleksei Miranchuk allowed Russia to kickstart their Euro 2020 campaign with a 1-0 win over Finland in Saint Petersburg on Wednesday, but the game was marred by an injury to Mario Fernandes.

Miranchuk, of Serie A side Atalanta, produced a glorious finish in first-half stoppage time for the only goal of the game between the neighbours in Group B. It blows open the section after Russia, one of nine participating nations at the Euro playing matches at home, had lost 0-3 to Belgium in their opening game at the weekend. Finland, making their debut at a major international tournament, had beaten Denmark 1-0

in Copenhagen on Saturday, a game completely overshadowed by Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest.

Here it was Russia's Fernandes, the Brazilian-born CSKA Moscow right-back, who provided an injury scare.

The 30 year old went up for a high ball in the Finland box in the first half and came down awkwardly, the back of his neck taking the full force of the landing. He needed to be stabilised and was stretchered off before being taken to hospital.

The Russian team's Twitter feed said

he was undergoing tests for a suspected spinal injury.

Russia went on to win the game without Fernandes, as Miranchuk turned on the edge of the box and played a one-two with skipper Artem Dzyuba before sending a glorious left-foot shot into the top corner of the net.

That was enough for the 2018 World Cup quarterfinalists to win the game but it could have been very different.

Finland thought they had gone in front inside three minutes when Joel

Pohjanpalo headed in a Jukka Raitala cross. However Pohjanpalo, who got the winner against Denmark, was this time denied as a VAR check confirmed a marginal offside against the Bayer Leverkusen player.

Russia went on to have the better chances and could have won by a wider margin, with Finland goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky producing a superb fingertip save to deny Daler Kuzyaev in the second half.

Russia's final group game will be in Denmark next Monday, while Finland should again have a sizeable support behind them as they stay in Saint Petersburg to play Belgium.

AFP

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP C



UKRAINE VS NORTH MACEDONIA
(5pm)



GROUP B



DENMARK VS BELGIUM
(8pm)



GROUP C



NETHERLANDS VS AUSTRIA
(11pm)



(All kick-offs are Oman time)

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP A								
Wales	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
Italy	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Turkey	2	0	0	2	0	5	-5	0
GROUP B								
Belgium	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Russia	2	1	0	1	1	3	-2	3
Finland	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	3
Denmark	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
GROUP C								
Austria	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	0	3	2	1	3
Ukraine	1	0	0	1	2	3	-1	0
North Macedonia	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0
GROUP D								
Czech Republic	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
England	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Croatia	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Scotland	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
GROUP E								
Slovakia	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
Spain	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sweden	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Poland	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
GROUP F								
Portugal	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
France	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Germany	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Hungary	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

Austria defend Arnautovic following one-game ban

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Marko Arnautovic was defended by Austria captain David Alaba and coach Franco Foda after being handed a one-game Euro 2020 ban for insulting a North Macedonia player in his side's opening match.

UEFA said Arnautovic had been punished for 'insulting another player' and the 32 year old will miss his side's match against the Netherlands in Amsterdam on Thursday as a result. European football's governing body had opened a probe into Arnautovic following the incident in Sunday's 3-1 win over North Macedonia in Bucharest.

The former West Ham United player, who now plays for Shanghai Port in China, netted Austria's third goal in the game and then launched into an ill-tempered celebration until Alaba intervened to calm him down. "I just wanted to celebrate with him and I didn't realise he had words with the North Macedonian player," Alaba told at a press conference on Wednesday. "He had to put up with some bad words from the opposing players and out of emotion he reacted in that way."

Coach Foda admitted he had been in line to start against the Dutch on Thursday. "We thought about maybe putting him in the starting XI but now we will have to have a rethink," said Foda, the German who took over as Austria coach in 2018.

AFP

Wales prove too good for Turkey

Ramsey and Roberts on the scoresheet, skipper Bale misses a penalty

Baku, Azerbaijan - Goals from Aaron Ramsey and Connor Roberts helped Wales take a huge step towards the Euro 2020 last-16 with a 2-0 win over Turkey in Baku on Wednesday.

With a crowd of more than 30,000 in Azerbaijan's capital city effectively making this a home game for Turkey, Wales responded to the hostile atmosphere with a vibrant, attacking display in which they cut their opponents open at will.

After a host of missed chances in a breathless first half, captain Gareth Bale played a brilliant lofted pass through the heart of the Turkish defence for Aaron Ramsey, who brought the ball down and finished elegantly, minutes before the interval.

Although Turkey came back strongly in the second half, Wales squandered a glorious opportunity to consolidate their lead when captain Bale ballooned a penalty over the bar.

There were some nervous



Wales' Connor Roberts (C) celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Turkey at the Olympic Stadium in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Wednesday (AFP)

moments for the Welsh defence as they withstood Turkish attacks - with Danny Ward making a crucial late save to deny Merih Demiral.

But Connor Roberts struck from a corner deep in injury time to seal a win that takes

GROUP A

WALES VS TURKEY



0 - 1

Wales to four points with one match left in the group stage.

That final fixture will be in Rome on Sunday against Group A favourites Italy, who face Switzerland later in Rome on Wednesday.

Having drawn 1-1 with Switzerland in their opening

fixture last Saturday, Wales, semifinalists five years ago, will keep a close eye on events at the Stadio Olimpico as that match could have a major bearing on their hopes of reach the last-16.

Agencies



EURO2020



FORTUNATE FRANCE

Hummels own goal gives Les Bleus narrow win against Germany



Germany's defender Mats Hummels (L) deflects the ball to score past his own team goalkeeper Manuel Neuer during their match against France in Munich, Germany, on Tuesday

Munich, Germany - A Mats Hummels own goal was enough to hand France a 1-0 victory over Germany on Tuesday as the world champions made a winning start to their Euro 2020 campaign by controlling the game in Munich.

Hummels turned the ball into his own net in the 20th minute, which ultimately decided the contest.

France also saw Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema have second-half goals ruled offside, while Adrien Rabiot hit the post for Les Bleus.

"It was a clash that could have been a semifinal or a final, so to take three points was important," said France coach Didier Deschamps.

"We played a big game against a very good German team, but we were up to the level and this victory does us good."

The result leaves



France second on goal difference in the early Group F table behind Portugal, after the holders' 3-0 win over Hungary earlier in Budapest.

The home defeat piles the pressure on Germany ahead of their next game against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal on Saturday, also at the Allianz Arena.

"It was a brutally intense game," said Germany head coach Joachim Loew.

"We fought until the end and I can't blame the team, we gave it everything we had."

"What was missing was a bit of penetrating power in the final third. We didn't do enough there."

He refused to blame Hummels for the own goal, saying: "There is no need to reproach Mats for the own goal. It was difficult for him to clear."

Loew, who will stand down after the European Championship, is desperate to avoid a repeat of the 2018 World Cup when *Die Mannschaft* suffered the humiliation of finishing bottom of their group.

Heartbreak for Hummels

It was a heartbreaking night for Hummels, back to boost the German defence after a two-year exile from international football. Seven years ago, it was Hummels' headed goal which knocked France out of the 2014 World Cup in the quarterfinals as Germany went on to win the title in Brazil.

The opening 15 minutes on Tuesday were spent with the European heavyweights tentatively probing each other's defence until the French started to exert pressure and landed a sucker punch.

France's Bayern Munich defender Lucas Hernandez met Paul Pogba's magnificent pass with a low cross from the left flank which Hummels, to his horror, turned into his own net.

There was plenty of first-half niggles. Germany defender Antonio Ruediger appeared to attempt to bite the back of France midfielder Pogba, who he was tightly marking.

Joshua Kimmich was booked in only the seventh minute for a late tackle on his Bayern teammate Hernandez.

France made a strong start to the second half as Rabiot hit the post, but then Germany started to threaten the French goal, with Serge Gnabry firing over.

The hosts had a let-off when Mbappe hit the net after cutting inside and curling in a superb shot on 66 minutes, but the goal was ruled out.

With 16 minutes left, Loew put fresh legs into Germany's attack with Leroy Sane and Timo Werner replacing Kai Havertz and Serge Gnabry, but the French defence held firm.

In the final ten minutes, Mbappe was furious to be denied a penalty when a Hummels tackle from behind just pushed the ball out of harm's way before the France forward crashed to the turf.

In his first competitive international since France's defeat by Germany at the 2014 World Cup, Benzema looked to have sealed the win when he tapped in Mbappe's pass in the dying stages, but VAR caught the Paris Saint-Germain star offside again.

AFF



'Germany must crank it up against Portugal'

Munich, Germany - Germany head coach Joachim Loew says his side must 'crank things up' ahead of Saturday's Euro 2020 clash against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal after an opening defeat against France.

Germany's defence showed signs of improvement, having leaked 20 goals in their previous 13 games, but the main concern is up front, where Thomas Mueller, Serge Gnabry and Kai Havertz mustered just one shot between them.

"It's up to us to crank things up in the next two or three days," said Loew. "We have to look to improve, because we need a goal or two."

Hummels said on Instagram the defeat 'hurts us a lot and me especially, because my own goal decided the game', but the centre-back said the



Germany's coach Joachim Loew during their match against France on Tuesday (AFP)

focus was now on beating holders Portugal in Munich.

The second-half introduction of Timo Werner and Leroy Sane was not enough to turn the tide.

"The substitutes didn't get into the

game as well as we had hoped," said Loew.

"But France are strong. They sat very deep after the lead and didn't give us much space."

Midfielder Ilkay Gundogan, Man-

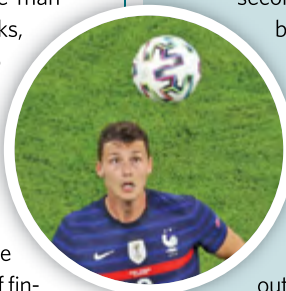
chester City's top-scorer last season, said it was important for Germany to create more chances against Portugal.

There is talk of the Germans abandoning their three-man defence, with two wing-backs, in favour of a back four to push forward with an extra player in midfield. "We have two systems that we can both play well," said Gundogan.

Loew's Germany team are still haunted by the trauma of finishing bottom of their group at the 2018 World Cup and fans fear a similar outcome at Euro 2020.

Beating Portugal would ease the pressure and provide a much-needed confidence boost.

AFF

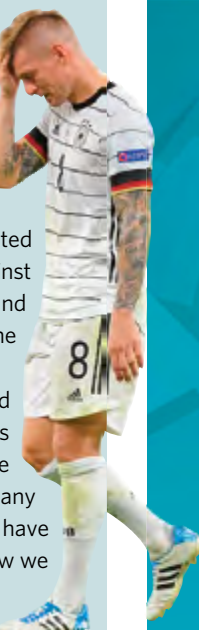


Germany's Kroos rues 'unfortunate goal' in defeat

Toni Kroos rued an 'unfortunate' own goal for Mats Hummels in Germany's defeat by France on Tuesday. "We had our chances, no fewer than the French had, but the match was decided by an unfortunate goal," Kroos told broadcaster ARD. "We would have defended against that nine times out of ten. "We controlled most of the match and there were very few counter-attacks from the French."

Kroos bristled when asked about the disallowed goals by Mbappe and Benzema, saying 'offside is offside, right?' He admitted pressure is on for Saturday's home game against Portugal. "We have lost the first match and when you only have three games, then the pressure is large," added Kroos.

German midfielder Joshua Kimmich said *Die Mannschaft* have to prove themselves against Portugal. "I wouldn't say we were the worst team, France didn't have that many chances," said the Bayern star. "France have shown they are one of the favourites and now we have to prove that too in the next game."



Antonio Ruediger (L) speaks to Paul Pogba (C) after the match as N'Golo Kante walks off the pitch

Pogba plays down Ruediger 'bite'

France midfielder Paul Pogba has played down Antonio Ruediger's apparent attempted bite on his back during the world champions' Euro 2020 win over Germany.

Television replays showed Chelsea defender Ruediger putting his mouth on Pogba's shoulder just before half-time in France's win over Germany.

Immediately after the incident, Pogba cried out and complained to Spanish referee Carlos del Cerro Grande, who did not punish the German, and the Manchester United star played it down after the game.

"I think he nibbled at me a little bit, but we've known each other for a long time. Toni and I are friends. It was nothing big. We hugged after the game and it's over," Pogba said.

Pogba, the man of the match in Munich, said it was 'better' that Ruediger escaped punishment. "I don't want him to be suspended because of that," said the Frenchman, who played a key role in the build-up to Mats Hummels' ultimately decisive own goal.

Pogba said he told the referee what happened but was glad there was no 'yellow or red card for such an incident'.

In the build-up to the match, Champions League winner Ruediger had said the Germans would need to 'be a little dirty' against the French.

Pavard reveals he was 'knocked out'

France defender Benjamin Pavard revealed he briefly lost consciousness during the world champions' win over Germany, but still managed to finish the game. The Bayern Munich defender Pavard was poleaxed in the

second half in a collision with Germany left-back Robin Gosens and needed treatment on the pitch. "I had quite a shock," said Pavard. "I was a bit knocked out for ten to 15 seconds. After that, I felt better."

On Wednesday, the global footballers' union FIFPro asked UEFA why Pavard played on after being 'knocked out' "FIFPro is in touch with UEFA to find out why the Concussion Charter was not applied and subsequently Benjamin Pavard was not removed from the field of play," FIFPro said in a statement on Twitter. All 24 teams at the European Championship have signed a 'concussion charter' designed to improve the care of players during games.

AFF

'MAIN TARGET ACHIEVED'

Coach Branko Ivankovic delighted to lead Oman to final round of Asian World Cup Qualifiers

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP AND 2023 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Achieving a target always gives a feeling of delight and pride. No wonder, Oman's national team coach Branko Ivankovic of Croatia was all smiles on Tuesday night as he led Oman to an impressive 3-0 win over Bangladesh at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, Qatar, that sealed their spot in the final round of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers and a spot in the AFC 2023 Asian Cup finals.

The victory meant that Oman finished second with 18 points in Group E behind World Cup hosts Qatar.

This is the third time that Oman have reached the final round of the FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers. Oman sealed their return to the third round after missing out on the decisive stage on the road to Russia 2018.

It was way back during the Asian qualifying campaign for the 2002 FIFA World Cup that Oman had secured a spot in the final round for the first time under then Czech coach Milan Macala.

Ivankovic's Red Warriors also made it to the Asian Cup finals



Oman's Mohammed al Ghafri (R) celebrates with Khalid al Hajri after scoring against Bangladesh at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Tuesday

for the fifth time and second time in a row.

Oman made their debut in Asian Cup finals in 2004 and then participated in 2007, 2015 and 2019.

Their best performance at the Asian Cup was under Late Pim Verbeek of the Netherlands in UAE, when Oman reached the round-of-16 for the first time.

On Tuesday, Oman secured their place in the final round of the Asian Qualifiers for the World Cup prior to their final

group match against Bangladesh after India held Afghanistan 1-1.

Oman's dominating win against Bangladesh helped them end with 18 points in their kitty and earn one of the best five runners-up spots available to the final round.

The impressive run of the Red Warriors saw them register back-to-back victories against Afghanistan (2-1) and Bangladesh after a narrow 0-1 loss to Qatar on June 7, a match that was marred by poor refereeing decisions.

Speaking on Tuesday night after the win, a delighted Ivankovic said, "First of all I want to congratulate the players and all Omani people for the victory against Bangladesh and qualifying into the final round.

"The players performed well today and this brings a lot of satisfaction to us. Our main target was to advance to the next stage and this is what we achieved, by showing great determination and continuous efforts."

Looking ahead, the Croatian



First of all I want to congratulate the players and all Omani people for the victory against Bangladesh and qualifying into the final round

BRANKO IVANKOVIC, OMAN COACH



Sayyid Theyazin announces cash awards

Muscat - Following Oman's qualification to the final round of the Asian Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup in Qatar and securing a spot in the Asian Cup finals in China 2023, H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), announced cash awards for the national team players and the accompanying technical and administrative staff.

A statement from the

Oman Football Association (OFA) said, "After the national team's qualification into the Asian Cup finals in China 2023 and advancing to the final stage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, congratulated the team and has announced a financial reward to the team players and the technical and administrative staff."

tactician admitted that there will be tough matches in the final round of the Asian Qualifiers but the team will be well prepared.

"We know that we will be playing against the best teams in the final round and we will prepare the players well in order to get good results.

"Our focus in the next few days will shift to the match against Somalia on June 20 in the FIFA Arab Cup Qualifiers in Doha and hopefully we can prepare well for the match."

The attention will then shift to the draw for the Asian Qualifiers final round, which will be held on July 1, when Asia's top-12 contenders will be drawn into two groups of six teams each.

The sides will battle against each other from September 2- March 29, 2022 with the top two in each group qualifying for Qatar 2022, while the two third-placed teams will advance to the fourth round playoff.

Hajri slams double against Bangladesh

Oman's in-form striker Khalid al Hajri hit a brace in Oman's win against Bangladesh. Mohammed al Ghafri opened the scoring in the 23rd minute while Hajri's double came with strikes in the 60th and 81st minutes.

Hajri had also orchestrated the first goal as he sent a through ball from Omar al Fazari to an advancing Ghafri, who hit the target from close range. The Red Warriors increased their lead when

Hajri connected a pass from Fazari from inside the rival penalty box.

And the striker netted his second goal after combining well with substitutes, Abdulaziz al Miqbali and Zahir al Aghbari, as Oman signed off the second round with a dominating win.

Iran, Iraq, UAE and Saudi advance

Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE topped their respective groups to ease into the final phase of Asian qualifying on Tuesday.

On a frantic day of action across Asia, with 14 matches played, Iraq, China, Vietnam and Lebanon joined Oman after finishing among the five best second-placed teams.

Syria, Japan, South Korea and Australia had already clinched their spots. Qatar, who topped Group E, will not play in the final phase as they qualify automatically as hosts.

On Tuesday, Iran pipped Iraq 1-0 in Bahrain to top Group C while the UAE edged Vietnam 3-2 in their final Group G match in Dubai. China's also needed to win their last match and they did with a 3-1 victory over Syria.

Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia thrashed Uzbekistan 3-0 to clinch top spot in Group D. Already-qualified Australia edged Jordan 1-0 to record their eighth consecutive win in the second phase. Earlier, Japan confirmed their dominance in Group F with a 5-1 win over the Kyrgyz Republic in Suita, Japan.

In the other Group F match, Tajikistan beat Myanmar 4-0 in Osaka to seal second place.

(With inputs from AFC)

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ONLY
PURE
WATER
AND
PERFECT
TASTE

ONLY
WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL

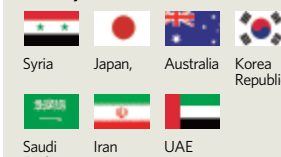
Omani



Oman players celebrate and acknowledge their fans' support after their win over Bangladesh at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Tuesday

12 QUALIFIED TEAMS

Group winners:



Best runners-up:



Every day, all day!