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HOCKEY
PERSONALITY
NAQVI PASSES
AWAY



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RUSSIA INCREASES
GAS FLOWS TO
EUROPE, PUSHING
DOWN PRICES



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THE FRENCH
CONTINUE TO
CHARM WITH
GOOD FOOD



MUSCAT

SYMPOSIUM ON GOVERNANCE HELD

The Command of the Sultan's Armed Forces organised a national symposium on governance and its role in improving performance, enhancing transparency and improving financial and administrative auditing, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs. The symposium aimed to introduce governance and its importance and components as a development tool which supports all sectors. The symposium came up with a number of recommendations, such as the initiation of a governance award named "The Sultan Haitham Award for Governance" and activating and speeding the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 enablers. **DETAILS ON P2**

OMAN, US DISCUSS YEMEN PEACE EFFORTS

Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy received a phone call from US Secretary of State Dr Antony Blinken dealing with issues of common concern. Sayyid Badr and Blinken discussed ways of boosting efforts to stop the war in Yemen and encourage dialogue among all parties within the framework of a political process to achieve security and stability in Yemen. The two sides affirmed their desire to continue consultations and cooperation to achieve peace and benefit all parties. — ONA

INSIDE



SYRIA HAS WORLD'S WORST
LANDMINE CASUALTY FIGURES

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ORIGINAL APPLE COMPUTER
SELLS FOR \$400,000

P8

OMAN-BRITAIN
JOINT MILITARY
EXERCISE

The Oman-Britain military exercise, code-named 'Musandam Fort 2021' continued in Musandam Governorate according to the plans of the exercise. The exercise, which runs till Thursday, comes in accordance with RAO Command's training programme for its personnel. It also comes within the framework of exchanging expertise and military skills to achieve the desired training objectives. **DETAILS ON P3**



Pandemic put
huge challenges
on health sector

MUSCAT: Covid-19 has imposed many challenges on the health systems, governments, as well as communities, around the world.

This was stated by Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, during the Intra-action Review (IAR) for Covid-19 response workshop, which began on Wednesday.

The health minister highlighted the country's efforts exerted in Covid-19 response and exchange of expertise, applauding the remarkable role of the health personnel during the pandemic.

He noted that the workshop will highlight all actions taken to confront the pandemic.

The two-day workshop is organised by the Ministry of Health's Directorate General of Disease Surveillance and Control in cooperation with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the WHO office in Oman.

It comes in preparation for the

Booster dose is
only Pfizer vaccine

The Ministry of Health clarified that the booster or the third dose for the target groups will be of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, regardless of the type of vaccine received by the person previously. The ministry recently started giving the booster dose or the third dose of the vaccine to target groups. The booster dose is for those who have completed eight months from the date of receiving the last dose and including, people above 65 years, healthcare and frontline workers aged 50 and above, patients with chronic diseases. **DETAILS ON P3**

visit of the regional office team to conduct the IAR in due course.

Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO Representative in the Sultanate of Oman, spoke of the relations between the ministry and the WHO before and amid the pandemic, and the work to strengthen the joint efforts to share expertise and experiences from the Sultanate of Oman's health sector. **TURN TO P3**

Royal Decree gives
licence for OFT
to provide telecom
services

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No 65/2021 granting Oman Future Telecommunications Company (OFT) first class licence to provide and operate a system of international general telecommunication service.

Article (1) grants Oman Future Telecommunications Company (OFT) first class license to provide and operate a system of international general telecommunication service, in accordance with the provisions of the license 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

Climate summit pledges to slash emissions

GLASGOW: Automakers, airlines and governments unveiled a raft of pledges at the UN climate summit on Wednesday to slash greenhouse gas emissions from global transport, albeit with some conspicuous absences.

Driving, flying and shipping contribute nearly a quarter of the world's man-made greenhouse gas emissions, making transport a

valuable target in the effort to fight climate change.

US car makers Ford and General Motors and Germany's Daimler were among a group that committed to phasing out fossil-fuel vehicles by 2040, accelerating a shift towards electric motors from the internal combustion engines that they pioneered over a century ago.

The world's second most populous

country, India, joined the pledge. But in a sign of the challenges of shifting to zero emissions, the world's top two car makers, Toyota Motor Corp and Volkswagen AG, did not sign up. Nor did China, the United States and Germany, all major vehicle markets. Volkswagen has committed to having a CO2-neutral fleet globally by 2050.

SEE ALSO P8



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LADIES' ANNUAL CALENDAR REF. 4947R

Patek Philippe Boutique
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WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 29°C Min 22°C SALALAH: Max 31°C Min 26°C NIZWA: Max 32°C Min 18°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 06:19 FAJR: 05:01 DHUHR: 11:56 ASR: 15:06 MAGHRIB: 17:28 ISHA: 18:41

COSAF hosts national symposium on governance



His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, and other dignitaries at the national symposium on governance.

MUSCAT: The Command of the Sultan's Armed Forces organised a national symposium on governance and its role in improving performance, enhancing transparency and improving financial and administrative auditing, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs. The symposium aimed to introduce governance and its importance and components as a

development tool which supports all sectors in Oman. It also reviewed the regional and international directions in governance, the mechanisms of implementing it in the administrative apparatus, as well as theories and studies of utilising governance in developing the performance of military and security departments from an international perspective. The event saw the participation of officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Sultan's Armed Forces

(SAF), the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Capital Market Authority (CMA), the State Audit Institution (SAI), Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability, Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and Injaz Development. Furthermore, the three sessions of the symposium included several

presentations and working papers covering various topics related to governance, namely governance as a development tool, governance in Oman's legislation and Oman Vision 2040, governance in the Sultanate of Oman between the challenges of the present and the aspirations of the future and governance as a pillar of Oman Vision 2040, among other papers. The symposium came up with a number of recommendations, such as the initiation of a governance

award named "The Sultan Haitham Award for Governance", activating and speeding the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 enablers, rapidly approving and implementing the national plan of enhancing integrity and improving financial and administrative auditing. Moreover, the symposium also recommended granting Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability the power to apply governance in the

public sector. It also proposed publishing an annual summary of the major works of SAI, among other recommendations. The symposium was attended by members from the Royal family and some ministers, Chairmen of the State Council and the Majlis Ash'shura, SAF Chief of Staff, commanders of other military and security departments, a number of under-secretaries, senior SAF officers, academics and other military and civil guests. — ONA

Japan honours former Omani official



Japan Ambassador Kobayashi Toshinori confers The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star on Salem bin Nasser al Maskari.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 10

The Embassy of Japan in the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday held a ceremony at the Ambassador's residence to confer The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star on Salem bin Nasser al Maskari, former secretary-general of the Higher Education Council of the Sultanate of Oman. The ceremony was attended by a number of Omani senior officials and dignitaries. Kobayashi Toshinori, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman, conferred the Order on Al Maskari on behalf of the Government of Japan. The Government of Japan announced on November 3 the conferment of the Order on Al Maskari in recognition of his outstanding contributions to promoting friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman in the field of education, particularly academic exchange. The long-awaited conferment ceremony was finally realised after a delay of a year due to

Sayyid Badr to get Japan's Order of the Rising Sun



The Government of Japan announced last week that it will present The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star on Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Busaidy in recognition of his outstanding contributions to enhance defence cooperation between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman.

concerns over the coronavirus. The Order of the Rising Sun, one of the prestigious decorations in Japan, was introduced in 1875. The award of the order for non-Japanese nationals started in 1981.

Oman to mark World Tolerance Day

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman will join the rest of the international community in celebrating World Tolerance Day on November 16, themed "Diverged by pandemic, converged by tolerance". Speaking at a press conference held at Kempinski hotel on Wednesday, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said that tolerance constitutes the main theme in the Sultanate of Oman-based "Message of Islam" exhibition welcomed by all nations. "By 2020, the exhibition was held in 133 stations, of them 96 international and 37 local within the Sultanate of Oman," he added. Al Maamari pointed out that the "Message of Islam" exhibition emerged as a measure to assert the Sultanate of Oman's approach in spreading the culture of peace and harmony among nations. The



Ali bin Khalfan al Jabri, Information Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Information

exhibition consolidates the values of tolerance, coexistence and understanding as it reflects the need to engage in constructive dialogue among sects and proponents of different religions in the world, he explained, noting that the exhibition focuses on the Sultanate of Oman's own experience in



Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs

peaceful coexistence informed by religious tolerance. Al Maamari said that the International Religious Freedom Report, issued by the US State Department, lauded the role of "Message of Islam" exhibition in spreading the culture of tolerance and changing negative stereotypes in the world.

The exhibition lent support to many members of political, municipal, social and educational establishments in all parts of the world, said Al Maamari, adding that the exhibition drew the attention of diplomatic missions from Arab and other countries. As part of World Tolerance Day celebrations in the Sultanate of Oman, a symposium will be held on consolidating values of tolerance among societies in times of crises. The symposium focuses on the global coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and its fallout. One of the workshops in the symposium highlights the role of scholars in promoting tolerance during adverse conditions. Another workshop underscores the role of community establishments in alleviating the impacts of Covid-19 on society. The press conference was attended by Ali bin Khalfan al Jabri, Information Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Information. — ONA

Al Amana to organise photo expo on tolerance

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Al Amana Centre under the auspices of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs will be observing the International Day of Tolerance on November 16 to be held at Sheraton Oman. The day is to be marked with a photography exhibition by people living in the Sultanate of Oman from different religious backgrounds. "We will be sharing pictures and the participants will showcase their faith and how it contributes to the tolerance we have here in the Sultanate of Oman," said Rev Justin Meyers, (pictured) of Al Amana Centre. On Wednesday evening the



participants gathered at the Qurum Cultural Club to learn about each other by talking and exploring to understand what they believe. "We are able to open up the doors and pathways for understanding and tolerance here in the Sultanate of Oman and around the world," said Rev Meyers. Al Amana Centre has a long

history in the Sultanate of Oman. It is the legacy of the doctors and teachers who came to the Sultanate of Oman in the late 1800s from the Reform Church in America. "People have heard about Dr Thomas and Dr Bosch and their homes in Muttrah are our offices now," noted Rev Meyers. He added, "We bring people

from around the world to learn about the tolerance of the Sultanate of Oman and to learn techniques to talk to one another to build stronger communities across the world." According to him, through understanding trust is built, with trust fear of the unknown goes away because the other is known. "You know them as friends and you know what they will do because they will know each other as friends and neighbours not as someone from another religion," said Rev Meyers. Tolerance is a good place to start but it takes a lot of energy to maintain tolerance, but if you understand somebody you do not have to just tolerate them, instead

NCSI conducts consumer confidence survey

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) began conducting the 32nd cycle of the Consumer Confidence Survey for the fourth quarter of 2021. The survey, which runs till November 24, aims to identify future expectations of the Omani economy, the economic situation of families and their purchasing power.

The Consumer Confidence Survey is considered an important indicator of expenditure, specifying the volume and direction of markets and their popularity and identifying the effects of the measures taken due to the Covid-19 pandemic on economic and social indicators. It also provides a future vision for the trends of economic growth.

The survey includes 1,500 samples, covering Omanis aged 18 or above, distributed across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The samples take into account the representation of males and females. Data collection will be done over mobile phones.

— ONA

Minister lauds role of healthcare staff in Covid fight

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Dalia Samhouri, Programme Area Manager at the Country Health Emergency Preparedness and HIR, reviewed the significance and objectives of the programme, in addition to the expected outcomes.

The ministry's Director General of Disease Surveillance and Control Dr Saif al Abri presented the epidemiological situation of Covid-19, response pillars, response plan, as well as the recovery plan and phases of immunisation.

The workshop aims at building national capacities on conducting IAR, and offering the opportunity to exchange experiences and collectively analyse the actions taken so far to respond to the current Covid-19 pandemic in a bid to identify best practices, challenges, and lessons learned.



Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, at the Intra-Action Review (IAR) workshop in Muscat on Wednesday.

The workshop is an opportunity to extrapolate lessons learned from actions taken by the Sultanate of Oman during Covid-19 response. It should be noted that the agenda of the expected visit would review essential health services pillars

in the Sultanate of Oman for Covid-19 procedures as per the WHO documents.

The two-day workshop addresses approach to conduct the IAR, which includes number of pillars that are country-level

coordination, planning and monitoring, in addition to risk communication, community engagement and infoemic management (RCCEIM). The approach involves also surveillance, case investigation

and contact tracing, as well as points of entry, national laboratory system, infection prevention and control, and case management and knowledge sharing about innovations and the latest research.

— ONA

Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine to be booster dose for all

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Health (MoH) clarified that the booster or the third dose for the target groups will be of the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, regardless of the type of vaccine received by the person previously.

MoH recently started giving the booster dose or the third dose of the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine to the target groups.

The target groups with the booster dose for those who have completed eight months from the date of receiving the last dose and including, older people 65 years, healthcare and frontline workers aged 50 years and above, patients with chronic diseases from the age



The target groups with the booster dose for those who have completed eight months from the date of receiving the last dose and including, older people 65 years, healthcare and frontline workers aged 50 years and above, patients with chronic diseases from the age of 18 years and above, especially if they are not well controlled.

of 18 years and above, especially if they are not well controlled.

These include patients with chronic lung disease, kidney disease, including those who are undergoing dialysis, diabetes with glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) above 7.6 percent, blood pressure, genetic blood diseases, liver diseases, and obesity with a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30 kg/m².

The target groups for the third dose must have completed three months from the date of receiving the last dose are immunocompromised patients aged 12 years and over.

It includes patients undergoing cancer treatment, and patients who have undergone bone

marrow or organ transplants. Immunodeficiency diseases and people living with HIV and patients receiving immunosuppressive or biologic agents.

The ministry indicated that the date for giving the dose is determined according to the instructions of the treating doctor in order to be in line with the patient's health condition and not conflict with his other medications.

The Supreme Committee has approved giving the third dose of the vaccine to enhance the level of protection for groups most at risk of the Covid disease.

The committee also agreed to vaccinate children from the age of 5 to 12, starting from the first week of November 2021.

MUSANDAM FORT 2021 ENDS TODAY



The Oman-Britain military exercise, code-named 'Musandam Fort 2021' held in the military exercises area in Musandam Governorate, continued on Wednesday. It will conclude on Thursday in accordance with RAO Command's training programme. It also comes within the framework of exchanging expertise and military skills to achieve the desired training objectives. — ONA

In brief

MUSCAT

HONORARY CONSUL
OF BELARUS TO OMAN
APPOINTED

Dr Abdullah bin Masoud al Harthy was on Wednesday appointed as Honorary Consul of the Republic of Belarus to the Sultanate of Oman. The accreditation was handed over by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry. He wished the Consul success in promoting bilateral relations between the two countries to serve the joint interests.

ONLINE ARAB YOUTH
FORUM LAUNCHED

The Online Arab Youth Forum, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, was launched on Tuesday. As many as 200 young people representing 22 Arab countries take part in the 2-day forum. The first day of the forum included two working papers. The first one was on the concept of creative and cultural industries and their social and economic impact. The second working paper was on the opportunities and challenges facing the creative and cultural industries in the Arab world. The first day also included two training workshops.

TENDER RESULTS OF
TREASURY BILLS ISSUED

A tender of Government Treasury Bills, issue number 549, worth RO 74 million was announced this week. The total value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 74 million, for a maturity period of 91 days, from November 10 until February 9, 2022. The average accepted price reached 99.816 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.815 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.73634 per cent and 0.73770 per cent.

20,000 ABALONE
SEEDS RECEIVED

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has received 20,000 abalone seeds. “The ministry received 20,000 ‘abalone’ seeds as part of an initiative of the Oman Aquaculture Company, as part of its abalone farming project in the Wilayat of Mirbat, in support of the local community and programmes to enhance the natural stock of Omani abalone,” the ministry said.

PARIS

ONCECS TAKE PART IN
UNESCO MEETING

Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences (ONCECS) is participating in the 8th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions of the member states in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). The participation came on the sidelines of the 41st session of the General Conference of Unesco in Paris November 9 to 24. Amna bint Salim al Balushiyah, Secretary-General of ONCECS, thanked Unesco for its efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.



The suggestions from the public include redesigning the Muttrah Souq as it continues to get flooded after heavy rains.

Cable car at Muttrah
waterfront on cards

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The authorities are planning various projects to enhance the quality of life in the governorate of Muscat

Some projects also aimed at raising the level of experience of tourists coming to the country as tourism is one of the key pillars of the diversification policy.

The office of the Governorate of Muscat has been interacting with the youth for their suggestions as the planners seek to work on sustainable projects for the future. It may be noted that Omran has been working on plans to launch various recreational activities at Muttrah Waterfront, which

include operating water taxi services and a cafe.

The suggestions from the public include redesigning the Muttrah Souq as it continues to get flooded after heavy rains.

“Really nice to see that cycling facility has been launched at the waterfront and it is time to launch more facilities such as boat rides, among others,” said the owner of a popular restaurant near the Souq.

The authorities are working on launching a cable car, which will start at the vegetable and fish market and at Kalbuh Park.

Tenders have been already floated by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for the management of the iconic Muttrah Fort.

Project to train Omani
youths for IT jobs

MUSCAT: Oman Information Technology Society (OITS), in collaboration with Microsoft, launched the “MaharaTec” initiative to upskill the nation’s future leaders and talent, enhancing their capabilities in the field of communications and information technology.

This addition to the industry will empower young professionals to acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills to improve their job prospects in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

“The ICT field is witnessing rapid growth and we are happy to support Oman’s 2040 vision, which aims to create diverse economic opportunities for the sector,” said Dr Salim al Ruzaiqi, Chairman of Oman Information Technology Society. “This partnership with Microsoft will enrich the experience of the Omani youth and train them in one of the most essential career paths of today, so that they can gain the in-demand expertise on ensuring their lead position in a knowledge-based economy of the Sultanate.”

The goal of MaharaTec seeks to enhance the confidence of the functional community in educational outcomes in the IT sector. The courses will train the youth for jobs such as software developer, data analyst, IT administrator, IT support & helpdesk, project manager, digital marketer, financial analyst, graphic designer, customer service and sales.



“MaharaTec is a valuable project that generates opportunities for young talent in the country to hone their skills and gain career-building experiences, which contributes to strengthening the future of the IT industry”
SHAIKH SAIF HILAL AL HOSNI
Country Manager for Microsoft Oman and Bahrain

“MaharaTec is a valuable project that generates opportunities for young talent in the country to hone their skills and gain career-building experiences, which contributes to strengthening the

future of the IT industry,” said Shaikh Saif bin Hilal al Hosni, Country Manager for Microsoft Oman and Bahrain.

Reimagining industries in the new normal, Microsoft remains committed to its core pillars of global educational and skilling future workforce initiatives, as these courses will equip young technology-driven professionals with the appropriate tools and skills to secure and grow the country’s ICT environment. This will enable the nation to build a resilient infrastructure, enhancing and catering to new demands of their digital economy.

The MaharaTec programme will continue to operate for a period of one year, while participants are free to choose the courses and dates that are suitable to their learning requirements. Further incentivising the skilling experience, OITS will cover exam free for the first 200 participants who successfully pass the certification test. — ONA

Carbs are not evil, just excess of it is bad

DR NISMA HARIS

The pandemic has slowed down our physical activity levels and additional confinement in our homes has made us weigh heavier on the scale. This weight gain confession marks our preliminary steps towards shedding those extra kilos and we land in developing a carbs phobia. Little do we realise that carbs are not evil and need not be eliminated. There is so much goodness when it comes to consuming carbs and we all need to know this.

What are carbs basically? Carbs or carbohydrates are one of the major food groups along with proteins and fats that our bodies need daily nutrition from. Carbohydrates and fats are typically energy-giving foods (convert the glucose from foods into energy). Also, they are the brain’s preferred energy source. Some will argue that proteins are an alternative to carbs for a weight loss regimen although proteins chiefly assist with muscle mass production, regulate bodily functions and provide a fluid and acid-base balance. They can provide energy in absence of carbs and fats. However, excess of anything is bad for our bodies and we need to know the right amount of nutrients our body needs so that we are not deprived of any essential nutrients and can sustain a healthy weight.

There are two types of carbohydrates; simple and



Complex carbohydrates are rich in dietary fibre, break down gradually upon digestion and hence keep you satiated for longer and are classified low in terms of glycemic index and are of high nutritional value

complex. Simple carbs include sugars that break down immediately upon digestion and provide energy and are therefore categorised as high in terms of glycemic index and are of little nutritional value. (Glycemic index is a measure of how specific foods increases blood sugar levels). Complex carbohydrates are rich in dietary fibre, break down gradually upon digestion and hence keep you satiated for longer and are classified low in terms of glycemic index and are of high nutritional

value. Henceforth, emphasis should be laid on carbs that are rich in fibre content. Moreover, the role of fibre is noteworthy and well known in maintaining regular bowel movements.

Processing of foods such as milling and grinding removes the outer coat or bran which is rich in fibre and leaves only the inner starch component. Hence, whole grain foods such as oats, millet, quinoa, barley, brown rice, whole-wheat bread and pasta, make some excellent choices.

Fruits, vegetables, beans, peas, are other examples of complex carbohydrates.

Refined carbs such as white bread, pasta and rice, refined flour, processed cereals, cakes, sweets, biscuits, sweeteners, juices, ice-creams and candies are devoid of fibre and minerals and are a big no. They give a sudden boost in energy levels but don’t keep you fuller for longer intervals so obviously one ends up overeating. Moreover, they are of little nutritional value. Simple carbs are

present in fruits, vegetables, milk, and dairy products but as they contain natural sugars they can be consumed in moderation. Sweet potatoes, turnips, pumpkin, yams are starchy and complex carbs and hence constitute other healthier carbs options.

A common prevailing myth is that the consumption of carbs leads to obesity and diabetes, despite there are a lot of other factors such as sluggish lifestyle, easy access to junk food, oversized portions, stress, and genetic factors that contribute greatly towards obesity and diabetes. In fact, according to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, “those who eat the most carbohydrates – especially from natural sources such as beans, whole grains, and vegetables — have a lower risk for obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease”.

So, next time consider swapping a pizza slice with a bowl of pepperoni beans salad or dessert craving with freshly cut fruits. Bake your bread instead of store bought as they are processed and contain certain additives. Rye or barley bread, lettuce or lentil wraps can be favourable alternatives if one wants to avoid whole wheat bread. At the end of the day it’s not just the carbs but the type of carbs that counts for a sustainable and optimum weight.

The author is a Salalah-based general physician, content creator, health and wellness adviser. She can be reached at www.healthyvows.com / dr.nisma.healthyvows@gmail.com



Climbing wires replaced in Jabal Shams to ensure safety



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 10

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is replacing the via Ferrata climbing wire in Jabal Shams in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate for the convenience and safety of climbers.

MoHT, in cooperation with the Oman Hiking team, is replacing the old pillars with new ones that are safer for climbers. The climbing wire is 80 metres high, while the path is 120 metres long.

The Oman Hiking team, in partnership with the tourism committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, has been maintaining the iron climbing wire, with the approval of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and under the technical supervision of the Royal Army of Oman.

The Oman Hiking team said that there have been a few accidents due to the presence of sharp pegs, which will now be replaced by U pegs for the safety of adventurers.

Oman Air flights to Munich, Zurich begin on Dec 1

MUSCAT: Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, has updated its winter schedule reflecting frequency increases and flight resumptions. Among reinstated destinations are Munich, Zurich and Kuala Lumpur.

Three flights to Munich and two flights to Zurich will resume on December 1. Meanwhile, 5 weekly-flight to Kuala Lumpur will be resumed in December 4. Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are on board the aircraft and in the Sultanate of Oman's airports.

Social distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of everyday. Meal service has been modified to further

ensure safety, and a number of other measures have been implemented to ensure that the airline's passengers and crew are safe at all times.

Passengers who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority website, caa.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter the Sultanate of Oman.

Passengers travelling to Germany, Switzerland and Malaysia, as well as all other destinations on Oman Air's network, should ensure they are aware of official requirements to enter or transit through their destination.

Passengers departing from the Sultanate of Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure procedures, as well as requirements during their flights, which are provided at omanair.com. — ONA



OCCI: Unified fee structure to bring in more investment, boost economy

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has welcomed the preparations for a unified guide for government services fees as per the high directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Redha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman, OCCI, said the directives, which coincide

with the Sultanate of Oman's celebrations of the 51st Glorious National Day, will boost the confidence of the private sector and support foreign investment.

Al Saleh said, "These directives will help empower the private sector and also focus on achieving economic diversification."

He said the reduction of fees is part of the steps to stimulate the national economy and attract investment to the Sultanate of

Oman. This reduction in fees will encourage investors to establish their projects in the Sultanate of Oman."

He said that the private sector and business owners are invited to take advantage of this incentive and take the initiative to contribute to strengthening the national economy by focusing on the promising sectors that are covered by these incentives.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of

Heritage and Tourism issued a clarification statement that hotel and tourist facilities will be exempted from fines levied on licences that have expired during the period between June 1 and December 2021, subject to renewal.

The ministry said small and medium enterprises will be exempted from rental fees for activities conducted on the real estate owned by government agencies.

In brief

14 NEW COVID-19 CASES,
NO DEATH

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has announced 14 fresh infections within 24 hours, as the country's Covid tally reached 304,403 cases. No deaths reported in 24 hours. The total deaths reported in the country is 4,113. 2 patients have been admitted to hospitals in the last 24 hours while the total ICU cases touched 3 and 10 total hospitalised cases.

FIRE IN AL DAKHLIYAH DOUSED

MUSCAT: A fire that broke out at a commercial store in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has been extinguished by teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA). "The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate managed to control a fire that broke out at a commercial store in the Wilayat of Samayil, without registering any injuries", CDAA said in a statement.



Notice for The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Board of Directors of Dhofar University (S.O.A.C) is pleased to invite the shareholders of the company to attend the seventeenth Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the company (AGM) to be held on Sunday, 28 November 2021 at 1:00 PM via the electronic platform for holding AGM's, which can be accessed from the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Co. (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum is not present to convene the AGM, a second meeting will be held on Monday, 29 November 2021 at 01:00 pm. Agenda of the valid meeting will be as follow:

AGM Agenda

- To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the activities of the company and its financial status during financial year ended on 31 August 2021.
- To consider and approve the board of director's report on the organization and management of the company, during the financial year ended on 31 August 2021.
- To consider and approve the auditor's report on the financial statements of the company for the financial year ended on 31 August 2021.
- To consider the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended on 31 August 2021.
- To appoint the Auditor for the new financial year ended 31st August 2022, and determining his fees.

As per the Articles of Association of the company and the MOCI's guidelines of holding AGM's for SAOC companies via electronic means defined by ministerial decree number 65/2020, please be advised of the following

- A legal person only has the right to appoint a natural person to attend the AGM and vote on decisions taken on his behalf via electronic means. This natural person must have an ID issued by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC.
- Shareholders have the right to vote on any of the items of the agenda starts no earlier than 3 days from the date of holding the AGM. In case the shares owned by a shareholder changed (increased/decreased), the vote shall be void and a new vote needs to be made on the day of the AGM.

In case of any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Legal Advisor
Mr. Mohammed Abbas, Tel. No.: 23237108, GSM: 94043168

Regards,

Chairman

Legal Advisor

External Auditor



Tender Announcement No (1/2021)

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit announces the following tender:

No/	Description	Document fees	Qualified companies	Last date for document collection	Last date for tender submission
1/2021	Providing general cleaning services for the building of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit	OMR 25,000	Companies with excellent and first grades,	23/11/2021	16/12/2021 At 10:00 AM

First:

The companies specialized in this field and interested to apply for this tender must obtain the specifications brochure from the General Directorate of Administration and Finance - Procurement Department - during official working hours until 12 o'clock, Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, located in Al Khuwair, the ministries district

Second:

Preference shall be given to companies that have Riyada card.

Third:

A bank guarantee or a certified check by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman shall be attached to the bid at a value not less than (1%) of the submitted bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submitting the offer. Any offer that does not meet the required bank guarantee will not be considered

Fourth:

The bids shall be submitted in sealed envelopes and addressed in the name of (His Excellency / Deputy Chairman of Oman vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit - Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee), with the tender's number and name written on it from the outside, provided that the name of the bidder or what he refers to is not written on the envelopes.

Fifth:

Bids are delivered to the General Directorate of Administration & Finance - Procurement - in Al Khuwair, ministries district. The Unit Will not consider any bids that do not meet the above conditions, and the unit has the right to accept or reject any bid, and is not obligated to assign the tender to the lowest price bid.

164 COUNTRIES ARE BOUND BY MINE BAN TREATY STRUCK IN 1997

Syria records world’s worst landmine casualty figures

GENEVA: Syria overtook Afghanistan last year as the country with the highest number of recorded casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war, a monitoring group said on Wednesday.

The Landmine Monitor said Syria had registered the most victims for the first time since its annual reports began in 1999, with 2,729 people either killed or injured.

Colombia recorded the most casualties from 2005 to 2007, and Afghanistan has recorded the most since then until last year.

Globally in 2020, the report said at least 7,073 casualties of mines and explosive remnants of war, including 2,492 deaths, were recorded across 54 territories. The overall number of casualties was below the peak of 9,440 reached in 2016, but up from 5,853 in 2019. “This was mostly the result of increased armed conflict and contamination with mines of an improvised nature,” the monitor said.

The number remains far higher than the all-time low of 3,456 registered in 2013.

Some 164 countries are bound by the landmark Mine Ban Treaty struck in 1997.



A Syrian girl looks out of a hole in a newly-built mudbrick house in a village erected east of Al Safira in the countryside of Jarabulus, Aleppo province. – AFP

“The continued high number of casualties and disappointingly slow clearance outputs highlight serious and persistent challenges to treaty implementation,” said monitor editor Marion Loddo.

“If we are to reach a mine-free world, states must redouble their efforts towards speedy

implementation of their obligations and a much more efficient distribution of resources among all affected states and territories.”

Where the age, combat status and gender of victims were known, 80 per cent of casualties were civilians — of which half were

children — while males made up 85 per cent of the victims.

From mid-2020 to October 2021, Myanmar was the only country whose state forces had used anti-personnel mines, it found.

There were indications that new use of anti-personnel mines

happened during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in late 2020, but they could not be confirmed.

In Syria, the monitor could not confirm any new use of anti-personnel mines by Syrian government or Russian forces, but armed groups “likely continued to use improvised landmines, as in

previous years”, it said.

Meanwhile, non-state armed groups were found to have used anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Myanmar, Nigeria and Pakistan, while alleged uses in seven other countries could not be confirmed.

“Ongoing use of mines by non-state armed groups is particularly worrisome and more can be done to prevent anyone from using these weapons,” said Mark Hiznay, the monitor’s ban policy editor.

Nearly 146 square kilometres of land was reported cleared of landmines last year, with more than 135,000 anti-personnel mines destroyed. Sri Lanka completed the destruction of its stockpile in 2021 — the 94th country to do so.

As last year, the monitor identified 12 states as still producing anti-personnel mines: China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, the United States and Vietnam.

The 23rd annual report is produced by the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, the research and monitoring arm of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition NGOs. — AFP

Tunisia city on strike after landfill protest death



A tractor buries garbage after the reopening of a landfill in Aguerieb on Tuesday. – AFP

AGUERIEB: A Tunisian city held a general strike on Wednesday, after a protester died of tear gas inhalation during angry demonstrations over the reopening of a rubbish dump.

Abderrazek Lacheheb, 35, died early on Tuesday in Aguerieb, in the Sfax region on the central coast, after security forces used tear gas to disperse protesters. A medic and a family member said he had died of asphyxia.

The prosecution has opened an inquiry into the incident, while the interior ministry said the man had died as a result of a

pre-existing health condition.

On Wednesday, the city observed a general strike across the public and private sectors, following a call by the powerful UGTT trade union confederation to protest what it called a “savage intervention by security forces”.

Thousands of people joined a march against violence by security forces and demanding that the landfill site remain closed, an AFP journalist reported. Police officers deployed heavily and used tear gas again to block protesters from reaching the dump. — AFP

Despite dangers, many Iraqi Kurds dream of reaching Europe

ARBIL, Iraq: “Our life is awful,” says Iraqi taxi driver Himen Gabriel, who no longer believes he has a future in his war-battered country and says he is about to try to reach Europe.

He won’t say whether he will try to enter the EU across the Belarus-Poland border like thousands of others, but is determined to leave his home in Arbil in Iraq’s Kurdistan region.

Sporting a long, black beard and a fashionable haircut, Himen, 28, says he has no professional prospects, blaming local systems of patronage and nepotism. He pointed to his four brothers, saying “all have degrees and none has found a job in the public sector because they do not belong to any political party”.

He prefers not to say whether his itinerary will run via Belarus where up to 4,000 migrants, many of them Kurds, now huddle in an improvised camp in freezing weather.

As troops mass on both sides



Himen Gabriel, a taxi driver who wants to immigrate to Europe, is pictured during an interview in Arbil. – AFP

of the border, Poland has accused Russia of orchestrating a wave of migrants trying to illegally enter via Belarus in a bid to destabilise the European Union.

One Iraqi man now in Belarus, who asked not to be named, said by telephone that he and his family had made it all the way to the razor wire fence at the Polish border.

When they arrived, he said their group was confronted by “Polish soldiers” on the other side.

“We tried to cross,” he said, “but the soldiers fired tear gas to force us back.”

Now back in the capital Minsk, he said he remained in contact with relatives living inside the European Union, eager to find another way to enter and cross to Germany.

Gabriel, the taxi driver, remains convinced that even an arduous and dangerous journey is worth it, given the prospect of “leading a

quiet life” in Europe.

Kurdistan, an autonomous region in northern Iraq, presents itself as a haven of relative stability.

The region has been ruled for decades by two parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

About 3,000 Kurds have left the region in the past three months, of whom 1,600 have gone to Belarus on tourist visas, according to the Kurdistan Refugee Association.

The Belarusian honorary consul in Arbil, Fouad Mamend, said that they were using travel agencies to obtain tourist visas and plane tickets. He added that the Belarus missions in Arbil and in Baghdad had now been “closed for a week at the request of the Iraqi government”.

The head of the foreign relations committee in the Kurdistan parliament, Rebouar Babki, said that “initiatives are under way to bring these migrants back” to Iraqi Kurdistan. — AFP

GLASGOW

Climate fight shouldn’t shun any energy source

Saudi Arabia’s top energy official said on Wednesday that efforts to combat climate change should not undermine global energy security or shun any particular energy source, and denied the kingdom was hampering international talks on the issue.

The comments from Saudi come as the UK hosts of the UN climate summit underway in Scotland push to secure ambitious pledges from world leaders to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

“It is imperative that we



recognise the diversity of climate solutions, and the importance of emissions reduction as stipulated in the Paris Agreement, without any bias towards or against any particular source of energy,” Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud said at the summit.

KHARTOUM

Sudan’s army chief to form committee for funds

Sudan’s Army Chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan issued a decision to form a supreme committee to review and receive funds restored through the Empowerment Removal Committee, state TV said. Burhan suspended the Empowerment Removal Committee, which was meant to dismantle the former regime of ousted president Omar Hassan al Bashir and his supporters, just after the army took over the powers from Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok’s civilian



government last month.

Meanwhile, a Sudanese court ordered the country’s three main telecommunications providers to restore Internet access, as the country entered its sixteenth day of an Internet blackout following a coup by military leaders on October 25.

TELAVIV

Palestinians demand Israel free prisoner on strike

A Palestinian who has not eaten for months in protest at his detention without charge by Israel is close to suffering a collapse, his mother said, after demonstrators called for him and others also on hunger strike to be released.

Miqdad al Qawasmī’s weight has nearly halved since July 21, when he began refusing food and drinking only water with salt, his family says.

His protest, and parallel hunger strikes by five other



detainees also from the occupied West Bank, are in response to being placed in administrative detention, under which Israel can hold Palestinians it views as suspects for up to 60 days without charge and extend that period with court approval.

In brief

■ JAKARTA



MALAYSIA WARNS OF REFUGEE INFLUX FROM MYANMAR

An influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Malaysia is likely unless the crisis stemming from this year's military coup in Myanmar is resolved, warned Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yakoob on Wednesday.

"We need to resolve the Myanmar issue and Malaysia and Indonesia have the same view on this," Ismail said after talks with Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the presidential palace.

"The current crisis in Myanmar will result in more Rohingya refugees fleeing to Malaysia," he said, adding that his country had already taken in 200,000 Rohingya.

■ SEOUL



SOUTH KOREA URGES COVID-19 BOOSTER SHOTS AS CASES RISE

South Korea encouraged its citizens to take Covid-19 booster shots on Wednesday, as more of the elderly fell ill and reported vaccine breakthrough infections, driving serious and critical cases to a record.

Severe coronavirus cases jumped from the mid-300s in October to 460 on Wednesday, official data showed. Of the severely ill patients, more than 82 per cent were aged 60 and older.

Son Young-rae, a senior health ministry official, told a news conference that the increase is not posing a threat to the country's healthcare system yet, as there are nearly 500 ICU beds available.

■ BEIJING



CHINA'S XI TO PARTICIPATE IN APEC MEETINGS VIA VIDEO LINK

China's President Xi Jinping will participate in, and speak at, a meeting of the leaders of Asia-Pacific trade group APEC via video link on Friday, the foreign ministry said.

Leaders of the grouping, hosted this year by New Zealand, will focus on the region's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, emphasising supply chain support and decarbonising economies.

Xi will also make a keynote address to a November 11 meeting for APEC business leaders, the ministry said in a website statement on Wednesday.

New US special envoy to meet Taliban

ISLAMABAD: The new US special envoy for Afghanistan will visit Pakistan this week for a meeting with the Taliban foreign minister and senior diplomats from China and Russia, a Pakistani official and the US State Department said.

It will be Thomas West's first trip to the region since taking over from Zalmay Khalilzad, the long-serving diplomat who spearheaded the talks that led to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The so-called "troika plus" meeting, due to take place on Thursday in Islamabad, will include the Afghan Taliban's new foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, a senior Pakistani government official said on condition of anonymity.

The State Department said earlier in the week that West also plans to visit Russia and India.

"Together with our partners, he will continue to make clear the expectations that we have of the Taliban and of any future Afghanistan government," State Department spokesman Ned Price told a briefing this week.

The senior Pakistani official said the meeting is "primarily aimed at... finding ways to avert a humanitarian crisis and to look into possibilities of setting up an inclusive government in Afghanistan".

The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Afghanistan is on the brink of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with more than half the country facing "acute" food shortages and



Children bask in the sun next to a wall along a street in Nad Ali district, Helmand province, Afghanistan, on Wednesday. — AFP

winter forcing millions to choose between migration and starvation.

West, who was in Brussels this week to brief Nato on US engagements with the Taliban, told reporters that the Taliban have "very clearly" voiced their desire to see aid resumed, as well as to normalise international relations and see sanctions relief.

He called for unity from allies on those issues, noting that Washington "can deliver none of these things on our own".

West said Beijing has a "positive role" to play in Afghanistan.

China and Russia both confirmed they were sending their Afghan envoys to the meeting.

"China supports all international efforts that are beneficial towards promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, and firm up consensus on all sides," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a routine briefing.

AFGHAN CONFERENCE

West said that while he will visit India, he did not plan to attend a regional security dialogue on Afghanistan there on Wednesday. Indian officials said that meeting will involve Russia and Iran as well as Central Asian nations Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and

Uzbekistan.

Pakistan was also invited but declined, as did China, Islamabad's close ally. Wang said Beijing would not attend for "scheduling reasons".

India was an enthusiastic supporter of the ousted Western-backed government of Afghanistan.

Ajit Doval, the Indian national security adviser, echoed West's call for close cooperation among regional allies as he opened the meeting in New Delhi.

"I am confident that our deliberations will be productive, useful and will contribute to help the people of Afghanistan and

enhance our collective security," he said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a press conference on Wednesday that the group welcomes the various regional meetings. "We have no worries, the meetings will be for Afghanistan's benefit because the entire region believes that the security of Afghanistan is for the benefit of all," he said.

West also touched on security in the region, saying the United States is concerned about a recent uptick in attacks by the IS group in Afghanistan. "We want the Taliban to be successful against them," he said. — AFP

New Delhi vows, as it does each year, to clean its filthy air

NEW DELHI: New Delhi pledged "game-changing" steps to clean its foul air, including intensive water sprinkling and a crackdown on the burning of garbage, as eye-stinging smog covered the Indian capital for a fifth straight day.

The government vows action each year to battle the smog in the world's most polluted capital and one environmentalist described Tuesday's announcement as mere face-saving rhetoric.

Delhi's pollution gets worse in October and November as crop fires and vehicular exhausts get trapped in the cool, slow-moving air for longer.

A recent private survey showed that nearly 80 per cent of families in Delhi and its satellite cities reported ailments like headaches and breathing troubles due to the air.

The concentration of poisonous particulate matter PM2.5 in a cubic metre of air averaged 309 on Tuesday, six times the safe limit set by the federal government. PM2.5 is small enough to travel deep into the lungs and even enter the blood stream.

Delhi's environment minister promised a campaign against open burning of garbage from Thursday, widespread among the poor, increased sprinkling of water to settle dust, action against pollutants like coal furnaces and diesel generators and efforts to encourage public transport to

reduce vehicular emissions.

Gopal Rai also said that all of Delhi's 4,000 acres of cultivable land will be covered with a bio-decomposer solution by November 20 so that farmers do not have to burn crop stubble.

Crop stubble burning in states neighbouring Delhi is a major driver of the pollution in the city of about 20 million people, and Rai again urged the federal government to address the issue.

The city government said in a

statement it was "taking its fight against pollution to a higher level" and that Rai's "game-changing five-point plan will bring Delhiites freedom from pollution".

But an environmentalist said not enough was being done.

"This is mere rhetoric and face-saving tactics by the government, putting the onus of the extreme pollution in Delhi on to neighbouring states or the farmers alone," said Vimlendu Jha, founder of environment

group Swachha.

"Lack of public transport leads to massive use of private vehicles and that remains the main source of air pollution in the region," he said, adding that some studies showed that it contributed to almost 30 per cent of the problem.

India loses more than a million lives each year to toxic air, various studies have shown. Many Indian cities top global pollution lists as enforcement of laws is lax.

— Reuters



Women take a dip in the waters of Yamuna river as a part of rituals for the upcoming festival of Chhath puja in New Delhi. — AFP

Japan PM Kishida plans payouts in stimulus package



Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio gestures as he speaks during a press conference at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Wednesday. — AFP

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida vowed on Wednesday to compile a pandemic-relief stimulus package worth "several tens of trillion yen" by the end of next week that will include cash payouts to households hit by the coronavirus crisis.

Cash payouts worth 100,000 yen (\$884) each will be delivered to students, temporary workers and low-income households hit hardest by the pandemic, Kishida said.

The government will also offer cash and vouchers worth a combined 100,000 yen to children aged 18 or younger excluding those of families with annual income exceeding 9.6 million yen, he said.

"We will compile an extra budget as soon as possible by the end of this year, to deliver (the payouts) at the earliest date possible," Kishida told a news conference. — AFP

Nasa pushes back crewed Moon landing not until 2025



Nasa Administrator Bill Nelson

WASHINGTON: The United States will send a crewed mission to the Moon “no earlier than 2025”, Nasa chief Bill Nelson told reporters on Tuesday. A target of 2024 was set by the administration of former president Donald Trump when it launched the Artemis program, but it has faced numerous delays, including most recently litigation with Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin which unsuccessfully sued after losing a lander contract to SpaceX.

Nelson was appointed by President Joe Biden to lead the space agency. Nasa is making plans to send humans to the moon for the first time since the 1970s.

Biden had agreed to continue a program, known as Artemis, that began under Trump to put astronauts on the moon by 2024, intended as a prelude to an even-more-ambitious human Mars landing in the future.

Nelson cited seven months of litigation, which prevented communication between Nasa and SpaceX, as a major reason why Nasa is pushing back its target date.

Nelson, a former US senator from Florida, was appointed by President Joe Biden to lead the space agency.

— Agencies

Draft seeks stronger carbon cutting targets

GLASGOW: A draft UN climate summit text urged countries on Wednesday to boost their emissions cutting goals by 2022, three years ahead of schedule, after data showed the world was far off track to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Wednesday’s text was the first indication of where nations are 10 days into the COP26 talks in Glasgow, which host Britain has billed as crucial to achieving the most ambitious temperature goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The text called for nations to “revisit and strengthen” their decarbonisation plans by next year and said that limiting heating to 1.5°C “requires meaningful and effective action by all parties in this critical decade”.

It said “rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions” were needed to avert the worst impacts of heating, which has already seen countries worldwide slammed by fiercer floods, droughts and storms.

Countries’ latest decarbonisation plans submitted under the Paris Agreement are



A person gestures as people protest during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow on Wednesday. – Reuters

likely to see Earth warm 2.7°C this century, according to a United Nations assessment of the pledges.

The 2015 accord contains a “ratchet” mechanism requiring countries to update emissions plans every five years.

Several large emitters missed the 2020 deadline for submitting new plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Vulnerable nations say that the next deadline, in 2025, is too

distant to deliver the short-term emissions cuts needed to avoid disastrous heating.

In what observers said was a “significant first mention” of the fuels driving global warming, the draft summit called on countries

In what observers said was a “significant first mention” of the fuels driving global warming, the draft summit called on countries to “accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels”. Previous climate summit decisions and the Paris Agreement itself do not so much as mention fossil fuels, focusing instead on emissions

to “accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels”.

Previous climate summit decisions and the Paris Agreement itself do not so much as mention fossil fuels, focusing instead on emissions.

One senior negotiator said they were confident that the fossil fuel mention would appear in the final text, “in some form or another”.

— AFP

WHO looking forward to oral and nasal Covid vaccines

GENEVA: The World Health Organization’s chief scientist said on Tuesday she was looking forward to the “second generation” of Covid-19 vaccines, which could include nasal sprays and oral versions.

Soumya Swaminathan said such vaccines could have advantages over the current crop as they would be easier to deliver than injections and could even be self-administered.

Swaminathan said there were 129 different candidate vaccines that have got as far as clinical trials — being tested on humans —

while a further 194 are not yet that advanced in their development and are still being worked on in laboratories.

“This covers the entire range of technologies”, she told a live interaction on WHO social media channels.

“They’re still in development. I’m sure some of them will prove to be very safe and efficacious and others may not.

“There could be advantages to some of the second generation vaccines... clearly if you have an oral vaccine or an intra-nasal vaccine this is easier to deliver

There were 129 different candidate vaccines that have got as far as clinical trials — being tested on humans — while a further 194 are not yet that advanced in their development and are still being worked on in laboratories

than an injectable.

“Ultimately we’ll be able to choose the ones that are most

appropriate.

“If not for Covid, we’re going to use these platforms for other infections in the future.”

Swaminathan explained the advantages of a vaccine being sprayed into the nose, as happens in some countries with influenza vaccines.

“If there’s a local immune response then it will take care of the virus before it even goes and establishes itself in the lungs and starts causing a problem”, she said.

The WHO has only given emergency use authorisation to seven Covid-19 vaccines: Those

created by Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Sinopharm, Sinovac and last week Bharat Biotech.

“None of the vaccines are 100 per cent. Nobody has ever claimed that the vaccines are going to be 100 per cent protective. But 90 per cent is a wonderful amount of protection to have, compared to zero”, Swaminathan said.

“Till now, with the vaccines that we have approved, there has not been any signal which has been so worrying that we need to say, well, we need to re-think this vaccine.”

— AFP

Original Apple built by Jobs and Wozniak sells for \$400k

LOS ANGELES: An original Apple computer, hand-built by company founders Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak 45 years ago, sold for \$400,000 at auction in the United States on Tuesday.

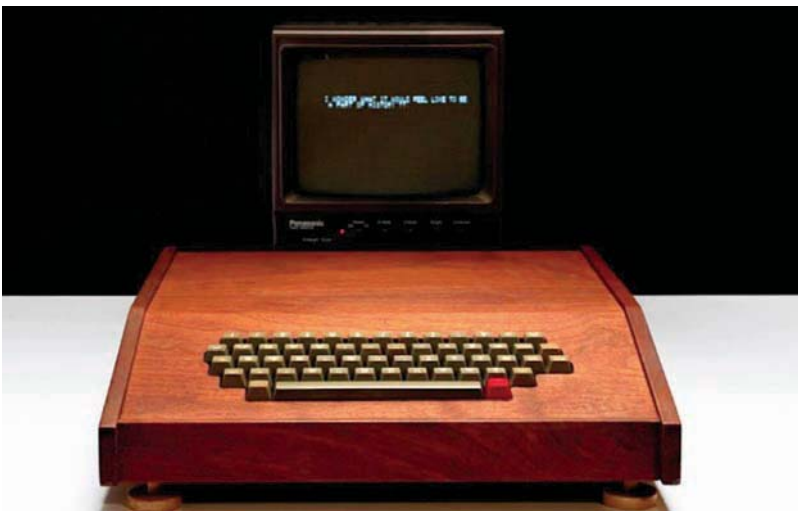
The functioning Apple-1, the great-great-grandfather of today’s sleek chrome-and-glass Macbooks, had been expected to fetch up to \$600,000 when it went under the hammer in California.

The so-called “Chaffey College” Apple-1 is one of only 200 made by Jobs and Wozniak at the very

start of the company’s odyssey from garage start-up to megalith worth \$2 trillion.

What makes it even rarer is the fact the computer is encased in koa wood — a richly patinated wood native to Hawaii. Only a handful of the original 200 were made in this way.

Jobs and Wozniak mostly sold Apple-1s as component parts. One computer shop that took a delivery of around 50 units decided to encase some of them in wood, the auction house said.



“This is kind of the holy grail for vintage electronics and computer tech collectors”, Apple-1 expert Corey Cohen told the Los Angeles Times ahead of the bidding. “That really makes it exciting for a lot of people.”

John Moran Auctioneers said the device, which was sold with a 1986 Panasonic video monitor, has only ever had two owners.

“It was originally purchased by an electronics professor at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, California, who then sold it to his

student in 1977”, a listing on the auction house’s website said.

The Los Angeles Times reported the student — who has not been named — paid just \$650 for it at the time.

While the \$400,000 hammer price represents a healthy return on investment for that former student, it is a long way short of the record for such a device.

A working Apple-1 that came to the market in 2014 was sold by Bonhams for more than \$900,000.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

PARIS

Azoulay re-elected as Unesco chief

The UN cultural agency Unesco on Tuesday re-elected France’s Audrey Azoulay as its Director-General for a second mandate, with the former French culture minister hailing a new confidence and unity in the organisation.

Unchallenged, Azoulay won her new mandate at Unesco’s general conference with 155 votes in favour, just nine against and one abstention.

“I see this result as a sign of regained unity within our organi-



sation. Over the last four years, we have been able to restore confidence in Unesco, and in some respects this has also been about restoring Unesco’s confidence in itself”, she said.

LONDON

Nobel Prize winning activist Malala gets married

Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, who was shot by the Pakistani Taliban for campaigning for girls’ education, got married on Tuesday in a small ceremony in Birmingham, central England, she announced on social media.

“Today marks a precious day in my life. Asser (Malik) and I tied the knot to be partners for life”, she wrote on Twitter, where she also posted images of herself and her new husband on their wedding day.



“We celebrated a small nikkah ceremony at home in Birmingham with our families. Please send us your prayers. We are excited to walk together for the journey ahead”, she added.

PARIS

Covid booster demand surges in France

Demand for Covid booster jabs jumped in France after President Emmanuel Macron said a top-up dose would be necessary for people to retain their vaccine passes, the country’s main appointment booking site said on Wednesday.

“The Macron effect” prompted 149,000 requests for shots, most during and immediately after the president’s televised address on Tuesday evening, in which he warned that coronavirus cases were again on the rise,



Doctolib said.

Anticipation of the tougher rules had already sparked 96,000 bookings on Monday, compared with an average of 50,000 a day in recent weeks.

Biden looks to reap rewards of huge infrastructure bill

AURELIA END

US President Joe Biden hits the road on Wednesday to show off the huge new infrastructure bill passed last week, hoping to reap its benefits politically even as he watches his approval ratings slump.

The Democratic president chose Baltimore, a port city less than an hour's drive from Washington, to explain to the nation why and how the country will spend \$1.2 trillion on its sagging infrastructure.

On Monday evening, in an interview on local television in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Democratic leader insisted it would only be a “matter of weeks” before the effects of the massive investment plan would start to be seen.

Days earlier he had predicted it would be “two to three months” before the public starts to see the real effects of the bill on expanding Internet networks, roads, bridges, drinking water pipes, electric car charging stations and a slew of other projects.

The president is counting on the programme producing an impact — at least politically — before Americans vote in midterm elections in a year's time. That election, traditionally a challenge for the party in power, could well cost the Democrats their slim majority in Congress.

In the meantime, Biden's cabinet has been rallying to play up the legislative win, while the president is trying to mobilise local party officials to provide after-sales service for the gigantic spending bill.

It is popular in principle, but its precise details remain unclear to the wider public, especially after weeks of complicated negotiations in Congress.

And another battle is already underway in Congress over the other part of Biden's ambitious economic and social reform agenda: an up to \$1.85 trillion plan that includes major investments in health, education, tackling climate change and expanding social welfare programmes.

After Baltimore, the president will continue to plug his message on the ground, deputy White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday. Biden likely has the experience of Barack Obama — under whom he served as vice-president — in mind. — AFP

“It would only be a matter of weeks before the effects of the massive investment plan would start to be seen”
JOE BIDEN
US President



AIMING FOR WORLD RECORD

French balloonist Remi Ouyard attempts to set a world record by standing on the top of a hot air balloon for the Telethon at an altitude of over 3,637 metres on Wednesday in Chatellerault, western France. The altitude should be the same of the phone number of the Telethon campaign 36-37. — AFP

Omani wheat enters the market!



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

SOON YOU WILL
REALISE THAT
A PRODUCT
HAS ALREADY
ENTERED
THE MARKET
AND BECAME
A NATIONAL
TRADEMARK
AND A BIG
BRAND

It is a matter of delight that an agricultural product from this virtuous land is being launched in the market. It is of high quality and better taste. This is in addition to other crops like pomegranates, roses and various agricultural crops.

Soon you will realise that a product has already entered the market and became a national trademark and a big brand. All citizens and residents prefer to buy the local products. Not only this, it will also enter the markets across the world soon. The Omani wheat is ready to become part of our food basket. This was a dream which has now become a reality with the signing of an agreement last week between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources with the Oman Flour Mills to buy 300 tonnes of wheat crop for the year 2022.

The produce of wheat reached 2,649 tonnes in the season of 2020-2021 which was an increase of 19 per cent over the previous season. The number of farmers who grow wheat in the Sultanate of Oman stood at 3,067. It also has registered an increase of 5.5 per cent. The area on which the wheat is cultivated in the country jumped to 2,449 acres, which is an increase of 19.6 per cent over the previous season. There is no looking back. Because there is good harvest, more and more people are now entering into

this area and more and more lands are being utilised for the purpose. All these indicators mentioned above show growth and the interest to produce wheat has also gone up.

Oman Flour Mills has taken the responsibility of marketing the wheat produce of citizens in various governorates of the country as a distinct trademark and brand. It is an indication of great agricultural renaissance which has already started in the country. The company is focused on the local agricultural produce to ensure food security in the country. It is the partnership between the public sector and the private sector which is making these achievements possible. Both these sectors complement each other in their efforts in making the country self-reliant in agricultural products. They will jointly make sure that Omani wheat also became a world known brand as many other brands and trademarks of the country.

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the countries which have a dry climate required for such agricultural produce. It needs cold weather and an abundance of water. The authorities concerned also support farmers as they are the main source of food security and become self-reliance in agriculture. The wheat they produce is of high quality and tastes better. The way they are being packed

and presented in the market will help the country emerge as a major wheat producer.

The consumer prefers better quality and superior taste in his food basket. It is an experience others should also do. Quality and taste are the characteristics on which local farmers should focus to emerge as the most preferred producers. It is not only wheat, there are many other agricultural products which have become a brand name in the world. The wheat is new to the genre and will soon emerge as most prominent among its categories.

These are the efforts of every individual farmer, the institutions formed by the government to promote this, under the auspices of the ministry. The role of Oman Flour Mills is most important due to the significant job it is doing to support local wheat crops.

Indeed, these are many incentives announced by the ministry and authorities concerned which work as confidence boosters for farmers. They deserve it. Every helping hand towards them is worth appreciating. What the ministry has done for this segment of our society is unmatched. Similarly, nobody had expected the Oman Flour Mills to enter into partnership and this proves to be very promising for the food security of the country.

How Afghanistan was really lost



Ricardo Hausmann

THE WRITER IS A FORMER MINISTER OF PLANNING OF VENEZUELA AND FORMER CHIEF ECONOMIST AT THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, IS A PROFESSOR AT HARVARD'S JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND DIRECTOR OF THE HARVARD GROWTH LAB

Assume you knew nothing about a particular low-income country except the following facts. Its annual income per capita in 2020 was just \$509, the seventh lowest in the world. In the decade to 2019, annual aid inflows had halved, to just \$114 per capita, or 31 cents per person per day. As a result, its GDP per capita fell by 14 per cent over this period. Meanwhile, annual per capita imports also fell by half between 2012 and 2020, to \$179, or just 49 cents per person per day — one of the lowest levels in the world. Exports per capita, at just under \$38, were the world's lowest. The official poverty rate increased from 38 per cent in 2011 to 47.3 per cent in 2020.

Given these numbers, you would not expect the population to have much enthusiasm for the status quo. Nor would you

expect the government to garner significant support or exhibit much capacity to improve matters.

Indeed, aid flows to the country were by no means unusually large. According to the World Bank, the \$114 in per capita assistance in 2019 was less than the aid received by 26 other countries, including Somalia (\$121), Bosnia and Herzegovina (\$141), Yemen (\$151), the Central African Republic (\$159), Lebanon (\$223), Jordan (\$277), the West Bank and Gaza (\$477), Syria (\$600) and the Marshall Islands (\$1,122). Clearly, therefore, the reduction in aid was a choice, not an obvious necessity.

You may be surprised that the country in question is Afghanistan, which the United States and its Western allies regarded as important enough to warrant the sacrifice of more than 3,500 troops

and an amount of treasure that dwarfs the sums above. According to the US Department of Defence (DoD), the cost of the US military engagement in Afghanistan in 2020 alone was \$39.7 billion — twice the country's total GDP, or \$1,060 per Afghan.

From 2001 to 2020, the war cost America an estimated \$815.8 billion, equivalent to more than 40 times Afghanistan's 2020 GDP, or \$21,000 for every Afghan living today. Between its 2012 peak and 2020, annual US military spending in Afghanistan declined by 60 per cent, or \$57.8 billion. But instead of using some of the savings to increase aid to the country, the West cut its assistance by \$2.5 billion in that period.

According to Brown University's Costs of War project, the DoD's military spending numbers are

gross underestimates, because they exclude the costs of US veterans' medical and disability care, as well as the interest payments on the debt incurred to pay for the war. The project instead puts the war's cost at more than \$2.2 trillion, equivalent to 115 years of the country's 2020 GDP, or 30 times the level of aid to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2019.

Looking at these numbers, it is difficult to avoid thinking that the US-led coalition lost the war on the economic front, owing to a serious misallocation of resources. Given the West's clear readiness to spend money in Afghanistan, it should have been possible to engineer a growth miracle that would have created a political constituency in favour of more of the same. Notwithstanding the formidable obstacles to building a strong state in Afghanistan, it would have

become obvious to millions of citizens that playing ball with the government was in their interest.

Furthermore, such an effort need not have been costly. According to the World Bank, Afghanistan has a purchasing-power adjustment factor of about 0.24, among the seven lowest in the world, meaning that a standard consumption basket costing \$1 in the US could be purchased for less than 25 cents in Afghanistan. But the US decided to forgo those savings by pursuing a development-assistance strategy that used US-based contractors (the “Beltway bandits”) that charge US costs plus appropriate margins, overhead, and hardship pay. To this, one should add the cost of maintaining their security inside Kabul's Green Zone.

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sport



Hockey personality Naqvi passes away

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 10

The man who passionately loved hockey and campaigned for the development of sports in the Sultanate of Oman is no more. Former India and Oman hockey coach Saiyed Ali Sibtain Naqvi passed away in Muscat at the age of 90.

Naqvi breathed his last on Wednesday after he was unwell for the last two weeks.

Naqvi came to the Sultanate of Oman as the head coach of Oman hockey team, then stayed on for 39 years to lay the foundations of Oman Olympic Committee as well as Oman Hockey Association.

The hockey veteran had represented the Sultanate of Oman at five Olympic Games and five Asian Games.

After retiring from active sports administration in 2002, Naqvi continued to serve the sports in the Sultanate of Oman in the adviser role.

In 2018, Naqvi had realised his dream by setting up a sports museum at his own residence on October 16. The museum tells the brief history of sports in the Sultanate of Oman and the golden era of hockey in India with some rare pictures and paper cuttings from the past.

The museum was opened by Asian Hockey Federation CEO Tayyab Ikram in presence of Dr Hammad bin Hamed al Ghafri, former president of Oman Olympic Committee.

In 2016, Naqvi received the International Hockey Federation (FIH) Asian Hockey Federation's (AHF) Lifetime Achievement Award.

Naqvi was honoured for his 75 years contribution to hockey in India and the Sultanate of Oman in various capacities as



an international player, coach of India's men's and women's teams.

Recently, one of the survivors of the golden era of India hockey, SAS Naqvi had expressed his delight to the *Observer* when Indian men won the hockey bronze in Tokyo Olympics, first hockey medal for India after 41 years.

The former Indian coach said it was a dream come true.

"I congratulate the young Indian team for claiming the long-awaited medal. It's a historic occasion for hockey in India," Naqvi had said.

Many Indian players including star goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, captain Manpreet Singh and defender Rupinder Pal Singh had visited Naqvi's residence in Muscat when they came to Oman on different occasions.

"Goalkeeper Sreejesh, Manpreet and Rupinder had visited my place and I am proud these players along



with their team-mates have revived Indian hockey at the Olympics," the 89-year-old had

said. The first coach of Oman hockey team, Naqvi also hailed the splendid performance of

Indian women's hockey team who missed out on a bronze medal after a 4-3 defeat to

Britain. He was the coach of Indian women's teams for the Madrid World Cup 1978 and a tour of Holland, France and Britain.

Naqvi, during his early years in hockey, was close to Indian hockey legend Dada Dhyan Chand and hockey stalwarts like KD Singh Babu and Kishan Lal.

Naqvi was the coach of the Indian hockey team (men) in 1973 and 1975, coach of the Indian hockey team (women) in 1978 and 1979, national hockey coach of Oman in 1982, and technical adviser of the Oman Olympic Committee for 18 years from 1984 to 2002.

For the past 15 years, The Friends of Naqvi Group – masterminded by Naqvi – and Team Coorg Muscat annually held hockey tournaments marking the Republic Day of India and Indian Independence Day and Dhyan Chand Day (National Sports Day of India) in Muscat.

'Red Warriors' ready to take on China



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 10

A confident Oman team will aim for victory to get closer to accomplishing the dream and qualifying for the World Cup as they will meet China in Group B fifth round for the AFC Asian qualifiers – Road to Qatar. The match kicks off at 7:00 pm at the

Sharjah Stadium.

A win over the Dragon team will raise the Sultanate of Oman's tally to nine points and will reduce the gap to three points in case the group topper Saudi Arabia is defeated by Australia while the latter's defeat will equalise the points to nine points.

The Red Warriors' head coach Branko Ivankovic is fully aware

of the difficulty of the fixture. The opponent China managed to win against Vietnam in Sharjah. The triumph will keep alive their hopes in competing for the direct two tickets in the group.

Despite the 'Red Warriors' unstable campaign till now in the group, Ivankovic's men focused to reached the ninth point. The team had a short preparatory camp in

Dubai ahead of the two crucial assignments against

China and Asian heavyweight Japan on Tuesday in Muscat.

The training sessions abroad witnessed focused sessions on different tactical and technical sides. The coaching staff prepared the players with mixture of attacking and defensive techniques ahead of the significant

forthcoming clashes.

Red Warriors are high on confidence after their significant victory in the last round against Vietnam 3-1 in Muscat. The Oman team is currently third in the group with nine points and they are favourites to get past their rivals who are fifth with three points.

It is expected that coach

Ivankovic will depend in today's fixture on the experienced goalkeeper Fayez al Rusheidi, Amjad al Harthi, Juma al Habsi, Harib al Saadi, Khalid al Hajri, Essam al Subhi and beside other squad members. The Croatian coach may well begin the encounter with similar starting line up to the previous fixture against Vietnam.



Mitchell stunner powers NZ into final



HARIDEV PUSHARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 10

Daryl Mitchell played a stellar innings to muscle New Zealand into the final of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 as they beat England by five wickets in the semifinal in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Mitchell's sensational innings of 73 off 48 comprising four boundaries and four sixes and James Neesham's 28 off 10 balls which had three sixes and a boundary got New Zealand over the line.

KIWIS FLY AWAY

Chris Woakes gave England a dream start in their defence of 167 as he got Martin Guptill to chip one to Moeen Ali at mid-on in the first over.

Disaster struck New Zealand in the third over when their skipper Kane Williamson got his ramp shot horribly wrong as he holed out to Adil Rashid at short fine leg.

At 13/2, Devon Conway and Daryl Mitchell had a lot of work to do as New Zealand were up against it in a high-pressure World Cup semifinal.

Conway and Mitchell stitched together a fifty-plus partnership but could not really get the run

rate going in a big way.

The run-rate hovered around 6.2 as the required rate touched 10.5 and the task kept getting steeper.

Conway blasted away to 46 off 37 balls before getting stumped by Buttler off Livingstone in the 14th over.

It was then the Mitchell and Neesham Show all the way. James Neesham's 26 off 10 and Daryl Mitchell's 73 off 48 took New Zealand home in 19 overs.

MOEEN, MALAN SHINE

England began their innings at a brisk pace thanks to a flurry of boundaries by their main man

upfront, Jos Buttler.

Buttler slammed four boundaries and scored at a fast clip to put some pressure on the New Zealand bowlers. However, Jonny Bairstow who was replacing the injured Jason Roy struggled to get going and was eventually out for 13 off 17 balls.

Adam Milne got him out caught by Kane Williamson off the first ball after powerplay.

Buttler kept going for a bit before he became the victim of Ish Sodhi's guile in the ninth over.

Then followed a xxx-run partnership between Moeen Ali and Dawid Malan. Malan the more aggressive of the two as

scored at a strike rate of 120 plus.

England were going at a run rate of 7 plus and needed to up the ante desperately if they harboured intentions of reaching 160 plus.

Malan made his intentions clear as the first six of the England innings came in the 16th over off the bowling of Tim Southee.

Southee hit right back in the very next ball as he got Malan fishing outside the off stump as wicket-keeper Devon Conway snapped him up easy.

At 119/3 after 16 overs, England were in search of a late charge from their celebrated batting stars.

Moeen Ali came to the party

in the 17th and 18th overs as he smashed two sixes off Ish Sodhi and Adam Milne to give England some much needed momentum.

Liam Livingstone's humongous six off the last ball of the 18th over gave England more traction towards the end of their innings.

The match-turning 40-run partnership between Ali and Livingstone came to an end in the 20th over when Livingstone was caught at long off by Mitchell Santner off James Neesham.

Ali brought up his fifty off the next ball with a cracking boundary through the offside as England wrapped up their innings at a very competitive 166/4.

Australia underdogs against Pakistan in role reversal

DUBAI: It will be quite a role reversal with Australia being the proverbial underdogs in Thursday's semi-final of the Twenty20 World Cup against a red-hot Pakistan who have displayed rare consistency to set alight the tournament.

Aaron Finch's Australia were written off after losing all five Twenty20 series they played, including in Bangladesh, before heading into the tournament and have not looked entirely convincing despite making the last four.

In a spin-dominated tournament, they have reposed faith in the pace of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins and favoured playing seven specialist batsmen.

Adam Zampa has led their spin attack and with 11 wickets from five matches is the joint-leading wicket-taker of the Super 12 stage of the tournament.

Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis have chipped in at different times to play the fifth bowler's role with Australia refusing to compromise on their batting strength.

"I think you can look at stats and you can deep dive into whether you should be bowling spin or quicks in the powerplay," Finch said on the eve of the match.

"They're a world-class trio of quick bowlers and we've got Kane Richardson there as well, who's arguably one of the best T20 bowlers in the world who hasn't featured just yet.

"We're really happy with how that's gone."

Finch will hope the ploy works against the tournament's only unbeaten team who are chasing their second 20-overs world title.

For a team known as much for their surfeit of talent as for their mercurial nature, Pakistan



Australia's David Warner plays a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup in Abu Dhabi. – AFP

have been a revelation in the tournament.

Babar Azam's side have laid the marker with their unblemished Super 12 run built around their incisive bowling attack and incendiary batting.

Babar has led by example and is the tournament's leading run-scorer and has a perfect foil in opening partner Mohammad Rizwan, who is number six in that table.

Down the order, they are blessed with the power-hitting skills of Asif Ali and the reassuring presence of veterans Shoaib Malik and Mohammad Hafeez.

Their bowling, traditionally their strong suit, has been equally impressive.

Shaheen Afridi's left-arm swing has troubled the best batsmen, while spinners Shadab Khan and Imad Wasim have been very impressive. — Reuters

Medals decided in the last race of the 2021 Asian 49er and 49er FX Championships in Musannah



MUSCAT: The 2021 Asian 49er and 49er FX Championships concluded in dramatic fashion at Al Musannah with the podium positions decided in the very last race of the day. After four days of competition, the Indian crew of KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar took the 49er gold ahead of Musab al Hadi and Walid al Kindi in second and Ahmed al Hasani and Abdulrahman al Mashari of the Sultanate of Oman in third. Akira Sakai and Russell Awylworth of Hong Kong, second place for most of the week, struggled in the final round of races and dropped from second to fourth.

In the overall front, Hernan Umpierre and Fernando Diz of Uruguay overhauled a large points gap with a display of near-perfect sailing to finish first, ahead of Andrew Mollerus and Ian Macdiarmid from the USA in second. Leaders going into the day, Danish duo Fredrik Rask and



Jacob Precht, also found today difficult and dropped to third overall.

In the 49er FX class, Molly Highfield and Sandi Choi from Hong Kong won two of the three races on the final day to take the gold and finish second overall. Harshita Tomar and Sweta Shervegar of India claimed silver and the Omani team of Ibtisam al

Salmi and Marwa al Khaifi took the bronze.

In the overall rankings, Odile Van Aanholt and Elise de Eujter of the Netherlands ended the tournament in top spot after leading all week, while Lara Granier and Amelie Riou of France finished narrowly missed out on second to Molly Highfield and Sandi Choi and had to settle



for third place.

Rashid al Kindi, Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said, "This has been a great advertisement for Asian sailing and for Oman Sail's programme. The entire fleet shone in the Musannah sunshine this week. We're delighted to welcome so many sailors to the Sultanate of Oman for the championships, which provide vital time on the water for everyone,

whether competing for the title, enjoying some winter training or preparing for the upcoming World Championships later this month, also be held in Musannah. The future of sailing in Asia is very promising in these three classes. We thank the competitors for making the journey to the Sultanate of Oman and look forward to welcoming them all back here again in the future."

The event was supported by national carrier Oman Air, OQ and the Barceló Musannah 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.

Many of the sailors will now remain in Musannah ahead of the 49er and 49er FX World Championships taking place from November 16-21.

Musannah is also preparing to host the opening ceremony and first leg of the 11th edition of Sailing Arabia — The Tour on November 24, 2021 and the 50th Youth Sailing World Championships, the first time one of the most significant competitions in the sailing calendar has been held in the Asian federation, starting on December 11, 2021.

Van Gaal confident of Netherlands World Cup qualification

AMSTERDAM: Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal is confident his side will secure World Cup qualification in the next week, but warns their next match in Montenegro will be no easy assignment. Van Gaal is back for a third spell as the Dutch manager and since taking over has led his side on a five-match unbeaten run — one draw followed by four victories — and they are two points clear at the top of Group G. Van Gaal's first game back was a 1-1 draw in September at Norway, who are second behind the Dutch and play them in Rotterdam next Tuesday in their final qualifier. "Of course, only qualification counts and that was the goal when I was appointed. It doesn't just happen like that but in principle I assume that we will qualify", he told a news conference on Tuesday.



Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal.

"We played a very attacking brand in all those matches, although that is possible against those kind of opponents", he said after they scored 17 goals in victories over Turkey, Montenegro, Latvia and Gibraltar. "But we were also the attacking side against Norway, just look at the statistics." However, in order to ensure they stay ahead of Norway in the standings and be in a strong position for their last qualifier,

they must beat Montenegro in Podgorica on Saturday. "The individual quality is quite high among their players", Van Gaal said of Montenegro. "Don't forget that we were actually outplayed at home for the first 20 minutes when we beat them in September. "We only started to play better when our wingers started to move into the right position. Then we were able to really overwhelm them and able to achieve a good result. Individually they can all do something, but as a team they are lesser than the Dutch national team", Van Gaal added. Van Gaal took over from Frank de Boer after the Dutch exited this year's European Championship in the last-16. The Netherlands failed to qualify for the World Cup in Russia but under Van Gaal were third in Brazil in 2014. — Reuters

England's James relishing best form ahead of World Cup qualifiers

LONDON: England right back Reece James is enjoying the best form of his career ahead of their 2022 World Cup qualifiers against Albania and San Marino, the 21-year-old said. James, who withdrew from the last England squad due to injury, has four goals and four assists for Chelsea in 12 games in all competitions this season. "I'd say at this moment in time, this is probably the best I've performed, and recent results and performances have probably shown that as well", James told a news conference on Tuesday. "Our team (Chelsea) is performing well and we're creating a lot of chances, so that's obviously helping and we've got great players around us. "When you're playing week in and week out, you're



playing well and the team's performing, keeping clean sheets and winning games, it obviously helps everyone build confidence." England are top

of Group I in the World Cup qualifying, three points ahead of Poland. They host Albania on Friday and play at San Marino three days later. — Reuters

business

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Asyad Drydock gearing up for shipbuilding role

ROBUST DEMAND: Duqm-based ship repair and maintenance yard handles over 1,000 vessels to date

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 10

Asyad Drydock (formerly known as Oman Drydock Company) has handled more than 1,000 vessels calling at its Duqm facility for ship repair and maintenance services since the yard was established just over 10 years ago.

According to Haitham bin Nasser al Taie (**pictured**), Chief Operating Officer, robust demand for the services of the yard has prompted the management to consider plans for strengthening the capacity of the drydock with a view to enhancing



its appeal to mega ships of various types.

Additionally, efforts are underway to improve the efficiency

and upgrade the quality of services offered by the yard, he noted.

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Taie said the drydock

had recently built and delivered its first home-built craft — a modest-sized logistics support ship — on behalf of a local company. It has



since received new requests for the construction of private ships, which necessitates an expansion of the capacity of the drydock.

To this end, Asyad Drydock has floated a tender for the procurement of a floating dock, offers for which are currently being evaluating by a consultancy firm. Over the past two years, the yard has upgraded its capabilities by installing several gas control and water treatment systems. Plans are also afoot to build a new workshop specialised in the construction of small ships.

The workshop is currently being designed. Likewise, there are initiatives to purchase new equipment and high pressure water pumps. Additionally, the Duqm yard is the only drydock in the region with the ability to receive and treat oil waste from ships. Other docks require ships to unload their bilge before arrival for maintenance work — a requirement that increases the time and costs for shipowners.

Commenting on the yard's finances, Al Taie said the company had averted operational losses since 2018. During 2019 and 2020, it achieved breakeven results and is now pointed to move towards profitability. Also this year, Asyad Drydock awarded contracts totalling around RO 11 million in support of local businesses and SMEs, he added.

‘Made in Oman’ solutions to support Smart Cities

HOMEGROWN EXPERTISE: Semi-government NEC plans smart solutions for the energy, water, buildings, environment, mobility and e-governance sectors

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

In support of the government's vision to develop smart cities in the Sultanate of Oman, the semi-government National Energy Center (NEC) plans to develop and roll out a complete suite of smart solutions encompassing the energy, water, buildings, environment, mobility and e-governance sectors.

A pioneer in the field of smart metering, NEC has unveiled a business model that envisions a leading role for itself in realising the vision for Connected Infrastructure, Connected Cities and Connected Buildings — all integral components of Smart Cities.

These indigenously crafted ‘Made in Oman’ solutions are set to position the company, as well as the country, as front-runners in the ‘smart solutions’ space in the wider region. According to a senior company representative, NEC's planned portfolio includes smart solutions for the: (i) Energy sector (smart meters, smart lighting, smart grids, microgrids and distributed generation, and remote monitoring and control); (ii) Water sector (water treatment, water management, monitoring and control, wastewater management, and



hazardous treatment and energy response; (iii) Buildings (Building automation, HVAC controls, video surveillance and access control; (iv) Environment (solid waste management, air quality management, green buildings and green energy; (v) Mobility (electric vehicle charging, smart parking and payments, vehicle detection, connected cars and smart traffic control); and (iv) e-Governance (citizen engagement, public safety, and managing supply-demand policy).

“All of us can be part of the Smart Cities strategy,” said Laila al Hadhrami, Smart Cities Development Manager – National Energy Center.

“We need Smart Cities in the Sultanate of Oman, for example, to improve the quality of life for each of us. All of us deserve a good environment, health system, services, and so on. We need innovative solutions to address any shortcomings,” she stated during a conference on ‘Digital Transformation’ held in the city

recently.

Initially launched as a start-up to improve energy efficiency in the Sultanate of Oman, NEC soon became a key player in the delivery of smart metering and measurement solutions in the country.

According to Laila, the company was the first in the Middle East to support the large-scale rollout of Automated Meter Reading (AMR) services — a technology that helps reduce manpower costs, eliminates metering inaccuracies and billing errors.

Over the past year, NEC has signed a number of strategic agreements with Omani government and public sector organisations to support the implementation of customised smart solutions.

It includes a cooperation pact with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to implement Internet of Things (IoT) and Smart City solutions,

DIRECTORS REPORT
For 3rd Quarter (Jan-Sep) Results – Year 2021

Interim condensed consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at 30 September 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the Company's unaudited consolidated results for the six-month period ended on 30th September 2021.

Our key results are annexed below:

Key Results:

Key Indicators	Group (Oman Fisheries Co.)			Parent Company (Oman Fisheries Co.)		
	Jan-Sep 2021	Jan-Sep 2020	Percentage Change	Jan-Sep 2021	Jan-Sep 2020	Percentage Change
Total revenue	8,092,793	9,475,338	-14.59%	7,831,092	9,217,426	-15.04%
Total Costs	(9,632,233)	(10,408,346)	-7.46%	(9,306,047)	(10,342,478)	-10.02%
Profit before tax	(1,539,440)	(933,008)	84.20%	(1,474,953)	(1,125,052)	46.92%
Tax Income	179,163	0	-	177,993	0	-
Profit after Tax	(1,359,439)	(933,008)	65.00%	(1,296,960)	(1,125,052)	31.10%

Turnover and summary of results:

The unaudited results of the second quarter represent the consolidation of Oman Fisheries Co. SAOG (Parent), Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration LLC and Oman Fisheries Co. Sharjah (FZE). Your company has achieved the consolidated turnover of RO 8,092 Million in 2021 as at 30th September, 2021 compared to the previous year turnover of RO 9,475 Million for the same period last year. The group made a net loss of RO 1,359,439/- compared to the net loss of RO 933,008/- during the same period of previous year.

Following are the key operational highlights for the third quarter:

- The outbreak of COVID-19 continued with intermittent lockdown imposed in Oman and many parts of the world had resulted in low economic activity thereby hampering boost in sales.
- Further the third quarter of the year is perennially experiencing low fishing activity as July and August characteristically falls within non fishing season. Fishing season started from second week of September and based on the initial landing report, Co. hopes that the upcoming months would experience healthy haulage of wild catch.
- Your Company also made a provision of OMR 221,000 against fish stock as per IFRS guidelines. This had an additional bearing on profitability for the quarter.
- Our commercial fishing vessel is also undergoing drydocking at Duqm port. Additional expenses on account of drydocking has been OMR 112,000. Other expenses had been right-sized and are within the budgeted limit.
- Export sales had been 88% of the total sales while domestic sales occupied remaining 12% of the total sales in terms of volume and value.
- On the procurement side the Co. managed to procure 15,070 tons of fish up to September 2021 from its own sources as well as partner SMEs compared to 19,144 tons during the same period in 2020. The drop in catch has been mainly due to extended drydocking of our commercial vessel.

The administrative costs were lower than the overall budget due to stringent control over the expenses and right sizing of the divisional costs.

The selling and distribution expenses were lower than the forecasted limit, principally due to abolishment of inter-branch/direct transfer and transfer of processed fish to principal warehouse. Further, management ensured direct loading from the branches thereby reducing the warehousing charges and also improving inventory turnover ratio to a significant extent.

Due to lower demand for warehousing of food products, the average volume of storage for Al-Ameen shrunk from 85% (January to September 2020) to 65% (January to September 2021), thereby reducing the overall occupancy by 20% as compared to same quarter of preceding year.

The logistics division of Al-Ameen is more or less consistent and had been principal service provider for its parent company.

Debtors and cash collection cycle has been consistent in relation compared to the volume of sales both in the domestic and export market.

We are pleased to announce to our shareholders that the board of directors has appointed Mr. Sulaiman Al Ghanami as Chief Executive Officer effective from October 1, 2021, subsequent to resignation of previous CEO who resigned on July 25, 2021.

On behalf of the Board and entire management of Oman Fisheries we wish good luck to Mr. Ghanami and are confident of traversing through a new era in Oman Fisheries as well as fisheries sector in building the sector through positive transformation and sustainability under his leadership.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company, I wish to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and his Government for establishing good working environment in the fisheries sector and for taking good steps for food security in the Country.

Further, we are extending our thanks to, government bodies, suppliers, service providers, banks, customers, consultants and employees of the Company for their continuous efforts and we are wishing them all the success for the remaining period of the year.

	Group (Unaudited) 30 September 2021 RO	(Audited) 31 December 2020 RO	Parent Company (Unaudited) 30 September 2021 RO	(Audited) 31 December 2020 RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets:				
Property, plant and equipment	5,407,268	5,760,906	3,198,789	3,417,131
Right-of-use assets	253,833	289,942	215,287	250,558
Finance lease receivables	-	-	302,150	314,088
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	515,750	515,750
Fixed deposit	1,100,000	-	1,100,000	-
Deferred tax assets	692,734	514,740	673,369	495,376
Non-current assets	7,453,833	6,565,588	6,005,345	4,992,903
Current assets:				
Inventories	1,644,645	2,097,948	1,641,329	2,097,948
Current portion of lease receivables	-	-	15,874	15,526
Trade and other receivables	1,386,314	1,662,135	1,129,659	1,508,997
Amounts due from related parties	-	-	819,911	705,311
Financial assets at FVTPL	105,336	78,529	105,336	78,529
Fixed deposit	-	1,121,888	-	1,121,888
Cash and cash equivalents	483,839	737,836	349,794	534,636
Total assets	10,733,969	12,263,924	10,058,248	11,055,738
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity:				
Share capital	12,500,000	12,500,000	12,500,000	12,500,000
Legal reserve	3,480,985	3,480,985	3,314,319	3,314,319
Capital reserve	29,269	29,269	29,269	29,269
Accumulated losses	(10,284,181)	(8,745,276)	(11,775,016)	(10,300,061)
Total equity	5,725,336	7,264,978	4,068,572	5,543,527
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities:				
Term loans	332,971	532,599	216,342	282,634
Lease liabilities	224,541	251,975	224,541	251,975
End of service benefits	100,216	105,178	75,963	80,865
Current liabilities:				
Current portion of term loans	268,709	275,473	85,372	75,469
Current portion of lease liabilities	46,270	46,270	46,270	46,270
Short term loans	3,109,343	2,500,000	3,109,234	2,500,000
Trade and other payables	1,264,914	1,337,262	1,145,057	1,154,291
Amounts due to related parties	378	5,030	1,086,897	1,120,707
Income tax payable	1,200	45,159	-	-
Total liabilities	4,690,705	4,109,194	5,472,830	4,896,737
Total equity and liabilities	11,073,969	12,263,924	10,058,248	11,055,738
Net assets per share	0.046	0.058	0.033	0.044

Interim condensed consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 September 2021

	Group (Unaudited) Period ended 30 September 2021 RO	(Unaudited) Period ended 30 September 2020 RO	Parent Company (Unaudited) Period ended 30 September 2021 RO	(Unaudited) Period ended 30 September 2020 RO
Revenue	7,890,236	9,299,527	7,521,623	8,942,447
Direct costs	(7,827,362)	(8,047,150)	(7,246,543)	(7,636,481)
Gross profit	662,874	1,252,377	275,080	1,305,966
General and administrative expenses	(1,434,343)	(1,533,212)	(1,208,415)	(1,300,937)
Selling and distribution expenses	(635,235)	(782,496)	(932,879)	(1,367,547)
Gain on disposals of property, plant and equipment	-	10,719	-	10,719
Loss on fair value of financial assets at FVTPL - net	(22,153)	(851)	(22,153)	(851)
Other income	201,816	224,164	296,319	310,564
Operating loss	(1,627,041)	(809,299)	(1,592,048)	(1,042,086)
Finance income	23,268	28,705	35,303	41,313
Finance costs	(114,832)	(152,414)	(96,203)	(124,279)
Loss before tax	(1,718,605)	(933,008)	(1,652,948)	(1,125,052)
Tax (expense)/credit	179,163	-	177,993	-
Loss for the period	(1,539,442)	(933,008)	(1,474,955)	(1,125,052)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive loss for the period	(1,539,442)	(933,008)	(1,474,955)	(1,125,052)
Basic and diluted loss per share	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.009)

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, either in Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

OMAN FISHERIES

Thailand's PTT inks pact to buy Omani crude

Expanding engagement: Oman crude will provide further trading opportunities, including out-out trading and profit to the companies and Thailand, says PTT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 10

Thai state-owned oil conglomerate PTT has signed a contract covering the sale and purchase of Omani crude. The arrangement is between PTT and its subsidiaries PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation (POC) and PTTEP MENA Limited.

Auttapol Rerkpiboon, President and Chief Executive Officer of PTT, presided over the signing ceremony in Bangkok on Tuesday. The signatories were Disathat Panyarachun, Senior Executive Vice-President, International Trading Business Unit, PTT, and Montri Rawanchaikul, Chief Executive Officer, PTT Exploration and Production Public



Company Limited (PTTEP). Kris Imsang, Chief Operating Officer, Downstream Petroleum Business Group, PTT, also witnessed the signing.

In a statement, Disathat Panyarachun, Senior Executive Vice-President, International Trading Business Unit, PTT, said, "Oman crude is widely recognised

as one of the most important crude benchmarks in the world. PTT's International Trading Business Unit wins the Sale and Purchase agreement with PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation and PTTEP MENA Limited for a total of 5 million barrels of Oman crude oil delivered from January-June 2022.

This Oman crude will provide

further trading opportunities, including out-out trading and profit to the companies and Thailand. Under the corporate governance policy, the signing ceremony of the sale and purchase contract of Oman crude between PTT and PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation and PTTEP MENA Limited has marked another successful milestone of

Oman crude is widely recognised as one of the most important crude benchmarks in the world. PTT's International Trading Business Unit wins the sale and purchase agreement with PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation and PTTEP MENA Limited for a total of 5 million barrels of Oman crude oil delivered from January-June 2022

DISATHAT
PANYARACHUN
Senior Executive Vice-President,
International Trading Business
Unit, PTT

PTT's International Business Unit with an attempt to increase trading

capability and networking." Montri Rawanchaikul, Chief Executive Officer, PTTEP, stated, "PTTEP returned to the Sultanate of Oman in 2019 through the acquisition of Partex Corporation which was later transformed into PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation (POC) and currently holds two onshore producing petroleum blocks. The PDO (Block 6) Project has a total oil production volume of approximately 610,000 barrels per day and Mukhaizna (Block 53) Project holds approximately 120,000 barrels per day. "Earlier this year, in February, PTTEP also acquired 20 per cent in Block 61 Sultanate of Oman through PTTEP MENA Limited (a subsidiary of PTTEP) which adds condensate production volume of around 65,000 barrels per day. Combining the equity portions of the three projects, PTTEP holds approximately 23,000 barrels per day of crude oil. "The projects have enabled PTTEP to make further investment, creating energy security, as well as generating revenues to the country."

'Made in Oman' solutions to support Smart Cities

FROM PAGE 13
a Memorandum of Cooperation to deliver a Smart City pilot project at the Ras Al Hamra residential complex of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), and a similar deal with Madayn to help transform its Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) into a Smart City. In a further testament to its regional appeal, NEC also inked an agreement with the Electricity and Water Authority in Bahrain for the supply of water meters to the Kingdom. Investors in National Energy Center (NEC) include Shumookh Investment & Services (the investment arm of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn) and a number of government, defence and security pension funds.

OITS teams up with Microsoft to boost skill, career opportunities

MUSCAT: In their continued mission to spread the ICT culture in the country, Oman Information Technology Society (OITS), in collaboration with Microsoft, launched the "MaharaTec" initiative to upskill the nation's future leaders and talent, enhancing their capabilities in the field of communications and information technology. This addition to the industry will empower young professionals to acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills to improve the labour market in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. "The ICT field is witnessing rapid growth, and we are happy to support Oman Vision 2040, which aims to create diverse economic opportunities for the sector," said Dr Salim al Ruzaiqi, Chairman, Oman Society for Information Technology.



Dr Salim al Ruzaiqi

"This partnership with Microsoft will enrich the experience of the Omani youth and train them in one of the most essential career paths of today, so that they can gain the in-demand expertise on ensuring their lead position in a knowledge-based economy of the Sultanate of Oman."

The goal of MaharaTec seeks to enhance the confidence of the functional community in educational outcomes in the IT sector. The courses will ready the youth in proficiency as a



Shaikh Saif bin Hilal al Hosni

software developer, data analyst, IT administrator, IT support and helpdesk, project manager, digital marketer, financial analyst, graphic designer, customer service and sales. "MaharaTec is a valuable project that generates opportunities for young talent in the country to hone their skills and gain career-building experiences, which contributes to strengthening the future of the IT industry," said Shaikh Saif bin Hilal al Hosni, Country Manager for Microsoft Oman and Bahrain.

NBO, Tibiaan Properties to offer competitive home finance packages

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tibiaan Properties to provide an ultra competitive home finance package starting from just 4.45 per cent. Tibiaan Properties is one of the leading real estate companies in Oman, managing a rich portfolio of apartments, villas, condos and land, as well as commercial real estate. The partnership will allow customers to secure financing for their first home, their new home or investment properties at the best rate on the market. With projects underway in prime areas of Muscat, Tibiaan Properties possesses a profound and clear understanding of the real estate market to find buyers the perfect home. Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, "Purchasing a property is an important decision and we are here



to make the process smooth and seamless. Our partnership with Tibiaan Properties gives customers access to a variety of options to suit every need and every budget, and with attractive financing options for prospective buyers we are able to support them every step of the way." Fahad al Ismaili, Chief Executive Officer at Tibiaan Properties, said, "We are delighted to partner with NBO to make buyers' dreams of

owning a home or investing in their future a reality. Our astute knowledge of the sector and market trends creates even more value and potential growth for owners and investors while contributing to the development of the national economy." NBO offers a wide range of home loan options with no maximum cap and long repayment terms of up to 25 years. The bank's doorstep

service and easy processing through a dedicated Mortgage Direct Sales Team and Operations Unit advises and updates buyers at every stage to make the process simple and rewarding. Tibiaan Properties' key projects of Ghorroob, Al Hail Views, Areej Residential Complex, Boulevard Tower and The Beach offer high-quality community living in the heart of Muscat. Maximising space and seamlessly blends modern urban decor with timeless themes, each development comes finished to the highest standards with plenty of customisable options to make each house feel like home. For more information about NBO's international transfer services, please visit www.nbo.om. Details about Tibiaan Properties' current projects can be found online at www.tibiaan.com.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds reveals special collection to celebrate Oman's 51st National Day



MUSCAT: As a tribute to the 51st glorious National Day, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with over 260 showrooms spread across 10 countries, has launched special diamond collection, including pendants and ring, priced at RO 51. "On the 51st National Day, as the people of Oman reflect on the remarkable progress this nation has made, it is a joyful moment for our brand too. "This country has successfully overcome many challenging times and we are confident that its future journey will also continue to be as inspiring as the past. On behalf of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, I wish the people of the Sultanate of Oman a very happy National Day and to celebrate this special day, we have launched an exclusive diamond collection priced at RO 51. "We're quite hopeful that our customers will love these designs," said Najeeb K, Regional Head, Malabar Gold & Diamonds. The exclusive collection is available in 4 designs and reflect the vibrance of the

Omani culture. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has a strong retail presence across the Sultanate of Oman and has incorporated the special design as part of the Mine-Diamonds collection. The National Day products will be available across the outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Muttrah Souq, Seeb Souq, Salalah Lulu, Ruwi Street, Ruwi Lulu and Ruwi West Gate Mall, Avenues Mall, Barka Lulu, Sohar Lulu, Muscat City Centre and Darsait Lulu. Additionally, it will also be available at MGD - Lifestyle Jewellery outlets located in Oman Avenues Mall, Muscat City Centre, Lulu Al Bandar, Grand Mall, Oasis Mall, Ibri Lulu and Nizwa Lulu. The group is always proactive when it comes to CSR initiatives right from its inception and has kept aside 5 per cent of its profit for enabling CSR activities in all the regions that they operate. The key focus areas of the CSR initiatives of Malabar Group are in the areas of health, education, women empowerment, housing and environment.



In brief

■ WASHINGTON



US AIRLINES, AMAZON JOIN PUSH TO REDUCE AIRCRAFT EMISSIONS

Major US airlines and Amazon.com's aviation unit are joining an effort to speed development and use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) to decrease emissions in air transport.

The Sustainable Aviation Buyers Alliance (SABA) said Amazon Air, Alaska Airlines, JetBlue and United Airlines are joining the effort, which includes major corporate airline customers, to help drive greater SAF production, price cuts and technological advancements.

The Environmental Defence Fund and the Rocky Mountain Institute launched the Sustainable Aviation Buyers Alliance (SABA) in April with companies including Boeing, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft and Netflix to support increased market demand for SAFs. — Reuters

■ SINGAPORE



FINTECH FUNDING IN SE ASIA TRIPLES TO RECORD \$3.5 BILLION

Financial technology (fintech) funding in Southeast Asia jumped more than three times in the first nine months of this year compared with full-year 2020, reaching a record \$3.5 billion, a report showed on Wednesday.

The rebound was driven by 167 deals including 13 mega rounds, which accounted for \$2 billion of the total funding, according to the report.

Late-stage fintech firms garnered most interest, with involvement in 10 of 13 mega rounds this year, as investors took a more risk-adverse approach during the pandemic by backing more established firms, it said. — Reuters

Economic recovery to buoy GCC chemical industry growth

MUST-SEE EVENT: TOP OFFICIAL OF OMAN'S OQ TO ADDRESS KEY GPCA FORUM IN DUBAI

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 10

The chemical and petrochemical industry in the Arabian Gulf is poised for growth in 2021-2022, as the regional and global economy is forecast to recover in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), the voice of the chemical industry in the Arabian Gulf, announced on Tuesday.

The regional chemical industry is anticipated to see growth across all key indicators including chemical sales revenue, production output and international trade off the back of an increase in regional economic activity, supported by a rapid vaccination roll-out, and the global economic rebound, GPCA said.

According to the World Bank, GCC economies are expected to return to an aggregate growth of 2.2 per cent in 2021, buoyed by global economic recovery, projected at 5.6 per cent and the revival of global oil demand and international oil prices.

Earlier this month, Brent crude rose to its highest levels since October 2018, reaching \$86.04 per barrel. Higher oil output combined with an improved oil price outlook are boosting fiscal revenues in the region, as hydrocarbons generate significant revenue for the GCC.

This, combined with strong economic and manufacturing activity in China, which represents the GCC's largest export market, GPCA forecasts a healthy chemical and petrochemical GCC market outlook, which will spill into 2022.

Nevertheless, supply chain delays and disruptions will likely persist, leading to an increase in the cost of commodities, including some of the chemical industry's key inputs. With higher oil prices, feedstock prices are expected to remain elevated, and margins to decrease.

To discuss these trends and highlight the chemical industry's role in a post-pandemic recovery, the Annual GPCA Forum will convene global and regional



industry leaders from over 500 companies in 50 countries during December 7-9 in Dubai.

The forum will take place under the theme 'Redefine. Reshape. Reinvent. The Chemical Industry in a Post-Pandemic Reality' to shed light on the lessons learned from Covid-19, the opportunities for investment in the regional chemical sector, and drive multi-stakeholder partnerships.

This year's edition will combine an insightful conference programme, a must-see speaker line-up and an array of networking opportunities, bringing the regional and global chemical industry together under the same roof for the first time since the spread of the virus in early 2020.

Ahmed al Jahdhami, CEO Downstream — OQ, the Sultanate of Oman's integrated energy group, will be among a host of top executives who will be addressing the event.

Dr Abdulwahab al Sadoun, Secretary General, GPCA, commented, "The chemical industry in the region is emerging from a period of significant disruption, subdued growth and an unprecedented decrease in consumer demand in a range of

The chemical industry in the region is emerging from a period of significant disruption, subdued growth and an unprecedented decrease in consumer demand in a range of end-user sectors, which chemical producers serves

DR ABDULWAHAB
AL SADOUN

Secretary General, GPCA

end-user sectors, which chemical producers serve.

At the same time, the industry demonstrated resilience like never before, as it fulfilled its vital role to serve society's needs and help equip the healthcare industry with the equipment and materials it requires to combat the spread of the virus and distribute the vaccine.

The Arabian Gulf region is now

entering into a gradual recovery which will require it to maintain resilience and keep production output high in order to cater to end-user markets at home, in Asia and the world.

"Beyond maintaining operational and supply chain resilience, the next big imperative for GCC producers will be to deliver on their sustainability objectives, including lowering emissions, investing in innovative technologies, driving partnerships across the value chain to reduce their environmental footprint and that of their products, and advancing the plastic recycling agenda.

At the Annual GPCA Forum, we provide a senior leadership platform built on leading thought leadership and cutting-edge expertise to help facilitate the discussions and exchange needed to drive progress on these important issues and support the sustainable development of the industry in the region. I look forward to welcoming you all to this prestigious and must-attend forum at the heart of the Middle East in Dubai for a productive and meaningful exchange of ideas and lessons learned."

Oil prices slip ahead of US inventory report

LONDON: Oil prices slipped after early gains on Wednesday, though a potential drop in US crude stocks and tighter supplies capped losses. Brent crude futures were at \$84.56 a barrel by 1101 GMT, down 22 cents, or 0.3 per cent, after touching a session high of \$85.50.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell by 49 cents, or 0.6 per cent, to \$83.66 after rising close to \$85. Market sources said that API data showed US crude stocks declined by 2.5 million barrels for the week to November 5, defying analysts' estimates for a 2.1 million build in crude stocks in a Reuters poll.

"After the strong rally over the last few days, oil prices are in a wait and see mode", said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo. "Market participants will closely watch if the EIA will confirm the large draws for crude and oil products and on the next moves from the US administration."

USEnergyInformation Administration (EIA) official oil inventory data is expected later on Wednesday. Further underpinning the view the market remains tight, trading giant Vitol Group's CEO, Russell Hardy, said on that oil demand had returned to pre-pandemic levels.

— Reuters



A woman pumps gas at a station in Falls Church, Virginia. — Reuters

Russia increases gas flows to Europe, pushing down prices



A view shows pipelines at a gas processing facility, operated by Gazprom, at Bovanenkovo gas field on the Arctic Yamal peninsula, Russia. — Reuters

MOSCOW/OSLO: Russia increased its flow of gas to Europe via Poland and Belarus as well as Ukraine on Wednesday, easing some of Europe's concerns about

tight supplies before winter and pushing down wholesale prices.

Low flows to Europe last week and reverse flows on the Yamal-Europe pipeline — meaning gas

LOW FLOWS TO EUROPE LAST WEEK AND REVERSE FLOWS ON THE YAMAL-EUROPE PIPELINE — MEANING GAS FLOWED EASTWARDS INTO POLAND INSTEAD WESTBOUND INTO GERMANY — HAD WORSENER A SUPPLY SQUEEZE IN EUROPE THAT HAS DRIVEN UP ENERGY PRICES FOR INDUSTRY AND CONSUMERS

flowed eastwards into Poland instead westbound into Germany — had worsened a supply squeeze in Europe that has driven up energy prices for industry and consumers.

But after an order by President Vladimir Putin to increase supplies to Europe and rebuild Russian

inventories there once domestic storage tanks were replenished, Moscow started pumping gas to Germany again late on Monday.

Russian state gas company Gazprom said it had started to refill its European gas storage. This pushed down spot prices in the region although analysts said Moscow would have to do more to ease concerns in Europe to lead to a more significant drop in prices.

Entry flows into Germany via the Yamal-Europe pipeline, which runs through Belarus and Poland, rose to 12,469,613 kilowatt hours (kWh) per hour at the Mallnow metering point on the Polish border, up from 9,825,008 kWh/hour most of the previous day, data on German transmission company Gascade's website showed. While Mallnow flows were at their highest volume in weeks, they

remain "well below" levels seen in September, analysts at Refinitiv said in a note.

"The flows are unlikely to keep growing as only 325 GWh/d of Mallnow's entry capacity was booked for November", they added. Meanwhile, nominations for flows at Velke Kapusany on the Slovak-Ukraine border, stood at 94.3 million cubic metres (mcm) per day, the highest daily nomination this year.

That was up from 85.2 mcm/day on Tuesday, website data from Eustream, the Slovak transmission system operator, showed.

In a sign of concerns in Europe easing, the Dutch front-month gas contract — a European benchmark — was down 8 per cent at 64.35 euros per megawatt hour (MWh) by 1126 GMT on Wednesday, its lowest level since November 2.

Gas prices have risen this year because of factors including low gas inventories and increased demand following the economic recovery since the easing of Covid-19 lockdowns, as well as tighter-than-usual supplies from Russia.

In Britain, some energy companies have gone bust, consumers face much higher energy bills and companies in many sectors including food production and agriculture have felt the pain.

Internet data displayed by Gazprom-owned German storage company Astora, which operates two storage facilities in Germany and one in Austria, showed the Rehden storage facility in Germany had been steadily receiving 406,875 kWh per hour of gas from early Tuesday. — Reuters

GE breakup is common sense, at least in theory

Larry Culp has described his management style as chief executive of General Electric as “common sense, vigorously applied.” His plan to break the company into three listed parts, unveiled on Tuesday, looks like common sense, belatedly applied.

The 119-year-old GE will hive off its healthcare-equipment business in 2023, and then spin off its power and renewable energy division a year later.

That will leave the jet engine business, which contributes more than half of GE’s operating profit — and which Culp will continue to run. One sprawling company will become three more focused ones.

Under earlier GE bosses like Jack Welch and Jeff Immelt, this would have been unthinkable. But Culp has already spent three years cleaning GE up. And what’s left could in theory be worth more broken up. By GE’s own targets the aviation business could generate \$6 billion of operating profit by 2023.

Valued at the same 20-times multiple as peers Honeywell and Safran, it’s worth \$120 billion.

The healthcare business, assuming \$3.5 billion of operating profit valued at the same 25-times multiple as Siemens Healthineers, is worth nearly \$90 billion.

Already, that \$210 billion beats GE’s current enterprise value of around \$160 billion, ignoring its barely profitable power and renewables unit. Apply the uplift to the company’s roughly \$120 billion equity value as of Monday, and shareholders could see gains of more than 40 per cent over a few years after decades of stock-market underperformance.

A breakup could even open up future deals. GE’s failed tie-up with Honeywell two decades ago could theoretically make sense one day, with GE’s aviation business as the target. Similar logic led Japanese conglomerate Toshiba to say on Monday that it might divide itself into three.

On paper, it’s common sense. The reality can, however, fall short in value terms, as demonstrated by the disappointing three-way split of DowDuPont after its creation through a merger. — Reuters

The 119-year-old GE will hive off its healthcare-equipment business in 2023, and then spin off its power and renewable energy division a year later

LARRY CULP
CEO, General Electric



SEA STRIKE

A woman passes by docked ferries in the port of Piraeus, near Athens, during a 48-hours strike of Greek dockers federation. A 48-hour strike by sailors called by the Greek union PNO disrupted maritime transport in Greece on Wednesday morning, no connections were provided to the Greek islands, according to the port police. — AFP

Addressing climate issues requires concerted global collaboration



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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THE ISSUE OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED GLOBAL ATTENTION IN LIGHT OF THE SERIOUS HARM THAT GLOBAL WARMING HAD CAUSED TO MANY ASPECTS OF LIFE

The world is finally waking up to the immense damage to the environment by various factors, including severe and frequent flooding, cyclones, forest fires and record high temperatures — primarily stemming from global warming.

In addressing these concerns, the Sultanate of Oman is considered a front-runner in the Arab region, as it had established in the 1970s a number of institutions to safeguard the environment.

These steps were taken to promote awareness of these issues at the national and community levels in light of the multiple climate-related hazards that the country has faced over the past two decades, especially strong cyclones, the most recent of which was Tropical cyclone Shaheen, which had resulted in significant material and human losses.

Today, the issue of environment and climate change has been received global attention in light of the serious harm that global warming had caused to many aspects of life.

Recently, the city of Glasgow, Scotland, hosted the 26th Conference of the

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the participation of many world leaders, to discuss these issues, and to educate generations about the need to work on reducing carbon dioxide emissions to preserve life from pests, and to invest in alternative and green energy.

More than 100 global leaders pledged at the last summit to end deforestation and soil degradation by the end of the decade, covering 21 million square kilometres, given that forests absorb about 30 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere, preventing them from causing global warming. Many countries have put in place legislation and laws to preserve their environments and natural resources and to provide environmental security for their peoples.

Runaway urbanisation and flawed development models have necessitated measures to prevent damage to the environment, pollution of the atmosphere, and other safeguards.

The reckless actions of humans have disturbed the environment’s delicate natural balance. All of us are now required to work collectively in raising awareness,

especially among young people, by providing them with educational insight and pushing them to make behavioural changes to help preserve our environment.

Everyone agrees that, during the past five decades, the world has witnessed many challenges due to human actions, whether onshore or offshore, resulting in changes in the fragile ecosystem in which we live.

Today, countries need to work seriously to introduce legislation and laws that lead to enhancing our prospects of sustaining life by conserving natural resources, some of which are starting to become scarce, at a time when the number of people worldwide is increasing.

This has led governments and institutions to invest in alternative energies to keep pace with the requirements of the next phase, and to preserve and coexist with the environment.

The world has witnessed several natural disasters that resulted in the elimination of many species and the loss of resources. This unfolding catastrophe has prompted global leaders to come together at conferences and summits to address what our current generation can do to safeguard our planet for the future generations.

Where America’s fiscal debate goes off the rails



BARRY EICHENGREEN
The writer is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley

The US Congress has just taken an important step towards implementing President Joe Biden’s fiscal plans, by passing a signature \$1 trillion infrastructure bill.

Now we will see whether the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), in its non-partisan wisdom, agrees that the companion plan for \$1.75 trillion in social and climate-related spending is fully financed by additional taxes and other “pay fors”, as moderate Democrats evidently require.

At one level, this is precisely the debate the country needs. It is a debate, fundamentally, about what kind of society the United States should be and about the appropriate role of government.

Should government, to address inequality, provide more support for childcare because it enables women to enter the labour force

and fosters healthy childhood development, especially among disadvantaged youth? Or should it avoid doing so, as some argue, because taking childcare out of the household weakens families?

Similarly, should the federal government, to combat climate change, invest in a network of charging stations for electric vehicles, just as it invested in the interstate highway system? Or is this a problem that can be left to the market, notwithstanding the existence of network effects?

Recent debates remind us that there is less than full agreement on the desirability of such programmes. But where there should be agreement is on how best to finance them. And here the debate has been derailed by warrantless fears of fiscal disaster.

Republicans and so-called moderate Democrats insist that neither physical nor social infrastructure should be deficit-financed. Having doled out

trillions of dollars in pandemic relief, the US already has yawning deficits and crushing debts.

In the view of opponents, it cannot afford more. What this argument misses is that here the debate is about public investment, not only transfer payments and public consumption.

Productive public investments pay for themselves if they grow the denominator of the debt/GDP ratio.

This is most obviously the case of physical infrastructure that makes it easier to offload containers, truck them to warehouses, and distribute their contents, enabling producers to realize the efficiencies of global supply chains.

Better infrastructure boosts GDP, which means more tax revenues for servicing and retiring debt.

But the point applies equally to investment in social infrastructure: Pre-K and lifelong learning yield a

more productive workforce. It also applies to investments in climate-change abatement and adaptation insofar as these expenditures prevent destructive climate events that cause GDP to fall.

The debate about these programmes tends to be framed in terms of values. But it should also be a debate over rates of return and about which investments pay for themselves.

European countries, including Germany, are having this discussion. Why the US is not having it is something of a mystery.

Or maybe it’s less a mystery than yet another indication of the difficulty of having any rational, informed Congressional debate, whatever the issue.

But wouldn’t more deficit spending create excess demand, aggravating an already worrisome inflation problem? In fact, many earlier programs fuelling the deficit are set to expire at the end of the year.

CBO calculations project that the deficit as a share of GDP will fall from 13.4 per cent this year to 4.7 per cent in 2022. This is an alarming amount of “fiscal drag.” Everyone is fixated on inflation and the Federal Reserve, but maybe they should be asking how, with the government vaporizing 9 per cent of GDP, this lost spending will be made up.

But isn’t debt spiralling out of control? Having rocketed past 100 per cent of GDP, public debt in the hands of the public is at unprecedented levels. Yet debt service as a share of GDP has barely budged since the turn of the century, because interest rates today are just a third as high.

On current law, the CBO sees publicly held debt as a share of GDP falling between 2022 and 2024, as the economy expands and interest rates trend up only modestly.

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features



The French continue to charm with good food

As the French in the Sultanate of Oman celebrate Gout de France, even French Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman Veronique Aulagnon had to yield that French food is the best ambassador of their country to the world. As the event ends on Friday, here are some suggested French food to try to have that unique culinary experience... **P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



BEST WISHES, WARMEST REGARDS
BY DANIEL LEVY
AND EUGENE LEVY

Character profiles, major story moments and behind-the-scenes tales from the Emmy Award-winning series "Schitt's Creek."

Box office star Dwayne Johnson lands on Netflix in heist movie 'Red Notice'

DWAYNE JOHNSON, the action star whose films pull in big bucks at global box offices, is aiming to entertain viewers in their living rooms with his next movie spectacle, the globe-trotting Netflix heist caper "Red Notice."

Johnson stars in the movie with Gal Gadot and Ryan Reynolds about a race to locate and steal three valuable arti-

facts. The movie will stream on Netflix starting on Friday after playing for a week in a limited number of movie theatres.

The film ranks among the most expensive ever made by Netflix, with a price tag of roughly \$200 million.

Johnson, the former wrestler known as the Rock and star of big-screen blockbusters such as "Jumanji"

and "Furious 7," said he believed it was important to offer at-home streaming of movies that traditionally debuted only in theatres.

"I do have a handful of colleagues who are going to disagree with me," Johnson said in an interview with Reuters. "For me, the most important thing is to take care of the people and how they want to be taken care of, and... there are a lot of people out there who want to enjoy movies from home."

"Red Notice" follows Johnson's FBI agent John Hartley as he tries to clear his name after being set up by an international art thief, The Bishop (Gadot).

To do so, he falls in with The Bishop's biggest competition, Nolan Booth, played by Ryan Reynolds.

"I think Dwayne's fighting style is sort of... brutalist, sort of not unlike his (World Wrestling Entertainment) life," Reynolds said, while Gadot's "is very athletic and elegant."

"Usually my character is just running away from the fight as much as possible," Reynolds said.

Production of "Red Notice" began



shortly before Covid-19 started spreading around the world in early 2020. The health crisis forced a shutdown for months and a rewrite of filming plans.

"It was just a very intense environment, but I've got to give our crew such huge credit because they brought us to the finish line," Gadot said. — **Reuters**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Lady Gaga's '9-month romance' to bring Gucci tragedy to big screen



LADY GAGA brought her star power to London on Tuesday for the premiere of the drama "House of Gucci", her second major film role, for which she said she stayed in character for nine months to play the wife of a murdered heir to the Italian fashion dynasty.

Based on the book of the same name and directed by Ridley Scott, the film features an all-star cast, including Adam Driver, Al Pacino, Jared Leto, Salma Hayek and Jeremy Irons, in an account of the famous m+++urder case, which shocked Italy and its fashion industry in the 1990s.

With an Italian accent, Gaga plays Patrizia Reggiani, who married her Maurizio Gucci in 1972. They divorced in 1994.

A year later, Maurizio was shot dead by a hitman in front of his Milan office. Reggiani spent 18 years in jail for orchestrating her murder and was released in 2016.

When asked about reports that she had been in character for 18 months, Gaga said on the red carpet: "I really feel in a way that my process has become somewhat sensational, but I do not like to lie about my work and my process. So what I'm going to say is this: I'm a romantic when it comes to art."

"I had a romantic relationship with my character, Patrizia. I had a romantic relationship with the script and I jumped headlong into this world because she is nothing like me. (...) I don't know where 18 months came from. Nine months, yes, but twice as long, I don't know."

The role follows Gaga's acclaimed performance in "A Star Is Born", for which she won an Oscar for Best Original Song "Shallow" and a Best Actress nomination.

Leto plays Paolo Gucci, Maurizio's cousin, in the film and is completely unrecognizable.

"The make-up and hairstyle took about six hours", she told Reuters, adding that she had been inspired by current Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele, among others, for her accent. "When you hear the voice, you can hear Alessandro there too", he said.

"House of Gucci" begins its theatrical release on November 24. — **Reuters**

CHANGING WORLD

Like the Titanic — Lebanon's orchestra keeps playing as country sinks



BEFORE HOSTILITIES flared again with Israel in May, Palestinian violinist Khader El-Bayed used to be inundated with students, offering a rare opportunity to learn a musical instrument to a dozen or more per day.

But now, with the economic downturn that accompanied the fighting, fewer than half that number attend the studio he has set up in his Gaza Strip home.

The crisis has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the August 2020 Beirut blast that killed more than 215 people and damaged parts of the city "including the conservatory where the orchestra practices".

As the currency crashed, the roughly 100 musicians in the ensemble watched the value of their wages tumble from \$3,000 to around \$200.

Most foreign musicians packed their bags and left.

"We used to do very big productions that would cover the entire classical repertoire. Now it's very difficult", Baalbaki said.

Wages of those who remain now cover little more than the price of fuel to drive to weekly practice sessions, forcing Baalbaki to reduce the number of concerts from dozens a year to a handful.

This mirrors a wider decline in Lebanon's cultural spaces including summer festivals, once seen as a beacon of the arts in the region that featured jazz legends and Arab icons, due to the crisis and the pandemic.

Mona Kusta Semaan, a violinist who has been with the ensemble since it was re-founded in 2000 after its closure during Lebanon's 1975-90 Civil War, has fond memories of performing with Spanish tenor Placido Domingo at the Roman ruins in Baalbeck in the early 2000s. Now, she said she

choked up when she saw an orchestra on TV.

"I hope now that things get better, and Lebanon gets back on its feet, and they [foreign musicians] come back," she said. "We became a family."

with no musical qualifications.

The second, seen as qualified for the post, was not permanently appointed because he was Catholic rather than an Orthodox Christian.

Lebanese musician Bassam



SECTARIANISM

Even before the crisis, the conservatory had been paralysed for nearly a decade by Lebanon's sectarian quota-sharing system, where top posts at public institutions are distributed among politicians who generally appoint loyalists, with little regard for merit.

When conservatory head Walid Gholmieh, a Greek Orthodox Christian, died in 2011, a permanent replacement was not found for seven years. Instead, two acting heads were appointed.

The first was a bureaucrat

Saba finally took over in 2018 after returning from the United States, but he died from complications related to Covid-19 last year. Baalbaki fears it could take years before a successor is appointed.

"We are hostages", Baalbaki said. "The fate of art and music in Lebanon is taken hostage in this country because of the political class who insist on introducing this sectarian spirit." But the musicians would keep going, he said.

"We were born in this country and this is our fate, to find solutions and create new opportunities." — **Reuters**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

The Forbidden Fruit

The following are translations of poems by the Omani poet Hilal Al Hajri (1968-) from his collection titled: "Like a Mountain Bird Watching the Collapse of the World", (Beirut 2013):

IN THE PIRATE'S GRIP

The pirate has tightened his grip
On the world's map.
Very shortly
Like dough
All the small states will flow
Between his fingers.
He won't devour them as we think
But dip his hand in the toilet
And go away
Searching for his dreams' treasures!

GRANADA

Clouds with yields
Nigh and easy
Rains more merciful than mother to child
Breasts like clusters of grape
Wine like saliva of a bosomy girl
Liberty more eloquent than prophets
That's Granada.

LADY GODIVA*
Do you know Godiva?
Delight of mind and heart
Daughter of honour and liberty
Like mellowed wine in grace
Like pure water in nudity
Did you ever see a beauty Undress malady?

ABANDONED LOVER

Calling me from afar
Why my sweetheart?
My tears I relied on
Betray me too much these days
I know you see yourself
In my tearful eyes
But why all these vast deserts?
True
I'm not bold enough to cross them
With feet heavy in mud
My charming love
Will you change the rule of the world
And stretch to me your arms?!

A PASSING WOMAN
I know you're a fleeting shade
I'm a wandering cloud

But I'll cling to your foxy phantom
Thrust into it my nails
Till death!

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Your voluptuous, wavy curves
I won't just relish from afar
This forbidden fruit
I'll swoop down on
Like an eagle
In my dreams
I will leave nothing for my unknown future
I'll devour it
Like a man stricken by famine!

IN HER HEART

Put your hand below your left breast
You'll find there a warm secret
Drowning the world with love and relief.
Ask it to be gentle with me
I who want to be its air and blood
I want to be anything
In it!

HER BREAST

Only the chandelier
As she squeezes the skies
Can match your breast
In its glory and vanity!

A PRAYER

O my Lord
Guide me to the fountain-head
Of your sacred sadness.
I'd like to dip into it all at once.
I've grown weary from it
Dripping in my heart
Tear after tear!

*Legend has it that Lady Godiva, an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, rode naked through the streets of Coventry after her husband refused to remit the heavy tolls imposed on his tenants. Her husband said he would if she rode naked on a horse. She stripped naked, covering herself only with her long hair (the translator).



The French continue to charm with good food

BY YERU EBUEN

There's no better way to put it. While the French will forever be known for their romantic accent, Instagram-worthy country and charming people, it's definitely food that is the best ambassador for France anywhere in the world.

As the French in the Sultanate of Oman celebrate Gout de France, even French Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman Veronique Aulagnon had to yield to this making food front and centre during the launch of the event at her residence last week. Gout de France runs from November 2 to 12.

The launching showcased some of the best products and dining locations in Muscat and present during the event are some of the big names in the culinary industry representing some of the luxurious hotels and French restaurants in the Sultanate of Oman.

The 6th edition of Gout de France marked the 10th anniversary of the Gastronomic Meal of the French on Unesco's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List.

This year's event is packaged as something that will provide people in the country a glimpse of the local, sustainable and eco-friendly art of living in France while tapping local produce, producers in its effort for the "renaissance of food."

We recently reached out to

Al Marsa Gourmet, one of the emerging high quality provider of some of the most delicious French gourmet food in the Sultanate of Oman to share what to them is a good starter pack to learn more about French food as the celebration ends today.

Amina Marais, marketing and social media guru from the brand shared that the key to enjoying French food is knowing where to get the best quality.

She said, "Don't ever underestimate the power of food when it comes to gift-giving. Whether you want to share your city's best bites with a faraway loved one, do something nice for a coworker or a friend, or plan a celebratory evening, a beautifully wrapped treat will win the day."

Her recommendations for the Top 5 gourmet food to try are as follow:

FRENCH CHEESE TASTING BOX

A cocktail party in a box. This collection of 6-8 French cheeses is sure to delight the most avid fromage-ophiles's. France produce some of the best cheeses and a great selection of French cheese will definitely make you understand why this is always present in nearly all gatherings.

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Perfect gift for a meat lover, this charcuterie is hand-crafted and dry-cured with simple ingredients — nothing but meat, salt and spices. This collection boasts amazing flavour and a must

try for everyone.

OAK COLD SMOKED ARBEQUINA GIFT BOX

Olive oil that is delicately smoked with oak, who wouldn't like that? It is the ideal oil to drizzle over all kinds of meat and fish, salads, burrata, or simply eat it with bread

VENDÔME — FROZEN YULE LOG CHOCOLATE & PRALINES

Perfect dessert for those who want to make their dinner a bit more special! This stunning dessert has it all, nestled on all homemade amond cake sits our Valrhona chocolate fillings with a hidden Praline insert! It is a true indulgence for any chocolate lover.

HOMEMADE SLOW-COOKED DUCK FOIE GRAS

Made the traditional way, Al Marsa Gourmet homemade foie gras has only a few simple and natural ingredients and offers the essence of foie gras: Purity of flavour, creamy, delicate texture and luxurious richness.

On Friday, November 12, is the last day of the Gout de France. You can check out their partners like Muscat Hills, Alila Jabal Akhdar, Kempinski Muscat, Hormuz Grand and Al Bustan Palace for discounted prices on French menu. Al Marsa Gourmet also offers 10% discount on the entire range of their French product. Take this opportunity to check out the best of what French food have to offer. Bon appétit!



Five French Gourmet Food To Try

