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NEW ZEALAND INTO SEMIS, AS INDIA IS ELIMINATED



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STRONG US PAYROLLS BRIGHTEN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK



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MEN IN MASKS: BACK TO BUSINESS



HM issues one Royal Decree

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree No 64/2021 on the ratification of an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Greece on mutual waiving of visas for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports, signed in Muscat on October 20, 2021. Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement as per the version attached to this Decree. Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO SIERRA LEONE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Julius Maada Bio, of the Republic of Sierra Leone on victims of the fuel tanker explosion in the capital, Freetown. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies to President Maada Bio, families of the victims and the friendly people of Sierra Leone, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — ONA

Now get news on the go



OMAN OBSERVER

INSIDE



SUDAN SECURITY FIRES TEAR GAS AS CAMPAIGN STARTS

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PROBE WIDENS INTO STAMPEDE IN HOUSTON

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HM'S MESSAGE TO EMIR OF QATAR



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a written message to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar. The message deals with bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest. The message was handed over by HH Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, when he was received by Qatari Emir in Doha on Sunday. **DETAILS ON P2**

'REEFY' TO EMPOWER RURAL WOMEN



Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on Sunday presided over the inaugural ceremony of a rural women's product funding programme named 'Reefy.' Held at the House of Musical Arts in Muscat, the ceremony was attended by senior dignitaries and officials. Reefy is the outcome of a successful partnership between Oman Development Bank (ODB) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. The project seeks to encourage entrepreneurship among women in the countryside in different governorates. It will empower women operating in the production, manufacturing and marketing of local produce. **DETAILS ON P2**

'SHABAB OMAN II' BEGINS MARITIME TOUR



Shabab Oman II, sail ship of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), set out on a maritime GCC tour themed 'Oman, A Renewed Approach'. The tour re-enacts the Sultanate of Oman's maritime history and the country's modern-day achievements. The tour incarnates Oman's timeless tradition of extending bridges of peace, amity and fraternity among nations of the world. A ceremony was held on the occasion under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. It was attended by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, and others. **DETAILS ON P4**

PHOTO BY TAHNI AL SIYABI

State Council endorses study on reality of research

MUSCAT: Based on the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council on Sunday opened the third annual sitting of its 7th Term.

The session was held under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

The council endorsed a study presented by the Education and Research Committee on "The Reality of Research in the Sultanate of Oman and the Role of Public and Private Sectors and Global Firms in Supporting Research".

The members of the State Council affirmed that the study fits with Oman Vision 2040 and its different strategies. It reflects the vision's role in creating

The study fits with Oman Vision 2040 and its strategies. It reflects the vision's role in making mechanisms aimed at enabling public and private sectors to contribute in enhancing research efforts

mechanisms aimed at enabling public and private sectors and global firms to effectively contribute to enhancing research efforts in the country.

Upon the directives of His Majesty, the Majlis Ash'shura also opened the third annual sitting of its 9th Term (2019-2023).

The first session, chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali,

Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, saw the opening of candidacy to membership of the Majlis Ash'shura Office and posts of heads and deputy heads of committees.

Out of 16 candidates who contested, six emerged as winners: Nasser bin Sultan al Habsi, Jihad bin Abdullah al Fannah, Ammar bin Salim al Saadi, Badr bin Nassir al Jabri, Malik bin Hilal al Yahmadi and Abdullah bin Musallam al Rasbi.

The following were voted as indicated: Hilal bin Hamad al Sarmi as head of the Health and Environment Committee, Dr Hamoud bin Ahmed al Yahyaee as head of the Services and Social Development Committee, Jamal bin Ahmed al Abri as head of the Education and Research Committee, ...

Ministry rolls out booster dose for Covid-19

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyp

The Ministry of Health has announced the roll-out of the booster dose against Covid-19 for select target groups from Sunday.

A statement from the ministry said, "the target groups are those who have completed eight months from the date of receiving the last dose and others in the select risk groups".

They can receive the third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, it said, without specifying the centres from where they could be available.

The target groups for the third dose are those who have completed eight months from the date of receiving the last dose, and include others above 65 years, employees in the healthcare sector and frontline staff in the age of 50 and above.

"Patients who suffer from chronic diseases from the age of 18 years and above, especially if they are not well controlled, are also eligible for the third dose",

the ministry said.

They include patients with chronic lung diseases, those with kidney diseases and who are under dialysis, heart patients, diabetics with glycated hemoglobin (hbA1c) greater than 7.6 per cent, those who have genetic diseases and those who have hypertension or blood pressure diseases.

TARGET GROUP

Those who are obese with a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30 kg/m2 are included in this group.

The second target group, according to the statement, consists of those who have completed three months from the date of receiving the last dose, but are above 12 years and over and are undergoing cancer treatment, or those who have undergone bone marrow or organ transplants.

Also included are those infected with human immunodeficiency virus and others receiving immunosuppressive or biologic agents.

Sultanate condemns attack on Iraqi PM

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its condemnation of the terrorist act which targeted the residence of the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi, using drones.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, the Sultanate of Oman expressed its solidarity with Iraq in safeguarding its security and stability. Earlier, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi escaped unhurt from an "assassination attempt" in which an explosives-packed drone hit his Baghdad residence early on Sunday.

Washington condemned the "apparent act of terrorism" while Iraqi President Barham Saleh called the attack, which was not immediately claimed by any group, an attempted "coup against the constitutional system".

SEE ALSO P6

HH The Honourable Lady presides over rural women’s entrepreneurship programme

MUSCAT: Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidy, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on Sunday presided over the inaugural ceremony of a rural women’s product funding programme codenamed “Reefy”.

Held at the House of Musical Arts in Muscat, the ceremony was attended by senior dignitaries and officials. Reefy is the outcome of a successful partnership between Oman Development Bank (ODB) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The project seeks to encourage entrepreneurship among women in the countryside in different governorates of the country. It will empower women operating in the production, manufacturing and marketing of local produce.

The programme will promote women’s role in developing the economy of rural society, improve family income and upgrade the economic status of the local community. The ceremony saw the presentation of a visual display on the financial product ‘Reefy’, along with success stories about inspirational young women.

HH The Honourable Lady toured an exhibition held on the sidelines of the launch ceremony and reviewed leading models about rural projects and products. She listened to a briefing about the exhibits and hailed women’s initiatives in this field. At the conclusion of the ceremony, HH Assayida Ahd accepted a souvenir gift presented by the Executive President of the ODB. — ONA





Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company

Diam Haya

Member of Nama Group

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company hereby announces the following tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2413400/2021 (Re-float)	Improvements of wadi crossing in Darsait STP	Local companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in road works	115 /- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/11/2021	06/12/2021
T/22442530/2021	Providing support and cleaning services for STPs, pumping stations and networks at Muscat Governorate	Small and medium enterprises and specialized in similar works	FREE	18/11/2021	29/11/2021
T/2442552/2021	Supply of spare parts for blowers at Al Seeb STP	Local companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in similar works	25 /- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/11/2021	29/11/2021
T/2244256/2021	Cleaning and hospitality services for Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company at Muscat Governorate	Local companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in similar works	195 /- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/11/2021	29/11/2021

The tender documents can be purchased from Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company e-tendering page ([Supplier Login](#)) from the date of publication of this announcement until 18/11/2021. The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through [Supplier Login](#).

Applicants who are not registered with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company shall register from: <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through OWWSC e-tendering page ([Supplier Login](#)).

All participating companies shall submit a bid bond of 1% of bid value in a sealed envelope to OWWSC's Chairman of Tender Committee **not later than 3:00 pm on the bid submission date**. Bid bond must be obtained from a bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company e-tendering page not later than 3:00 pm on the date specified above.

For more details, refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om

ص.ب. ١٠٤٧ | ب. ١٣٣، الخوير، سلطنة عمان

P.O. Box 1047 | PC 133, Al Khuwair | Sultanate of Oman | 1442 www.owwsc.nama.om

HM sends written message to Emir of Qatar

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a written message to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar. The message deals with bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest.

The message was handed over by His Highness Sayyid Fatik bin Fahr al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, when he was received by the Qatari Monarch at the Emiri Diwan in Doha on Sunday. During the meeting, HH Sayyid Fatik conveyed greetings of His Majesty the Sultan to Shaikh Tamim, along with His Majesty’s best wishes of permanent health and happiness to him. He also conveyed His Majesty’s greetings and wishes of further progress and prosperity to the Qatari people.

On his turn, Shaikh Tamim asked HH Sayyid Fatik to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Jassim bin Hamad al Thani, Personal Representative of the Emir, Shaikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Chief of the Amiri Diwan and Najeeb bin Yahya al Balushi, Ambassador of Oman to Qatar. Meanwhile, HH Sayyid Fatik returned home this afternoon after a short visit to Qatar. — ONA

Tropical depression over Arabian Sea

MUSCAT: The National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre weather analysis indicates that a tropical depression was observed East-Central of the Arabian Sea on Sunday.

The depression is located at longitude (67.5 E) and latitude (14.0 N) with an estimated surface wind speed around the centre 21- 27 knots (40-50 km/hour). It is expected to maintain its intensity as a depression and move west to southwest towards the Horn of Africa with no impact over the Sultanate of Oman during the next 72 hours.

The sea state will be moderate along the coasts of the Arabian Sea and with a maximum wave height of 2 metres and slight waves along the Sultanate of Oman’s sea coastal areas. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) advises all to take precautions during rain and while crossing wadis. Check the visibility and sea state before sailing and follow the issued weather bulletins and reports. — ONA

OMANI-BRITISH DRILL ‘MAGIC CARPET 2021’ BEGINS



THAMRAIT: The Sultanate of Oman-Britain military exercise, codenamed “Magic Carpet 2021”, began on Sunday between the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the British Royal Air Force at the air training zone in the Governorate of Dhofar. The exercise, which will run till November 18, includes joint training air operations that aim to sustain RAFO’s preparedness in all fields. The exercise comes as part of joint military cooperation and exchange of expertise between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom (UK). — ONA



Oman to host UFI Global Congress 2022 of exhibition industry

MUSCAT: The UFI Global Association of the Exhibition Industry endorsed Oman's hosting of the UFI Global Congress 2022, the world's largest gathering of global exhibition industry.

Oman will be represented by the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in hosting the event.

The announcement was made at the conclusion of the UFI Global Congress held in Rotterdam, the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

This precedent reflects the Sultanate of Oman's preparedness in activating tourism activities after they were suspended due to the

Oman will be represented by the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in hosting the event

Covid-19 pandemic, as the Supreme Committee has recently launched a recovery plan to bring life back to normalcy.

Said bin Salim al Shanfari, CEO of OCEC, said that the Global Congress is a chance to promote OCEC's facilities and foundations on a global arena. Choosing OCEC to host the next congress is a testimony to its international competitiveness in the global exhibition industry.

Al Shanfari added that succeeding to host the next Global Congress will set a precedent in the history of conventions and exhibitions in Oman. The event will bring together more than 800 specialists in this field.

Moreover, Al Shanfari said that he hopes the event will contribute in marketing the Sultanate of Oman as an international destination for conventions tourism. — **ONA**

Council endorses study on reality of research



Based on the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council on Sunday opened the third annual sitting of its 7th term. — **ONA**

FROM PAGE 1

Abdullah bin Ahmed al Malik as head of the Food Security Committee, Ali bin Ahmed al Maashani as head of the Information and Culture Committee, Younis bin Ali

al Mantheri as head of the Youth and Human Resources Committee, Ahmed bin Said al Sharji as head of the Economic and Financial Committee and Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali as head of the Legislative and Legal Committee.

The Majlis Ash'hura will on Monday hold a session on the state draft budget for the fiscal year 2022, topics of ministerial statements, panel plans, discussion requests and government proposals.

The agenda for the second

meeting includes discussions on the report of the Economic and Financial Committee regarding the reorientation of electricity and water subsidy for citizens and the economic sectors, applying the value-added tax on electricity and water bill.

The Majlis will also discuss the committee's report on the economic incentives for the small and medium enterprises.

The meeting will also discuss the conditions of the Oman Food Investment Holding Company. — **ONA**



Upon the Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Majlis Ash'shura on Sunday opened the third annual sitting of its 9th Term (2019-2023). — **ONA**



Import permits for wild species suspended

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
LAKSHMIOMAN

Exotic pets could be harmful to the Sultanate of Oman's ecosystem and accordingly Environment Authority has taken a stern action. The Environment Authority has suspended granting of permits to import wild reptiles and insects to the country.

For now, permits will be given for import of wild reptiles and insects for scientific purposes only and this includes zoos as well.

The decision is currently temporary and was taken to assess the current situation as many incidents of wild species that are alien to Omani environment have been found in the open causing direct threat to the native species of the country.

The situation is considered as a threat due to the fact that Omani environment is defined

as fragile.

The Director of Biodiversity at Environment Authority, Saleh al Saadi, explained, "During the recent years we have faced a lot of problems regarding native species or the invasive ones and one of the main problems is the invasive alien species. We have plants and animals in this category and the issue is that they are brought in as pets or out of special interest. They are wild animals but are being kept as pets and when they cannot manage them, the animals are released outdoors and at times they are escaping on their own. The wild species are at times breeding and require plenty of food as well as specific care. When the pet owners cannot meet the demands the animals are let free in the wilderness. This is effecting our native species and also the ecosystem."

House crow and common myna are considered as

examples of the invasive species among birds that have been increasing in population. Invasive plants such as Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) and Parthenium hysterophorus have been harming the environment and competing with native species as they multiply quickly and currently they are occupying huge areas in the country, according to the director of biodiversity.

"It is important to try to eradicate them or prevent the pathways and one of the pathways is importing of these species to the country. So we have to take actions to minimise the impact of these species whether they are reptiles or birds," he pointed out. Even pythons have been imported as pets.

"People have been importing pythons, lizards and so on. We do not know exactly the purpose. Sometimes they claim some reptiles are meant for

consuming and this explanation cannot be taken seriously. The suspension is a temporary step until we streamline solution process on how to manage the situation," he noted.

The authority, meanwhile is dealing with scientific centres and zoos. The zoos tend to have good management and care too. But normal people when they keep the wild reptiles and insects at home or farms, they tend to be careless.

"Sometimes we do not know whom the wild animal belongs to. There is a different way to manage wild animals compared to domesticated ones. If they keep it in their own homes it is still okay but the general public get worried when they spot rare species in their surrounding areas. We do receive complains from the public often. They say prevention is better than cure so it is best to stop importing them rather than trying to eradicate them later," said Al Saadi.

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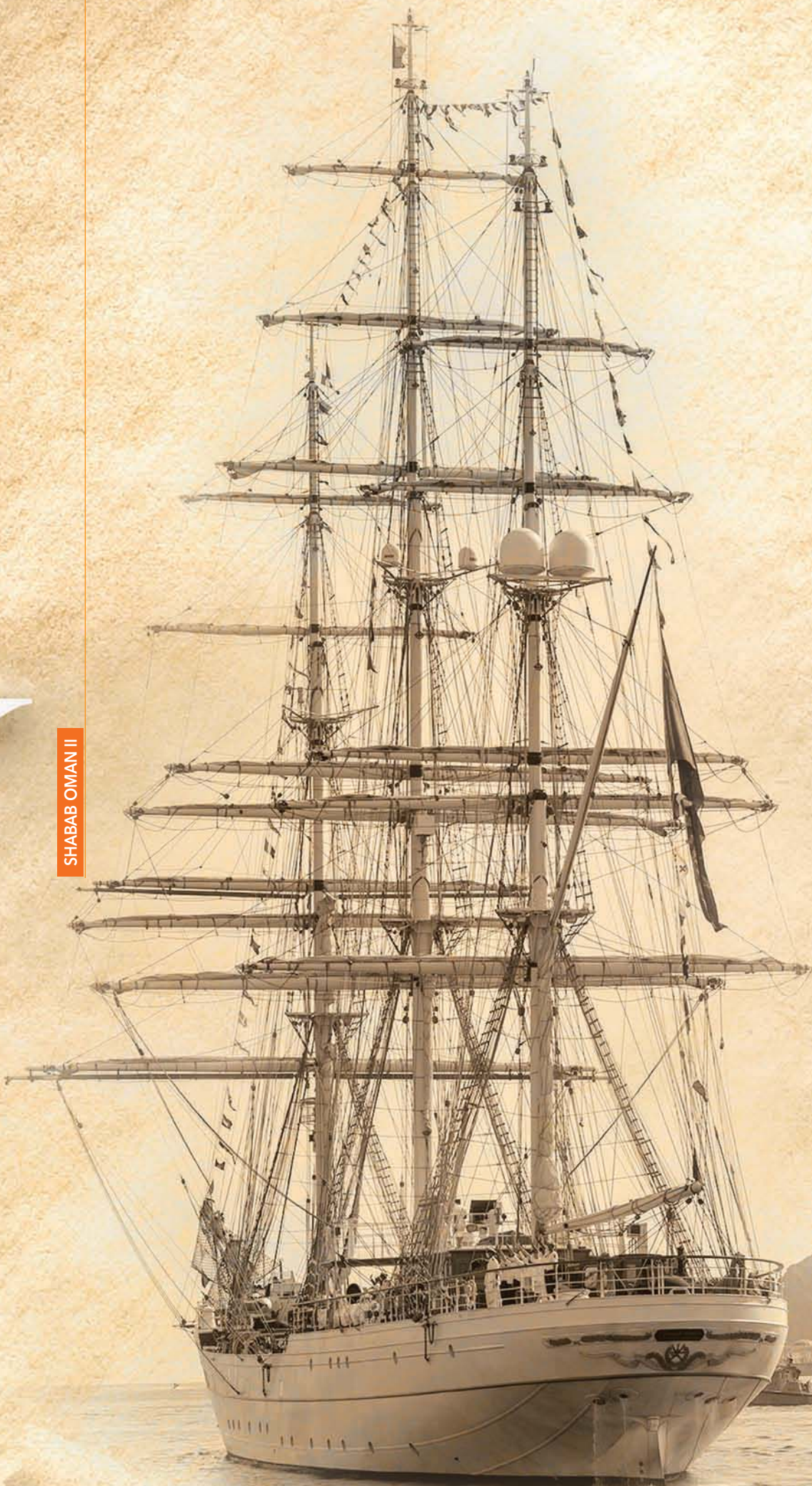
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Al Khamis Plaza, Qurum - Tel. 24560992 | Muscat Grand Mall - Tel. 24399930 | Al Hail South - Tel. 24558148
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Sayyid Theyazin sees off *Shabab Oman II*



SHABAB OMAN II



ROUTE OF THE VOYAGE

November 7
(Sultanate of Oman) - Sails
out of Port Sultan Qaboos

November 11-12
(Kuwait) A'Shiyoukh Port

November 14-15
(KSA - Dammam)
King Abdulaziz Port

November 16-17
(Bahrain - Manama)
King Salman Port

November 18-19
(Qatar - Doha)
Hamad Port

November 21-Dec 1
(UAE - Dubai) Dubai Port
Take part in Expo Dubai 2020

December 5
(Sultanate of Oman) Comeback
Port Sultan Qaboos

MUSCAT: *Shabab Oman II*, sail ship of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), set out on a maritime GCC tour themed "Oman, A Renewed Approach". The tour re-enacts the Sultanate of Oman's maritime history and the country's modern-day achievements.

The tour incarnates the Sultanate of Oman's timeless tradition of extending bridges of peace, amity and fraternity among nations of the world. A farewell ceremony was held on the occasion under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

It was attended by His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), military and security services. The ceremony, held at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muttrah, began with an honorary salute to HH Sayyid Theyazin, who later inspected the front row of the parade.

Then, the chief guest, senior officials and commanders boarded the ship to bid farewell to the crew. They listened to a briefing about the course of the voyage. They posed for commemorative photos and watched a presentation about the past and present glories of *Shabab Oman* ship, which sailed around the world, carrying around the Sultanate of Oman's message of peace and humanitarian love to the global community. Then, HH Sayyid Theyazin launched the *Shabab Oman II* electronic website.

In its GCC tour, *Shabab Oman II* will visit A'Shiyoukh Port in Kuwait, King Abdulaziz Port in Saudi Arabia, King Salman Port in Bahrain, Hamad Port in Qatar and Dubai Tourism Port in the United Arab Emirates.

The ship will drop anchor at Dubai Port on November 21 and remain there till December 1, the period during which it will represent the Sultanate of Oman at Dubai Expo 2020. *Shabab Oman II* will also represent the Sultanate of Oman at the pavilion of GCC states at Dubai Expo 2020 and it will stage musical performances through the bands of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the RAO's Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division.

The 28-day tour includes an academic programme for participants from different countries of the world and a stationary exhibition to be held on board. The exhibition will embody a pioneering Omani maritime and naval history, as well as military bands. — ONA



OVER 15,000 CHILDREN ENROL IN 1ST GRADE FOR 2022-2023

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 7

The statistics of the Ministry of Education for the registration of new students in the first grade of government schools for the academic year 2022-2023 showed that approximately 15,241 students have been registered so far. The number of students targeted for enrolment who are of school age is approximately 80,000 students, whom were born from September 1, 2015 until December 31, 2016.

The ministry has opened the door for registration for these students in government schools since October 28, 2021, and has set several conditions for their registration. The registration



should be exclusively for children born in the period from September

1, 2015 until December 31, 2016. Applications for registration are

submitted through the Sultanate of Oman's educational portal by

entering the link <https://eportal.moe.gov.om>. The citizen child

must also have a civil number on the birth certificate, and the non-citizen child must have a valid resident card in the Sultanate of Oman.

After registering on the website, parents must report to the school, accompanying the child, and bringing the following documents: the child's medical record, and a medical report documented by an accredited health institution on chronic diseases, or any disabilities that the child suffers from (if any), and the child undergoes medical examinations by government health institutions.

The ministry also notes that the last date for registration is Thursday, December 30, 2021, and registration shall not be allowed after that.

'Covid affected Omani society psychologically, educationally'

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 7

The Covid-19 Research Programme, one of the research projects funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), an expert team headed by Dr Mohsin bin Nasser al Salmi from the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), revealed the effects caused by Covid-19 on the Omani society.

The research study aimed to identify the educational, psychological, and social effects caused by Covid-19 on the Omani society, as well as studying the positive aspects showing the best practices followed by the Omani society in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, which can be utilised for dealing with similar cases in the future. Furthermore, the study sought to provide suggestions to those in charge of the various sectors included in this research project on how to deal with these pandemics in the future. The study also aimed at training researchers



Dr Mohsin al Salmi, Principal Investigator

in the humanities field on studying phenomena that have huge impact on societies, such as Covid-19.

Speaking about the prominent effects, Dr Mohsin al Salmi, said, "This research study revealed the most important positive practices that the Omani society followed in dealing with the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, which acted as a motivator for educational institutions to increase their attention to the quality of education, in terms of forming committees to deal with its effects benefiting from local media and social media. Taking the education

quality into consideration, educational challenges and emergency conditions will be addressed so that institutions and students are kept up-to-date with the modern trends and developments in the educational system as they benefit from international and regional experiences.

One of the main findings of the study at the psychological field pointed that students of general education are having high levels of being addicted to study, self-regulation strategies of learning, and psychological flexibility. On the other hand, they have low levels of academic burnout, procrastination, and academic anxiety, which indicates the student's ability to adapt to distance learning environment. This also reflects the effort put in by those in charge of the educational learning process in providing various ways that help learners achieve the educational aims.

The study findings also confirmed the long-term role of pandemic in the flourishing of technological life and digital communication (through

social media applications) instead of physical communication.

The study focused on the social effects of official response in facing the pandemic on the front line workers, where the study sample members confirmed that working during Covid-19 added new skills for them and refined them better over time. Adding to that, because of the cases they underwent and had to deal with, it made them feel the life value and that changed some of their concepts.

Commenting on the most important recommendations that this study came out with, Dr Mohsin al Salmi, the Principal Investigator of the research study, said, "Recommendations given to those who are in charge at the educational sector can be summarised in developing a partnership strategy with telecommunications companies to strength the infrastructure of schools and universities sector in different governorates and wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman."



Omani Assn for Intellectual Property signs MoU with WIPO

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 7

The Omani Association for Intellectual Property (OAIP) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), within context of current visit of OAIP's delegation to Geneva, Switzerland to attend the current session of WIPO's meetings.

The MoU was signed from OAIP's side by lawyer Dr Ali bin Khamis al Alawi, Chairman of OAIP, while it was signed from WIPO's side by Hassan Kulayeb, Deputy Director General at

the Regional and National Development Sector of WIPO.

The MoU aims at enhancing the objectives of the two sides in terms of raising awareness of the importance of intellectual property, promoting innovation, exchanging expertise and knowledge on intellectual property related-issues, enhancing cooperation between the two sides in the field of intellectual property rights, raising awareness on intellectual property and protecting its rights as well as rendering education and training in such a field, due to the value and significance of intellectual property rights.



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources
Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
455/2021/MAFWR/HQ-65	Establishment of Khasab Fish Market	200/-	First	Tuesday 23-11-2021	Monday 13-12-2021
457/2021/MAFWR/HQ-66	Implementation, Supply & Installation of Floating Platform in Khasab at Musandam Governorate	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 18-11-2021	Tuesday 23-11-2021
458/2021/MAFWR/HQ-67	Maintenance Works of Wadi Qurayat Recharge Dam in Wilayat Bahla Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah	25/-	Third	Tuesday 23-11-2021	Monday 13-12-2021

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtit.gov.om.
- Note:** Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

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Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fee	Last Date of Collection the Tenders	Last Date of Submission
BME/T/722/2021	LEASE CONTRACT FOR IMMUNOASSAY ANALYSER	OMR. 25	19/12/2021	20/12/2021

Tender Conditions:

- The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
- The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelop.
- The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms & Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Procurement Directorate
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
AL Khoudh / Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24144688/ 24144633
Fax: 24413156
E-mail: hospitalprocure@squ.edu.om
www.squ.edu.om



TENT-PEGGING COMPETITION



A horseman takes part in a tent-pegging competition in Yemen's capital Sanaa on Sunday. – AFP

Iraqi PM calls for restraint after drone strike on his home

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi said he was unhurt and appealed for "calm and restraint" after a drone attack on his residence early on Sunday heightened political tensions in the war-scarred country.

The attack in Baghdad's Green Zone was the first to target the residence of Kadhemi, who has been in power since May 2020. It came as Iraq's political parties negotiate alliances over who will run the next government after elections last month.

That vote saw the Conquest (Fatah) Alliance, the political arm of the Hashed al Shaabi paramilitary network, suffer a substantial decline in its parliamentary seats, leading the group to denounce the outcome as "fraud".

The big winner, with more than 70 seats according to the initial count, was the movement of Moqtada Sadr, a preacher who campaigned as a nationalist.

Security sources said three drones were launched, but two were shot down. They were "launched from a site near Republic Bridge" which crosses the Tigris River in Baghdad, before flying towards the Green Zone, one source said.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack, which left two bodyguards wounded, according to a security



Iraqi security forces take part in a security deployment following the drone attack on PM residence at one of the fortified Green Zone entrances in Baghdad on Sunday. – Reuters

source.

Gunfire sounded and smoke was seen rising from the Green Zone area after the strike.

Photos issued by Kadhemi's office showed debris strewn on the ground below a damaged exterior stairway and a door that had been dislodged. In a tweet, Kadhemi called "for calm and restraint on the part of everyone for the good of Iraq".

"My residence has been the target of a cowardly assault. Praise God, I am fine", he then said in

a short video shared on social media. His office described the attack as a "failed assassination attempt".

The United States, which has around 2,500 troops in the country, said it was "relieved to learn the Prime Minister was unharmed".

"This apparent act of terrorism, which we strongly condemn, was directed at the heart of the Iraqi state," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

Iraq's President Barham Salih,

who holds a largely ceremonial role, said the attack "requires a united position in confronting the evil actors trying to mess with this country's security and the safety of its people.

"We cannot accept dragging Iraq into chaos and to a coup against the constitutional system."

A large number of security forces were deployed in and around the Green Zone, which also hosts the US embassy and is frequently targeted by rocket attacks. — AFP

Sudan security fires tear gas as anti-coup campaign starts

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces on Sunday fired tear gas at an anti-coup rally by teachers at the start of a two-day civil disobedience call against last month's military takeover.

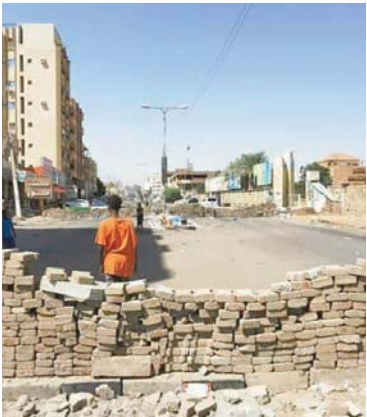
Dozens of teachers carried banners reading "no, no to military rule" and demanded a transition to "full civilian rule" at a rally outside the education ministry in the capital Khartoum.

Nationwide anti-coup protests — including by tens of thousands on October 30 — have occurred since the October 25 coup but have been met by a deadly crackdown. At least 14 demonstrators have been killed and about 300 wounded, according to the independent Central Committee of Sudan's Doctors.

"We organised a silent stand against the decisions by Burhan outside the ministry of education," said Mohamed al Amin, a geography teacher who took part in that protest against the country's top general, Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

"Police later came and fired tear gas at us though we were simply standing on the streets and carrying banners," he said.

There were no confirmed reports of casualties but about 87 teachers have been detained, according to the Sudanese



A young Sudanese man stands in front of barricades in the capital Khartoum on Sunday. – AFP

Professionals Association, an umbrella of unions which called for the Sunday-Monday civil disobedience.

The teachers' rally came after the military leadership which carried out the coup replaced heads of department at the education ministry, as part of sweeping changes it made in multiple sectors.

"The protest rejects the return of remnants of the old regime" linked to ousted president Omar al Bashir, the teachers' union said in a Facebook post.

Sunday's rally followed calls for civil disobedience made by SPA, an umbrella of unions which were instrumental in the 2018-2019 protests which led to the ouster of longtime strongman Bashir in April 2019. — AFP

Organic farmers find fertile ground in Tunisia and Morocco

TUNIS: Proudly displaying her freshly picked pomegranates, Tunisian farmer Sarah Shili says going organic is "the future of farming" — and as demand surges in North Africa and beyond, the sector is blooming.

Shili runs Domaine Elixir Bio, a 230-acre farm near Tunis that produces organic-certified vegetable, fruit and cereal crops in a way she said "respects nature".

The farm's revenues have surged thanks to strong demand and the growth of online sales, multiplying five times in as many years to hit 100,000 euros in 2020.

That is despite the higher price of organic products in a middle-income country where many people's wallets have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and years of economic crisis.

Indeed, with export demand also on the rise, Shili says the main challenges are on the supply side.

"We lack water, like all farmers, and to get organic seeds and plants we have to do everything ourselves," she said.



Farmers harvest olives at an organic grove in Oudhna, near Tunisia's capital Tunis. – AFP

Despite the challenges, the sector has surged in Tunisia since the turn of the millennium.

In 2001, just 16,000 hectares were dedicated to organic farming — a figure that has multiplied 20-fold over two decades.

The number of producers and venders has grown at a similar pace to some 8,000, said Samia Maamer, in charge of organic products at the agriculture ministry. Maamer said the sector has helped diversify the country's economy and now makes up 13 per cent of food exports. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DAMASCUS

Mine blast in central Syria kills all 7 in car

A landmine explosion killed seven people, including a child, in Homs province of central Syria on Saturday, a war monitor reported.

It detonated as a vehicle with the seven on board passed through a desert road outside the historic city of Palmyra, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "It destroyed the vehicle and killed all the passengers inside, which included two women, a child, and four men," said the monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria.



Explosives left in fields, along roads or even in buildings by all sides in Syria's decade-long conflict have wounded thousands of civilians and killed hundreds of others.

SANAA

Over 150 fighters dead in Yemen raids

The military coalition in Yemen said it has killed more than 150 more Ansar Allah fighters in the past 24 hours in raids around the northern pro-government bastion of Marib.

The coalition, which backs Yemen's internationally recognised government, has reported near-daily strikes over the past month against the Ansar Allah, each time claiming high losses.

The Ansar Allah, who have for months waged an offensive against Marib, rarely comment on losses.



"Fourteen military vehicles were destroyed and more than 157 fighters were eliminated" in the latest raids, the coalition said in a statement carried by the Saudi state news agency SPA.

TEHRAN

Prominent Iran cartoonist dies of Covid

Prominent Iranian cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh, who published and exhibited his art across the world, has died of Covid-19 at the age of 79, media reported on Sunday.

Derambakhsh was born in the southern city of Shiraz and won acclaim both at home and abroad for his cartoons during a career spanning 60 years. His drawings were published by newspapers including in the United States and Germany, and his work went on display as far



as Japan.

The artist was particularly known for his character representing an ordinary man without a face, sketched with a simple line.

In brief

KABUL



2 HURT IN BLASTS TARGETING TALIBAN FORCES

At least two members of the Taliban security forces were wounded after twin blasts followed by gunfire in Afghanistan's eastern Jalalabad city, police said on Sunday.

Nangarhar police chief Mawlawi Shaikh Neda Mohammad said the first blast hit a vehicle belonging to the security forces. Two people were injured. The second blast caused no casualties, he said.

Eyewitnesses reported a gunfight between the Taliban forces and the attackers following the blasts.

"Two blasts hit the Taliban, then the IS militants engaged in a gunfight and finally managed to escape," a resident of the area said.

LONDON



UK'S TRUSS TO VISIT SOUTHEAST ASIA TO BOOST TIES

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss will travel to Malaysia as part of a week-long visit to southeast Asia aimed at deepening economic and security ties in the region, her office said.

Truss will also visit Thailand and Indonesia, chosen to reflect their "growing economic and diplomatic heft", as post-Brexit Britain looks to strengthen relations with nations and regions beyond Europe.

"I want to position Britain where the future growth is and to think about who our major partners will be in 2050 and beyond," Truss said in a statement.

BEIJING



CHINA ISSUES WINTER'S FIRST SNOWSTORM ORANGE ALERT

China's weather agency issued the winter's first snowstorm orange alert, the second-highest level, on Sunday while nationwide cold wave alarms fuelled concerns over traffic disruptions and flu outbreaks amid rising Covid-19 cases.

The National Meteorological Centre forecast blizzards in northeastern China, with some regions getting 45 millimetres of snow over 24 hours and heavy snow across the northern part of the country.

The capital Beijing welcomed its first snow of the season 23 days earlier than normal years, while temperatures on Sunday night are expected to fall to their lowest for the period in the past decade.

CHINA HAS TIGHT QUARANTINE FOR RETURNING TRAVELLERS

Asia tourism reopens with big-spending Chinese stuck

BANGKOK: Asia's gradual easing of international travel curbs is proving a welcome relief for the region's hard-hit tourism operators slowly opening up to visitors from around the world — with one giant exception.

China, previously the world's largest outbound tourism market, is keeping international air capacity at just 2 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and has yet to relax tight travel restrictions as it sticks to zero tolerance for Covid-19.

That has left a \$255 billion annual spending hole in the global tourism market for operators such as Thailand's Laguna Phuket to try and fill. Managing Director Ravi Chandran says Laguna Phuket's five resorts have shifted their marketing focus to Europe, the United States and the United Arab Emirates to make up for the loss of Chinese visitors, who accounted for 25-30 per cent of its pre-Covid business.

"Up to today, we have not done significant marketing or promotion in China... because we don't feel anything coming our way," Chandran said.

The pandemic has cost Thailand an estimated \$50 billion a year in tourism revenue and Chinese were above-average spenders based on tourism ministry data.

Thailand hopes to receive 180,000 foreign tourists this year, a fraction of around 40 million it received in 2019, as it opened places beyond Phuket to tourists on Monday.

Many experts expect China to keep such stringent measures such as up to a three-week quarantine for those returning home until at least the second quarter of next year and possibly then open gradually on a country-by-country basis.



Foreign tourists are seen next to the Reclining Buddha at Wat Pho in Bangkok, Thailand, last Tuesday. — AFP

"Destinations have to identify new source markets and learn how to market and cater to different cultures," Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Chief Executive Liz Ortiguera said, citing the Maldives as a rare example of a successful pivot during the pandemic. The string of islands in the Indian Ocean promoted itself heavily at trade shows and attracted more Russian and Indian visitors to its luxury resorts and sparkling waters.

China had been its greatest source of tourists before the pandemic but the Maldives saw overall arrivals in the first nine months of 2021 fall just 12 per cent versus the same period of 2019.

Travel data firm ForwardKeys estimates it will take until 2025 for

Chinese outbound travel to recover to pre-pandemic levels. That will also force airlines to re-evaluate their routes given its data shows 38 per cent of Chinese tourists took foreign carriers in 2019. Even as Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia's Bali gradually open up for international travellers, Thai Airways and Garuda Indonesia are drastically shrinking their fleets as part of restructuring plans amid the absence of Chinese tourists.

When China does open its borders, industry surveys show a reluctance by many to travel internationally due to Covid-19 fears.

There has also been a boom in domestic holidays to Hainan Island which now offers duty free shopping in a threat to future visits

to nearby destinations such as Hong Kong and South Korea.

"I honestly do not have much enthusiasm for international travel," said at Kat Qi, 29, a researcher in Beijing who travelled to Southeast Asia and Britain before the pandemic. "A lot of places that I wanted to visit are in less developed countries with gorgeous natural scenery and they tend to be the least vaccinated countries."

Her preference for natural scenery is also a trend emerging in surveys of Chinese travellers. Many are focused on the outdoors at a time when domestic camping holidays have become popular and tourism operators will need to adapt accordingly, experts say.

— Reuters

North Korean troops stage artillery fire competition

SEOUL: North Korean mechanised troops held an artillery fire competition over the weekend as part of efforts to boost the country's defence capabilities, state media reported on Sunday.

The drills were conducted on Saturday, state news agency KCNA said, and come as North Korea increasingly complains over what it sees as a double standard where its military activities invite international criticism when similar exercises by South Korea and the US usually do not.

Analysts say Pyongyang is seeking to normalise its defence activities, with the aim of eventually winning international acceptance of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile arsenals, which have been sanctioned by UN Security Council resolutions.

Much of North Korea's large conventional artillery force is deployed along the fortified border with South Korea, where they have the range to reach as far as the heavily populated capital city of Seoul.

The drills come "at a time when the enthusiasm to undergo intensive training prevails throughout the Korean People's Army (KPA) for ushering in a new heyday in strengthening the state defence capabilities under the banner of self-defence," KCNA reported.

— Reuters

Delhi air quality dips as stubble burning spikes

NEW DELHI: The Indian capital and adjoining regions were shrouded in a thick smog of toxic air for the third straight day on Sunday as farmers burnt crop stubble, adding to the pollution created by firecrackers on Diwali.

Air quality index levels at most monitoring stations in and around Delhi and nearby cities were in the severe category, with fine particulate matter (PM2.5) levels hovering between 400 and 470, which is six to seven times the limit deemed safe by the World Health Organization (WHO).

People have been complaining of breathing problems and itchy eyes and at least three major hospitals reported an increase in the number of patients coming in with respiratory problems.

Bad air quality amid the pandemic compounded the problem, Delhi-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences director Randeep Guleria was quoted as saying by NDTV news channel.

"Covid affects lungs, air pollution causes inflammation and therefore lungs get doubly stressed out. This leads to more severe disease," Guleria said.

Delhi, with 25 million inhabitants, has been ranked



Cyclists make their way along a road amid smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

among the world's most polluted cities in recent years.

The pollution spikes annually in November around Diwali because of fireworks, which are set off despite a ban, stubble burning and local climatic conditions.

The Delhi government has stopped work at more than 90 construction sites which were not following protocols and was using 114 tankers to spray water on roads

to settle dust, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said.

Rai said there were 3,000 to 4,000 cases of stubble burning by farmers in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana being reported daily since Diwali.

HAZARDOUS

"The firecracker ban didn't seem to be successful in Delhi, which led to hazardous pollution levels adding on top of existing perennial

sources," Sunil Dahiya, Analyst, Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said.

Every year, either government authorities or India's Supreme Court impose a ban on firecrackers. But the bans rarely appear to be enforced.

Making matters worse, Diwali falls in period when farmers in the Delhi's neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana burn the

stubble left after harvesting to prepare their fields for the next crop.

Stubble fires accounted for up to 35 per cent of New Delhi's PM2.5 levels, according to data from SAFAR's monitoring system, which falls under the federal Ministry of Earth Sciences

A rare spell of clear skies in October due to intermittent rains and winds had helped Delhiites breathe their cleanest air in at least four years. But during winter months pollution levels surge in northern India, as lower temperatures and a drop in wind speed tend to trap pollutants in the air longer.

Sick of the lack of commitment to making the capital more liveable, Ambrish Mithal, a doctor at the Max Health Care hospital in New Delhi, vented his frustration over the deteriorating AQI readings.

"It's terrible for those with allergies and asthma. We will continue to squabble over reasons and are doomed to suffer," he wrote in a post on Twitter. Indian governments are often accused of not doing enough to curb pollution, as they prioritise economic growth to lift living standards in the world's second-most populated country.

— Agencies

Ethiopians denounce US at rally to back military’s campaign

ADDIS ABABA: Tens of thousands of Ethiopians rallied in Addis Ababa on Sunday in support of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government as federal troops fight rebellious forces who are threatening to march on the city.

Some demonstrators denounced the United States, which is among the foreign powers that have called for a ceasefire as a year-long war that has killed thousands of people intensified amid rebel advances last weekend.

The United States, the UN Security Council, the African Union, Kenya and Uganda have called in recent days for a ceasefire.

Abiy’s government has pledged to keep fighting. On Friday, the government said it had a responsibility to secure the country, and urged its international partners to stand with Ethiopia’s democracy.

Some of those gathered in Meskel Square in central Addis Ababa draped themselves in the national flag. Many singled out the United States for criticism.

US President Joe Biden’s administration on Tuesday accused Ethiopia of “gross violations” of human rights and said it planned to remove the country from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) trade agreement.

“Shame on you USA,” read one demonstrator’s placard, while another said the United States should stop “sucking Ethiopia’s blood”.

Other demonstrators expressed anger at the US call for the government and the Tigray



Demonstrators wave flags during a rally in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Sunday in support of the national defence forces. – AFP

People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) to begin talks.

The conflict in the north of the country started a year ago when forces loyal to the TPLF seized military bases in the Tigray region. In response, Abiy sent troops, who initially drove the TPLF out of the regional capital, Mekelle, but have faced a sharp reversal since June this year.

“Why does the US government not negotiate with terrorists like Al Shabaab?” said 37-year-old Tigist Lemma, referring to an Al Qaeda linked militant group in Somalia.

“They want to destroy our country like they did to Afghanistan. They will never

The United States, the UN Security Council, the African Union, Kenya and Uganda have called in recent days for a ceasefire

succeed, we are Ethiopians.”

Speaking at the rally, Addis Ababa Mayor Adanech Abiebe invoked Ethiopia’s history of resisting colonial power to justify the war.

The conflict has killed thousands of people, forced more than 2 million from their homes

and left 400,000 people in Tigray facing famine.

On Sunday, UN aid chief Martin Griffiths and the AU’s special envoy to the Horn of Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo, landed in Mekelle, one humanitarian source in Ethiopia and one person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

A spokesperson for the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Ethiopia did not respond to a request for comment, and UN officials in New York were not immediately reachable. AU spokesperson Ebba Kalondo did not respond to a request for comment. — Reuters

Probe widens into deadly stampede at Houston rap concert

HOUSTON: At least two investigations, one of them criminal, were under way on Sunday into the deadly stampede during rap star Travis Scott’s Astroworld music festival that killed at least eight people and injured dozens in Houston.

Officials in Houston said autopsies on Friday’s victims were being performed as soon as possible so their bodies could be returned to family members, with the identities of some of the dead expected to be released on Sunday.

The dead were young, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner told reporters on Saturday: Two were aged 14 and 16, two were 21, another two were 23, with a seventh aged 27.

An eighth victim has yet to be identified, he added.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo called for an “objective, independent” investigation into the tragedy, as she spoke about the rap festival being attended by 50,000 fans when the stampede took place.

“Perhaps the plans were inadequate. Perhaps the plans were good but they weren’t followed”, Hidalgo said. “The families of those who died, everybody affected, deserves answers.”



Attendees standing in close proximity during rap star Travis Scott’s Astroworld festival in Houston, Texas, in this still image from social media video on Friday. – Reuters

In a 90-second video released on Twitter on Saturday, Scott said that, while on stage, “I could just not imagine the severity of the situation.” He described himself as “absolutely devastated” by the incident.

Houston city police chief Troy Finner said his department had opened a criminal investigation by homicide and narcotics detectives, following reports that somebody in the audience had been injecting people with drugs. — Reuters

Brazil bids shocked goodbye to country star Mendonca

GOIANIA: Thousands of people flooded the hometown of late Brazilian country music star Marilia Mendonca on Saturday, paying an emotional tribute to the beloved songstress of sorrow and strong women after she was killed in a plane crash at age 26.

Mendonca, a Latin Grammy-winning superstar of Brazilian “sertanejo” music, died with four other people on Friday when a small plane carrying her to a concert crashed in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais.

Her body was flown on Saturday to the central city of Goiania, her home, where huge crowds of distraught fans lined up to file past her white-lined casket before she was laid to rest.

Known for her soaring voice and heartrending songs, Mendonca managed to break into a country music scene long dominated by men and machismo. She was a leading figure in a burgeoning sub-genre known as “feminejo”, or sertanejo music by women.

But her massive fan base included men and women alike. Many mourners outside the stadium where the wake was held could barely find words to describe their feelings.

“It’s an emotion so strong we don’t even know how to express it. It’s an immense pain, for all Brazilians”, 22-year-old Matheus Alves said.

“It was a tremendous loss. It’s such a blow I don’t even have the



A military firefighter brigade truck carrying the remains of singer Marilia Mendonca leads the funeral cortege to the Cemeterio Parque Memorial, in Goiania, state of Goias, on Saturday. – AFP

words to explain it”, said 16-year-old student Gustavo Lacerda, before breaking into one of Mendonca’s songs, “Eu Sei de Cor” (I Know it By Heart).

Fans started lining up at dawn outside the 15,000-capacity arena, where large floral arrangements arrived in a steady stream.

Some 100,000 people were expected to attend, said Goias state Governor Ronaldo Caiado.

The star and an uncle who worked with her — also killed in the crash — were later buried in a small private ceremony at a local cemetery, after a funeral cortege through the city.

Mendonca’s producer and the plane’s two pilots were also killed in the crash, which left their twin-

engine Beechcraft King Air C90A shattered against the rocks near a picturesque waterfall outside the city of Caratinga, where the artist had been scheduled to perform.

Authorities said the plane hit an electrical tower just kilometres (miles) from the Caratinga airport, but it was unclear whether that caused the accident or if the aircraft was already on its way down.

Air force officials were at the scene Saturday investigating.

Nicknamed the “Queen of Suffering”, Mendonca was known for ballads of heartbreak and spurned lovers, but also for singing of women’s empowerment and the need to “overcome” — the title of one of her most famous songs.

— AFP

LONDON

UK govt denies graft charges over donors

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government rejected fresh accusations of corruption on Sunday after a newspaper investigation found major donors to his Conservative Party were offered seats in parliament’s upper chamber.

The government has been embroiled in a corruption row over the past week, with Johnson forced to abandoned plans pushed through parliament to protect one of his lawmakers who was found to have broken



lobbying rules.

The *Sunday Times* reported that all but one of the 16 Conservative treasurers over the last two decades had donated more than £3 million.

WASHINGTON

Court freezes Biden’s vaccine rule for companies

A US federal appeals court issued a stay on Saturday freezing the Biden administration’s efforts to require workers at US companies with at least 100 employees be vaccinated against Covid-19 or be tested weekly, citing “grave statutory and constitutional” issues with the rule.

The ruling from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit comes after numerous Republican-led states filed legal challenges against the new rule, which is set to take



effect on January 4.

In a statement, Solicitor of Labor Seema Nanda said the Labour Department was “confident in its legal authority” to issue the rule.

LOURDES

France’s bishops kneel in penance for abuse

Senior members of France’s Catholic hierarchy knelt in a show of penance at the shrine of Lourdes on Saturday, a day after bishops accepted the church’s responsibility for decades of child abuse. But some of the victims of the abuse — and lay members supporting them — said they were still waiting for details of compensation and of a comprehensive reform of the church.

In Lourdes, a place of pilgrimage for Christians



worldwide, some 120 archbishops, bishops and laymen gathered at the unveiling of a photo showing a sculpture representing the head of a weeping child.

Chasm opens between COP26 words and climate action

PATRICK GALEY

COP26’s first week saw keynote pledges to end deforestation, phase out coal, and mobilise trillions for green investment. But observers say there is a gulf between host Britain’s proclamations and the emissions cuts that must be achieved.

Mohamed Adow, director of the Nairobi-based climate think tank Power Shift Africa, said that there had been “two realities” at the global climate conference in Glasgow.

“One is the world of press releases by the UK Government announcing a host of initiatives such as ‘an end to coal,’ which suggest all is well and we’ve as good as cracked the climate crisis,” he said.

“The other reality is outside this PR bubble. The climate deals in cold hard facts.”

The conference aims to implement the Paris Agreement — including the goal of limiting temperature rises to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

British organisers are pushing to solidify 1.5C as the summit’s unequivocal temperature target.

They have also pushed for their much-repeated priorities — “coal, cars, cash and trees” — shorthand for actions to phase out polluting fuels and internal combustion vehicles, provide money to help the world decarbonise, and protect forests.

There was movement toward that end at COP26 this week.

A COP26 spokesman said there had been “real momentum for climate action” including “commitments on ending our reliance on coal, increasing climate finance, tackling deforestation and plans to cut emissions.” But experts say there is actually a glaring disconnect between what some called “inflated, rehashed pledges” and genuine progress on reducing fossil fuel emissions.

Last Wednesday, for instance, COP26 president Alok Sharma announced: “A 190-strong coalition has today agreed to phase out coal power”. Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng tweeted: “The end of coal is in sight.” — AFP

“One is the world of press releases by the UK Government announcing a host of initiatives such as ‘an end to coal,’ which suggest all is well and we’ve as good as cracked the climate crisis

MOHAMED ADOW
Power Shift Africa



DIWALI IN PESHAWAR

Women place oil lamps or ‘diya’ during Diwali (festival of lights) celebration in Peshawar, Pakistan, on Sunday. – AFP

Pandemic placed its burden on health

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AT THE LOCAL FRONT, THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN WELL MANAGED BY THE SUPREME COMMITTEE

The two-year-long hard experience of battling with coronavirus pandemic presented insightful lessons to humanity. The different struggles hitting the various sectors and businesses mark a turning point for new reforms all over the world. The pandemic’s countless impacts have been affecting governments, corporates and individuals alike. Losing businesses, malfunctions of systems, budgets shortfall and disconnecting social relations are just to name a few effects of this global crisis. In fact, the world has been on a one-of-a-kind aggressive war that hit the universe.

As the world has been witnessing a gradual recovery, countries started navigating new ways to the new normal post-pandemic. Essential modifications have to be placed to restore health systems, economies and unite societies together. Likewise, countries are urged to work on long-term plans that allow them have more resilient communities and a common vision to become healthier and safer. Although, the world is halfway through to bring life to normalcy, Covid-19 related downturn will leave long-lasting scars.

Coronavirus has brought several changes to the world, some of which might disappear, while others might continue to be part of the new lifestyle adopted post-pandemic. With all the changes experienced, people have to adapt themselves to the new lifestyle.

Other than the changes and challenges introduced by the crisis, it has also brought rewarding lessons.

Not only governments, but individuals too are supposed to learn these lessons and make the most of them. Either on a personal or national level, these lessons shall be accorded high attention to ensure in developing successful future plans.

Covid-19 is an extraordinary crisis that has put the healthcare sectors all over the world on emergency for over a year. This raised the flag against the unbearable burden on medical staff who have been in hospitals day and night. As well, the capacity of hospitals have been overloaded most of the time with patients of different infection cases. Medical supplies have also been in high demand and shortfall sometimes. Therefore, this brings the high significance to always have back up and emergency response plans for healthcare sectors to meet such large-scale health crises.

At the local front, the pandemic has been well managed by the Supreme Committee, which is concerned with following up the developments of the coronavirus pandemic. One of the commendable actions taken by the committee against this global health crisis is establishing the healthcare fund. This national fund, managed by the Ministry of Health, marked a significant necessity to support the government to

tackle the pandemic. It stands as a reliable backup fund for healthcare sector during rainy days. Hence, it was a very beneficial lesson learnt on the right time.

Another lesson delivered by Covid-19 was the importance of personal hygiene. Maintaining a sustainable hygiene standard in the personal and communal level helped combating the spread of infection. We have all been taught to wash our hands every time we have been to a place that could have disease-causing germs. It was a compulsory precautionary measure to comply with when returning home from outside and every now and then as a protective practice. Further, having the sanitisation approach for our hands, homes, cars, offices and personal belongings efficiently helped stopping the virus transition from place to another, especially in public.

To tell the truth, Covid-19 pandemic served as an alert for many countries to accord extra attention to their healthcare systems and to employ more advanced technological approaches. As well, they are urged to always have a backup medical workforce for emergency calls during national or global crisis. Moreover, countries are also urged to work on emergency response plans for key sectors. This was a great lesson brought by the pandemic and alternative plans for various scenarios shall be always put in place.

The Democrats’ debacle in Virginia...



The author is a Washington-based journalist and the author, most recently, of Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon’s Downfall

ELIZABETH DREW

Perhaps the Democratic Party’s downhill slide can be arrested by President Joe Biden and his top congressional allies. But their job is daunting. If objective conditions don’t change — particularly inflation — and if the Republicans field able candidates, the Democrats could be in for a drubbing in the midterm congressional elections in 2022.

The presidential vote in 2024 could also be in danger. The surprisingly tight gubernatorial election in Democratic-leaning New Jersey on the same day that the Republicans eked out a victory in Virginia underscored the Democrats’ trouble. Whether or when the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bipartisan bill passed by the House

near midnight on November 5 will be enacted can’t be known for a while.

Glenn Youngkin, a very wealthy former businessman (he funded his election effort) ran a highly effective campaign for Virginia’s governorship, especially for a neophyte. Youngkin was particularly deft in handling what’s become the Republicans’ problem of dealing with Donald Trump, whose support could work against them. Though Youngkin paid honour to Trump, particularly before he obtained the nomination, he stopped short of obeisance. He even managed to keep Trump physically out of the state without incurring the wrath of the easily irritated Trump.

As a result, Youngkin got the votes of both Trump supporters

and of white suburban women who had switched to supporting Biden in 2020. Youngkin largely focused on issues of local interest: mainly, parental unhappiness with local school systems — making, most unusually, education the second-highest concern (the first, as usual, was the economy, with inflation key).

Instead of dealing with local issues, Terry McAuliffe, a successful former governor who was again the Democratic candidate, tried to make Youngkin the embodiment of Trump. But it didn’t work, because Youngkin had evaded Trump’s embrace. So, McAuliffe’s shots at Trump were largely wasted. Trump’s base came out and other Republicans who had rejected Trump returned to the fold. Unusually, the record turnout

benefited the Republican candidate more than the Democrat.

Moreover, crucial as it is to find out all that can be about what happened before, during, and after the riot on the Capitol on January 6, most of the country appears to prefer to deal with the present and future. Trump doesn’t come across now as the danger he would likely be if he ran for president again in 2024, which he’s giving every sign of wanting to do, mostly to seek revenge against those who, as his paranoid fantasy has it, cheated him out of reelection.

Youngkin didn’t avoid Trumpism altogether: the subject of race ran subliminally through much of what he argued. This turned up in particular in what he maintained were issues about the education system, and which

signalled that he sympathised with certain racist views. The main education argument was ostensibly about parents’ role in their children’s education, an issue enhanced by the pandemic’s closing of schools, with education taking place at home. McAuliffe handled the issue awkwardly, famously misspeaking during a debate, on which Youngkin pounced. The Virginia result might have been considered sui generis but for the close outcome in usually Democratic-leaning New Jersey. The incumbent Democratic governor, Phil Murphy, who polls had predicted would be an easy victor, didn’t get called the winner until after nearly two days of counting (technically, it’s not finished yet).

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Holders Dhofar will meet Majees in HM Cup Round of 32 clash

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 7

Ten times champion, Dhofar, will defend their title in the prestigious His Majesty football Cup with a match against Majees in the Round of 32. The match will be played at Sohar Sports Complex. The matches of Round of 32 will be played on November 19, 20 and 21.

The draw ceremony of the coveted cup was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Muscat under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik al Said, in the presence of Shaikh Salim bin Said al Wahaibi, Oman Football Association (OFA)

The last 32 round and round of 16 will be played in the knockout format. The quarterfinal matches will be played with first and second legs

chairman, top dignitaries and club officials on Sunday.

Al Nahdha will meet Jaalan at Al Buraimi Sports Complex. Al Nasr will take on Masirah. Three times winner, Al Seeb, will face off with Ibri while Muscat will meet Salalah.



Al Ittifaq will host Al Musannah and Al Oruba will host Suhar. In the remaining matches, Saham will meet Samayil while Oman club will play against Al Bashaer.

The nine-times winner Fanja will take on Al Ittihad while Nizwa will play against Bausher. Al Rustaq will face Qurayat while Bahla will meet Al Kamil W'al Wafi. Sur will take on Al Shabab and Al Khabourah will play against Ahli Sidab. Al Suwaiq will meet Al Mudhaibi. The last 32 round and round of 16 will be played in the knockout format. The quarterfinal matches will be played with first and second legs.

Excitement at Asian 49er and 49er FX Championships

MUSCAT: After the first day of racing at the 2021 Asian 49er and 49er FX Championships in Barcelo Mussanah Resort it became clear that the standard is incredibly high and there will be title will be hard fought. Just 15 points separate the top six crews in the men's and the top nine in the women's competition with three full days of racing still to come.

A fleet of 50 across all classes representing four countries from Asia took to the waters in Al Musannah for the first race keen to show their best form.

For the international guests, ineligible to compete for the title, the Asian 49er and 49er FX Championships are a chance to find their groove ahead of the World Championships taking place later this month. As a result, the sailing was excellent and highly-competitive from the very first race.

The crew of Molly Highfield and Sandi Choi of Hong Kong lead from Harshita Tomar and Sweta Shervegar of India after the first day



in the 49erFX class, sitting seventh and ninth overall respectively.

Dutch pair of Odile Van Aanholt and Elise de Eujter are out in front, holding a very slim lead from Finnish duo Ronja Gronblom and Veera Hokka in second and Lara Granier and Amelie Riou of France

in third.

In the 49er class, Indian pair of KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar lead from Akira Sakai and Russell Awylworth of Hong Kong, India's Anand Thakur and Satyam Rangad and the Omani crew of Ahmed al Hasani and Abdulrahman al

Mashari with just a point separating second, third and fourth.

Robert Dickson and Sean Waddilove of Ireland lead overall, level on points with Denmark's Fredrik Rask and Jacob Precht, and Germany's Jakob Meggendorfer and Andreas Spranger tied in third

place with Great Britain's Jack Hawkins and Chris Thomas.

Rashid al Kindi, Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said, "This was a great first day of competition in perfect conditions. The skill on show is evident and the international guests are pushing the sailors from

Asia to find their very best. If the competition continues at this pace, we are going to see thrilling sailing right to the very end. It is such a privilege to see sailors from around the world compete in the Sultanate of Oman once again and as we build towards the World Championships the competition is only going to get more intense."

Racing began on the 5th November 2021 with registration and a practice session. Competition takes place every day through to the 9th November when the leaders will compete for honours on the final day.

The event is supported by a line-up of supported including the national carrier Oman Air, OQ and the Barcelo Mussanah Resort as official partners, and Be'ah as environmental supporter. The National Mineral Water Company Salsabeel Water provided all essential water supplies for the event while the Royal Navy of Oman provided medical support throughout.

NEW ZEALAND

INTO SEMIFINALS, INDIA ELIMINATED

ABU DHABI: New Zealand reached the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals with a comfortable eight-wicket win over Afghanistan on Sunday, a result that eliminated star-studded India from the tournament.

Chasing a modest 125, skipper Kane Williamson (40) and Devon Conway (36) put on an unbeaten stand of 68 to drive the team home in 18.1 overs in Abu Dhabi.

The Kiwis join Pakistan as the two teams in the semifinals from Group 2, leaving India's final match against Namibia on Monday a dead rubber. England and Australia have already made the semi-finals from Group 1. The semi-final match-ups will be decided after Pakistan play Scotland in the second match of the day.

"It was a strong performance," said Williamson.

"We know how dangerous this Afghanistan side is. It was good for us to be able to set the tone with the ball, take wickets early and then keep them to below-par total. 150-155 would have been par"

Unless unbeaten Pakistan suffer a shock defeat to Scotland in Sharjah later on Sunday, the Kiwis will face England in the semi-finals.

Pakistan would take on Australia in the other semi-final.

"There's another strong challenge coming up. England are a very strong side," said Williamson.

"For us it is important we keep learning and building."

Afghanistan skipper Mohammad Nabi admitted making only 124 was never likely to be enough.

'Not decent total'

"This was not a decent total," said Nabi after his team ended the tournament with two wins and three losses.

"Still we tried our best with the ball. We played good cricket in the tournament, and we will take a lot of positives.

"But we need to correct the mistakes we made with the bat."

Left-arm quick Trent Boult returned figures of 3-17 from his four overs and was ably supported by Tim Southee, who took two wickets, to restrict Afghanistan to 124-8. Najibullah Zadran played a lone hand with his 48-ball 73 to give the Afghanistan total some respectability after they elected to bat first.

New Zealand's pace bowlers rattled the opposition's top order with quick strikes as Adam Milne sent back Mohammad Shahzad caught behind for four in his first over. Boult got going from the other end to get Hazratullah Zazai out for two and Southee trapped

SCOREBOARD

AFGHANISTAN

H Zazai c Santner b Boult.....2
M Shahzad c Conway b Milne.....4
R Gurbaz lbw Southee.....6
G Naib b Sodhi.....15
N. Zadran c Neesham b Boult73
M Nabi c and b Southee.....14
K Janat c Sodhi b Boult.....2
R Khan c Williamson b Neesham3
M Ur Rahman (not out).....0
Extras (B-1, LB-1, W-3).....5
Total (for 8 wkts, 20 overs)..... 124
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-12, 3-19, 4-56, 5-115, 6-119, 7-121, 8-124
Bowling: Southee 4-0-24-2, Boult 4-0-17-3, Milne 4-0-17-1, Neesham 4-0-24-1, Santner 2-0-27-0, Sodhi 2-0-13-1

NEW ZEALAND

M Guptill b Rashid.....28
D Mitchell c Shahzad b Mujeeb.....17
K Williamson (not out).....40
D Conway (not out).....36
Extras (LB-2, W-2).....4
Total (for 2 wkts, 18.1 overs)..... 125
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-57
Bowling: Nabi 4-0-26-0, Mujeeb 4-0-31-1, Naveen 2-0-16-0, Hassan 3-0-14-0, Rashid 4-0-27-1, Naib 1-1-0-9-0

Rahmanullah Gurbaz lbw for six as Afghanistan slipped to 19-3.

Zadran counter-attacked with a handful of boundaries including two off Jimmy Neesham but soon took to defence after losing his partner Gulbadin Naib for 15.

Naib dragged a wide delivery from Kiwi leg-spinner Ish Sodhi onto his stumps.

Skipper Mohammad Nabi joined Zadran at the crease as the duo attempted to push the scoring against the spinners and singled out Mitchell Santner for runs.

The left-handed Zadran smashed Santner for two sixes and later got to his 50 in a 33 balls. It was his second fifty in this T20 World Cup and sixth overall.

Southee broke the 59-run partnership, seeing off Nabi for 14.

Boult got the key scalp of Zadran with Neesham taking a good diving catch in the deep and the Afghans struggled to get runs in the final overs.

New Zealand remained clinical in their modest chase with Martin Guptill and Daryl Mitchell mixing their singles and twos with occasional boundaries.

Mujeeb Ur Rahman struck with the wicket of Mitchell, caught behind for 17.

Spin king Rashid Khan then sent back Guptill bowled for 28 to bag his 400th wicket in T20 matches. But Williamson stood firm with Conway who joined his skipper for a smooth partnership that steered the team home.

The left-hand Conway smashed four boundaries and the winning runs in his 32-ball knock. — AFP



GROUP II POINTS TABLE

POS	TEAM	PLD	NRR	PTS
1	NEW ZEALAND	5	+1.162	8
2	PAKISTAN	4	+1.065	8
3	INDIA	4	+1.619	4
4	AFGHANISTAN	5	+1.053	4
5	NAMIBIA	4	-1.851	2
6	SCOTLAND	4	-3.494	0

New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson plays a shot. — AFP



Hamed al Wahaibi in action at Golendale on the Oregon Trail Rally.

Al Wahaibi up to fourth and holds class lead at Oregon Trail Rally

MUSCAT: Omani rally driver Hamed al Wahaibi held a sensational class lead and fourth overall after the second day of action at the Oregon Trail Rally in the Golendale area of neighbouring Washington State on Saturday.

The 53-year-old and his New Zealand co-driver Tony Sircombe settled into an impressive pace and set a string of fourth fastest stage times behind the three more powerful Open class cars of rally leader Brandon Semenuk, stunt legend Ken Block and Travis Pastrana. Al Wahaibi leads his nearest rival Javier Castro by 2min 15.2sec heading into the final day.

The Omani's performance in the Ford Fiesta R5, being run on the event by McKenna Motorsport, has already captured the interest of the local media and the support of local spectators on his first appearance at the round of the

ARA National Championship.

"It all went very well and I am very pleased that we were fast in the R5", said Al Wahaibi. "Travis Pastrana came along and complimented us on our performance. The super special at the start was good and the stages on Saturday were beautiful to drive on."

"They were fast and flowing and really enjoyable. The scenery is amazing. The people are fantastic. The level of competition has been very good. What an experience and I will definitely come back again. I tried in the morning to see how close we could get to the Open Class cars, but they are WRC cars in effect. They were flying."

Sircombe added: "Hamed has been driving really well and the car has been doing everything he wanted it to do. They have been tricky and quite difficult roads

“
Travis Pastrana came along and complimented us on our performance. The super special at the start was good and the stages on Saturday were beautiful to drive on
HAMED AL WAHAIBI
Omani rally driver

and you need confidence in some places. Some sections were very technical and narrow, still high speed but no room for error. We are pleased and we had a little bit of night driving as well. That is

something we hadn't done for a while."

Al Wahaibi made an excellent start to his maiden American rally and held a superb fourth overall and the class lead after two runs through a short super special stage at Portland International Raceway on Friday evening.

American legends Pastrana and Block battled for the outright lead, but Al Wahaibi shadowed third-placed Semenuk. The Omani duly topped the RC2 field on his debut and found himself 5.4 seconds in front of rival and esteemed British racing driver Kyle Tilley.

Al Wahaibi is running the Ford in the USA with logistical support from Asyad Express (an Omani delivery and logistics company) and Sandan Development LLC.

The Oregon Trail Rally concludes on Sunday with a further loop of gravel stages around the Dufur region.

Talented Bharathi Ramachandran retains women's singles title

MUSCAT: Much awaited Modern Exchange — ISC Oman Open Badminton Championship took off at the ISC multipurpose hall on November 5. Hon Sports Secretary Saji Abraham opened the event in the presence of shuttle enthusiasts and other executive committee members. Event started with Men's Singles and doubles categories. In Men's Singles top seed Himesh Haridas beat Abdul Salam in the semifinals and moved to the finals. In the members group of ISC, Rajesh had a comfortable victory over Abin and moved to the finals. In the same category, Gururaj B moved to finals beating Dr Abhilash Vijayan who came from Sur.

In the Women's singles, Bharathi Ramachandran retained her title after beating Nayan Anil in a tough battle. Bharathi took her first set without much effort but Nayan came back in the second set using her wrist power but Bharati played a brilliant game in the third set to concede the match in her favor.

In Men's doubles open category, Nowfal & Shanith will face the favourites Himesh Haridas and Vaisakh Nair in the semis and the in

the same category, Renjith & Anwar will play against Mohd Haroos and Rahul Hari. In Men's doubles category, Abin & Rajesh will face Riyas and Sakkariya in the semis and in the same event Mony & Nadeem will face Shabeer & Shine in the semis.

In Veterans open event Gireesh Pillai & Francis PT used their brilliant form to claim victory over seeded No 3 Albert & Geemon. Gireesh & Francis enjoyed court superiority and played with their usual cool form to wrap the 1st game. The second game was no different with both teams exhibiting delightful drops and aggression. Gireesh & Francis started off well but Albert & Geemon managed to keep at level taking 2nd game in their favour. On resumption, Gireesh & Francis stepped up on his smashes but Albert & Geemon managed to put these back and win some crucial points to keep their nose in front. Closer to the end, Gireesh & Francis held their nerve to fashion to win the match at 21-16, 16-21 and 21-18. In the similar category Nadeem & Jinesh won against injured Mathew Thomas & Simon Joseph after a brilliant resistance from the team.



Bharathi Ramachandran and Nayan Anil.

Redemption for Pavlyuchenkova as Russian lift Billie Jean King Cup

PRAGUE: Six years after Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova suffered heartbreak versus the Czech Republic in the Billie Jean King Cup final in Prague, the Russian redeemed herself at the same venue with a winner's medal against Switzerland.

World number 12 Pavlyuchenkova had to withdraw at the last minute from her singles rubber on Saturday but that did not stop her team, competing in Prague as the Russian Tennis Federation, beating the Swiss for their fifth title.

It was the team's first final appearance since 2015, when the Russians lost 3-2 after the deciding doubles against the Czechs at the O2 Arena with Pavlyuchenkova losing both singles rubbers.

"I guess it's better late than never", a smiling Pavlyuchenkova told reporters.

"Six years ago I was playing here in the final where Maria Sharapova won all her singles and we just needed one point that I couldn't give them, so that was probably the worst day of my life.

“
I guess it's better late than never. Six years ago I was playing here in the final where Maria Sharapova won all her singles and we just needed one point that I couldn't give them, so that was probably the worst day of my life
ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA
Russian player

"But I overcame it and that also made me stronger I guess.

"When you play a team competition it's about the team, it's not about yourself and I think I've learned that. I wanted to bring as much as possible (in terms of) encouragement and positive energy to all the girls."

With Saturday's victory, the



Team Russia (L-R) Liudmila Samsonova, Ekaterina Alexandrova, captain Igor Andreev, Veronika Kudermetova, Anastasia Pavluchenkova, Daria Kasatkina pose for media. — AFP

Russians extended their winning streak to nine ties in the women's team tournament, which was formerly known as the Fed Cup.

Their last defeat came in a home tie against Latvia in 2018 which relegated them to the zonal groups.

Igor Andreev, whose first assignment as team captain was the defeat by Latvia, hailed the entire journey that started with a win against Poland in 2019.

The 30-year-old Pavlyuchenkova, who also won the Tokyo Olympics mixed doubles gold this year, said: "It's funny that Igor remembered Poland, where we were really low, playing the group zone matches, we weren't even in the World Group.

"I went there after the Australian Open and the only thing, I swear, I had in mind was, 'I want so badly to win the World Cup with the girls, with the team', but I thought it's so far ahead.

"So we started there and it's an incredible journey and I'm so grateful for my year." — Reuters





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Oman endorses global Green Grids Initiative

LANDMARK ENDEAVOUR: The Green Grids Initiative (GGI), launched against the backdrop of the Glasgow Climate Summit, is a call to power the world economy with clean energy.

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](#)

The Sultanate of Oman is among 80 countries globally that have endorsed the Green Grids Initiative — an ambitious endeavour to accelerate the construction of a renewable energy powered transmission network spanning the globe. The landmark initiative was launched last week against the backdrop of the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP26) currently under way in Glasgow, UK.



Backed by a high-level coalition advocating for clean energy, the Green Grids Initiative was unveiled in the presence of heads of states, leaders of international organisations and other leading personalities.

At the heart of the Green Grids Initiative (GGI) is a call to power the world economy with

clean energy. By blanketing a tiny swathe (400km x 400km) of the world's deserts with solar panels, enough low-carbon electricity can be produced to meet the energy requirements of the planet, according to its proponents. Wind and hydro power can be harnessed to offset any fluctuations in supply. Pivotal to the success of the initiative

is global connectivity, explained Climate Parliament – a UK-based organisation that has spearheaded the GGI project from its outset.

“To ensure a reliable supply of affordable, clean energy, new long-distance grids are needed to connect the most energy-rich locations, crossing borders and time zones. Meanwhile, mini-

grids can help communities to harness their local energy resources, bringing electricity to off-grid villages, and ensuring a more resilient supply during the heat waves, storms and floods that are now striking all parts of the planet,” it stated.

To help support the delivery of the global project, the Green Grids Initiative has formed partnerships with a host of leading international organisations promoting green energy causes. It includes the ‘One Sun One World One Grid’ (OSOWOG) representing a government-to-government coalition with a Ministerial Steering Group co-convened by India and the UK. Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas will be represented as well.

A declaration adopted by global leaders in support of the Green Grids Initiative — One Sun One World One Grid partnership last week affirms the following: “Realising One Sun One World One Grid through interconnected green grids can be transformational, enabling all of us to meet the targets of the Paris

Agreement to prevent dangerous climate change, to accelerate the clean energy transition, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. These efforts can stimulate green investments and create millions of good jobs. By sharing the sun's energy, we can help to build a more peaceful and prosperous world.”

Joining the Sultanate of Oman in the endorsement of the declaration were Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Maldives, Netherlands, Nepal, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE, Ukraine and Venezuela, among other countries.

As reported by the *Observer* on October 24, 2021, the One Sun One World One Grid initiative envisions, among other things, the construction of an undersea power cable connecting India's west coast with the Sultanate of Oman. The roughly 1,000km long HVDC link will enable the export of surplus green electricity generated by solar and wind-based renewable energy projects due to be established in the Sultanate of Oman over the coming years.

Could Oman hold the key to net zero emissions?

MUSCAT: As a key UN summit in Glasgow this week searches for ways to cut threats from global warming, one answer may lie in an unlikely place about 8,000 kilometres away. A team of scientists and engineers there have been testing a new technology that captures planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere then injects it into the Sultanate of Oman's ample stores of peridotite rock, where it is stored away.

“From our rough calculation, in the region we have enough peridotite to mineralise up to 50 trillion tonnes of CO2 — almost every single emission by humankind since the industrial revolution,” said Talal Hasan, who heads Omani carbon removal firm 44.01. The company and its partner Climeworks AG, a Swiss start-up that specialises in direct air capture (DAC) of carbon, say “mineralising” the gas into rock is “the safest, most scalable, and permanent approach of CO2 storage”.

Removing carbon dioxide from the air has emerged as a core part of many national plans to limit rising temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, particularly as climate-damaging emissions from fossil fuel use continue to rise.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found emissions cuts by industries would not be enough to attain the 1.5C goal, saying so-called “negative emissions” would be needed to hold

temperatures down in case of an overshoot.

Climeworks’ massive Iceland plant Orca can suck out about 4,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year — nearly half of what the world's 15 DAC plants pull out of the atmosphere annually.

That is still a drop in the ocean compared to global CO2 emissions, which are set to increase by nearly 5 per cent in 2021 to 33 billion tonnes, according to the International Energy Agency's Global Energy Review 2021.

INITIAL TESTS

The Sultanate of Oman is also home, however, to some of the world's largest, most easily accessible swathes of peridotite. Hasan said 44.01 and Climeworks are still waiting for the results of their initial tests in the Sultanate of Oman this year, but estimated they could mineralise one tonne of carbon dioxide for every tonne of peridotite.

The process could be more secure than other available options, such as pumping carbon into depleted oil fields. “It's a very safe, long-term, essentially permanent carbon dioxide storage. So it doesn't have the concerns of other projects — including, will it leak? Are there safety issues?” said Robin Mills, chief executive at consulting firm Qamar Energy.

Generating the energy to run the plants themselves could eventually



“From our rough calculation, in the region we have enough peridotite to mineralise up to 50 trillion tonnes of CO2 — almost every single emission by humankind since the industrial revolution

TALAL HASAN
CEO, 44.01

be done sustainably if large-scale solar power plants are installed. While the Sultanate of Oman has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 7 per cent by 2030, neighbouring Saudi and the UAE recently promised net-zero emissions by 2060 and 2050

respectively — though neither intends to move swiftly away from fossil fuels. The two oil giants have one large-scale carbon storage facility each, but they capture the emissions produced from other industrial processes — rather than sucking out pre-existing emissions from the air, as the Sultanate of Oman's project would do. The Sultanate of Oman's peridotite could help launch “direct air capture” of emissions in the region, a so-far hugely expensive proposition.

The 44.01-Climeworks project could eventually “sell” storage space in the rock to other countries or companies looking to bring their net emissions down — known as a carbon credit. The peridotite's “verifiable and permanent” storage would generate “a very high-quality carbon credit,” said Mills.

As countries come under pressure to cut net emissions verifiably, these kinds of credits would trade at high prices,” he said.

BUMPY ROAD

But it's a bumpy road ahead. Companies are already buying and selling carbon credits, but Hasan said the “disjointed” nature of the market required some more regulated pricing — something that could emerge out of this week's COP26 climate summit.

“Everyone has promised more announcements on this at the COP — so we're looking for a bit more clarity,” Hasan said.

The technology itself remains extremely pricy: capturing carbon from the atmosphere costs about \$600 per tonne, but Climeworks project lead Dirk Nuber said the price could come down to \$200 with the right investments.

“Compare it with solar or wind power — in the beginning, everyone said ‘this is science fiction, it's too expensive,’” Nuber said.

“We're in the same position now. Unless you go really big, you can't get it for cheap,” he said. One environmental group, the Climate Action Network, has said that price tag made DAC “the most expensive atmospheric CO2 removal approach”.

It did not think DAC projects could shoulder significant emissions reductions fast enough to keep global climate goals in view, and therefore should have “no place” in immediate decarbonisation planning.

Greenpeace activists fear that ramping up the carbon credit system through DAC could allow emitters to simply pay to pollute — instead of actually reduce their carbon output. “The carbon credit system opens the door to significant utilisation of greenwashing activity in order to promote financial gain for different countries,” said Ahmed El Droubi, senior campaigner for the Middle East and North Africa at Greenpeace. “The primary focus should be on reducing emissions. We want real zero,” he added. — **Reuters**

Oman affirms pledge to cut GHG emissions by 7pc in 2030

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 7

The Sultanate of Oman has reaffirmed its commitment to slashing its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) — the principal contributor to global warming and climate change — by seven per cent by 2030.

A post by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which is representing the Sultanate of Oman at the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP26) underway in Glasgow (UK), noted that the pledge is enshrined in the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted by the Omani government to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. “The Sultanate pledges to reduce 7 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions expected in 2030,” the Authority stated in its post.

The NDC report submitted in July this year outlines, among other objectives, the Government Carbon Control Target Plan 2030, which aims to support a gradual transition to a low carbon economy and an energy matrix significantly lower in carbon emission by 2030.



Muzn, National Mass Housing to offer home-buyers special rates

MUSCAT: Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, has signed a strategic partnership with National Mass Housing SAOC to provide financing facilities for customers interested in purchasing a home in Areej Residential Complex — Phase 2, located in Halban.

Owning a villa at the modern complex, designed to suit families while giving them increasing investment value, is now easier than ever thanks to Muzn's mortgage and housing finance, which start at just 4.99% and are based on the concept of Ijarah

and Diminishing Musharakah. Salima al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer (CIBO) said, "At Muzn, we believe in giving our customers absolute peace of mind for their most important long-term investment. That's why we offer innovative, competitive and quality Islamic banking services through Muzn that meets their distinctive needs, without compromising their values. Backed by our dedicated customer service, we are ensuring they are simple, convenient, and accessible to all."

Abdullah bin Ali al Jahwari, CEO at National Mass Housing,

added, "In our efforts to help people turn their dream home into a reality, we are delighted to partner with Muzn Islamic Banking in providing necessary funding for individuals who wish to purchase a villa. The arrangement will help people access affordable Sharia-compliant financing, while contributing positively to the real estate sector in the Sultanate."

With 69 affordable villas, the second phase of the Areej Residential Complex stretches over 30,000 square metres, and is conveniently located near the German University of Technology

and is a 15-minute drive from the Muscat International Airport. Combining modernity and originality, the architectural design of the villa project ensures all comfort, luxury and an enjoyable life for all residents.

Each villa stretches over 237 square metres and has been equipped with a wide range of facilities, technology and internal design that provides the highest level of comfort and optimal use of space. All villas have spacious bedrooms, in-built kitchen cabinets, smart lighting for corridors and private parking.

Alizz Islamic Bank's humanitarian efforts granted with prestigious award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its outstanding humanitarian and collaborative efforts in the society, Alizz Islamic Bank was granted a prestigious local award for 'Digital Initiative of the Year - 2021', at the Digital Transformation Conference & Awards, during the annual event organised under the patronage of Dr Ali al Shidhani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology.

The award was received by Asaad al Kharusi, Head of Strategy & Transformation of Alizz Islamic bank and honoured the bank's role in launching the initiative to raise donations for the Association of Early Intervention for Children With Disabilities which resulted in the launch of the first crowdfunding website in the Sultanate of Oman.

Earlier this, Alizz Islamic



Bank and the Ministry of Social Development launched the website (www.crowdfunding.alizzislamic.com) as a crowdfunding project aiming to raise RO 2 million towards building the Centre of Excellence for Children with Disabilities, along with an additional initiative on the platform to raise RO 40,000 towards orphans of the Child

Care Center via the easiest digital channels, which allows all sectors and segments of the society to participate and contribute to building the Center of Excellence for Children with Disabilities and helping orphans.

It is worth noting that the donation process observes standards of absolute transparency by revealing the

exact number of total donations. Once one accesses the website, he/she can notice the digital meter's movement, indicating how much of the target has been achieved and how much of it is remaining.

Crowdfunding is the practice of raising small amounts of money from a large number of people via the Internet and social media with the aim of funding a project that serves the community. Funds are raised through a platform that enables everyone to play a role in serving our country.

Omani people, whether institutions or individuals, are considered a partner in the community, and play a role in building the society by providing services towards persons with disabilities by contributing to the establishment of private rehabilitation institutions for these individuals, in collaboration with government institutions.

OAB launches Advantage segment

MUSCAT: In line with its continuous endeavours to provide high-quality services that enrich customer experience, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently launched a new segment, entitled 'OAB Advantage'.

Aimed at customers who have modern lifestyles and are always keen to enjoy the benefits life has to offer.



OAB Advantage offers 1 per cent guaranteed cashback on e-payments and POS transactions using debit card for limited time. This is in addition to an attractive savings interest rates, merchant discounts and eligibility for a special salary monthly prize draw.

Commenting on the launch of OAB Advantage, Rashad al Shaikh (pictured), Head of the Retail Banking at OAB, said, "As customer demands shift with the transition of time, at OAB we always look to ensure that the services and facilities that we offer can be adapted to best suit their respective lifestyles."

Targeted towards customers within the salary range (RO 1,000 – RO 3,499) or maintaining deposit of

(RO 10,000- RO 34,999). OAB Advantage seeks to make banking even easier, while simultaneously hosting an array of benefits and offers.

A unique aspect of the new service that places it ahead of its competitors is that it is the only debit card in Oman to provide a cashback on e-payments, alongside opening the door for our customers to step into a world of incredible advantages."

Additionally, customers can benefit from higher interest rate of up to 3 per cent per annum on their savings and get special entries in the Hasaad Monthly Draws by simply transferring their salary to the bank, as well as special discounts and offers from renowned retailers across the Sultanate.

AMJ wins major international award



MUSCAT: AMJ won the prestigious 'Oman National Law Firm of the Year' award at the International Financial Law Review (IFLR) Middle East Awards held in Dubai on October 27, 2021. This accolade brings AMJ's tally of IFLR's 'National Law Firm of the Year' awards to an impressive and unrivalled 13th time in Sultanate of Oman.

The Award recognises the best law firms in each jurisdiction based on the innovation and the complexity of deals completed. AMJ was also

shortlisted for M&A Deal of Year. The annual IFLR Awards brings together leading global and regional corporate law firms to celebrate the most outstanding legal deals that have taken place in the region in the past 12 months.

AMJ's nomination and achievements highlight the resilience of the Omani market in terms of the quality of transactions and projects being undertaken in the country, particularly given the tough market conditions of the past few years and the challenging pandemic situation.

All-new 2022 Kia Carnival MPV now in Oman

MUSCAT: Kia's spacious and comfortable Carnival has been a popular choice for large families in search of space, comfort, power and features. With the introduction of the all-new 2022 Carnival, Kia enthusiasts can now revel in the Carnival's leading combination of innovation, space, flexibility and style. Based on Kia's new mid-size platform, the Carnival is more refined, roomy, and capable than ever, offering generous space and increased efficiency than its predecessors. Offering owners three-row seating configuration, with room for eight occupants

in total. Own the spacious Kia Carnival and get a chance to Win it back instantly through Scratch & Win Offer. All one has to do is to buy a Kia Carnival and just before taking the delivery and submitting all necessary documents, go for a Scratch & Win offer.

Other than chance to win a car one can also win 50% price payable or doubling of cash gift amount or win periodic services up to 100,000 kms. Three customers have already won their cars back. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.) The campaign is



valid until December 28, 2021.

The new Kia Carnival illustrates the evolution of Kia's design philosophy, offering customers visually stunning, dominating vehicles on the road, with customer driven, futuristic interior surfaces and finishing. The Carnival's SUV inspired design makes for a stylish and robust presence on the road and within the Multi-Purpose Vehicle (MPV) segment.

"The Carnival is as practical as it is stunning. Offering an abundance of space and cargo, the Carnival comes fitted with a modern suite of hi-tech features that cater to the interests and

demands of seasoned drivers and passengers of all ages. The Carnival's cabin provides an immersive luxury experience that prioritises comfort and convenience first," said Yaser Shabsogh, Chief Operating Officer, Regional HQs, Middle East & Africa. "Our design team has tackled the Carnival through all angles to produce a high-quality product which is unlike any other vehicle in the segment. The anticipation comes to an end as Kia customers from the region can now contact their distributor to learn more about the all-encompassing Carnival," he added.



Strong US payrolls brighten economic outlook

WASHINGTON: US employment increased more than expected in October as the headwind from the surge in Covid-19 infections over the summer subsided, offering more evidence that economic activity was regaining momentum early in the fourth quarter.

But the brightening outlook was somewhat clouded by millions of unemployed Americans who remained at home even as companies are boosting wages, generous government-funded jobless benefits have ended and schools have reopened for in-person learning. The labour force is down 3 million from its pre-pandemic level.

“The dog days of summer are long gone and the US economy is gearing up for an acceleration in growth and activity in the fourth quarter”, said Brian Bethune, a professor of practice at Boston College. “Demand for labour is strong, but there is an issue with matching people with the jobs that are available.” The Labour Department’s closely watched

The dog days of summer are long gone and the US economy is gearing up for an acceleration in growth and activity in the fourth quarter

employment report’s survey of establishments on Friday showed nonfarm payrolls increased by 531,000 jobs last month. Data for September was revised higher to show 312,000 jobs created instead of the previously reported 194,000. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising by 450,000 jobs.

Employment is 4.2 million jobs below its peak in February 2020. Job growth has averaged 582,000 per month this year.

President Joe Biden hailed the acceleration after two months of moderate gains, saying the nation needed to “keep driving vaccinations up and Covid down”, for “our economy to fully recover.” Biden said vaccines had “made the



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks on the October jobs report at the White House in Washington. — Reuters

economy the envy of the world.” Leisure and hospitality businesses led the broad-based increase in hiring last month, with 164,000 jobs created. Payrolls also rose in professional and business services, transportation and warehousing, healthcare, wholesale trade, financial activities as well as mining sectors.

Manufacturing added 60,000

jobs, with 28,000 of the positions at motor vehicle manufacturers, an encouraging sign for an industry that has been hobbled by a global semiconductor shortage. Construction payrolls increased by 44,000 jobs.

But state and local government education shed 65,000 jobs. The government said pandemic-related staffing fluctuations in education

have distorted normal seasonal patterns, making the changes in employment in the sector challenging to interpret. Shortages of bus drivers and other support staff have been well documented. Overall government payrolls fell by 73,000 jobs.

The job gains joined rising consumer confidence and services sector activity in painting a more favourable picture of the economy, after the Delta variant of the coronavirus and economy-wide shortages of goods restricted growth in the third quarter to its slowest pace in more than a year.

The Federal Reserve announced it would this month start scaling back the amount of money it is pumping into the economy through monthly bond purchases.

Stocks on Wall Street rallied on the report, lifting the main indexes to record highs. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. US Treasury yields fell.

“The solid gain in employment is consistent with a strong quarter for output growth”, said Michael

Feroli, an economist at JPMorgan in New York.

Details of the smaller survey of households, from which the unemployment rate is derived were mixed. The unemployment rate fell to a 19-month low of 4.6 per cent from 4.8 per cent in September. The number of people unemployed for 27 weeks or more dropped 357,000 to 2.3 million. They accounted for 31.6 per cent of the 7.4 million people officially unemployed last month.

It was harder for employers to fill 10.4 million jobs that were open as of the end of August. The labour force participation rate, or the proportion of working-age Americans who have a job or are looking for one was unchanged at 61.6 per cent.

It has remained within a narrow range of 61.4 per cent to 61.7 per cent since June 2020. A small rise in the participation rate among the prime age population and people below 24 years was offset by a drop in the 55 and over age group.

— Reuters

ICT IS OMANTEL’S GROWTH ENGINE

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 7

A recent survey on the Sultanate of Oman’s ICT demographics initiated by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology showed that more than 95 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman population has access to Internet, mobile phones, computers, smart devices, social media and content. This data is not just illustrative of the ICT growth potential of the nation, but also puts in perspective Omantel’s contributions and imminent role in enabling and supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s long-term ICT vision and roadmap.

A distinct growth in fixed and mobile Internet market will ride



on the significant evolution and momentum resulting from the digitisation of technologies. High-speed Internet connectivity has opened up new ways and creative avenues of working, learning and living. The telecommunications landscape has now become significantly more data driven. This has helped in developing diverse opportunities across industries, allowing them to leverage the

enormous benefits of ICT and in turn accelerate national growth.

Commenting on this, Eng Baha al Lawati (pictured), Vice President of Enterprise Business at Omantel said, “The ICT market within the Sultanate of Oman and across GCC has been witnessing a massive boost in demand and every sector is seeking unique and differentiated technical solutions — to keep pace with fast changing and constantly evolving customer requirements.

Omantel has added in excess of 100 large enterprise clients, which required complex bespoke ICT solutions and best in class technology enablement and support. Based on our service delivery and customer management experience, we are

confident that the size and scale of our ICT business will keep growing exponentially.

Omantel is actively engaged in deploying several large projects for Ministries, Corporates and Smart Cities covering the wide range of its cloud services portfolio across Data Centre services, Software as a Service, Cyber Security, Managed services, Unified Communications, IoT and several hybrid platform solutions. Omantel’s ICT growth has been further fuelled by its strategic acquisition of subsidiaries such as Oman Data Park, Infoline, mOmkin and Blockchain Solutions and Services, in addition to its strategic JV with Equinix, a Leading global Data Centre services provider.”

Oman Cement launches oil well cement testing lab

MUSCAT: Oman Cement Company (OCC) launched on Sunday an oil-well cement strength testing equipment, which is considered the most advanced instrument in the Sultanate of Oman used for measuring the quality of cement.

The testing equipment simulates the high pressure and heat conditions prevalent in oil wells to test quality. Through this move, OCC aims to develop the quality measurement of oilfield cement produced by the company to fulfil the demand in the Sultanate Oman and abroad. Dr Hilal Saif al Dhamri, General Manager of Manufacturing at OCC said, “This equipment is one

of the most advanced devices used for measuring the efficiency of oil-well cement in the Sultanate of Oman. It measures the suitability of using cement in the oil-well environment by measuring the samples in conditions similar to those prevalent in oil wells.”

Dr Al Dhamri added that the device, manufactured by the American Schneider Company, takes around 90-120 minutes to complete the test of measuring the reaction and strength of cement in oil wells. He emphasised that the oil companies rely on the oil well cement efficiency tests to measure the well’s suitability for usage in the oil extraction operations.

(With inputs from ONA)

Occidental Oman sponsors Al Fulaij Camel Race



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 7

As part of its larger initiative to support camel racing in the Sultanate of Oman, Occidental Oman representatives recently attended the Al Fulaij Main Camel Race in Muscat Governorate, which was organised by the Oman Camel Racing Federation, and sponsored by Occidental Oman.

Held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin

bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; the event was attended by Stephen Kelly, President and General Manager at Occidental Oman; and Saif al Busaidy, Vice-President of Human Resources, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Admin at Occidental Oman, along with other senior representatives of the company.

A total of 2,700 camels competed to win on the racetracks, and after 8 rounds, 8 winners were declared.

China exports beat forecasts, offer buffer to slowing domestic economy

BEIJING: China’s export growth slowed in October but beat forecasts, helped by booming global demand ahead of winter holiday seasons, an easing power crunch and an improvement in supply chains that had been badly disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

However, imports missed analysts’ expectations, likely pointing to the overall weakness in domestic demand.

Outbound shipments jumped 27.1 per cent in October from a year earlier, slower than September’s 28.1 per cent gain. Analysts polled by Reuters had forecast growth would ease to 24.5 per cent.

Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said the strong exports would help to mitigate the weakening domestic economy, and give the government greater room for manoeuvre on economic policy.

The government can afford to wait until the year-end to loosen monetary and fiscal policies, now



Workers stand at the Port of Qingdao, Shandong province, China. — Reuters

that exports provide a buffer to smooth the economic slowdown”, he said.

Recent data has pointed to a slowdown in manufacturing. Factory activity shrank for a second month in October, an official survey showed, while growth in industrial output eased to the lowest since March 2020 — the first wave of the pandemic.

However, under heavy

government intervention, some supply constraints have started to ease in recent weeks, including a power crunch that had been triggered by a shortage of coal, tougher emission standards and strong industrial demand.

Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday the government would take measures to support the industrial sector as the economy faces renewed downward

pressures.

Imports jumped 20.6 per cent in October from a year earlier, accelerating from a 17.6 per cent gain in September but well below expectations for a rise of 25 per cent.

Goldman Sachs data showed the value of crude oil imports grew 56.3 per cent year-on-year, up from 34.9 per cent in September, and the value of coal imports rose 292 per cent on-year, accelerating further from a 234 per cent gain in September, as the global energy crunch and post-Covid economic recovery drove up commodity prices.

China posted a trade surplus of \$84.54 billion last month, the highest on record. It was also above the poll’s forecast of \$65.55 billion and September’s \$66.76 billion surplus.

The world’s second largest economy grew 4.9 per cent in the July-September quarter from a year earlier, the weakest reading since the third quarter of last year.

— Reuters

Forget COP26. The world needs COPPER 26

COP26 has a blind spot. The prime ministers and corporate bigwigs gathered in Glasgow want to cut demand for the fossil fuels that constitute most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. To make that happen without crashing the economy, there has to be lots more of the metals underpinning a greener society. Along with phasing out coal and reducing deforestation, COP26 needs to champion electric vehicles and spur investment in renewable energy. That means more wind turbines, solar panels, energy storage and charge points. That in turn means more aluminium, cobalt, copper, lithium and nickel.

Consultant Wood Mackenzie has run the numbers. Limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels implies 19 million tonnes of additional annual copper production by 2030, a 60% increase. Aluminium supply needs to jump 30%, nickel 50%, and lithium and cobalt 140% and 150% respectively. Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius implies an even greater supply hike.

Normally this would be an epic green light for miners to get digging. After an iron ore boom, giants like BHP and Rio Tinto are awash with cash. But the gap between the investment that's needed over the next 15 years and what's signed off is almost \$2 trillion, Wood Mackenzie says.

As big a problem is red tape. On average, it takes over 16 years to go from discovering reserves to producing metal, according to the International Energy Agency. Meeting the elevated demand will also mean venturing into trickier jurisdictions like Democratic Republic of Congo, where most western investors have feared to tread. That said, labour disputes and environmental or social rows can erupt anywhere, as Rio's Juukan Gorge debacle in Australia proved.

That's where politicians can help. Western governments have lists of critical materials. If they are so important, European nations and the United States can use their heft to strike agreements with mining jurisdictions like DRC. These could lay down rules of engagement to stop companies being hit with sudden taxes or expropriation, while also committing them to strict social and environmental principles.

This wouldn't change the geopolitical headache created by China's control of 60% of rare-earth production and its hefty sway over cobalt. But at the very least, Western powers need to start talking about the issue. Step forward, COPPER 26.

— Reuters

The gap between the investment that's needed over the next 15 years and what's signed off is almost \$2 trillion

WOOD MACKENZIE



WAITING FOR CUSTOMERS

A man sits in front of his tourist items shop, at the Ankara Castle in Ankara, Turkey. — Reuters

Commodities hold their breath



OLE S HANSEN
Head of Strategy at Saxo Bank

CRUDE OIL IS INCREASINGLY SHOWING SIGNS OF HAVING ENTERED A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION

The commodity sector continues to consolidate following the September to early October price surge, and this week the Bloomberg Commodity Index traded lower for a third straight week. Investors have become more risk adverse given the amount of incoming data pointing to pausing growth expectations, most notably in China, where a manufacturing slowdown, mounting debt risks in the country's property sector and nationwide power shortage all point to lower activity. In addition, a recent government-driven collapse in Chinese coal prices have helped support lower prices across some of the most energy-intensive metals led by aluminium.

Crude oil is increasingly showing signs of having entered a period of consolidation and, following a two-month rally which up until recently had lifted the price of Brent and WTI crude oil by close to one-third, it could be argued it was overdue. However, we only expect this phase to be temporary with the strong fundamental reasons which supported the surge not gone away. With this in mind, we still see the risk of even higher prices towards year-end and into 2022.

Some of the reasons why oil prices have softened recently are highlighted below. It is worth keeping in mind that several of these could quickly turn around and

become price supportive again.

- The prospect for Opec+ continuing to increase monthly production at a rate of 400,000 barrels per day.
- Stalled Iran nuclear talks will resume on November 29, and in the yet unlikely event of a breakthrough, Iran would be able to ramp up production.
- Stabilising gas prices, albeit at elevated levels, in anticipation of an imminent increase in flows from Russia reducing the recent gas-to-oil boost to fuel prices.
- Renewed worries about another Covid-related demand disruption, not least in China, the world's biggest importer.
- A seasonal expected increase in US crude oil stocks due to reduced demand from refineries as they go through their annual maintenance season.
- The US government continuing and potentially accelerating crude oil releases from its strategic reserve. During the past two months, they've been averaging 1.1 million barrels per week.
- Selling from technical traders and speculators in response to this week's break below recent support, in WTI most notably the uptrend from August low.

Against these mostly short-term developments, the oil market will still be facing years of potential under investments

with oil majors losing their appetite for big projects, partly due to an uncertain long-term outlook for oil demand but increasingly also due to lending restrictions being put on banks and investors due to ESG and the green transformation focus.

Whether the short-term trading range in Brent will be \$80 to \$85 or potentially some three to four dollars lower, will to a high degree be determined by US action to curb prices, Covid-19 developments and next week by the gas market when we will find out if Russia, as promised, will boost gas supplies to Europe, thereby potential softening prices further.

World food prices hit a fresh 10-year high last month according to the UN FAO which saw their Global Food Price Index rise by 3%. The index, which tracks 95 different price quotes, has risen by more than 30% during the past year with gains seen across all five food sectors. Vegetable oil prices hit a record high last month after rising almost 10%, thereby bringing the annual rise to +74%. Other sectors seeing strong annual gains are sugar (+41%) and cereals such as wheat, corn and rice at 22%. Apart from weather woes and strong demand, the UN FAO also mentioned labour shortages in parts of the world as a driver pushing up the cost of production and transportation of food.

The greening of global value chains



ERIK BERGLÖF
Chief Economist of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS FOR THE WORLD ECONOMY, AS WELL AS FOR LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES' GROWTH PROSPECTS

Clogged ports, long shipping delays, and skyrocketing transportation costs are all evidence of the havoc Covid-19 is continuing to wreak with global value chains (GVCs).

Firms are reconsidering where to locate (or relocate) production, whether and how much redundancy their operations need, and which inventories to hold as a buffer against future shocks. The effects are rippling through the global economy, creating additional uncertainty and slowing the recovery.

Moreover, with policymakers currently in Glasgow for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), there is increasing pressure to decarbonise production and transportation along GVCs.

How quickly this happens is of great importance. GVCs account for half of global exports, and emerging and developing economies' share of these production networks has increased

significantly since the 2008 global financial crisis. For example, a low- or middle-income economy no longer needs to produce a whole car to enter the global automobile supply chain; it is enough to specialise in one small component.

Against this backdrop, a recent report from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank examines the pandemic's impact on GVCs and shows how they can now become tools for achieving the 2015 Paris climate agreement's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° Celsius, relative to preindustrial levels.

The evidence from previous crises that significantly disrupted key supply chains (such as the 1999 Jiji earthquake and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster) suggests that strong efficiency pressures and heavy dependence on personal trust in supplier relationships favor a return to the status quo ante.

If this pattern holds, then current pandemic-induced GVC

disruptions and dislocations will prove temporary and resolve themselves as the world normalises. But this time may be different, because Covid-19 has hit the global economic system much more broadly and lasted much longer than most previous shocks.

The pandemic's current impact stems less from the initial shutdown in China in early 2020 —from which the Chinese economy and GVCs recovered remarkably quickly — and more from the rapid increase in demand triggered by massive government stimulus and the unleashing of accumulated savings.

The asynchronous opening of economies has also amplified the supply disruptions. It may take years to determine the effect of the Covid-19 crisis on GVCs. The pandemic could spark a fundamental rethink of how to organise them and where to locate production. Resilience, or the capacity to bounce back from shocks, has become a buzzword

in this discussion. At the same time, geopolitical concerns are creating pressures for economies to reduce their supply dependence on individual countries while decoupling is already under way in important high-tech industries.

Recent energy-price spikes are a reminder that GVCs face an even greater challenge as the world seeks to accelerate the transition to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions.

With production geographically dispersed and intermediate products shipped back and forth across borders and over long distances, pressure to decarbonise GVCs is mounting.

At the same time, emerging and developing economies themselves must meet their nationally determined contributions under the Paris agreement. But the drive to decarbonise GVCs also represents a great opportunity to accelerate the net-zero transition.

Because such production networks rely on their lead firms' capacity to increase efficiency

throughout the supply chain, these companies can play an important role in pushing the net-zero agenda across borders and sectors. Many of them have already committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and central banks are putting pressure on these firms' creditors to reduce climate risk in their loan portfolios.

Likewise, countries that want to attract and retain GVC investments will have an additional incentive to offer green infrastructure, including access to renewable energy, emissions-free multimodal transportation systems, and high-speed broadband.

Going green can thus become a competitive advantage for emerging and developing economies seeking to join global production systems and fulfil their Paris commitments.

Increased interest from governments can in turn encourage lead firms to engage in joint decarbonisation investments.

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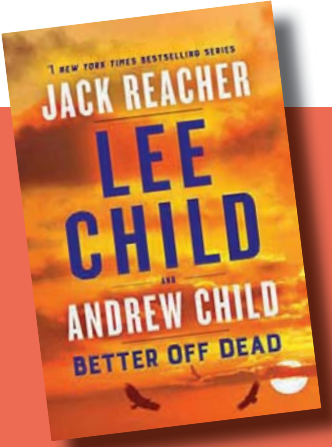


Men in Masks: Back to Business

The last 18 months had been very challenging not only for us individually but also for businesses. Amid the chaos brought about by the pandemic, street photographer Rimna Rasheed embarked on a journey to document men and women as they find the courage to start their businesses all over again... **P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



BETTER OFF DEAD

BY LEE CHILD
AND ANDREW CHILD

The 26th book in the Jack Reacher series. Reacher helps an FBI agent look for her missing brother and takes on a foe named Dendoncker.

Filming stopped on Black Panther sequel after Letitia Wright injury

PRODUCTION OF MARVEL'S "Black Panther" sequel is being halted to allow star Letitia Wright to recover from an on-set injury sustained in August, entertainment publications reported on Friday.

Wright played Shuri in 2018's acclaimed "Black Panther", set in the scientifically advanced but reclusive fictional African nation Wakanda.

The movie, which has a pre-

dominantly Black cast, became a cultural milestone, grossing \$1.3 billion and being nominated for a best picture Oscar.

Wright was injured while filming a stunt sequence in Boston in late August.

At the time, she was expected to recover soon enough for the shooting schedule to remain uninterrupted, Variety and Hollywood Insider reported.

More details about the injury have not been released but it was initially described as minor.

"Letitia has been recovering in London since September from injuries sustained on the set of 'Black Panther 2' and is looking forward to returning to work early 2022," representatives for the Guyanese-British actor said in a statement.



"Letitia kindly asks that you keep her in your prayers."

Wright's character is expected to take on a larger role in the sequel after Chadwick Boseman, who played the title character in the first movie, died of cancer last year.

"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" is scheduled for release on November 11, 2022.

The filming stoppage is reportedly not expected to affect the release date of the movie, which is directed by Ryan Coogler. — **AFF**

Latin Grammy-winning singer Mendonça dies in Brazil crash

MARILIA MENDONÇA, one of the hottest young stars of Brazil's answer to country music, died in a plane crash on Friday, officials said.

The 26-year-old mega-popular "sertanejo" singer was killed when the small plane she was travelling in crashed in Minas Gerais state, fire-fighters said.

The crash also killed the Latin Grammy-winner's producer and one of her uncles — who worked with the singer — as well as the two pilots.

Authorities have launched an investigation, said local police chief Ivan Lopes.

"We still cannot say what caused the plane to crash, but there is damage that suggests that the plane collided with a power anten-



na before falling," Lopes said at a press conference.

Local TV showed footage of fire-fighters working to remove the bodies from the plane, which crashed in a rocky area next to a waterfall.

The accident took place in a rural area near the city of Caratinga, where the artist was scheduled to give a concert later on Friday.

Mendonça, who won a 2019 Latin Grammy for best sertanejo album, was wildly popular in her native Brazil and beyond, with 22 million followers on YouTube and more than eight million monthly listeners on Spotify. — **AFF**

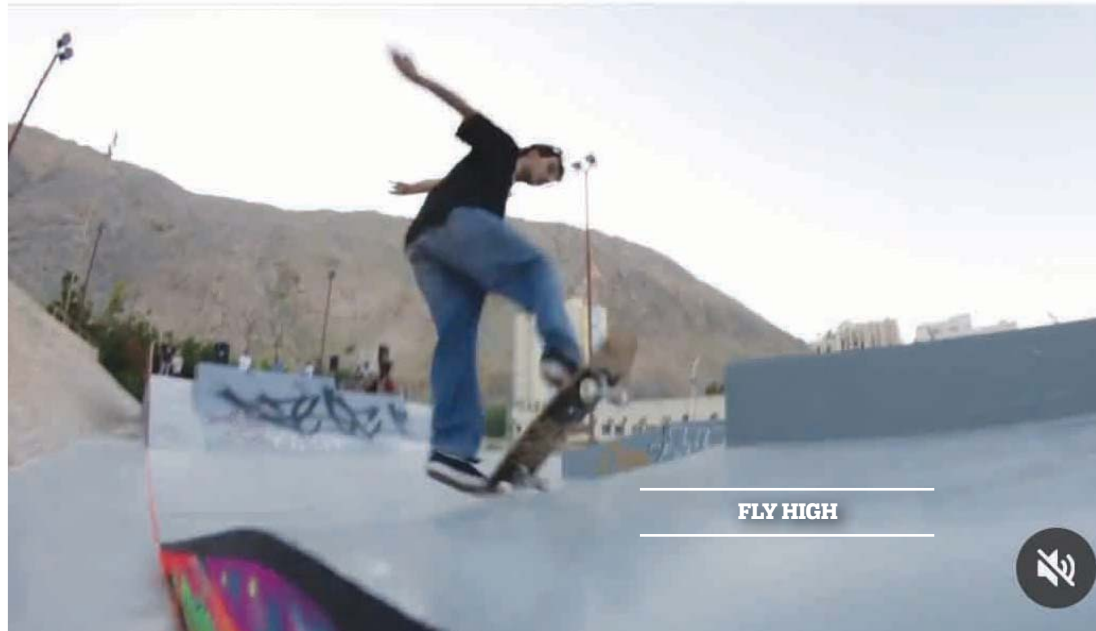


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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Dutch museum unveils once-hidden art collection in new mirrored warehouse



DUTCH ART AND design museum Boijmans Van Beuningen on Friday opened a stunning mirrored warehouse called the "Depot" to display the great bulk of its collection normally kept in underground storage, hidden from public view.

While most museums only have the space to show a small part of their overall collection, the Rotterdam art museum has now unveiled 151,000 works of art for the public in an airy, multi-storied, steel and glass building.



Boijmans director Sjarrel Ex told Reuters that art museums typically show just the tip of the iceberg of their collection, meaning a staggering 93 per cent of works are never on display.

"There is a moment where the things you (cannot) look at sink into oblivion," Ex said, adding the new building can accommodate over 60,000 visitors a year on guided tours or following a set walking route.

The depot, which features figurative Dutch art from the early Middle Ages to the 21st century and has one of the world's most significant collections of drawings, offers a very different experience from the usual curated museums.

"There is no editing in this depot at all," Ex said, adding that people can explore the warehouse at random according to their own curiosities and glean information about works on a special app or by scanning a QR-code.

Long-running plans to create the public depot got an extra boost in 2013 when flooding threatened the museum's collection in underground storage. It was decided that the artworks would be safer on view with good security above ground, Ex said. — Reuters

CULTURE



Algerian farmer's olive oil wins global recognition

HAKIM ALILECHE left a successful career in graphic design and moved to the Algerian countryside to produce "magic potion" — organic olive oil that has won him international recognition.

The 48-year-old said he chose the Ain Oussera plateau for its cheap land and water supply.

His oil won first prize at the Dubai Olive Oil Competition in the Extra Virgin Early Harvest category in February 2021 and in May he won silver at the Japan Olive Oil Prize.

"These honours really reassured us because it means we were right," he said.

The farm of some 40 hectares (100 acres) has over 15,000 olive trees, and so far 9,000 have started producing.

"I started planting them bit by bit from 2005. I like farming and I've been fond of olive trees since I was little," he said.

"In Algeria, it's a sacred tree."

Producing organic olive oil "puts me right into this mood of respect and protection for the planet," he said.

He has visited several other producing countries — Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, France and Italy to learn about production methods.

"These trees have never had any chemical treatment and I will do everything to make it stay that way," he said, clasping a goblet of oil freshly extracted from his modern Italian press.

"It's really food and medicine," he said, taking a sip of the fragrant liquid before heading out to supervise workers harvesting olives in the orchard.

'VERY HIGH QUALITY'

As with every year since entering into production, Alileche is picking his olives early, in a country where the harvest doesn't start until mid-November.

"An early harvest allows you to get all the benefits of the olives, all the natural antioxidants," he said.

The olives are scraped off the branches by hand to avoid damaging the trees, and fall on a tarpaulin on the ground to then be scooped



into crates and hauled off to the press.

"Crushing them the same day avoids the olives oxidising," Alileche said.

Picked this early, the olives give a meagre amount of oil — just eight litres per 100 kilogrammes (14 pints per 220 pounds). That compares to 18 litres for fully mature fruits.

"Our oil is a very high quality that we want to get certified in Europe" as organic, Alileche said.

He has labelled his oil Dahbia, the name of both his mother and his wife. The production process "respects the entire ecological system: no pollution, no fertilisers".

The oil's free acidity — a measure of quality whereby the lower the figure, the better the oil — is 0.16 per cent, just a fifth of the 0.8 per cent

limit for Extra Virgin oil.

"At the mill, we don't touch the olives much," he said. "We wash them, press them and finally bottle the oil."

That breaks with more traditional practices, he added.

"Before, people wouldn't wash the olives and they would sit exposed for long periods in bags in the open air, which changed the taste of the oil."

Alileche's farm benefits from a drip irrigation system, but he fears that climate change could threaten his livelihood, bringing both drought and early summer hailstorms.

"A quarter of an hour of hail and it's all gone," he said. "You'd have to wait five years for the olive tree to recover." — AFP

AROUND OMAN IN 3RD GEAR



Rachael MacIver
Instagram: @rachael_maciver

The adventure of a blonde and a very old car #17

"PLEASE LET THIS be the last time I drag this tent through a posh hotel lobby!" Mrs J sighed with poorly contained annoyance.

We had changed our plans of camping a night or two out of our small rented Yaris. However, Mrs J had come to the conclusion that she wasn't great with the idea of sleeping amongst Dhofar's wildlife after all. So we were back in our Salalah hotel room, which we had left in high spirits and full of confidence the very same morning. Oh well, plans change.

"Excuse me", the hotel receptionist called out as we tried to sneak past her with a cool box, tents, sleeping bags and a gas stove. "We have a message for you: Your Pajero is ready to be picked up from the garage". This was the best news we had had in days. Finally we could pack our things (again) and continue our journey camping along the coast, all the way back to Muscat.

The mechanic shrugged. "The oil pump is fixed but I'm afraid the old girl is still stuck in 3rd gear. We can fix that too but you'll have to wait another couple of months until we find a new gearbox". Mrs J looked at me wide-eyed. "But my flight home..." she whispered.

"It's fine, we'll take it as it is", I assured the mechanic. 3rd gear had got us this far.

Finally we were back on the road again. First stop was Sumhuram, the UNESCO heritage site, also known as Khor Rori archaeological site. The place had been under excavation for years, and now stood as a beautiful part-museum part-archaeological site on a hilltop overlooking the creek.

Mrs J wasn't a big fan of museums and always got that vacant look in her eyes when forced to walk from room to room looking at artifacts. It was difficult to imagine that this was the same woman who could easily spend 4 hours in IKEA walking from room to room looking at 'artifacts'. So I had to talk up this visit a bit to get her interested.

"You know, legends have it that these are the ruins of the Queen of Sheba's

summer palace. She would come here and enjoy the cool breeze and watch the dhows come in to the harbour with goodies from lands far away, and leave again loaded with the famous Dhofar's frankincense. Just imagine."

The archaeological site was beautifully laid out and one could easily imagine, once upon a time, this fortified city full of life. Narrow paths led us past ruins, which in those days had been divided into areas of residence, a large market place with big warehouses built for storage of frankincense and cargo.

The mentioning of Queen of Sheba had piqued Mrs J's interest as expected. The fact that scholars still argued whether the queen had ever existed, didn't matter at that moment. Mrs J had a frame of reference as she walked around the restored walls, touched a stone here and there, and that made the experience more real to her. "Picture the beautiful queen leisurely walking here with her entourage. Selecting the best quality frankincense and myrrh to gift to King Solomon, hoping her wealth and beauty would seduce him".

I swear, I hadn't meant to burst her romantic bubble or scatter her pink clouds. But the story was just too good to keep to myself.

"Did you know, that the Queen of Sheba (or Bilqis, as she is known in Islamic tradition) travelled to visit King Solomon with a camel caravan bearing gold and spices, with the purpose of testing his famed wisdom and flirt a bit? The king's jinn worried that the king might be tempted to marry her, and to put him off, whispered in his ear that rumours had it that the queen had hairy legs (and the hooves of a donkey). The king being curious, had a glass floor built in front of his throne, made to look like water. The queen raised her skirts to cross it, and revealed to all, her legs were indeed truly hairy. The king never proposed".

Mrs J glared at me for a long second. "Well, that is just typical, isn't it?"

And so began the long silent drive towards Mirbat.



Men in Masks: Back to Business

BY RIMNA RASHEED

No business could say they were 100% prepared for the toll that the Covid-19 pandemic launched on the workforce and economy. We all know we will come out of this eventually, but it's hard to predict when and how things will shift after such a crisis.

We've seen the devastating effect of the pandemic — how it threw a lot of families into chaos. In the last 18 months, media and social media had been filled with stories of horror with government and scientists scrambling to find both medicines and vaccines to save people. We saw countries shut down, we saw invisible walls built, we saw the stoppage of flights and traffics and locally, we witnessed our own version of purgatory being asked to stay home in order to save lives.

We saw the closure of schools and government institutions, the mass exodus of expats who lost their jobs, the suffering of frontliners and first responders and thanks to the collective effort of many relevant institutions, it felt like the nightmare is finally ending after a long time.

I wanted to share my version of stories of small businesses and their resilience amid Covid-19 through images that speak. What better than a photograph that will touch human emotions and make them forever documented. This inspired me to go around with my camera and click these simple lives that were impacted by the clasps of the global pandemic. For me, each of them is a survivor and thankfully, many of them fought a good battle and won to this day.

More than 100 plus subjects have been clicked as a part of this self-photo documentary project. All of these were clicked in the various months of 2021 starting from February 2021 compiling various men and women at work with their masks on fighting the risks associated with their daily activities.

Some of the clicks were from my everyday movements, but most of the clicks were from the many conscious visits I made to Al Seeb and Muttrah Souq which are major commercial hubs that bustle with activity and attract good footfall all around the year.

Being a street photographer, I always try to interact with my photography subjects as I believe the best portraits are a result of an emotional frequency match between the photographer and the one being clicked.

If the subject is hesitant, I never go ahead with the shot. But almost all the people I approach are very cooperative and do not mind being shot, especially the sellers at Muttrah and Seeb Souq who are very used to being clicked by tourists who visit Oman at different times of the year.

As I went through with this project, I had many realisations but the ultimate lesson is learned by these very men and women who relied on being out and about for their day to day living. Just like them, this pandemic taught us many lessons.

One of them is that future planning is now seen as a more vital tool. If this pandemic wrecked certain businesses, the present is the best time to start planning for the future. Using future thinking is all about finding how work would change in various economic and natural disasters and what would it take for businesses to stay afloat during tough times.

And second, hard work does pay off. There are several obstacles that we've all encountered running our businesses in this new climate just by staying calm and working hard. The thing to remember is that resilience will shine through in the end. After all, a business faces its greatest failures by giving in to the difficulties and being unwilling to change.

