

OMAN

SULTANATE ADVANCES SIX PLACES IN EPI

WASHINGTON: The Sultanate advanced 6 positions in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) issued by Yale University in the United States of America. The Sultanate ranked 110th in the world, compared to the 116th place in the 2018 Index. The Sultanate ranked 50th globally in the sub-indicator of Household Solid Waste Management, 96th in air quality indicator, 57th in Drinking Water and Sanitation, second globally in the Species Protection, and 7th globally in Biodiversity indicator. The Environmental Performance Index 2020 includes 32 environmental indicators, 12 of which are used for the first time covering 11 environmental fields.

WORLD

TRUMP AND BIDEN HIT KEY STATES

WATERFORD: Donald Trump was visiting five swing states on Sunday in a furious blitz of campaigning against challenger Joe Biden with just two days left before a US presidential election that has already drawn a record number of early votes. Biden focused on a state vital to both men: Pennsylvania, where the former vice president plans two socially distanced events in Philadelphia. The last-minute scramble came as polls showed Biden maintaining his overall lead but with some tightening in states including Pennsylvania, where he leads by a half-dozen points.

DETAILS ON P8

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ROYAL DIRECTIVES TO SET UP 6 PRIORITY SCHOOLS



MUSCAT: The Diwan of Royal Court on Sunday issued a statement reading as follows: “Within the context of the attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the education sector and His Majesty’s keenness to provide a supportive, incentivising environment for education and to empower it with all means, since it is the mainstay of nation building now and in future, His Majesty the Sultan has issued his Royal directives to the Diwan of Royal Court to fund the construction of six priority schools to the tune of RO 8.85 million in the forthcoming period .

“May the Almighty Allah grant His Majesty the Sultan long life and may He assist His Majesty with success and guard him as a treasured support and inspiration for Oman and its loyal people!” — ONA

Students happy to be back at school

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

An exceptional new academic year began in Oman to a smooth start after a two-month delay due to COVID-19.

According to the Ministry of Education, 676,943 students from 1,182 schools started blended education on Sunday.

Parents and teachers who spoke to the *Observer* said that several technical issues still need to be resolved, but this a new beginning in difficult circumstances.

“Getting access to the education portal was also tough”, said a teacher.

While parents had their share of concern over the new system, children welcomed return to studies, especially the Grade 12 students who were back in their schools.

A ministry report quoting Saeed bin Hamad al Junaibi, a Grade 12 student from Al Wusta, said: “Before going to school I was very afraid of infection, but on entering the school



I found all precautionary measures were in place, including temperature checks, and wearing masks.” He also praised the cleanliness of the classrooms, corridors and toilets.

Muhammad Sultan Ali al Kaabi from Al Buraimi Governorate, said: “I am overjoyed to return to school after a long vacation we spent at home. I met my friends and teachers.”

Dyaan bint Ali al Busaidiyah, another Grade 12 student from Al Wusta, said: “It is a nice feeling to go back to school after a long hiatus.”

Hammoud bin Nasser al Nawfali, an Arabic language teacher from Al Batinah Governorate, said: “It is not without difficulties and challenges, including the Internet network and the great pressure on it, the availability of devices for students, and the students’ lack of knowledge of how to deal with the platform. But we are optimistic and it is time for a change and start a new e-learning path.”

SEE ALSO P2

Fiscal balance plan to avert budget deficits

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance on Sunday announced its mid-term fiscal balance plan (2020-2024) which was approved by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, according to a statement issued by the Council of Ministers on October 22.

The plan is aimed at achieving sustainable levels of fiscal balance by the end of 2024 and preparing fiscal conditions that are supportive of the Oman Vision-2040.

The mid-term fiscal balance plan involves a set of initiatives some of which have entered the implementation stage, while others will be enforced according to priority and preparedness taking into account the necessity of gradual implementation of these procedures in consideration of the ensuing economic and social effects.

For that purpose, a comprehensive social protection system has been set up to help

limited-income segments cope with the impact of some financial policies.

The announcement of the plan comes within the context of continued fall in oil prices in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the global economy and lowered the demand for energy thereby affecting various economic sectors.

The fiscal balance plan will be published on the Ministry of Finance’s website in both Arabic and English to be available for local stockholders both from the Sultanate and abroad.

It is noteworthy that by implementing a set of initiatives and policies, the Sultanate seeks to avert a continuation of financial deficits as well as avoid the decline in the Sultanate’s credit ratings and improving them in order to achieve safe levels which are attractive to investors. — ONA

SEE P3

The plan is aimed at achieving sustainable levels of fiscal balance by the end of 2024

PCR test, 7-day quarantine must for all passengers

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has said that people arriving in the Sultanate from abroad have to undergo a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test within a period of not more than 96 hours prior to entry time.

They should also undergo the same test upon arriving in the Sultanate, observe a 7-day quarantine period and repeat the PCR test on the eighth day.

The test should be conducted in accordance with the document furnished by the Ministry of Health citing conditions and requirements.

The decision was made during a meeting held at the Interior Ministry on Sunday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Chairman of the Supreme Committee. — ONA

Study finds presence of 8 types of wild mammals in Dhofar

MUSCAT: A new scientific breakthrough has confirmed the presence of the Arabian Leopard in the area west of the Wilayat of Dhalkout in the Governorate of Dhofar.

This was revealed by a recent environmental study carried out by the Office for Environmental Conservation at the Diwan of the Royal Court, represented by the Environmental Affairs Department in Salalah.

This study is considered the first scientific documentation of this rare species in the region. The study revealed the presence of eight types



of wild mammals inhabiting the region, according to the indicators of relative density. These mammals are the Arabian wolf, Porcupine, genet, Lynx, Striped Hyena, Honey Badger, Mongoose and Rock Hyrax.

The results indicate the biological diversity in the area under study and its environmental importance, especially with its incubation of a number of wild mammals that are endangered or vulnerable to extinction according to the classification of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is worth mentioning that the Arabian Leopard is a rare breed

of tigers that inhabits the Arabian Peninsula and has been classified by IUCN as being critically endangered.

This rare animal is found in the Sultanate in the Governorate of Dhofar. The field studies carried out by the Office for Environmental Conservation at the Diwan of the Royal Court for 23 years confirmed the presence of the Arabian Leopard along the mountains of Dhofar from Hasik in the east to the Wilayat of Dhalkout in the west, in addition to spotting it in the previous years in some Najd areas, north of the Dhofar mountains.

— ONA

Renaissance march presses ahead with confidence

The Sultanate has embarked on establishing tasks of Oman Vision 2040, which will begin to be implemented with effect from 2021. It is the vision which embodies the great expectations of Omani people for a brighter future

MUSCAT: As the cool sun of the 1st of November rises, shimmering on the horizon, it finds Omanis on a date with history — their hearts and minds full of enthusiasm. It is the blissful moment, which depicts the dawn of Oman's modern renaissance, the epic march that still zooms forward, with full confidence and aptitude, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Since he assumed the reins of power in the country on January 11, 2020, His Majesty the Sultan has made every effort—armed with firm will, prudence and farsightedness—to follow the tracks of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour, the founder of Oman's modern renaissance. With this determination in mind, His Majesty Sultan Haitham focused on preserving what the late Sultan has accomplished. He built upon



his achievements, so as to elevate further the towering edifice of Oman and to promote standards of its people for a better life, albeit with the participation of its citizens, their cooperation and the collaboration of all efforts towards enriching the experience of development, progress and prosperity—all inspired to serve the country, safeguard its values and gains and enhance its security and stability.

In his historic speech on 20 February 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham laid down solid principles that outline the features of the forthcoming important stage in the country's comprehensive march of growth, his focus being the youth of the nation who represent its present force and future aspiration.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his keenness to listen to youth, sense their needs and explore their interests, which, he reaffirmed, will be accorded due care.

His Majesty the Sultan also underscored the significance of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector and the sector of entrepreneurship; particularly start-ups based on innovation, artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies. He laid emphasis on training youth and enabling them to benefit from the opportunities available in this vital sector, so that they could build the core component of a smart economic system.

Guided by the judicious directives of His Majesty the Sultan, the Sultanate has embarked on establishing tasks of Oman

Vision 2040, which will begin to be implemented with effect from 2021. It is the vision which embodies the great expectations of Omani people for a brighter future.

The strategic approaches of this vision have been defined in accordance with priority goals, on top of which comes a high-quality educational system, an effective schema of research and innovation to build a knowledge-based economy, the empowerment of nationals with expertise and dynamic skills that farewell at the local and international arenas, the achievement of sustainable healthcare and the employment of an administration that supports economic diversification.

The Royal directives also underline the need to establish an attractive environment at the labour market, so that the private sector could take the lead in constructing a competitive national economy that fits well with the global economy. This is in addition to sustaining environment safety and building a comprehensive geographic development based on decentralisation and integration of roles of the Government, the private sector and the community. All these priorities are part and parcel of a strategic approach to shape out a society that is fond of its identity and culture and faithful to its citizenship.

With effect from next year, the Sultanate commences its 10th Five Year Development Plan (2021-2025), which will be the first plan in Oman Vision 2040.

— ONA

■ NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

Blended education new learning curve for students, teachers

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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For the first time, students and teachers went into a new mode of teaching and learning in Oman as the new academic year began with the use of online platforms except for 12th grade.

Many parents chose to stay back on Sunday to ease the transition back to school in a digital world due to the pandemic and it seemed to have made a difference.

According to Lamia Juma al Sinani, trainer for teachers of English language, South Al Sharqiyah, Ministry of Education, for some children there was difficulty, but for students who had parents' support the first day was easier.

"It was a new experience and some children were struggling in the smaller grades but others accessed easily. As for the 12th graders, they went to school and some schools were so well prepared that students knew their designated classes the day before. Other schools informed the students this morning and informed them whether they are in this week's batch or next week, and the books were handed over today," explained Lamia.

These were the two main challenges students faced on the first day, "The main challenge



was the Internet coverage in some areas. The second challenge was students being confused about accessing and getting their passwords although the Ministry of Education had sent videos earlier on how to access classrooms, some children struggled to access."

Teacher trainers at the Ministry of Education had been busy with preparing teachers to work on the new platform – Google Classroom and other applications since the beginning of October. Lamia and her colleagues have been conducting training sessions and she herself trained 128 teachers on using the new format for grade 5 to 12.

"The teachers have been trained on how to access, how to use the Google classroom, how to create classes online, planning their

classwork online, how to make the homework, how to use the different applications that support teachers to conduct classes online, as well as electronic assessment, grading and registering marks," she explained.

An interesting observation she had while training was this: "I had the opportunity to train the teachers who have been doing so for a while as well as new teachers. The teachers who have been teaching in the traditional classrooms had a bit of difficulty, but new teachers were catching up fast and learning easily as they were used to some of the format in their universities. The fact is it all depends on how knowledgeable the teacher is in dealing with technology. It basically depends on how traditional the teacher is, how ready he/she is to learn the

new technology and apply it."

The new platform is easy and all it needs is for teachers to get used to it, said the teacher trainer. Each teacher has gone through five-day training with two sessions per day – 10 sessions in total. As for the teachers who needed help, they were given special classes in the evening online as extra support.

This is what the teacher trainer has as advice. "Technology is coming whether we want it or not and it is not difficult as it is a matter of getting used to the new methods. Online teaching is a must if not today then tomorrow. This is a new curve in teaching because for years we have been teaching face to face and now we are teaching online. It is a bit challenging for teachers but it is not impossible. It is a learning point for them. And they have to keep practising it and then it becomes easier."

And these are the tips for the students, "My advice for students is to have a clear outline on when to study and what to study. Focus on how to get the information easily. They have to learn and search for their information on their own and have to apply critical thinking, skills and self-education as well. So they should be eager to learn more as there would be no spoon-feeding and they have to run after information and knowledge."



Minister values Royal directives on schools

MUSCAT: Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, has valued the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Diwan of Royal Court on setting up six priority schools over the forthcoming period.

"The Royal directives come within the context of His Majesty's keenness to provide support to school education and enhance the ministry's efforts to meet the actual needs of schools, including buildings, which serve as centres for learning and grooming of our offspring," said the minister.

She added that the Royal gesture reflects His Majesty the Sultan's conviction in the role of education in shaping the present and future of the nation, as well as the importance he attaches to providing all means and facilities necessary for the Ministry of Education to accomplish its mission.

Dr Madeeha greeted teachers

and the educational staff on the occasion of the new School Year (2020-2021), which began today.

She expressed her thanks and appreciation for their efforts in forming the front line in imparting knowledge to the young generation.

The minister also congratulated the pupils and students on the occasion. She wished that this year, in which the System of Blended Learning and online education has been endorsed, would be a year full of activity and acquisition of knowledge from various sources and platforms.

Dr Madeeha urged the students to interact fruitfully with their teachers during online classes. She also called upon parents and guardians to follow up the education of their children and advise them to utilise their time wisely so that they could get the desired benefits.

— ONA

SLICE OF ANCIENT OMAN

Adam



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The Wilayat of Adam represents a slice of the history of Oman. In terms of heritage, it is of immense importance for the country.

Adam, which is 295 km from Muscat beyond Nizwa, is situated north of the wilayats of Manah and Bahla and in the south by the wilayats of Mahout and Haima a part of the Wusta Governorate. In the southwest the Wilayat of Ibri, which is a part of the Al Dhahirah, and in the east, the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, which is a part of the Al

Sharqiyah.

It is the last green oasis before the desert. The town comprises a number of villages that look together as one village.

Some say that the name of Adam comes from 'Adim Al Ardh' (surface of the earth), while others say it refers to fertile land which is located in the middle of the desert.

Harrat Al Jami, with its two-storied mud buildings, takes you down the corridors of time. The bedrooms, living rooms and kitchen were on the upper floors, and some of the larger dwellings, such as Imam Ahmed bin Said al

Busaidi's residence featured steps which enabled water to be drawn from wells, in addition to wash basins and toilets.

The strong walls of the house of Imam Ahmed bin Said al Busaidi (1744-1783), the founder of the Al Busaidi dynasty, stand as mute testimony to his steadfastness and resolve to unite the country.

Houses in Harrat Al Jami are the most magnificent specimens of Omani traditional architecture. There are many other harrats (neighbourhoods) that consist of mud houses like Al Rogha, Al Rahba, Al Ain, Bani Wael, Hisn Al

Hawashim, Al Nahdha, Al Alaya, Al Qala, Al Sumairat, Bani Shaiban, Al Aneb and Al Shuaibah. Most of the houses have inscriptions and decorations on their walls. There is also an amazing maze of lanes separating the houses, some of them wide while others narrow. The harrats are surrounded by date palms and verdant farms which provide a picturesque setting for the neighbourhoods.

The wilayat has a watchtower, an old Holy Quran school, many forts and castles.

There are three springs in the Wilayat of Adam; Rakhim and

Jandali, are located at the foot of Jabal Salakh, while Nama is located on the banks of Wadi Halfain.

Adam's inhabitants are engaged in iron works, weaving palm leaves, wool weaving, bee keeping and making of Omani sweets.

Adam is the birthplace of many scholars and leaders.

Adam's deserts are rich in minerals and oil. As Adam is home to a vast desert, it becomes the Bedouin's destination during the summer season. Adam has attracted many visitors to explore the nomadic life practiced by these Bedouins.



Algeria votes on constitution aimed at ending protest movement

ALGIERS: Polls opened in Algeria on Sunday for a vote on a revised constitution the regime hopes will neutralise a protest movement which at its peak last year swept long-time president Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power. Bouteflika's successor Abdelmadjid Tebboune, currently hospitalised overseas, has pitched the text as meeting the demands of the Hirak, a youth-led movement that staged vast weekly demonstrations for more than a year until the coronavirus pandemic stopped rallies. But despite a determined government media campaign for a resounding "yes" vote to usher in a "new Algeria", observers say the document offers little new. "Nothing has changed. The ultra-presidential regime will stay," said Massena's Cherbi, a constitutional expert at Sciences Po university in Paris. Tebboune has placed Sunday's referendum at the forefront of efforts to turn the page on the Hirak movement. And after a campaign that



An Algerian man casts his ballot at a polling station in Algiers on Sunday. — AFP

saw the "yes" camp dominate state-backed media coverage and supporters of a "no" vote banned from holding meetings, few observers doubt that the text will pass. "I voted 'yes' so my country doesn't collapse," said Djillali Bouazza, a 78-year-old retiree. The key question is how many people will vote. Tebboune said on Saturday that Algerians will once again "have a

rendezvous with history" to bring in a "new era capable of fulfilling the hopes of the nation and the aspirations of our people for a strong, modern and democratic state". The 74-year-old president is hospitalised in Germany amid reports of COVID-19 cases among his staff, and few details have been released on his condition. Seen by opponents as an old-school regime insider, Tebboune

came to power following a December 2019 presidential poll marred by record abstentionism. The Hirak movement led calls for a boycott of that election, and even official data put the turnout at less than 40 per cent. Experts say the referendum is partly a bid by Tebboune for a more convincing validation at the ballot box. Rather than attacking the Hirak, Tebboune has ostensibly reached out to it, describing it as a "blessed, authentic popular movement" and arguing that the revised constitution meets its demands. But despite his conciliatory language, many observers are sceptical, especially given how the document was written. "The drafting and consultation process was highly controlled by the state," said Zaid al Ali, a senior adviser on constitution building at International Idea. "It's hard to argue that the Hirak's demands for a fully inclusive debate on the state's constitution was respected." — AFP

Man rescued from rubble as Turkey quake death toll hits 51

IZMIR: A 70-year-old man was pulled from the rubble of a flattened building in western Turkey early on Sunday after being buried under the debris for 33 hours following a powerful earthquake which struck the country's Aegean coast and Greek islands. The death toll from Friday afternoon's quake rose to 51. Turkish authorities have announced 49 deaths in the coastal city of Izmir, while two teenagers died on the Greek island of Samos. The man, identified as Ahmet Citim, was rescued from the rubble of the residential "Riza Bey" building, one of the 20 residencies that collapsed during the earthquake. Officials said 20 buildings were destroyed in Izmir's Bayrakli district which was in the process of urban transformation due to lack of earthquake resistance. Turkey is crossed by fault lines and is prone to earthquakes.

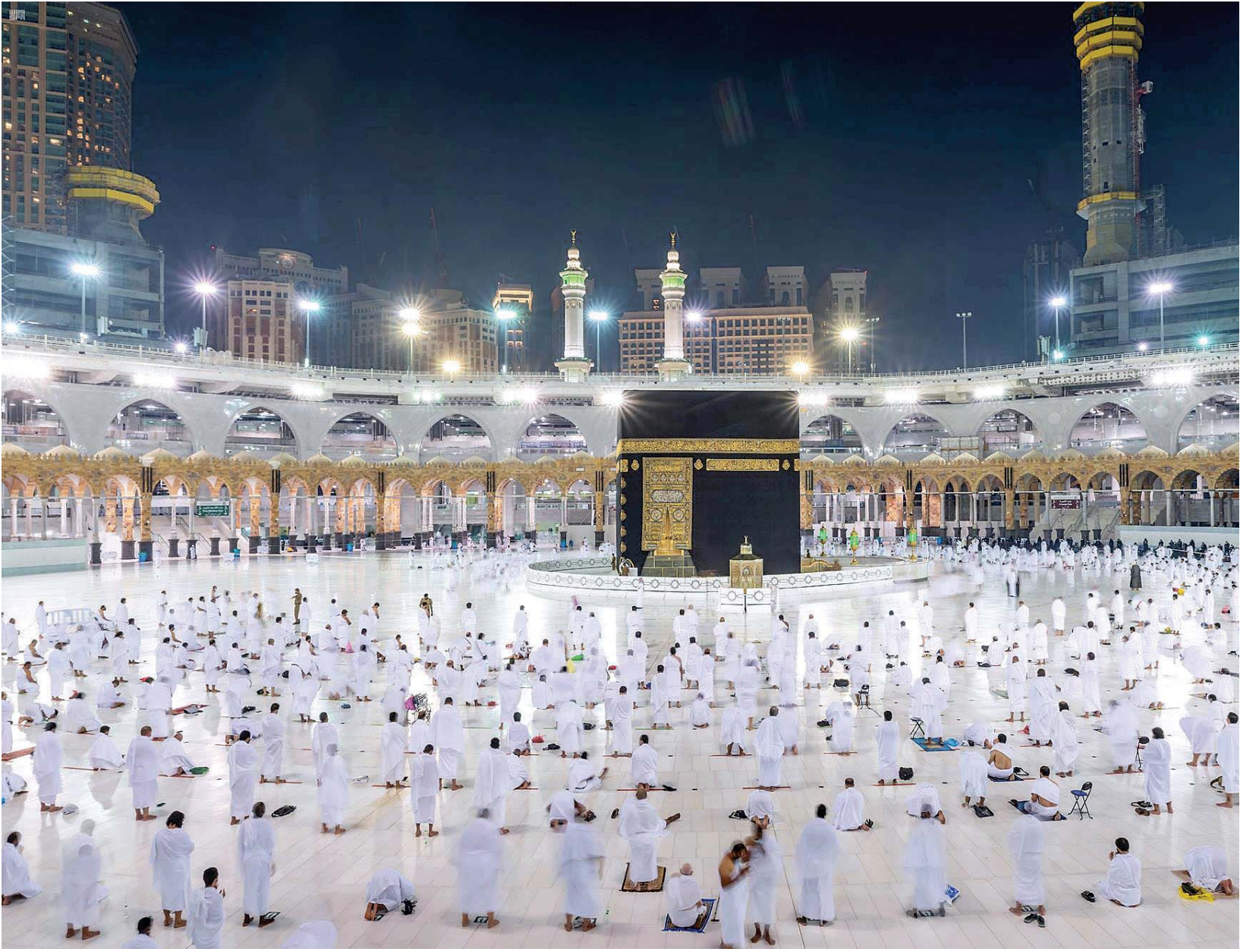
In 1999, two powerful quakes killed 18,000 people in northwestern Turkey. The Friday earthquake, which the Istanbul-based Kandilli Institute said had a magnitude of 6.9, was centred in the Aegean Sea, northeast of Samos. President Tayyip Erdogan said 885 people had been injured, 15 of them critically. "Sixteen-year-old Inci Okan was trapped under the rubble of the same 8-story building as the elderly man before being rescued 17 hours after the strong quake, along with her dog Fistik (Pistachio). Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca and National Medical Rescue Team (UMKE) member Edanur Dogan visited Okan at the hospital. Emergency worker Dogan had held the girl's hand while rescue teams removed the debris above her. "I am very happy. Thankfully my father was not at home. My father couldn't fit there. — Reuters

Crammed into camps, displaced Syrians fear spread of coronavirus

QAH, Syria: Hassan Sweidan is terrified he will catch COVID-19 in the overcrowded displacement camp in northwest Syria he calls home, even more so as medical staff in the region have become sick. Humanitarian workers fear any further rise in novel coronavirus cases would be disastrous in northwest Syria, where almost 1.5 million people live in overcrowded camps or shelters, often with poor access to running water. In an informal settlement in Idlib, the country's last major rebel stronghold, Sweidan said he and other displaced Syrians did not stand much chance against the disease. "We live in a camp all crammed in together. If someone talks to his family, all the neighbours can hear it," said Sweidan, who is in his forties and has an existing health condition. If someone gets sick, "it's hardly the disease's fault," the father of six added. In the encampment in Qah, a few makeshift solar panels shimmer on the canvas roofs of

endless tiny breeze-block rooms where families have settled after being uprooted by war. Resting after helping a friend build a small room to serve as a shop, Sweidan said he hopes he does not have to take anyone in his family to the local hospital. "Hospitals are overcrowded. People have started to be scared of doctors and nurses, who they think might be infected, with all the sick people going to them." 'END OUR MISERY' Sweidan, who fled his home seven years ago, especially fears catching the COVID-19 disease as he suffers from a chronic liver condition. "One of my relatives got it a while back, and I'm really scared because I have no immunity," he said. The Idlib bastion — now dominated by a group led by Syria's former Al Qaeda affiliate — has been battered by years of war. Local and international humanitarian workers are working to contain the virus, but cases are still on the rise. — AFP

BELIEVERS PERFORM UMRAH



Believers, keeping a safe social distance, perform Umrah at the Grand Mosque after Saudi authorities eased the COVID-19 restrictions, in the holy city of Mecca, on Sunday. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

TEL AVIV

Israel starts human trials on vaccine

Israel began human trials on Sunday for its COVID-19 vaccine candidate which, if successful, could be ready for the general public by the end of next summer. Eighty volunteers will initially take part in the trial that will be expanded to 960 people in December. Should those trials succeed a third stage with 30,000 volunteers is scheduled for April/May. "We are in the final stretch," said Shmuel Shapira, Director General of the Israel Institute for Biological Research. The



institute, which is overseen by the Defense Ministry, began animal trials for its "BriLife" vaccine in March and announced a week ago it had received regulatory approval to take it to the next stage.

TRIPOLI

Libyan rivals to meet on home soil today

The UN's Libya mission has said that a joint military commission with representatives from the two parties to the country's conflict will meet this week on Libyan soil. The November 2-4 talks will be the first time the teams have met on Libyan territory, UNSMIL said. "Participants will initiate discussions in the implementation of the ceasefire agreement," the UN said, referring to an October 23 deal

signed in Geneva. Talks will take place in Ghadames, a desert oasis some 465 kilometres southwest of the capital Tripoli, near Libya's borders with Algeria and Tunisia. Libya has been dominated by armed groups and divided between two bitterly-opposed administrations: a UN-recognised Government of National Accord based in the capital Tripoli, and another in the east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

TEHRAN

Iran's daily COVID death toll hits record high

Iran's daily tally of coronavirus deaths hit a record high of 434 on Sunday, the authorities said, a day after announcing stringent new restrictions including the closure of schools, universities and mosques in most of the country. The deaths, announced by Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari on state TV, take the national toll to 35,298. She said the number of confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 7,719 to 620,491. President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that



new restrictions will take effect on Wednesday in 25 of Iran's 31 provinces for 10 days. To stem a third wave of the virus in Iran, the government has banned weddings, wakes and conferences in the Iranian capital until further notice.

Ten dead as Typhoon Goni batters Philippines

MANILA: At least ten people were killed as Typhoon Goni pounded the Philippines on Sunday, ripping off roofs, toppling power lines and causing flooding in the hardest-hit areas where hundreds of thousands have fled their homes.

The strongest typhoon of the year also triggered deadly landslides that buried a number of houses in the southern part of the most populous island of Luzon, officials said.

Goni was a "super typhoon" when it made landfall on Catanduanes Island before dawn, packing maximum sustained wind speeds of 225 kilometres per hour.

It was downgraded a few hours later as it swept across Luzon and reduced intensity as it headed towards the capital Manila, where the sprawling city of 12 million was bracing for strong winds in the evening.

"Destructive winds and intense rainfall" were affecting areas in the typhoon's path, including provinces near the capital, the state weather forecaster warned in its latest update.

Goni comes a week after Typhoon Molave hit the same



A man looks at his house buried under the pile of rubble and sand following flash floods brought by Typhoon 'Goni' in Barangay Busay, Daraga town, Albay province, on Sunday. — Reuters

region of the natural disaster-prone archipelago, killing 22 people.

At least ten people were killed in Albay province, Civil Defence said in a statement.

Several of the victims died in rain-induced landslides of volcanic ash that police said

engulfed numerous houses in two adjacent villages near the active Mayon volcano in the province.

"We have recovered three bodies and are looking for three more," said Major Domingo Tapel, chief of police in Guinobatan town.

The roofs of at least two

evacuation centres were torn off by the force of the wind, while floods inundated some villages.

"The winds are fierce. We can hear the trees being pummelled. It's very strong," Francia Mae Borrás, 21, said from her home in the nearby coastal city of Legazpi.

Nearly 400,000 people have

The strongest typhoon of the year triggered deadly landslides that buried a number of houses in the southern part of the most populous island of Luzon

fled their homes, most of them to evacuation centres, Civil Defence said.

Various officials in affected areas have reported power cuts, which are disrupting telecommunication services and hampering efforts to assess the extent of the damage.

"Our roads have a lot of debris from the mountains such as branches and sand, some which came from Mayon (volcano). Some roads are unpassable," said Carlos Irwin Baldo, the mayor of Camalig, near Legazpi.

In Manila, the airport was closed and residents were evacuated from low-lying slum areas at risk of being inundated by several-metres-high storm surges.

"It's better to be safe," Arman

Atuel, 33, said as he sat with his wife in a vehicle taking people to shelters.

CORONAVIRUS COMPLICATIONS

Schools, which have been empty since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, are being used as emergency shelters, as are government-run evacuation centres and gymnasiums.

COVID-19 patients being treated in tent facilities have been evacuated, officials said.

The Philippines has recorded more than 380,000 infections, including more than 7,200 deaths, which has stretched its resources and complicated evacuations.

Mary Ann Echague, 23, and her family fled their home in Legazpi on Saturday to an inland primary school where they were sheltering in a classroom with several other families.

"We fear the wrath of the typhoon," said Echague, who was with her two children, parents and siblings. They had carried with them a portable stove, tinned meat, instant noodles, coffee, bread, blankets and pillows.

— AFP

Thousands of Thai royalists put on show of force for king



Royalist supporters hold portraits showing Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida during a gathering outside the Grand Palace in Bangkok on Sunday. — AFP

BANGKOK: Thousands of yellow-shirted Thai royalists staged their biggest show of support for the monarchy so far on Sunday in the face of months of protests that have called for royal reforms as well as the removal of the government.

"It's time that we come out to protect our beloved monarchy," said Bin Bunleurt, a former film star turned rescue volunteer who had encouraged people to demonstrate at the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

"Everyone has the right to advocate for whatever change they want, but what is the reason they want to reform the monarchy?"

The Palace has made no comment since the start of the protests in mid-July.

Protesters say King Maha Vajiralongkorn's powers are too great and want to reverse changes that gave him personal control of some army units and a palace fortune valued in the tens of billions of dollars.

They criticise the king's long stays in Germany as wasteful and accuse the monarchy of enabling decades of army domination by accepting coups such as the one in which Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha took power in 2014.

Student and youth-led protests initially sought the removal of

Prayuth, but have become the greatest challenge to the monarchy since the end of absolute royal rule in 1932.

The biggest protests have drawn tens of thousands of people, many times more than the royalists have brought out, even including accompanying members of security forces who are also ordered to wear yellow - the king's colour.

Suwit Thongprasert, a defrocked Buddhist monk and royalist leader, welcomed the size of the crowd on Sunday.

"It is a signal to those who want to abolish the monarchy to think of the people," he told reporters. Prayuth's government banned protests last month and arrested many of the best known leaders, but the emergency measures were cancelled after they backfired by drawing many more people onto Bangkok streets.

Three high-profile protest leaders were hospitalised over the weekend after police said they were being re-arrested at the expiry of the limit to their detention.

One of them passed out in police custody in scenes that angered protesters.

Prayuth has said he will not resign and rejects accusations that elections last year were engineered for his benefit.

— Reuters



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Chairman's Report

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited Financial Statements for the nine months ended 30 Sep 2020.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (RO'000)

	Jan-Sep 2020	Jan-Sep 2019	Inc /(dec)	Inc/(dec) %
Sales	254,529	352,582	(98,053)	(28%)
Gross profit	16,387	21,855	(5,468)	(25%)
Other income	1,958	1,289	669	52%
Total expenses	(18,017)	(20,115)	(2,098)	(10%)
Net profit after tax	328	3,029	(2,701)	(89%)
Earnings per share (RO)	0.0048	0.0439	(0.0391)	(89%)
Book value per share (RO)	0.591	0.651	(0.060)	(9%)
Net equity (RO'000)	40,801	44,924	(4,123)	(9%)

The economy recovered slightly in the third quarter, after Covid-19 containment measures and easing of restrictions, despite continuance of restrictions on air travel.

Total sales during the period dropped by about RO 98 million i.e. about 28 % from RO 352.5 million during Jan-Sep 2019 to RO 254.5 million in Jan-Sep 2020 mainly due to the drop in sales in retail & aviation sector.

Profitability improved during the III Qtr 2020 compared to the I Qtr & II Qtr 2020 and the net profit achieved amounts to RO 328 k for the period Jan-Sep 2020.

MARKETING PERFORMANCE

Retail segment continues to be our main focus as we strengthen our approach to modernize our existing retail infrastructure and at the same look forward to increase our retail network throughout Sultanate of Oman by developing new sites.

Commercial segment, despite stiff competition & challenging environment, continues to show positive growth due to the increase in supplies to energy sector.

Aviation segment performance is badly affected with the limited activity in the Muscat International airport for almost 6 months now. However, the expected resumption of Oman Air and other major airlines operations soon would certainly improve the performance in the next quarter.

MARKET SHARE

Based on the information published in the financial results of the other petroleum products marketing companies, your Company's market share at the end of III quarter 2020 stood at 29%.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

With the Government doing its best to contain the effect of the pandemic, we are optimistic about the future prospects as business activities are coming back to normal, despite continuance of limited restrictions in limited economic activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On behalf of the Board of Directors and executive management, I take this opportunity, to express our most sincere gratitude and loyalty to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and his efforts in continuing the legacy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos towards a prosperous Oman.

We thank our shareholders, customers, the officials of Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market for their valuable support and co-operation. We also appreciate the dedicated and committed service of our staff members.

Juma Ali Al Juma Al-Juma
Chairman

29 October 2020

Financial statements for the nine months ended 30 Sep 2020

Statement of Financial Position

	At 30 Sep 2020 RO'000	At 30 Sep 2019 RO'000	At 31 Dec 2019 RO'000
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	29,938	31,753	31,079
Investment property	600	658	635
Right of use asset	3,632	3,320	3,515
Contract assets	998	861	1,026
Deferred tax assets	2,157	1,841	2,157
Total non-current assets	37,325	38,433	38,412
Current assets			
Inventories	3,448	4,139	4,522
Trade and other receivables	56,810	56,784	58,925
Short term deposit	-	-	20,000
Bank balances and cash	22,149	29,900	28,722
Total current assets	82,407	90,823	112,169
TOTAL ASSETS	119,732	129,256	150,581
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	6,900	6,900	6,900
Legal reserve	2,300	2,300	2,300
Retained earnings	29,497	33,620	33,999
Special reserve	2,104	2,104	2,104
Total equity	40,801	44,924	45,303
Liabilities			
Non-current liability			
Non-current portion of lease liability	2,827	2,537	2,631
Employees' end of service benefits	213	338	333
Total non-current liabilities	3,040	2,875	2,964
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	34,600	43,210	45,228
Bank borrowings	39,809	36,803	55,032
Current portion of lease liability	1,204	868	1,025
Contract liabilities	220	43	112
Taxation	58	533	917
Total current liabilities	75,891	81,457	102,314
Total liabilities	78,931	84,332	105,272
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	119,732	129,256	150,581
Net assets per share (RO)	0.591	0.651	0.657

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	Jan-Sep 2020 RO'000	Jan-Sep 2019 RO'000	Jan-Dec 2019 RO'000
INCOME			
Revenue from contracts with customers	254,529	352,582	468,140
Cost of sales	(238,142)	(330,727)	(438,829)
Gross profit	16,387	21,855	29,311
Other Income	1,958	1,289	2,079
Total Income	18,345	23,144	31,390
EXPENSES			
Salaries and other employee related costs	(3,992)	(3,805)	(5,377)
Operating expenses	(5,696)	(7,741)	(9,982)
Administration expenses	(2,993)	(3,609)	(5,418)
Depreciation & amortisation	(3,858)	(3,748)	(5,476)
Finance charges	(1,420)	(686)	(1,128)
Total Expenses	(17,959)	(19,589)	(27,381)
Profit before income tax	386	3,555	4,009
Income tax expense	(58)	(526)	(601)
Net Profit and Comprehensive income	328	3,029	3,408
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.0048	0.0439	0.0494

Note:

The complete report is available with the Muscat Securities Market on the company website. The complete report will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request. The request should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the above mentioned address.

TRUMP AND BIDEN

HIT KEY STATES IN FINAL WEEKEND SPRINT BEFORE VOTE

READING, US: Donald Trump was to visit five swing states on Sunday in a punishing finale to a frantic weekend sprint against challenger Joe Biden just days ahead of the US presidential election.

The candidates and their top surrogates barreled through crucial states in the industrial Midwest and coastal southeast on Saturday, pressing closing arguments.

Trump was to rally voters on Sunday with an exhausting schedule in toss-up states Michigan, Iowa, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida while Biden focuses on Pennsylvania, a key battleground likely to play a crucial role in Tuesday's election.

Underscoring the high stakes — and the disruptive impact of the coronavirus pandemic — a record 92 million early votes have already been cast, as the bruising contest heads towards the biggest turnout in at least a century.

Using some of his most urgent language yet, Trump warned on Saturday of “bedlam in our country” if no clear winner emerges quickly in the election, saying, without evidence, that it could take weeks to sort out a result and that “very bad things” could happen in the interim.

Biden meanwhile told backers it was “time for Donald Trump to pack his bags and go home.”

The virus has killed more than 230,000 Americans, ravaged the world's largest economy and



This combination of pictures created on Saturday shows President Donald Trump (panel L) and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden (panel R) and during campaign events in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and Delaware and Iowa respectively on Friday and Saturday. — AFP

is infecting record numbers of people across the US.

The election takes place in a deeply divided country, with feelings so raw that gun sales have surged in some areas. Businesses in some cities, including Washington, are protectively boarding windows,

and police are preparing for the possibility of violence.

Trump focused on Saturday on Pennsylvania — “the state where the story of American independence began,” he said in the small city of Newtown, the first of four stops in that state amid a

frenetic final sprint.

Biden made his first joint appearance of the campaign with his former boss Barack Obama — probably the most popular Democrat in the country — in Flint, Michigan as they scrambled to boost turnout in a

state Trump carried by a razor-thin margin in 2016.

‘LIFE OR DEATH’

Pennsylvania has emerged as one of the top prizes this year.

In his motorcade en route to rural Bucks County, the president

passed hundreds of supporters holding up a forest of pro-Trump signs. The crowd then booed trailing vehicles that were carrying reporters, a regular target of Trump's attacks.

In remarks he lashed out at Biden, saying he would shut down the state's fossil-fuel industry.

The president claimed credit for creating the “greatest economy in the history of this country — the history of the world” — while “foreign nations are in freefall.”

Despite recent signs of recovery from the virus-induced economic pain, however, millions remain jobless. The campaign has been overshadowed by the surging pandemic, which even sickened Trump and members of his staff.

Stanford University economists estimated in a study out on Thursday that 18 of Trump's campaign rallies had resulted in more than 30,000 coronavirus cases and more than 700 deaths — although not necessarily among attendees — based on statistical modelling.

In stark contrast to Trump, who has belittled mask-wearing by Biden and others, the Democrat has scrupulously followed the guidance of public health experts.

After Biden and Obama appeared on Saturday before a socially distanced drive-in rally in Flint, they made an unannounced stop in suburban Bloomfield Hills before heading to Detroit, where they were joined by superstar singer Stevie Wonder. — AFP

Swordsman in medieval clothing kills two in Quebec

MONTREAL: Two people were killed and five wounded in a Halloween attack in Quebec City by a sword-wielding suspect dressed in medieval clothing, Canadian police said early on Sunday.

The rampage occurred late on Saturday in multiple locations in the Old Quebec neighbourhood, near the tourist hotspot Chateau Frontenac and the National Assembly, the Quebec provincial parliament, according to police.

The suspect, “a man in his mid-20s,” was armed with a sword and dressed in “medieval clothing,”

Quebec City police spokesman Etienne Doyon said during a press briefing.

Police have not given a motive for the attacks.

According to three witnesses quoted by Quebec newspaper *Le Soleil*, the attacker killed his first victim near the Chateau Frontenac hotel and there was “a lot of blood.”

The man then continued on Rue des Remparts, where the second person was killed, before heading to the Old Port, wounding the other victims, according to the newspaper. — AFP

Covid-19

World toll Sunday November 1, 1100 GMT

Deaths	New	Cases	New
1,196,109	6,559	46,099,446	466,108

New: 24-hour increase on Saturday October 31

Hardest-hit countries

	Deaths	New (latest report)	Cases
UNITED STATES	230,556	776	9,127,109
BRAZIL	159,884	407	5,535,605
INDIA	122,111	470	8,184,082
MEXICO	91,753	464	924,962
UNITED KINGDOM	46,555	326	1,011,660
ITALY	38,618	297	679,430
FRANCE	36,788	223	1,367,625
SPAIN	35,878	0	1,185,678
IRAN	34,864	386	612,772
PERU	34,476	65	902,503
COLOMBIA	31,314	179	1,074,184
ARGENTINA	31,002	210	1,166,911

Increases over 24 hours may not tally exactly with previous day's total due to inavailability or late publication of data or corrections made by authorities

Sources: AFP count based on official toll



UK minister says lockdown in England could be extended

LONDON: The one-month lockdown for England announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson this weekend could be extended as Britain struggles to contain a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior cabinet member said on Sunday.

Johnson announced on Saturday that the lockdown across England would kick in after midnight on Thursday morning and last until December 2. The United Kingdom, which has the biggest official death toll in Europe from COVID-19, is grappling with more than 20,000 new coronavirus cases a day and scientists

have warned a worst-case scenario of 80,000 dead could be exceeded. So far, it has reported 46,555 COVID-19 deaths — defined as those dying within 28 days of a positive test. A broader measure of those with COVID-19 on their death certificates puts the toll at 58,925. Asked if a lockdown could be extended beyond early December, senior cabinet minister Michael Gove told Sky News: “Yes.” “We can definitively say that unless we take action now, the (health service) is going to be overwhelmed in ways that none of us could countenance.” — Reuters

TBILISI

Ruling party in Georgia wins parliament poll

The ruling party in Georgia won parliamentary elections, firming its grip on power, near-complete results showed on Sunday, but the opposition rejected the figures and promised permanent protests. With around 99 per cent of the votes in, data from the Central Election Commission (CEC) gave the ruling Georgian Dream party 48.07 per cent of the vote and the largest opposition party United National Movement (UNM) 27.12 per cent.



Several other opposition parties managed to clear the 1 per cent threshold for membership in parliament. The opposition said the elections were rigged and promised to hold protests until a new election was called.

CHISINAU

Moldovans vote in presidential election

Moldovans started to vote in a presidential election on Sunday in which the pro-Russian incumbent Igor Dodon is bidding for a second term against former prime minister Maia Sandu, who wants to pull the country closer to the European Union.

The election in the nation of 3.5 million, where the West and Russia vie for influence, takes place in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic that has pushed one of Europe's poorest countries into a sharp economic

downturn. Dodon took power in 2016 after pro-Western political forces became mired in scandals.

He has led opinion polls against seven other candidates going into Sunday's vote but may not win outright, which would lead to a run-off. Sandu, a Harvard-educated former World Bank economist known for her tough stance on corruption, led a short-lived coalition government last year that was brought down by a no confidence vote within months.

PARIS

France makes new arrests over Nice attack

French police have made two new arrests in the probe into an attack on a church in the southern city of Nice that left three dead, as authorities seek to understand the profile of the suspected killer, judicial sources said on Sunday.

Authorities are now holding a total of six people for questioning to understand if they were linked to Tunisian Brahim Issaoui, who prosecutors say carried out the knife rampage early on Thursday morning in the Notre-Dame Basilica.



It so far remains unclear if he had outside help for the attack, which French President Emmanuel Macron has described as an act of terror and was the latest of a string of attacks in recent weeks in France.

A learning beyond acquiring numeracy and literacy...

As education can't be stopped and learning continues, school students must always be provided with quality education regardless of when, where and how! Another turning point in our life due to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is the change in the educational system worldwide. Over the past months, schools, colleges and universities have either shut or adapted to online learning since early this year.

Like all their counterparts around the world, school students in Oman have the right to receive quality education and be well-educated. It is true what the former US president, John F Kennedy said: "A child miseducated is a child lost".

However, as education is not only preparation for life; but it is life itself, learning does not necessarily happen at school ambience only. Education could be obtained from other places as well. Home-schooled children, for instance, are getting their education at home by parents or private tutors.

Learning at home could take place when going to schools is neither safe nor encouraged. In the worst case scenario, going to school becomes a threat to one's safety rather than an advantage! At this point, learning at home would be the best option perhaps for the world is proceeding with online education as an attempt towards combating the spread of coronavirus.



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OMAN HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE QUALITY EDUCATION

Therefore, school students in the Sultanate have on Sunday resumed their virtual new academic year 2020/2021. Over 676,000 students and more than 56,600 teachers will be experiencing for the first-time online educational platform throughout the year.

Such a learning experience is new not only to students, but to their parents, teachers and society overall.

Actually, this year marks a different educational practice for the Ministry of Education, which has been hardly working on introducing this experience in a bid to continue the educational process in the Sultanate.

The online learning approach goes in line with the worldwide changing educational march to promote the continuing learning in all circumstances. Hopefully, it works well for all and good outcomes are expected to benefit all parties and individuals concerned as students, parents and teachers alike.

Dear students and teachers, welcome back to the new academic year on a virtual school-like environment! With the different misconceptions being rumoured around about the new learning approach and online platform, stay positive and make the most of such distinct educational know-how experience.

Possibly, it stands as an educational opportunity that goes far beyond acquiring numeracy and literacy skills. It enables teachers to make well-balanced decisions and learn problem

and conflicts solving techniques. Likewise, it helps students improve their critical thinking and creative talents.

On the other hand, this new learning experience might be very challenging for parents. The inability to provide comfortable family learning environment could be a burden for some parents. When parents themselves lack literacy and numeracy skills, they are less able to reinforce what children are learning online. Other factors, such as a stressful or violent home environment can also highly obstruct a child's learning. However, as the world is rapidly changing by adapting to new technology, parents are urged to accept the experience as a turning opportunity towards adjusting to future quality education for their children.

Let us all, parents, teachers and community as a whole lend a hand of support to Ministry of Education towards making this year a success for all. It is a responsibility of all to make this year differently rewarding learning experience for school students. As the roots of education are bitter, we should remind students that a better future will never be guaranteed without a sacrifice; with no pain, no gain!

Dear all students and teachers, wish you all have an insightful and wonderful learning experience. The Lebanese-American writer and poet, Kahlil Gibran, says that education sows not seeds in you, but makes your seeds grow.

EDGE OVER MEN

Tech-savvy women could beat COVID-19 job blues

BAN BARKAWI

As COVID-19 swells the ranks of unemployed women in the Arab world, surging demand for digital skills could help many of them find work in a region where only one in four women has a job.

The pandemic has taken an especially heavy toll on retail, tourism and hospitality jobs traditionally held by women, but experts say those able to retrain could tap into growth areas like digital marketing, e-commerce and online customer support.

"This is a tremendous opportunity. These are areas where you can reskill someone relatively quickly", said Jasmine di Florio, Senior Vice President at Education for Employment (EFE), a job training non-profit for young people in the Middle East and North Africa.

"We need to teach young women all kinds of digital skills but we also need to continue to teach them human skills — things like empathy, teamwork, leadership... (that) are in even greater demand now because so much is going digital."

The fourth industrial revolution — a term referring to the new era of digital advances that is changing the way people live and work — is expected to double job opportunities for women in the region by 2030, according to a 2020 McKinsey study.

JASMINE DI FLORIO
EFE official

Many women are already finding new opportunities — sometimes by putting their new-found tech skills to work in jobs where they have an innate edge over men. One of EFE's trainees, Walaa Shahahdeh, who has her own business repairing smartphones, said her services were in high demand among women in her community who did not want men seeing personal photos on their devices.

"Technology is constantly evolving. You have to keep up to date... because new devices keep coming out and repairs will never stop", said Shahahdeh, 30, who comes from the Tafileh governorate in south-central Jordan.

"Because of high usage during coronavirus due to remote learning and work from home, devices are breaking down more often and I'm getting more calls."

The pandemic is expected to push 700,000 Middle Eastern women out of work in 2020 — about 40 per cent of the 1.7 million total jobs expected to be lost, according to aid organisation Oxfam. That is despite women in the Middle East and North Africa only accounting for a quarter of the workforce — the world's lowest rate of female participation in the labour market.

In hard-hit countries like Lebanon, where an August 4 explosion compounded the impact of a financial crisis and COVID-19, the number of unemployed women in June 2020 was up 63 per cent compared with figures from 2018 and 2019, according to UN Women.

New job prospects could provide some relief, though the additional burden of unpaid work — such as childcare and supervising remote schooling, is likely to widen the digital gap between men and women in Arab states. That could mean retraining is even more of a challenge for women, said Manuel Langendorf, a researcher on digital transformation in the region. — Thomson Reuters Foundation

BIGGEST CONCERN

Vote for your life — Why 2020 might be the COVID-19 election

IVAN COURONNE

At the end of January, a little after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States, the New York Stock Exchange hit an all-time high, and Donald Trump's biggest concern was the impact of Boeing's woes on the economy.

"The American Dream is back, bigger, better and stronger than ever before", the US president declared in Davos, already in campaign mode. Fast-forward nine months. More than nine million confirmed infected with the coronavirus and close to 230,000 have died from COVID-19 — making it the third leading cause of death for the year.

The numbers become even more grim when the hundred thousand or so additional deaths from misdiagnosed COVID-19 cases and indirect causes are added to the tally.

Despite an impressive rebound in the third quarter, millions of Americans lost their jobs, shattering the most reliable electoral argument of American presidents in search of a second term — that of economic strength.

Trump's defeat at the polls this Tuesday is far from assured, and the Republican believes the electorate



An attendee wearing a face mask watches Joe Biden at a campaign drive-in, mobilisation event in Detroit, Michigan. — Reuters

DESPITE AN IMPRESSIVE REBOUND IN THE THIRD QUARTER, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS LOST THEIR JOBS

will punish his rival Joe Biden for failing to campaign extensively on the ground. But his handling of the pandemic has certainly cost him votes.

Like that of Kimberly McLemore, a 56-year-old from St Augustine, Florida who worked in jewellery before the

pandemic hit.

McLemore, a lifelong Republican, said she thought Trump was doing a good job at the start, when he held daily briefings and seemed to listen to scientists, but she later realised he was not taking the crisis seriously.

— AFP

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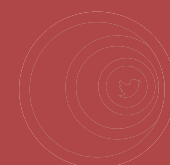
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Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores their first goal from the penalty spot. – Reuters

Liverpool go top, wins for Chelsea and Man City

BURNLEY, England: Liverpool moved clear at the top of the Premier League with a hard-fought 2-1 win over West Ham United, while Chelsea and Manchester City also enjoyed victories on Saturday.

Chelsea cruised to a 3-0 scoreline at winless Burnley while City edged Sheffield United 1-0 away with full-back Kyle Walker scoring against his former club.

Liverpool are top on 16 points, three more than local rivals Everton who visit Newcastle United on Sunday. Wolverhampton Wanderers, who beat Crystal Place 2-0 on Friday, are third, also on 13 points, while Chelsea have moved up to fourth, level with Aston Villa and

Leicester City on 12.

Juergen Klopp's Liverpool side still look far from their best but will be encouraged that they extended their unbeaten home tally to a club record-equalling 63 games despite being below par and missing several regular starters.

Pablo Fornals took advantage of a poor header from Joe Gomez to fire West Ham ahead in the 10th minute but the champions drew level just before the break when Mohamed Salah was fouled in the area by Arthur Masuaku and the Egyptian converted from the spot.

Diogo Jota had an effort ruled out but then grabbed the winner when fellow substitute Xherdan Shaqiri found him with a perfect

pass and the Portuguese made no mistake with his third goal in as many home games for the Merseyside club.

"It's so difficult with the number of games we have. Seeing the determination and desire of the boys, the will to play football, to deal with setbacks is really exceptional," said Klopp.

COMPLETE PERFORMANCE

Chelsea showed no signs of tiredness from their successful midweek Champions League trip to Krasnodar in Russia as they added to bottom club Burnley's growing troubles.

Hakim Ziyech, the Morocco winger, finished off a smart move with a low drive in the 26th minute to put Frank Lampard's

Liverpool are top on 16 points, three more than local rivals Everton who visit Newcastle United on Sunday.

Wolverhampton Wanderers, who beat Crystal Place 2-0 on Friday, are third, also on 13 points, while Chelsea have moved up to fourth, level with Aston Villa and Leicester City on 12

side ahead before Kurt Zouma's powerful header from a Mason Mount corner made it 2-0 just after the hour mark.

Ziyech turned provider by setting up Timo Werner for the third in the 70th as Chelsea kept a fourth straight clean sheet in all competitions. "It was a very complete performance from us," said Lampard, whose new signings appear to be settling quickly into an impressive side.

"Performances like this show that we're doing something positive. We need to get our heads down and keep working hard," he said.

WALKER STRIKES

Like Burnley, Sheffield United remain winless and their latest

defeat came with the added sting of former player and local lad Walker delivering the decisive blow.

The right back marked his 100th league appearance for City with a goal in the first half and refused to celebrate. The England international collected the ball outside the box and drilled it into the bottom corner.

"My mum and dad live here, so if I celebrated I'd probably get a lot of stick. I'm a Sheffield United fan, so I couldn't," said Walker. City had plenty of opportunities to put the game to bed but, as manager Pep Guardiola noted afterwards, lacked the killer touch in front of goal.



Messi is ‘complicated to manage’
Former Barcelona coach Quique Setien said the team’s star player Lionel Messi, a six-time Ballon d’Or winner, is hard to manage. Setien was sacked in August. — dpa



Millman claims maiden title
Australian fourth seed John Millman beat Frenchman Adrian Mannarino 7-5 6-1 in the final of the Astana Open to claim his maiden ATP Tour title on Sunday. — Reuters



Sonego into Vienna final
Lucky loser Lorenzo Sonego of Italy followed up his shock win over world number one Novak Djokovic by beating Britain’s Dan Evans to reach the Vienna final on Saturday. — AFP

Coach Abdulaziz unveils Nizwa promotion to the top-tier league



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Nizwa club will be present at Omantel League in the forthcoming season 2020/2021 for the second time in history after its initial appearance in 2002/2003 season.

Along with Nizwa, Al Ettihad clubs also had earned the direct ticket from the first division league on Friday to the top-tier league which will begin on December 3. The third spot will be unveiled on Tuesday between Al Musannah and Al Shabab who will meet to snatch the last direct ticket into the professional league. Nizwa

and Al Ettihad will meet to decide the champion of the first division league.

The experienced national coach and the head of the technical staff of Nizwa club, Abdulaziz al Riyami, affirmed to *Oman Daily Observer* the team’s promotion to the top domestic league came after a tough challenge and competition among the other opponents in the league.

Al Riyami unveiled the factors that supported his team to earn the promotion ticket to the top division league.

“We had faced some difficulty earlier in the league as the team’s results were not stable and suffered

to some losses. Later on, I had decided to depend on the young faces including members U-19 to lead the team with passionate and better enthusiasm. Therefore, we had signed contract with domestic players from top local teams which won in the “Cheer your Team” programme that run by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

I worked closely with team players and direct them to accomplish the target. Everyone took the responsibility as top priority and there were plans to move on towards the objective with a board support on that. Then, we had managed to reach the targeted



goal which was advancing to Omantel League” he added.

The former Fanja coach said he is fully aware on the difficulty of Omantel League and the difference between both leagues. “I believe we need to work from now on the requirement of Omantel League. I provided a detailed plan for the team to ensure their presence in the next season at Omantel League. The plan will feature having four competent foreign players and selecting some national players who have experience at Omantel league. Also, the team must provide a comprehensive plan for the top local young faces to adapt playing at Omantel League. With the above

mentioned factors, the team can ensure to be in a comfort zone and will not drop again to the first division league,” the coach clarified.

The Nizwa coach sent a dedicated thanks to the spectators for their continuous support despite the current restrictions. “We had played in exceptional cases and without attendance of the fans due to the ongoing globe health pandemic. However, the fans are in close follow up with us and requesting all the team’s updates. The promotion and advancing to the top league is a dedication for them and we are looking forward to their usual encouragement,” he ended.

I believe we need to work from now on the requirement of Omantel league. I provided a detailed plan for the team to ensure their presence in the next season at Omantel league. The plan will feature having four competent foreign players and selecting some national players who have experience at Omantel League. Also, the team must provide a comprehensive plan for the top local young faces to adapt playing at Omantel League. With the above mentioned factors, the team can ensure to be in a comfort zone and will not drop again to the first division league

ABDULAZIZ AL RIYAMI
Nizwa head coach

BUNDESLIGA ACTION

Mueller equals Kahn’s record as Bayern Munich go top

BERLIN: European champions Bayern Munich went top of the Bundesliga as Thomas Mueller equalled Oliver Kahn’s record for most league wins in the famous shirt in Saturday’s 2-1 victory at Cologne.

Mueller, 31, converted an early penalty to put the visitors on the way to a success which saw him match the tally of legendary goalkeeper Kahn on 260 league wins. Robert Lewandowski, who scored 10 goals in the opening five league games, was rested ahead of Bayern’s midweek Champions League match at Salzburg and next Saturday’s top-of-the-table Bundesliga clash at second-placed Dortmund.

“(We were) too nonchalant up front, even though the passion was there,” said Mueller despite the reigning champions’ victory.

Serge Gnabry, who scored Bayern’s second goal, admitted: “We let the opponent back into the game, it wasn’t our best performance.” An early header by Gnabry led to Cologne defender Marius Wolf giving away the 13th-



Bayern Munich’s Thomas Mueller scores during the Bundesliga match against FC Cologne in Cologne. – AFP

minute penalty which Mueller scored.

Gnabry added the second on the stroke of half-time when he rolled the ball into the net to finish a counter-attack. However, Cologne

improved in the second half and substitute midfielder Dominick Drexler pulled back a late goal.

LEIPZIG CRASH

Later, RB Leipzig, who started the weekend top of the table,

blew the chance to reclaim first place after losing 1-0 at Borussia Moenchengaldbach. The away defeat capped a week to forget for Julian Nagelsmann’s Leipzig following their 5-0 thumping

Mueller, 31, converted an early penalty to put the visitors on the way to a success which saw him match the tally of legendary goalkeeper Kahn on 260 league wins

at Manchester United in the Champions League. Leipzig forwards Yussuf Poulsen and Dani Olmo both wasted chances while Gladbach had a goal by Alassane Plea ruled offside.

Austrian winger Hannes Wolf, 21, who is on loan from Leipzig this season, sealed the win with his first Bundesliga goal on 60 minutes before Plea hit the post.

The result leaves Leipzig third and Gladbach fourth.

Earlier Dortmund climbed to second, despite resting striker Erling Braut Haaland, as defender Mats Hummels scored both goals in a 2-0 win at Arminia Bielefeld.

Hummels picked up a late thigh

injury while making a tackle.

However, Dortmund forward Julian Brandt backed Hummels to be fit for their Champions League match at Club Brugge on Wednesday, saying: “He’ll make it — he heals quick.” Dortmund took the lead when England winger Jadon Sancho curled in a corner which bounced off Hummels and rolled over the line on 53 minutes.

Hummels grabbed his second with a header from a Marco Reus cross 19 minutes from time.

HAHN DOUBLE

Augsburg climbed to fifth as winger Andre Hahn scored two late goals in a 3-1 home win against bottom side Mainz.

Swiss winger Ruben Vargas gave Augsburg the lead with a superb bicycle kick just before half-time.

Mainz sub Karim Onisiwo equalised on the hour mark, but Augsburg took advantage of tired legs as Germany winger Hahn netted twice in the final 10 minutes.

Werder Bremen coach Florian Kohfeldt picked up a point on his third anniversary in the job with a 1-1 draw at Frankfurt.— AFP



Bumrah, Boult propel Mumbai to big win over Delhi



DUBAI: Jasprit Bumrah moved to the top of the bowling charts on Saturday as Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Capitals and Sandeep Sharma dismissed Virat Kohli for a record seventh time in the Indian Premier League as his Sunrisers Hyderabad outplayed Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Bumrah and fellow fast bowler Trent Boult claimed three wickets each to restrict Delhi to 110 for nine, a total table-toppers Mumbai achieved in 14.2 overs for the loss of one wicket in Dubai.

In the late game, Hyderabad beat Bangalore by five wickets in Sharjah.

In Dubai, Ishan Kishan smashed an unbeaten 72 off 47 balls to be named man of the match as Mumbai, who have already qualified for the play-offs, ensured a top-two finish in the league stage.

Third-placed Delhi are struggling to stay in the final four after their fourth

straight loss.

Mumbai's stand-in-skipper Kieron Pollard praised his fast bowlers for the big win.

"Boult was exceptional. That's his strength, bowling with the new ball. He's consistently given us good starts," said Pollard.

"Bumrah, I kept delaying him, on this track with his angles. He's jumping to bowl in the powerplays, but again I saw today getting those early wickets, and with the spinners getting grip, kept him for the middle overs."

Bumrah, who came on to bowl second change, returned figures of 3-17 to go level with Delhi quick Kagiso Rabada on 23 wickets in the Twenty20 tournament but the Indian bowler has a better average and economy rate.

Boult led the bowling charge with figures of 3-21 including the key wicket of in-form Delhi opener Shikhar

Bumrah, I kept delaying him, on this track with his angles. He's jumping to bowl in the powerplays, but again I saw today getting those early wickets, and with the spinners getting grip, kept him for the middle overs.

KIERON POLLARD
Mumbai Indians stand-in skipper

Dhawan for nought off the third ball of the innings.

Kishan took on the Delhi bowling including South African pacemen Rabada and Anrich Nortje. The left-hand batsman hit eight fours and three sixes.

HYDERABAD WIN

In the second match, Sharma returned figures of 2-20 as Hyderabad held Kohli's Bangalore to 120 for seven in Sharjah before recording their sixth win this season to keep alive their hopes of making the play-offs.

West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder hit an unbeaten 26 to steer the David Warner-led Hyderabad home in 14.1 overs.

Holder also took two wickets with his pace bowling.

But Sharma stood out after he won his duel with Kohli who had also fallen to Indian paceman Ashish Nehra six times in the Twenty20 tournament.

Sharma equalled the effort of former quick Zaheer Khan, currently director of cricket operations with four-time IPL winners Mumbai, who got the better of Mahendra Singh Dhoni seven times.

"Kohli is one of the greatest batsmen this sport has seen. To get him out is always special," said Sharma. "We are now finding our momentum. We are excited about the next game."

Hyderabad have jumped to fourth with six wins and 12 points alongside Kings XI Punjab as the race for the play-offs goes right down to the wire.

Delhi will meet Bangalore in a must-win league clash for both the teams on Monday and Kohli is looking forward to the challenge. "It is going to be a cracker of a game with two teams locked at 14 (points)," said Delhi-born Kohli.

"I have always been a Bangalore boy when it comes to the IPL, and never drifted towards Delhi." — AFP

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بنك ظفار

Sohar Port mulls first-ever floating solar power project

GREEN INITIATIVES: Qabas, the renewable energy arm of Shell Development Oman, is set to bring a 25MW solar PV based plant into operation at the port and freezone before the end of this year.

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Sohar Port and Freezone says it weighing plans to support the development of a floating solar power plant — a novel venture that underscores growing interest in Oman's renewables based potential.

According to a top official of the industrial and commercial hub, the initiative is currently in the exploratory phase and involves collaborations with local and international universities. It also underlines Sohar Port's ambitions to reduce its dependence on fossil fuel based energy resources and switch to renewables, notably solar and green hydrogen, in a bid to support its transition towards a clean energy future.

Mark Geilenkirchen (pictured), CEO, said the port is working with Sohar University and Delft University of Technology, the oldest and largest Dutch public technological university, to "unlock the potential for a floating solar power plant". He made the announcement in a white paper outlining Sohar Port's plans to create the first green hydrogen hub in the Sultanate.

Significantly, the proposed floating solar power project will add to



an impressive portfolio of 'green initiatives' currently in various stages of implementation at the port and freezone.

Under an arrangement with Qabas — the renewable energy arm of Shell Development Oman — Sohar Port and Freezone is set to bring its first sizable solar power scheme into operation before the end of this year. The 25 MW solar-photovoltaic based plant will support the "green energy requirements of industrial companies operating in Sohar Port and Freezone", Geilenkirchen said.

Also on the anvil are large-scale utility-scale solar-based ventures, according to the CEO. "We are very

much into solar. Given the strong regular sunshine and the vast unused land outside the freezone, it is commercially viable to develop large solar power plants."

Elaborating, he stated. "Apart from our small-scale solar park powering our headquarters in Suhar, we are planning larger utility-scale power generation facilities within the industrial port and the adjoining freezone in line with our strategy to offer competitively priced, solar PV based electricity to industrial end-users and other tenants operating within the hub. Planned capacity is 3.5 gigawatts (GW), which is equivalent to what we are consuming in the port."

Seeking to promote efficient energy use in its operations, Sohar Port has also rolled out LED technology for outdoor lighting across various port

and terminal areas. Incorporating automation and intelligent control capabilities, LED-based lighting systems offer up to 60 per cent energy savings, according to the port.

"We were the first Middle East port with full LED street lighting for the Port and Freezone concession areas. And, we are ultimately planning to power the system independently from the grid, using solar panels", the CEO said, adding that a small-scale solar park powering the port's headquarters in Suhar will ultimately be powered by renewable hydropower.

At the same time, industrial and commercial tenants operating at the port are being encouraged to build LEED-certified buildings fitted out with solar panels for power air-conditioners and other fixtures.

Bank dividend bans have passed their sell-by date

LONDON: Andrea Enria and Sam Woods were right to stop banks paying dividends in March. When the pandemic struck, the chief supervisors at the European Central Bank and Bank of England, respectively, kept capital on lenders' balance sheets instead.

That policy is now out of date. Swift action by regulators prevented big euro zone lenders from paying about 30 billion euros to shareholders out of 2019 earnings. The emergency measures were necessary as national lockdowns starved firms of cash just as credit markets seized up.

Supervisors also worried that rampant loan losses could blow a hole in banks' capital buffers. Seven months on, these fears have receded. The initial surge in demand for bank credit was fleeting.

Bond markets quickly reopened for big companies, supported by generous monetary easing from central banks.

Non-financial firms in the euro zone issued 119 billion euros of debt securities in April, ECB data shows, close to double the monthly average over the previous year. UK capital markets were similarly buoyant.

Bank earnings and capital also

held up better than feared. NatWest, for example, on Friday reported a chunky 18.2 pc common equity Tier 1 (CET1) capital ratio, even though the state-controlled British lender has taken hefty bad-debt provisions this year. That trend should continue.

Members of the Euro STOXX Banks Index and Britain's five biggest lenders will on aggregate generate twice as much pre-provision profit in 2020 and 2021 as they will set aside for doubtful loans.

In other words, bad debts would have to be twice as bad as expected before banks dip into capital. Enria and Woods can therefore afford to drop their blanket dividend ban.

However, they should still attach a few conditions. One precaution would be to restrict payouts for lenders whose CET1 ratio is less than 2 percentage points above the regulatory minimum.

That's a rule of thumb that most bank CEOs follow informally anyway. The other safeguard is to require dividend-paying banks to keep growing their loan books, ensuring that rewards for shareholders do not come at the expense of a credit crunch. — Reuters



Banks are seen at the Canary Wharf financial district in London. — Reuters

GLOOMY OUTLOOK

Why MENA region must diversify to drive growth

NEW IMPERATIVE: A relatively gloomy outlook for the region's economy has made it more urgent than ever before for governments to develop non-oil sectors, says report.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Based on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) latest World Economic Outlook, MENA countries have little choice than to accelerate plans for diversification away from oil, according to a new report by Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI).

Released in mid-October, the IMF report downgraded its outlook for a Middle East and Central Asian economic recovery. It predicted a 4.1 per cent contraction for the region as a whole this year — 1.3 percentage points worse than its assessment six months earlier.

Unfortunately, the situation looks unlikely to improve any time soon. The IMF assumes the price of oil will

average just under \$42 barrel in 2020, and less than \$47 a barrel in 2021.

It forecasts the region will see a \$224 billion shortfall in revenue this year and the economies of the six GCC states will fall by 6 per cent in 2020.

The IMF pinpointed three immediate priorities for the Middle East and Central Asia more broadly: Contain the health crisis; cushion income losses and expand social spending. It added that governments must also begin to lay the groundwork for recovery and rebuilding, including by addressing legacies from the crisis and strengthening inclusion.

Commenting on the IMF report, Edris Alrafi, Head of Middle East & Africa for ASI, said: "It is inevitable that the double-whammy of drastically lower oil prices and the pandemic would take a heavy toll in the Middle East overall, given the region has some of the world's largest crude exporters and therefore tends to overly depend on oil to fuel domestic economies.

"Economic diversification is the most realistic way that MENA's



economies can lift themselves out of this crisis. It is essential for countries to plan for the future and tap into trends that will lead investment and consumer behaviour.

Embracing digitalisation and other new and emerging drivers of economic growth is needed to shift reliance from oil to non-oil sectors.

"This work is well under way in many GCC countries led by the

overall country visions that focus on creating more diverse and sustainable economies, but the pandemic has stressed the importance of this diversification and the need to accelerate it at all levels."

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on some of the region's most successful, and reliable, providers of existing non-oil revenue, such as tourism,

The IMF pinpointed three immediate priorities for the Middle East and Central Asia more broadly: Contain the health crisis; cushion income losses and expand social spending

transportation, retail and real estate. In addition to MENA's large exposure in the hard-hit services sector, the IMF also pointed to strained corporate balance sheets, challenges in working from home and dependencies on remittances as key factors that will weigh heavily on recovery prospects.

To try to avoid real GDP remaining below pre-pandemic trends for several years to come, the IMF suggests policymakers must carefully balance preserving livelihoods, minimising scarring, and promoting recovery, while not hampering necessary reallocation.

In the medium-term, it will be key to rebuild buffers to guard against future shocks. Going forward, the IMF is looking for authorities to carefully balance the sustained provision

of credit and the preservation of financial stability.

As the pandemic subsides, it said efforts should focus on "removing regulatory easing, strengthening supervision and continuing to improve financial inclusion to boost inclusive growth". This includes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

In response to increased fiscal vulnerabilities, the IMF is looking to governments to mitigate fiscal risks by developing medium-term fiscal frameworks, adopting fiscal rules and strengthening debt management.

At the same time, the IMF wants more fiscal space by, for example, enhancing tax compliance, increasing the progressivity of tax systems and raising expenditure efficiency, including through improving governance and gradually eliminating fuel subsidies.

Meanwhile, policymakers must also seek to support an inclusive recovery by enhancing social safety nets and prioritising spending on health, education and job retraining, according to the IMF.



MENA M&A transactions reach \$58bn in 9M of 2020

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The value of announced M&A transactions with any MENA involvement reached \$58.0 billion during the first nine months of 2020, according to a report by Refinitiv, one of the world's largest providers of financial markets data and infrastructure.

It marked the third-highest year-to-date total of all-time, despite falling 52 per cent in value from the record high achieved last year with Saudi Aramco's agreement to buy a stake in Saudi Basic Industries Corp for \$69.1 billion.

About \$6.3 billion worth of deals were announced during the third quarter of 2020, down 82 per cent from the previous quarter which was boosted by two mega deals — Saudi Arabia's National Commercial Bank announced plans to acquire Samba Financial Group for \$15.6 billion and a consortium of investors agreed to buy ADNOC gas pipeline assets for \$10.1 billion.

Despite scoring the second-highest first nine-month total of all-time, domestic M&A registered a 71 per cent decline from last year to \$25.2 billion, again due to the Aramco / Sabic deal.

Inbound M&A, involving an acquirer from outside of the region, increased 36 per cent to an all-time year-to-date high of



\$22.5 billion, while outbound M&A declined 47 per cent to \$5.0 billion.

The financial sector was most active, with deals targeting financial companies accounting for 40 per cent of total M&A in the region during the first nine months of 2020, followed by Energy & Power with 21 per cent. Saudi Arabia was the most targeted nation, followed by The United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

Morgan Stanley topped the any MENA involvement announced M&A financial advisor league table during the first nine months of 2020 with a 45 per cent market share.

MENA equity and equity-related issuance totalled \$2.6 billion during the first nine months of 2020, 7 per cent less

than the value recorded during the same period last year and a three-year low after less than \$80 million was raised during the second quarter.

Third quarter issuance reached \$1.7 billion as Abu Dhabi National Oil Co sold \$1 billion worth of shares in ADNOC Distribution, and Dubai-based social networking and entertainment platform Yalla Group raised \$139.5 million through its New York listing.

First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC takes first place in the MENA ECM league table during the first nine months of 2020, followed by Citi.

MENA debt issuance reached \$92.4 billion during the first nine months of 2020, up 8 per cent from the value recorded during

the same period in 2019 and an all-time year-to-date high.

After a strong start, with over \$9 billion raised in both January and February, March issuance slowed to just \$572.0 million. About \$52.4 billion was recorded during the second quarter of 2020, an all-time quarterly high in the region, followed by \$20.5 billion during the third quarter.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia were the most active issuer nations during the first nine months of 2020 with \$34.7 billion and \$21.9 billion in bond proceeds, respectively.

Standard Chartered took the top spot in the MENA bond underwriter ranking during the first nine months of 2020 with \$16.5 billion of related proceeds, or an 18 per cent market share.

Bank Muscat named the Safest Bank in Oman

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has been ranked as the Safest Bank in Oman by Global Finance.

The ranking was released by Global Finance as part of its

rankings for the Safest Banks in 112 countries worldwide.

The 29th annual list of 'Safest Banks by Country' was selected through an evaluation of long-term foreign currency ratings — from Moody's, Standard & Poor's



and Fitch —and the total assets of the 1000 largest banks worldwide.

Global Finance is read by decision-makers across 191 countries including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions. The annual rankings of the World's Safest Banks have been a recognised and trusted standard of financial counterparty safety for more than a quarter-century.

Salah Nasser al Habsi

(pictured), Deputy General Manager, Investment Banking, said: "Bank Muscat is delighted to be ranked as the Safest Bank in Oman. For over 38 years, the bank's success has been the result of understanding the consumer better and presenting them with innovative services and products. In line with the vision 'To serve you better, everyday', the Bank Muscat brand is synonymous with innovation, reliability and trustworthiness. This highly-

acclaimed award is a well-deserved tribute to the largest banking family in Oman."

As a forward-looking financial institution, Bank Muscat is committed to the development and progress of Oman through its operations across the Sultanate. In tune with the banking requirements of a young, tech-savvy generation, Bank Muscat enjoys an edge in hi-tech products and services, including electronic payment and web-based services.

\$90,000 MEDRC award for bio-inspired desalination solution

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

MEDRC has announced the recipient of a \$90,000 grant under its USAID backed pathway research grants in desalination. Planet, an Italian start-up, has secured the funding to develop their Mangrove Still — a bio-inspired, modular, low-cost easy to use, solar desalination system.

The funds are part of MEDRC's 5-year strategic programme launched in 2018 with a goal of driving innovation in small-scale desalination.

The programme, known as the Desalination Challenge has two tracks of funding — pathway research grants supported by USAID and a \$700,000 global challenge prize known as the Oman

Humanitarian Desalination Challenge, led by MEDRC and Oman's Research Council (TRC) and funded through the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

MEDRC's Centre Director Ciaran O Cuinn announced the award and met the grant recipients during a kick-off meeting held online. Speaking at the meeting, he said, "If desalination is to become a viable alternative to freshwater we need to find ways to reduce the costs and environmental impacts of the process. Every day all around us, nature conducts this complex task efficiently with no cost or impact. MEDRC is proud to collaborate with USAID to support Planet as they work to develop bio-inspired transformational solutions to freshwater scarcity."



MIDDLE EAST COLLEGE ORGANISES 2ND TESOL CONFERENCE

Middle East College (MEC) organised its 2nd Teaching English to Speakers Other Languages (TESOL) conference, which focused on "Emerging Trends and Contemporary Issues in Language Learning: the EFL Context".

The conference was held online on October 28, 2020.

The conference saw an attendance of over 10 countries around the world including experts, academics, researchers, and students, and received 50 research papers' participations. Prof Thomas Robb, Professor Emeritus, Kyoto Sangyo University, and Dr Ali al Issa, Associate Professor of English Language Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Sultanate of Oman, delivered their keynote speeches on topics of great interest.

OAB ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF SEPTEMBER HASAAD SAVINGS DRAW

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced the names of the 132 winners of its monthly Hasaad Savings Scheme for September 2020.

This included 94 winners of the monthly branch draws of RO 1,000 each, ten winners of the Children's Account draw (RO 100 each), twenty winners of the Youth Account draw (RO 100 each), five winners of RO 500 of the Bank's Salary Transfer draw, two winners of RO 10,000 of the Elite draw from the Rustaq and Buraimi branches and one winner of RO 25,000 from Big Prize draw for the third quarter from Barka branch.

Commenting on the results of the September draw, Rashad al Shaikh, Acting Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "We are delighted to see even more lucky people who have joined the long list of Oman Arab Bank winners in the Hassad Savings Scheme, since the beginning of the year."



OMAN TOURISM COLLEGE SIGNS MOU WITH WASHINGTON STATE UNIV

Oman Tourism College (OTC) has recently signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Washington State University (WSU).

As part of the agreement, OTC students and faculty members can engage in collaborative virtual learning, joint research and industry projects, as well as faculty exchange and study abroad programmes. It also allows Omani students looking to obtain a PhD in Tourism and Hospitality to apply for the Doctoral Degree Programmes at Washington State University.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Dr Abdulkarim Sultan al Mughairi, Dean of OTC said, "We are delighted to collaborate with Washington State University since it opens up broad prospects for us to further develop our programmes. Moreover, we can benefit from their extensive and valuable experience in the fields of academics, teaching, training and scientific research."

AL MOUJ MARINA LEISURE OPERATORS MAKE A SPLASH ON TRIP ADVISOR

A duo of Al Mouj Muscat's marina leisure operators is celebrating the news that they have been recognised as the 'best of the best' having scooped Traveler's Choice Award status for 2020 on Trip Advisor.

Al Mouj Muscat is Oman's leading Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) and a public-private venture between the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Omran and Tanmia. Its 400-berth marina is a key focal point and leisure facility, providing residents as well as visitors from all over the world with top quality ocean-based activities.

Daymaniat Shells and Mola Mola Diving Centre are the two marina-based Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) whose reputations have been buoyed by this latest accolade, reflecting the hard work and dedication of their staff coupled with the package of business support provided by the team at Al Mouj Muscat.





Easyjet looking at financing options

BERLIN: EasyJet is considering options to bolster its finances, and is not against state support to help the airline get through the pandemic, CEO Johan Lundgren said. — **Reuters**



Ford sells struggling Brazil factory

BRASILIA: Ford Motor Co said it had closed the sale of one of its factories in Brazil to civil construction firm Construtora Sao Jose and asset manager FRAM Capital. — **Reuters**



Indonesia sees more US investment

JAKARTA: Indonesia will see a significant boost in trade and investment from the United States as a result of Washington's renewed trade preference facility with it. — **Reuters**

US judge blocks Commerce Department TikTok order



A man holding a phone walks past a sign of TikTok at the International Artificial Products Expo in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China. — **Reuters**

WASHINGTON: A US judge in Pennsylvania blocked a US Commerce Department order set to take effect on November 12 that would have effectively barred Chinese-owned short video-sharing app TikTok from operating in the United States. US District Court Judge Wendy Beetlestone enjoined the Commerce Department from barring data hosting within the United States for TikTok, content delivery services and other technical transactions. In her ruling, Beetlestone said the order would "have the effect of shutting down, within the United States, a platform for expressive activity used by approximately 700 million individuals globally. Over 100 million of these TikTok users are within the United States, and at least 50 million of these US users use the app on a daily basis." The Commerce Department, has acknowledged the restrictions would "significantly reduce the functionality and usability of the app in the United States" and "may ultimately make the application less effective." On September 27, US District Judge Carl Nichols in Washington issued a preliminary injunction in a suit brought by TikTok owner ByteDance that stopped the US Commerce Department from ordering Apple Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google app stores to remove TikTok for download by new users. — **Reuters**

KLM \$3.9 billion bailout hits crisis as unions refuse paycut plan

The move puts the future of the Dutch arm of Air France-KLM into jeopardy, which said it would not remain afloat without a massive government injection to save KLM, the world's oldest airline hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic

THE HAGUE: The Dutch government suspended plans to help beleaguered national carrier KLM with a multi-billion-euro bailout package after unions declined to sign a deal involving a five-year pay-cut plan. The move puts the future of the Dutch arm of Air France-KLM into jeopardy, which said it would not remain afloat without a massive government injection to save KLM, the world's oldest airline hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. "The planned state aid is not going through. It's disappointing but that's the case," Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra told reporters in The Hague. "It's really important now that everybody take their responsibility and realise that KLM is in an existential crisis," the minister said after talks with KLM. The Dutch cabinet's decision follows a day of intensive talks between KLM and its unions to try and reach agreement over the deal. Hoekstra gave KLM and unions representing pilots, cabin and ground crew until 12:00 pm (11:00 GMT) on Saturday to sign the agreement to unlock the 3.4



KLM aircraft are seen on the tarmac at Schiphol airport near Amsterdam. — **AFP**

billion euro (\$3.9 bn) injection. While talks are still ongoing with several unions, the Dutch pilots' union VNV have refused to sign what they termed a "last minute" change to conditions for the deal. The bitter feud centres around a clause in the agreement which asks the troubled airline's staff to take salary cuts for the next five years. KLM this week presented the Finance Ministry with the austerity plan, which demands a 15 per cent cut in costs and will see 5,000 jobs being shed as a result of the global impact of the coronavirus pandemic on air travel. It also included an agreement from unions to cut pilots' salaries until March 2022 and ground and cabin crew salaries until the start

of 2023. But Hoekstra on Friday turned down the plan, insisting on salary cuts to run concurrently with the government's five-year bailout package. "We have not signed," a VNV representative said shortly after the deadline passed. "We had an agreement in place with KLM on October 1 and now they (the government) are going back on it," said the representative, who declined to be named. "A deal is a deal," he said. Talks are also ongoing with umbrella union FNV which accused the government of "creating great uncertainty with changes at the 11th-hour". "We do not understand why KLM and the cabinet require extra commitment at the last minute," FNV said in a statement. But it added: "As FNV we will

UK extends 80 per cent wage subsidies



LONDON: Britain's government will extend by a month its costly coronavirus wage subsidies to ensure workers who are temporarily laid off receive 80 per cent of their pay, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said as he announced a new England-wide lockdown. Britain introduced the 80 per cent wage subsidy scheme in March and it had been due to expire on Saturday to be replaced with a more targeted and less generous support. The scheme supported 8.9 million jobs at its peak, and had been forecast to cost around 52 billion pounds (\$67.28 billion) over its eight-month lifespan. Firms will have to contribute 5 per cent of the employment costs for workers covered by the extension, the finance ministry said. It also said a mortgage payment holiday scheme would be extended for households and business premises which are required to close because of coronavirus restrictions would get grants of up to 3,000 pounds (\$3,881) a month. Mortgage borrowers impacted by the pandemic and who have not yet had a payment break will be entitled to a six-month holiday, while those that have already started a payment holiday will be able to top up to six months, the ministry said. — **Reuters**

Amazon drops French Black Friday ad campaign



An employee works next to drive units robots at the Amazon fulfilment center in Bretigny-sur-Orge near Paris. — **Reuters**

PARIS: Amazon is withdrawing advertising for pre-Black Friday discounts in France, after the government said the campaign was unfair to small shops at time when a coronavirus lockdown has forced them to close. France entered its second national lockdown on Friday to try to contain a surge in infections. The curbs imposed under it include the closure of non-essential stores. Amazon said the group had agreed to halt its radio

advertising campaign around pre-Black Friday sales. A page with discounted items under the header "Black Friday ahead of time" was live on its French website on Saturday, however. Junior Economy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runchaer said she had asked Amazon to suspend the campaign. It was "not at all appropriate at a time when 200,000 businesses will have to shut their doors," she told Europe 1 radio. — **Reuters**

TRADE DATA

S Korea exports decline on cut working days

SEOUL: South Korean exports slipped back into contraction in October, as the Chuseok holiday cut working days, although chip and car sales remained robust, government data showed. Exports slid 3.6 per cent from a year earlier to \$44.98 billion, after a 7.6 per cent jump in September - the first expansion since February and the fastest rise in 23 months. The October decline was less than the 4.0 per cent drop forecast by 15 economists in a Reuters survey. Average daily exports, however, recorded the first expansion in nine months with a 5.6 per cent rise, adding to recent signs that Asia's fourth-largest economy is seeing a moderate recovery. South Korea's monthly trade data, the first to be released among major exporting economies, is considered a bellwether for global trade. A "negative reading was inevitable due to fewer working days, but the rate of decline was better than expected. ... That shows exports recovery has been resilient at least by October," said



A container terminal is pictured in Incheon, South Korea. — **Reuters**

HI Investment & Securities' chief economist Park Sang-hyun. The trade ministry said shipments of semiconductors and cars jumped 10.4 per cent and 5.8 per cent, respectively, but those surged 20.9 per cent and 15.9 per cent each in average daily terms. Shipments to China, South Korea's biggest trading partner, dropped 5.7 per cent due to its eight-day National Day holiday, but that rose 3.2 per cent when

eliminating calendar effect, the trade ministry said. Those to the United States and European Union rose 3.3 per cent and 9.5 per cent, but surged 13.1 per cent and 19.9 per cent, respectively, in per-day terms. Economists are now worried surging coronavirus cases globally and fresh lockdowns in Europe may hurt overseas demand for South Korean goods again. Given the time lag in export

Shipments to China, South Korea's biggest trading partner, dropped 5.7 per cent due to its eight-day National Day holiday, but that rose 3.2 per cent when eliminating calendar effect

TRADE MINISTRY

orders, "shipments to the EU in December-January is the biggest worrisome," Park said. "But exports to China will likely rebound and may offset the sluggish sales to EU." October imports fell 5.8 per cent, reversing the previous month's 1.6 per cent rise. This led to a preliminary trade surplus of \$5.98 billion, smaller than \$8.70 billion in September. Analysts had expected a 2.1 per cent drop in imports. — **Reuters**

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A GREEN KIND OF MAGIC IN IZKI

Not too far from the historic old walled city of Harat Al Yemen, is a swathe of green that cuts an impressive sight on the outskirts of the Dakhiliyah township of Izki. Here's how a farmer has turned to green crop production that will eventually become completely organic and environmentally sustainable... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

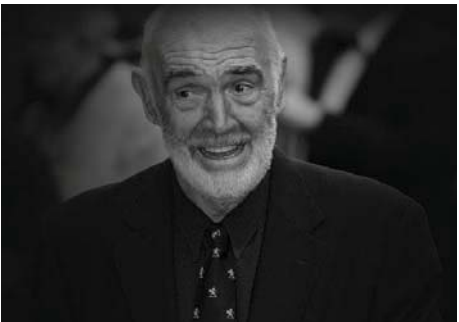
HEALTH



WOMEN IN OMAN SHOULD SELF-CHECK AND BE MORE MINDFUL OF BREAST CANCER

Each year, an estimated 40000 women die due to metastatic breast cancer which is why it has become extremely important to educate every female who is above 20 years old about self-examination and screening.. **Story on Page P20**

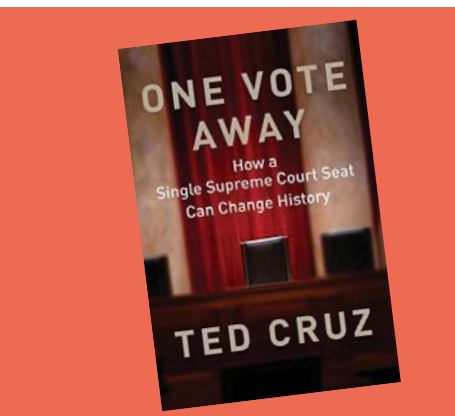
ENTERTAINMENT



FORMER JAMES BOND ACTOR SEAN CONNERY DIES AGED 90

Scottish movie legend Sean Connery, who shot to international stardom as the suave, sexy and sophisticated British agent James Bond and went on to grace the silver screen for four decades, has died aged 90... **Story on Page 19**

READ



ONE VOTE AWAY BY TED CRUZ

The Republican senator from Texas gives his views on what might happen if liberals gain a simple majority on the Supreme Court.

HUMAN INTEREST



BOLIVIANS REMEMBER COVID-19 DEPARTED BY BAKING BREAD IN THEIR LIKENESS

As the Day of the Dead approaches in Bolivia, bakers are helping those remembering loved ones lost this year to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating loaves in the likeness of the departed... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



BROADCAST TRAFFIC PROFESSIONALS DAY

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A GREEN KIND OF MAGIC IN IZKI

STORY BY RAY PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY LENA PETERSEN

You have all heard of the Bahla ‘magic’. Well, now Izki has its own ‘green magic’ in the form of Ishaq al Saqri’s latest agricultural venture. Stretching far into the distance, not too far from the historic old walled city of Harat Al Yemen, is a swathe of green that cuts an impressive sight on the outskirts of the Dakhiliyah township of Izki. Jaggi Vasudev said, “With wrong farming methods, we turn fertile land into desert. Unless we go back to organic farming and save the soil, there is no future.”

Here is local businessman/farmer Al Saqri’s response, with the latest venture among his agricultural enterprises that include four other locations in Dakhiliyah and Sharqiyah. Following in the footsteps of his agriculturally minded father Yousuf, Al Saqri has a policy, or maybe more correctly a philosophy, of green crop production that will eventually become completely organic and environmentally sustainable, and it’s not all that far away. He proudly identifies a combination of “good soil, quality seeds, clean water and naturally produced fertilisers” as the keys to his impressive crop yields, and beams with satisfaction at the crop around us.

“This is good light soil, that doesn’t take a lot of tractor work to get it ready for planting”, he said, and with our crop rotation policies, we are probably enhancing the soil each time we turn it over, as what

one crop takes from the soil, another gives. Then the science takes over briefly, as we must be extremely accurate with our planting distances. Too close together and the crop cannot flourish but too far apart and we could waste acreage.”

He explained too that the water

“The man who does not keep looking ahead will not progress much. There are traditional elements to our farming however, as much as there are modern, scientific, cutting edge agricultural and aquacultural elements to what we do, and we will look at anything that gives us quality produce

ISHAQ AL SAQRI
Farming Innovator

quality is exceptionally good here, and further identified a pond for producing his own clean, green, fertilisers. “This fertiliser is amazing. It sustains significant plant growth, as you can see, and the crop is also free

of the pests and insects you will often see in such crops. For now, we are growing string beans, cucumbers, okra, eggplants, zucchinis and maize, and we are preparing the ground for a watermelon plot just a few hundred metres away.”

He is proud of the environmentally friendly nature of his entire operation, and is proud of the fact that nothing is wasted, with much of the green leaf excess being utilised as stock feed by local farmers, the remainder worked into the ground perpetuating the agricultural ‘circle of life’. “It is while we are treating Mother Nature respectfully, that she treats us so well maybe?”

Al Saqri is far too progressive however and appears to have far too much business acumen to reject scientific development. “That is progress, and the man who does not keep looking ahead will not progress much. There are traditional elements to our farming however, as much as there are modern, scientific, cutting edge agricultural and aquacultural elements to what we do, and we will look at anything that gives us quality produce.”

An endless succession of locals arrived, purchased their vegetables, and though social distancing was at a premium, at least everyone wore their masks. “They are just very excited”, smiled Al Saqri bashfully, “and though we are using biodegradable plastic bags now, we are moving into paper bags and mini cartons soon, to sustain our environmentally friendly profile.” With that, he picked a zucchini fresh from the crop and passed it to me... one bite saw the delicious, healthy, natural juice proving his point, about quality and freshness, without another word. It really is... magic!





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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



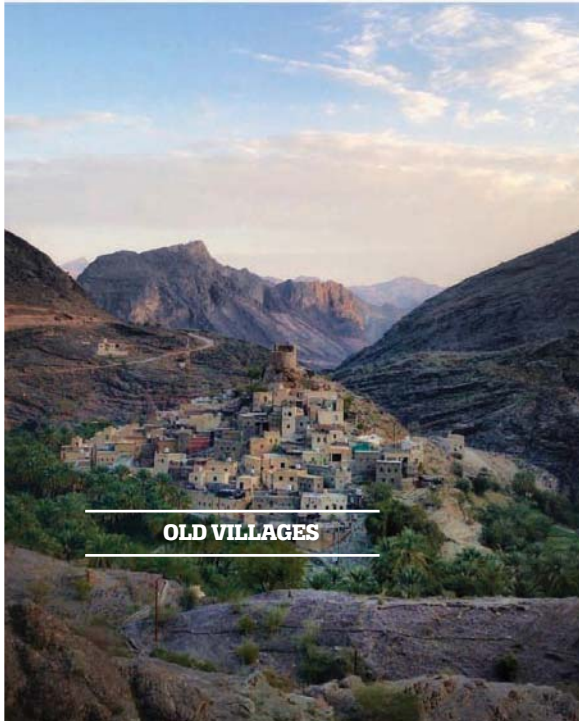
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ENTERTAINMENT

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Former James Bond actor Sean Connery dies aged 90

Scottish movie legend Sean Connery, who shot to international stardom as the suave, sexy and sophisticated British agent James Bond and went on to grace the silver screen for four decades, has died aged 90.

"His wife Micheline and his two sons Jason and Stephane have confirmed that he died peacefully in his sleep surrounded by family," family spokesperson Nancy Seltzer said on Saturday.

Connery was raised in near poverty in the slums of Edinburgh and worked as a coffin polisher, milkman and lifeguard before his body-building hobby helped launch an acting career that made him one of the world's biggest stars.

Sean was a global legend but, first and foremost, he was a patriotic and proud Scot," said Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

As Bond, his debonair manner and wry humour in foiling flamboyant villains and cavorting with beautiful women belied a darker, violent edge, and he crafted a depth of character that set the standard for those who followed him in the role.

Connery will be remembered first as British agent 007, the character created by novelist Ian Fleming and immortalised by Connery in films starting with "Dr. No" in 1962.

As Bond, his debonair manner and wry humour in foiling flamboyant villains and cavorting with beautiful women belied a darker, violent edge, and he crafted a depth of character that set the standard for those who followed him in the role.

He would introduce himself in the movies with the signature line, "Bond — James Bond." But Connery was unhappy being defined by the role and once said he "hated that damned James Bond".

Tall and handsome, with a throaty voice to match a sometimes crusty personality, Connery played a series of noteworthy roles besides Bond and won an Academy Award for his portrayal of a

tough Chicago cop in "The Untouchables" (1987).

He was 59 when *People* magazine declared him the "sexiest man alive" in 1989.

Connery was an ardent supporter of Scotland's independence and had the words "Scotland Forever" tattooed on his arm while serving in the Royal Navy. When he was knighted at the age of 69 by Britain's Queen Elizabeth in 2000 at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, he wore full Scottish dress including the green-and-black plaid kilt of his mother's MacLeod clan.

BECAME FED UP WITH 'IDIOTS'

Some noteworthy non-Bond films included director Alfred Hitchcock's "Marnie" (1964), "The Wind and the Lion" (1975) with Candice Bergen, director John Huston's "The Man Who Would be King" (1975) with Michael Caine, director Steven Spielberg's "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989) and the Cold War tale "The Hunt for Red October" (1990).

Fans of alternative cinema will always remember him starring as the "Brutal Exterminator" Zed in John Boorman's mind-bending fantasy epic "Zardoz" (1974), where a heavily moustachioed Connery spent much of the movie running around in a skimpy red loin-cloth, thigh-high leather boots and a pony tail.

Connery retired from movies after disputes with the director of his final outing, the forgettable "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" in 2003.

"I get fed up dealing with idiots," he said.

The Bond franchise was still going strong more than five decades after Connery started it. The lavishly produced movies, packed with high-tech gadgetry and spectacular effects, broke box office records and grossed hundreds of millions of dollars.

After the smashing success of "Dr. No," more Bond movies followed for Connery in quick succession: "From Russia with Love" (1963), "Goldfinger" (1964), "Thunderball" (1965) and "You Only Live Twice" (1967).

Connery then grew concerned about being typecast and decided to break away. Australian actor George Lazenby succeeded him as Bond in "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" in 1969.

But without Connery it lacked what the public wanted and he was lured back in 1971 for "Diamonds Are Forever" with temptations that included a slice of the profits, which he said would go to a Scottish educational trust. He insisted it would be his last time as Bond.

Twelve years later, at age 53, Connery was back as 007 in "Never Say Never Again" (1983), an independent production that enraged his old mentor, producer Albert "Cubby" Broccoli. — **Reuters**

On Day of Dead, Bolivians remember COVID-19 departed by baking bread in their likeness



AS THE DAY of the Dead approaches in Bolivia, bakers are helping those remembering loved ones lost this year to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating loaves in the likeness of the departed.

The bakers knead the dough and shape it into breads in the form of people, adding plaster faces. Known as "Tanta wawa," Bolivians believe they ease the journey of the visiting dead.

In a market in La Paz, Lourdes Vasquez has set up an altar to remember a colleague who died. It has a large, coffin-shaped loaf that says "COVID-19 2020" on it, as well as offerings of fruit, drinks and snacks.

Bakers said some locals are also requesting bread in the likeness of health workers, to remember those who died fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Bolivia has reported



All Saints' Day is marked on November 1 in many parts of Latin America, a time when families remember their deceased. With the region hit hard by the coronavirus, this year will be particularly poignant for many, and restrictions on social gatherings mean it will be harder for the usual festivities to take place.

over 8,700 deaths from COVID-19.

"To remember our family members we are making T'anta wawa," said baker Marcelo Montano. "They represent loved ones that we have lost and thanks to this (bread) we have them in our hearts... we remember them forever." — **Reuters**



Women in Oman should self-check and be more mindful of breast cancer

BY UPASANA VENAİK

Each year, an estimated 40000 women die due to meta-static breast cancer which is why it has become extremely important to educate every female who is above 20 years old about self-examination and screening. Every child or husband also must convince women in their house to undergo a regular health check-up including the screening of the breast.

As someone who got diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 32, it has become important advocacy for me to create awareness about the subject to help those who don't know how to deal with such situation.

October was celebrated all over the world as the breast cancer awareness month. But we are still far away from reaching the required awareness level.

Breast cancer is cancer that forms in the cells of the breast. It doesn't differentiate between male and female, although it is more commonly seen in females and is also a leading cause of death amongst women.

Every year more than two million women get diagnosed with breast cancer.

The age-old belief was that breast cancer occurs in women only and in women who are above 50 years of age. With the advancement in diagnosis, breast cancer is increasingly being seen in young women as well. With any type of cancer, early detection is the key, associated with higher chances of survival.

A lot of women associate their health with the healthy function of uterus and ovaries.

What is lacking, is the awareness amongst women of all age group that cancer is more commonly seen in the breast. With their routine health check, a clinical examination of breast or mammogram should not be ignored.

Dr Jaseena, obstetrics and gynaecologist, Lifeline Hospital Salalah said, "We advise our patients to undergo a yearly check-up of the breast along with check-up of reproductive system".

Females need to start with self-examination of the breast every month, they



My journey into breast cancer awareness started when I felt a painless lump immediately, upon self-screening. I knew that there was something wrong. I realised that there are so many females like me who are often surprised when they get diagnosed with breast cancer. Some cannot believe that it can happen to them at all.

UPASANA VENAİK

Medical Professional and Cancer Survivor

need to be familiar with their breast and notice any changes in the breast.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU FIND:

- Lump in the breast (generally it will be painless)
- Changes in breast size or shape
- Nipple discharge especially if blood-stained
- Changes in the skin of the breast
- Retraction of the nipples

RISK FACTORS FOR BREAST CANCER:

- Family history of breast cancer (accounts for 10 per cent of breast cancer

seen)

- Women who began menstrual cycle before age of 12 years
- Late menopause after the age of 55 years
- Women who never had a child
- First pregnancy after the age of 30 years
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Alcohol intake
- Previous exposure to radiation

GET YOURSELF SCREENED FOR BREAST CANCER:

- Clinical breast examination every 3

- years for women from 20-39 years, after 40, CBE every year,
- Mammography: age 40-50; every three years. Age 50+ every year.

This was according to Dr Suma Jacob, Radiologist, Sultan Qaboos Hospital, Salalah.

Women who are at higher risk (positive family history, BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene-positive, had radiation therapy to the chest) should get a breast MRI and a mammogram every year, typically starting at the age 30.

TREATMENT

Treatment of breast cancer is multi-disciplinary, where a team of doctors (oncologist, surgeons, radiation oncologist) sit together and decide the treatment plan for each case.

In Oman, cancer care is available in Government-run hospitals and amongst different specialised private hospitals.

Dr Altaf Ali, Medical Oncologist, Burjeel Hospital, Muscat said, "With so much advancement in chemotherapy drugs and reconstructive surgeries, the patient gets the best treatment outcomes provided the detection of cancer is at a curable stage. That is why so much of stress is being given to screening."

He added, "a lot of people avoid check-up due to fear, fear stops them from undergoing regular check-up and also to talk about the screening process amongst their friends or family members."

A WAKE UP CALL

My journey into breast cancer awareness started when I felt a painless lump in my breast. Immediately, upon self-screening, I knew that there was something wrong. Honestly, I was shocked when I learnt about my diagnosis. Eventually, I realised that there are so many females like me who are often surprised when they get diagnosed with breast cancer. Some cannot believe that it can happen to them at all. But cancer can happen to anyone. I realised today and feel I have to educate other people to start getting screened early.

I'm currently undergoing chemotherapy and I'm willing to help or listen if any female require any guidance or need a listener. You can reach out to me at upsveni@gmail.com