



HM, SHAIKH TAMIM REVIEW TIES

OMAN AND QATAR SIGN 6 COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

DOHA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, held a round of official talks at the Amiri Diwan in Doha on Monday.

At the outset of the talks, Shaikh Tamim expressed his warm welcome to His Majesty the Sultan for accepting the invitation.

He wished His Majesty and the accompanying delegation a pleasant stay. On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his appreciation to Shaikh Tamim for the warm welcome and hospitality.

During the session, the two leaders discussed areas of cooperation between their countries and means of promoting them in various spheres to meet the aspirations of their peoples. The session also reviewed other matters of common interest.

DELEGATION

The talks session was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour and Najeeb bin Yahya

HM, Emir of Qatar exchange Orders

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, exchanged orders at the Amiri Diwan in the Qatari capital, Doha on Monday afternoon. His Majesty the Sultan conferred the Oman Civil Order 'First Class' on Shaikh Tamim. The order is considered one of the loftiest Omani orders, which is conferred on kings and presidents whose countries are bound by distinguished relations with the Sultanate of Oman.

Meanwhile, the Emir of Qatar conferred on His Majesty the Sultan the 'Sword of the Founder Shaikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani', the highest Qatari order. The ceremony was attended by senior officials from both sides.

His Majesty visits Al Bayt Stadium

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq visited Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor city, Qatar on Monday. Al Bayt Stadium is one of the venues that will host World Cup 2022 matches. The visit comes as part of His Majesty the Sultan's state visit to Qatar. Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, led the welcoming party which received His Majesty the Sultan at Al Bayt Stadium. His Majesty the Sultan and Shaikh Tamim toured the stadium which comprised replicas of all playgrounds that will host Fifa World Cup 2022 in Qatar. His Majesty the Sultan listened to a briefing about Al Bayt Stadium whose facilities are inspired by the design of the Arabian tent, while at the same time depicting top international designs.

al Balushi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Qatar.

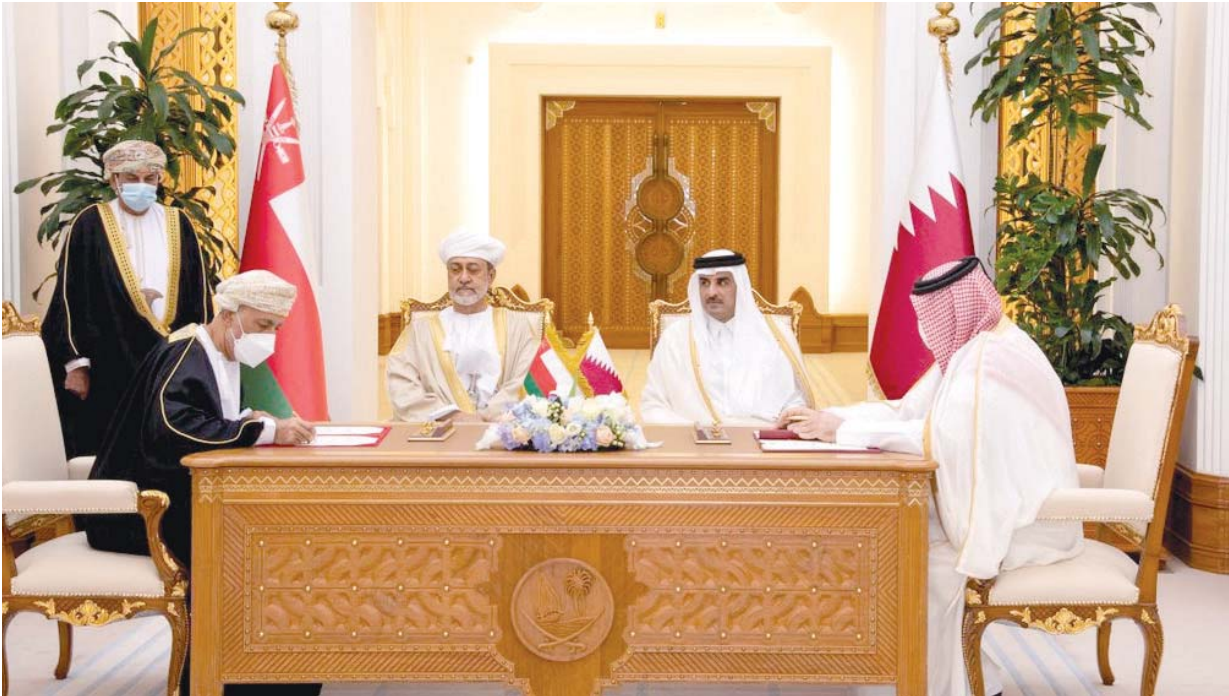
It was attended from the Qatari side by Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad al Thani, Deputy Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Jassim bin Hamad al Thani, the Personal Representative of the Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Khalid bin Khalifa al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Dr Khalid bin Mohammad al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, Abdullah bin Khalifa al Attiyah, Minister of State (Head of the Mission of Honour), Shaikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Chief of the Emiri Diwan, Dr Ali bin Ahmed al Kuwari, Minister of Finance, Dr Ali bin Said al Marri, Minister of Labour and Shaikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to the Sultanate of Oman. The session was also attended by a number of officials.

Afterwards, His Majesty the Sultan and Shaikh Tamim held a closed-door session.

AGREEMENTS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani witnessed the signing of six cooperation agreements covering military fields, avoidance of double taxation and prevention of tax evasion, labour, investment, tourism and transport. The military cooperation agreement was signed by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said and Dr Khalid Mohammed al Attiyah.

HM, EMIR OF QATAR EXCHANGE ORDERS





HM visits Al Bayt Stadium, a venue of World Cup 2022

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Majesty the Sultan listened to a briefing about Al Bayt Stadium whose facilities are inspired by the design of the Arabian tent, while at the same time depicting top international designs.

His Majesty the Sultan commended the unique design of the edifice and its facilities, noting that Al Bayt Stadium affirms Qatar's ability to present an exceptional model for hosting such

a global sports event. His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the visit by the head and members of the mission of honour and the Omani official delegation. — ONA



Oman, Qatar sign agreements

FROM P1
The agreement on avoidance of double taxation and income and capital tax evasion was signed by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi and his Qatari counterpart Ali Ahmed al Kuwari. The two sides also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of labour and human resources development. The MoU was signed by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain and his Qatari Counterpart Dr Ali Said al Marri.

The cooperation agreement in the field of investment was signed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority and Mansoor Ibrahim al Mahmood, CEO of Qatar Investment Authority. Al Murshidi and Al Mahmood also signed the agreement on cooperation in the field of tourism and hotels and the agreement on cooperation in the fields of maritime transport and ports.

LUNCHEON
Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, hosted luncheon at the Emiri Diwan on Monday in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of His Majesty's visit to Qatar. The luncheon was attended by the official delegations of the Omani and Qatari sides, shaikhs of the Qatari Royal Family and Qatari dignitaries. — ONA



FLOATING TENDERS

Oman Airports Company announces the following tenders:

Tender REF.NO	TENDER TITLE	DOC'S FEE OMR	Last date for DOC's DISTRIBUTION	TENDER SUBMISSION DATE
PC-210303	Supply of Desktop Computers, Laptops and Computer's accessories for Oman Airports (Call-off contract)	100	5 th December 2021	30 th December 2021
ITC-211107	Design And Construction of Bore Wells, Pumping Station and Discharge System at Muscat International Airport.	500	5 th December 2021	30 th January 2022
ITC-211108	Provision of Support and License Renewal for CCTV VMS (Milestone Careplus) at SLL airport	100	5 th December 2021	30 th December 2021
ITC-211109	Renewal Of Dell Technologies- Powermax 2000 Warranty For Oman Airports.	100	5 th December 2021	30 th December 2021
ITC-211110	Provision of Skilled Labors for Civil Maintenance works at Muscat International Airport.	100	5 th December 2021	30 th December 2021

Tenders Collection: Specialized companies may obtain Tender Documents/ Specifications from Procurement Department upon receipt of complete payment of tender fees by Cash Transfer/ deposit into below OAMC bank account and submittal of clear scanned copy of deposit Receipt along with a copy of Company Commercial Registration Certificate to Email: **(FinanceTenders@omanairports.com)** provided with company name, tender number & contact person as a mandatory.

OAMC Bank Account Details:
Account Name: Oman Airports Management Co. S.A.O.C.
Account No: 0423010849180012
Name of Bank: BANK MUSCAT
Branch: Corporate Branch, CBD Area, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
SWIFT Code: BMUSOMRX

Required Bond: All participating Companies must provide a bank guarantee, issued by locally registered bank, for the sum of not less than 1% of the Tender value, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, valid for 90 days from the date of submission of the Tenders.

Submission: All bids shall be submitted as per mentioned instructions in the tender documents and late bids will not be entertained.

All Technical Queries shall be sent to:
oamctenders@omanairports.com

The committee is not bound to accept the lowest tender.
Any payment received after last date of documents distribution will not be refunded

Headquarter Address:
Muscat International Airport
South Forecourt Building, First Floor
Oman Airports Management S.A.O.C
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Note: All Correspondence / Clarification / Enquiries send an e-mail:
oamctenders@omanairports.com



Rousing reception for His Majesty in Doha

DOHA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived here on Monday on a two-day state visit to the State of Qatar. Upon His Majesty's arrival at Doha International Airport, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, led the welcoming party, which included Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad al Thani, Deputy Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Jassim bin Hamad al Thani, the Personal Representative of the Emir, Shaikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Thani, Abdullah bin Khalifa al Attiyah Minister of State (Head of the Mission of Honour), Saud bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Chief of the Emiri Diwan and Shaikh Jassim bin

Abdulrahman al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to the Sultanate of Oman. When the Royal Jet entered the airspace of Qatar, it was escorted by warplanes from the Qatari Air Defence Force. After a short rest at the Reception Hall, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the Emir of Qatar, joined a motorcade that took them over to the Emiri Diwan. There, His Majesty the Sultan was accorded an official welcome. The protocols started when the vehicle carrying His Majesty the Sultan and Shaikh Tamim entered the yard, flanked by a cavalcade and a camelcade that had lined both sides of the street to welcome His Majesty the Sultan.

As soon as the motorcade arrived, Shaikh Tamim escorted His Majesty the Sultan to the dais, where the Royal Anthem of the Sultanate of Oman and the Qatari National Anthem were played. His Majesty the Sultan inspected the guard of honour which saluted him. Then, His Majesty the Sultan received members of the Qatari welcoming party and exchanged greetings with them, while the Emir of Qatar received the members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan. Earlier in the day in Muscat, His Majesty the Sultan was seen off at the Royal Airport by His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of

Ministers; His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan; His Highness Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy to His Majesty the Sultan; Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council; Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ashshura; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs; Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs; Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of

Health; Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shibaniyah, Minister of Education; Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat; Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqli, Inspector General of Police and Customs; Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service; Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman; Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman; Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman; and Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Ja'aboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF). — ONA



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is seen off at the Royal Airport by dignitaries.



Majlis Ash'shura discusses report on draft budget

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura on Monday discussed the report of its Economic and Financial Committee on the state draft Budget 2022.

The report, presented by the committee's chairman Ahmed bin Said al Sharqi, offered detailed recommendations on mechanisms of funding deficit, the government's plans on diversifying the national income and raising the contribution of industry, tourism and logistics sectors to the national

income. The recommendations also deal with the employment of job-seekers, the Job Security Fund and the situation of laid-off workers.

The deliberations took place during the Council's fourth ordinary session of the third annual sitting (2021-2022) of the 9th Term (2019-2023) held under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

Later, Majlis Ash'shura reviewed other

topics on the agenda, including the financial securities draft law forwarded by the government and a proposal to amend some provisions of the Documents and Archives Law as per the vision of the Media and Culture Committee.

The council's fourth ordinary session also discussed the report of the Education and Research Committee about a mechanism to boost external scholarships.

— ONA

Organ transplant facility to boost healthcare

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 22

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, met organ transplantation experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Monday. The ministry's under-secretaries and senior officials were present on the occasion.

In the meeting, the Health Minister pointed out the plan, with the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to establish a National Centre for Organ Transplantation, which will work on developing the National Transplantation Programme.

The meeting touched upon the significance of cooperation with the WHO towards developing the national programme for Organ Transplantation.

Furthermore, the meeting stressed the importance of multi-sectorial cooperation

for the programme's success, considering the ministry's orientation towards developing a post-mortem organ donation system to serve a significant number of organ failure patients.

One of the WHO experts gave a presentation. He explained the importance of completing all required procedures to launch the post-mortem organ donation programme, which can save the lives of organ failure patients and reduce current dialysis costs.

There are more than 2,200 patients suffering from kidney failure and are on regular dialysis.

The availability of organs can save their lives through transplants.

Once the National Transplantation Programme comes into force, the Sultanate of Oman will also have liver transplant surgeries for which patients have to go abroad.

Online fraud proliferating again: ROP

ALI AL KASBI

MUSCAT, NOV 22

The Directorate General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has confirmed that online fraud is again proliferating.

This time, the fraudsters are targeting gullible individuals by using one-time password (OTP). Under this modus operandi, the fraudsters call people by using an unknown number and impersonate as an employee of a telecom company.

Then the fraudsters inform the targets that they are calling because of a technical issue or lure them that they have won some prize.

Then, the fraudsters download an individual's bank application on their mobile phone, inform him that he will receive an OTP and he must share it with the 'telecom company' (fraudsters).

Subsequently, the fraudsters use the OTP to shop online or withdraw money from the individual's bank account instantly.

This 'scheme' caught the attention of the ROP when the victims called the ROP asking for help.

Through the Directorate of Public Relations, the ROP raise awareness among the community to be careful and cautious against cyber or online fraud or any other suspicious activities.

Recently, there is an increase in online fraud, which is causing tremendous harm, financially and psychologically to businesses and individuals. The ROP has urged people not to respond to such unknown and unverified calls.

It reiterated that people must call the ROP at toll free number 800777444 or at emergency number 9999 for advice and help.

Pact to set up fish landing centre, fish market



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Monday signed an agreement to establish a fish landing centre in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands and a fish market in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

The agreement was signed with a local company, and funded by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The agreement was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Eng Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghareebi, PDO's External Affairs and Communication Manager, in the presence of Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of

the Ministry for Fisheries.

The fish landing centre will be established in Al Shuwaimiya (wholesale market — phase one) on an area of 1,320 square metres. It includes a sorting and cleaning hall, an auctioning area, cold stores, a fish loading and unloading area, ice production unit, administrative offices, shops and other services.

The fish market in Al Rustaq will be established on an area of more than 1,490 square metres. It will include 24 fish sale stalls, 12 fish cutting stalls, an ice production unit, a cold store and stores, administrative offices, shops, a fish loading and unloading area and other services. — ONA

UAE delegation visits NDC



MUSCAT: A delegation of the National Defence Delegation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) visited the National Defence College (NDC) here on Monday.

The visiting delegation was received by Air Vice Marshal Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, NDC Commandant. The delegation was briefed on the college's facilities and equipment, as well as various departments and halls designed according to the latest specifications and equipped with the best educational systems, training aids and multi-purpose electronic network systems. — ONA

Oman attends GCC Joint Defence Council meeting



RIYADH: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, on Monday took part in the 18th meeting of the Joint Defence Council of GCC Ministers of Defence, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

The meeting discussed the agenda

submitted by the Supreme Military Committee of GCC Chiefs of Staff. It also reviewed achievements made in joint military fields.

The meeting covered several military matters of mutual interest to enhance the march of GCC military cooperation.

Moreover, the council took decisions and recommendations, due to be submitted at upcoming summit of the Supreme Council of GCC leaders.

— ONA



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fee	Last Collection Date	Site Visit Date	Last Date of Submission
HMD/T/776/2021	MAINTENANCE OF LANDSCAPING AND IRRIGATION SERVICES AT SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL	OMR. 25	30/11/2021	01/12/2021	03/01/2022

Tender Conditions:

- The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The site visit shall be at 10.00 am in the Technical Affaires Department building / Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
- The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelop.
- The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms& Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

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



His Majesty greets UAE President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates while His Majesty was crossing the UAE's airspace on his way to the State of Qatar.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to Shaikh Khalifa, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant him good health, well-being and long life to continue achieving aspirations of further progress and prosperity for the UAE people under his wise leadership. — ONA

Oman, Syria hold talks on documents, archives



MUSCAT: An Omani-Syrian session of talks was held in the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) on Monday between Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of NRAA and Dr Bouthaina Shaaban, Political and Media Adviser to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and Chairperson of the Wathiqat Wattan Organization's Board of Trustees. The session reviewed cooperation in the fields of documents, archives and historical studies and

means of enhancing them to serve the joint interests. It also discussed enhancing the bilateral coordination in conducting conferences and seminars, among other topics. The session was attended by Dr Bassam Al Khatib, Ambassador of Syria to the Sultanate of Oman. The Syrian delegation went on tour to some of NRAA's specialised and technical departments. They also saw a presentation which gave a comprehensive overview on NRAA's system of managing documents and archives. — ONA

Asyad Group issues EoI notice for developing Al Suwaiq Port

MUSCAT: Asyad Group has invited prospective local and international private sector parties to invest in the expansion of Al Suwaiq Port within the framework of a joint cooperation programme.

The offer includes developing, operating and management of Al Suwaiq Port (North Al Batinah Governorate), so that the 600 sqm port would continue to perform its role as a multipurpose commercial port in accordance with global standards. — ONA

Global specialists discuss major trends in big data, analytics

MUSCAT: COMEX Oman's Technology Exhibition launched its Big Data and Analytics meet at the Crowne Plaza, Qurum on Monday. The Big Data & Analytics meet 2021 will conclude on November 24 and is being held face-to-face as well online. As the organisers of COMEX since 1990, Arabian Research Bureau — ARB/OITE are proud of the significant role the event has played in Oman's digital transformation.

Amr bin Abdullah Baabood CEO said "we are quite excited to play our part in Oman's Digital Future, the numerous opportunities for investment in technology, and in particular, future tech as a driver of Vision 2040, as well as the opportunities it provides for Omani youth to participate in tech-powered Human Capital Development and Innovation".

Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah bin Hamad al Barwani, CEO of National Centre for Statistics & Information (NCSI), inaugurated the three-day conference as the chief guest. A number of under-secretaries, ambassadors and CEOs attended. Bakhait bin Ahmed al Mahri, Under-Secretary of Higher Education and Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of Heritage, attended as guest of honour.

Sadiq Khan, Group COO of Arabian Research Bureau said "The meet is a deep dive event



for the data science fraternity into Big Data and Analytics segment of Information Communications Technology". As the significance of data and the professions associated with its architecture, infrastructure and management are critical for building reliable digital transformation government or company towards VISION2040; this event will serve the who's who and will provide you with the tools and knowledge you need to execute your most effective data-driven strategy. The 3-day hybrid conference (face2face + Online) brought together highly skilled

global specialists as speakers and senior and middle management data decision-makers as delegates to discuss the next major trends in big data and analytics as well as the challenges that lie ahead in building an efficient data-driven organisation. Delegates will also hear case studies and lessons gained from big data and analytics specialists on which data methods have the best RO I, have the most impact and have led to improved business decision-making capabilities. The conference will provide you with latest in-depth information.

Ooredoo — Data2Cloud and Innovateq were the diamond sponsors and Oman Data Park, Datamount and ETCO were the lead sponsors. The event had COMEX Awards for Data Science & Analytics to recognise and honour companies and ministries which in setting up exceptional practices and achievements. These businesses and governments have demonstrated how data science, big data and analytics can boost corporate performance, improve customer experience, and drive product creation, sales and economic success.

Event to showcase luxury tourism products begins

MUSCAT: Activities of Oman Connections for Luxury Tourism Event began at Al Bustan Palace Hotel on Monday. The four-day event is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The event showcases the best luxury tourism products with the participation of 30 international travel and tourism agencies.

The event aims at enhancing partnership among international luxury travel and tourism companies with their counterparts in the Sultanate of Oman, including hotels and tourism experience providers through using innovative communication methods to facilitate long-term business relationships.



Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director General of Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: "The Sultanate of Oman is considered as a destination for luxury tourism for visitors from all over the world, therefore we are pleased to host the "Oman Connections" event to establish long-term business relationships and providing valuable opportunities for tourism.

It is worth mentioning that Connections is the next generation for business practices, which is designed for decision-makers. The Connection has innovated a new way to build confidence among travel agents and service providers. — ONA

'Creatourism' contest winner announced

STAFF TRPOTER
MUSCAT, NOV 22

As part of the Group's initiatives to promote art, culture and heritage in various development projects and hotels, Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) recently announced 'Makan Studios' winner on the first place in its 'Creatourism's' first competition that invited SMEs and Omani talents to participate in managing the art space at InterContinental Hotel Muscat.

Makan Studio was appointed following an evaluation process and criteria that includes the participant experience and portfolio, business strategy design and product sales model, concept design and artwork display, capabilities in arts events management. It has demonstrated its creative capabilities.

"The 'Creatourism' programme was conceptualised with a vision to bring together creative minds from across the country and



encourage them to participate in the enhancement of the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman. With Makan Studio becoming the first local SME to operate the art space at Intercontinental hotel, it gives me great pride to announce that we have been able to achieve precisely what we had envisioned. We will continue to remain invested in our efforts as we set new tourism horizons for innovation, that revolves around our the Sultanate of Oman's authentic culture and heritage."

said Hassan Meer, Branding Art & Culture Manager at OMRAN Group.

Commenting on this milestone event, Futoon al Mahrouqi, Co-founder of Makan Studio said, "We are indeed delighted to have emerged winners of the 'Creatourism' programme that saw the active participation of several art management firms from across the country. This unique initiative led by OMRAN Group truly reiterates the commitment of the brand to

empower the local communities and help them showcase their talents. Managing the art space at InterContinental Muscat Hotel is an honour, and we will ensure that we dutifully carry out the responsibilities that we have been entrusted with. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to OMRAN Group and InterContinental Muscat Hotel for acknowledging our efforts."

Anna-Marie, General Manager at InterContinental Muscat, said, "It is our honour to be able to share the InterContinental hotel space for constructive and innovative national programmes like Creatourism. We commend the efforts of OMRAN Group in consistently planning and implementing initiatives that not only preserve the Sultanate of Oman's art, culture, and heritage, but also provide impetus to the local SMEs. InterContinental Hotel Muscat is pleased to be the first hotel to host the art space under this programme."

Flights to India likely to continue under air bubble

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The air-bubble agreement signed by India with around 30 countries, including the Sultanate of Oman, is likely to continue for now, which means only a few airlines will be allowed to operate with limited seats in the offering.

As per the agreement, both Indian and Omani airlines can carry the following passengers — nationals/residents of the Sultanate of Oman, any Indian national holding a valid residency permit of the Sultanate of Oman and destined for the Sultanate of Oman only. Currently, only Oman Air and Salam Air, Air India and Air India Express are allowed to carry passengers in this sector.

Passengers, both residents and citizens travelling to India

and from India, have been hoping for the widening of the air bubble agreement that will allow more airlines to operate in this sector, and subsequently bring fares down.

For this week, two-way ticket fares to India's commercial capital, Mumbai, start from RO 260.

The air bubble agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and India allows passengers with valid visas from both sides to travel freely. India's Civil Aviation Ministry has said that the government is evaluating the process for normalising international operations and that it wants to return to normalcy while keeping in mind the Covid pandemic in certain parts of the world. Scheduled international passenger flights to and from India remain suspended since March 2020.

In brief

■ LUCKNOW



INDIAN FARMERS HOLD MASS RALLY, KEEP PRESSURE ON MODI

Indian farmers held a mass rally on Monday to demand minimum support prices be extended to all produce, not just rice and wheat. The protest movement launched by farmers more than a year ago became the most serious political challenge to the government, and resulted in Modi making a surprise commitment on Friday to roll back the reforms.

Thousands gathered for the latest rally in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, where Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party will seek to hold onto power in state elections due early next year. — Reuters

■ SEOUL



S KOREAN SCHOOLS RESUME FULL IN-PERSON CLASSES

For the first time since South Korea began battling its coronavirus outbreak in early 2020, all schools across the country resumed full-time in-person classes on Monday. As the first country outside China to face a major outbreak of the virus, South Korea's schools have seen various stages of shutdowns, remote learning, and hybrid arrangements.

Widespread testing, intensive contact tracing and tracking apps have enabled S Korea to limit the spread of the virus without the extensive lockdowns seen in other countries, but previous efforts at fully opening schools have been hampered by new waves of infections. — Reuters

■ COLOMBO



LANKA BEGINS TRIALS CONNECTED TO 2019 BOMBINGS CASE

A Sri Lankan court on Monday began the first of three trials connected to bombings that killed nearly 270 people on the island in 2019, amidst appeals for greater accountability from victim support groups. In this trial, former national police chief Pujith Jayasundara is charged with failing to act on repeated intelligence warnings of a possible terror attack.

A total of 855 charges of murder and attempted murder were read out as Jayasundara stood in the dock at the back of the courtroom. A total of 1,215 witnesses have been listed to give evidence, his lawyer said. — Reuters

■ RAINS BRING MISERY



Commuters wade through a water-logged road following heavy rains in Bangalore, India. — AFP

Australia to re-open borders

SYDNEY: Australia announced on Monday it will re-open to foreign students and skilled workers from next month, easing some of the world's most stringent pandemic travel restrictions. Twenty months after Australia slammed shut its borders, some visa holders — as well as Japanese and South Korean citizens — will be able to enter from December 1.

"Australia is re-opening to the world," said Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews as she announced the news, adding it was "yet another step forward for Australia".

The government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison lifted restrictions on Australians travelling overseas last month, sparking a flood of travel bookings for the southern hemisphere summer.

But Morrison — who is hoping to be re-elected next year — had pointedly refused to relax travel rules for most non-Australians.

That decision left an estimated 1.4 million skilled visa holders stuck in Australia, unable to return if they decided to leave.

Business groups had lobbied hard for vaccinated visa holders



to be allowed to return, as they struggle to fill jobs and gird for the beginning of a third year of restrictions.

Among those most vocal in calling for rules to be further relaxed was the beleaguered university sector.

According to Universities Australia, an industry group, 130,000 international students

remain outside the country.

"They want nothing more than to re-join their classmates in Australia," said the group's chief executive Catriona Jackson, who described the decision as "great news."

There had been fears that many Asian students would opt to study in person in the United States or Europe rather than pay for online



Home Affairs Minister says the step is 'yet another step forward for Australia'

courses based in Australia.

There is no word yet on when leisure travellers may be able to return to Australia, a blow to the equally hard-hit tourism sector, which has seen visitor numbers virtually evaporate since borders were closed in March 2020.

While some Australian states still require quarantine, vaccinated Australians, some visa holders and citizens of Japan, South Korea and Singapore will now be able to visit Australia with only a pre-departure negative Covid-19 test. — AFP

Nobel laureate Ressa rules out going into exile

MANILA: Philippine Nobel Prize winning journalist Maria Ressa ruled out on Monday going into exile over legal challenges she faces, and her lawyers urged the government of President Rodrigo Duterte to drop all charges against her. Ressa, the first Nobel laureate from the Philippines, shared the Peace Prize with Russian investigative journalist Dmitry Muratov, a move widely seen as intended as an endorsement of free speech rights under fire worldwide.

Ressa's news site, Rappler, had its licence suspended and she has faced legal action for various reasons, motivated, supporters say, by her scrutiny of government policies, including a bloody war on drugs launched by Duterte.

"Exile is not an option," Ressa told a streamed news conference with her legal team, adding that she felt a climate of violence and



Filipino journalist and Rappler CEO Maria Ressa.

fear under Duterte's term was easing before 2022 elections.

Free on bail as she appeals against a six-year prison sentence handed down last year for a libel conviction, Ressa is facing five tax evasion charges and a corporate

case with the regulator.

"You don't know what freedom feels like until you almost lose it," Ressa said from the US city of Boston, where she is on an academic visit.

The Philippines saw its ranking

Exile is not an option. You don't know what freedom feels like until you almost lose it

MARIA RESSA

Nobel Prize winning journalist

in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index drop two notches to 138 out of 180 countries, and the Committee to Protect Journalists ranks the Philippines seventh in the world in its impunity index, which tracks deaths of media members whose killers go free.

The government denies hounding media and says any problems organisations face are legal, not political. It says it believes in free speech.

Asean-China summit held without Myanmar

KUALA LUMPUR: Leaders of China and Southeast Asian countries met on Monday without a representative of Myanmar, with the military-ruled nation skipping another international summit after its neighbours excluded its junta chief.

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah confirmed information provided by several sources that a diplomat expected to represent Myanmar at the virtual meeting did not show up.

Myanmar boycotted summits hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) last month, rejecting Asean's insistence that it be represented by a non-political figure.

Asean made the unprecedented call to exclude military chief Min Aung Hlaing over his failure to take agreed steps to solve a deadly crisis triggered by the February 1 coup he led against an elected government.

Saifuddin said that as of Sunday, Asean countries excluding Myanmar had agreed with China that Myanmar's ambassador to Beijing would join the meeting, hosted by China President Xi Jinping.

"There was an empty chair on Myanmar's side, but at least there was some kind of consensus as to who will represent Myanmar," he told a briefing, adding that by Monday, Myanmar had not given word of its attendance. "At least there was a name."

Myanmar's junta had no immediate comment and a spokesman could not immediately be reached. Other Asean countries had no immediate official comments. — Reuters

5 dead, 40 injured after SUV hits Wisconsin parade

WAUKESHA: Five people were killed and more than 40 injured when an SUV sped through a Christmas parade in the small town of Waukesha, Wisconsin, on Sunday, plowing into dozens of people including young children.

Waukesha Police Chief Dan Thompson told reporters that one person was in custody and a vehicle had been recovered after the incident in the town of around 72,000 people, 32 km west of Milwaukee. Police said the number of dead and injured could change. Thompson said it was not clear whether the incident was terrorist in nature, but that there was no further danger and police had lifted an order urging people to shelter.

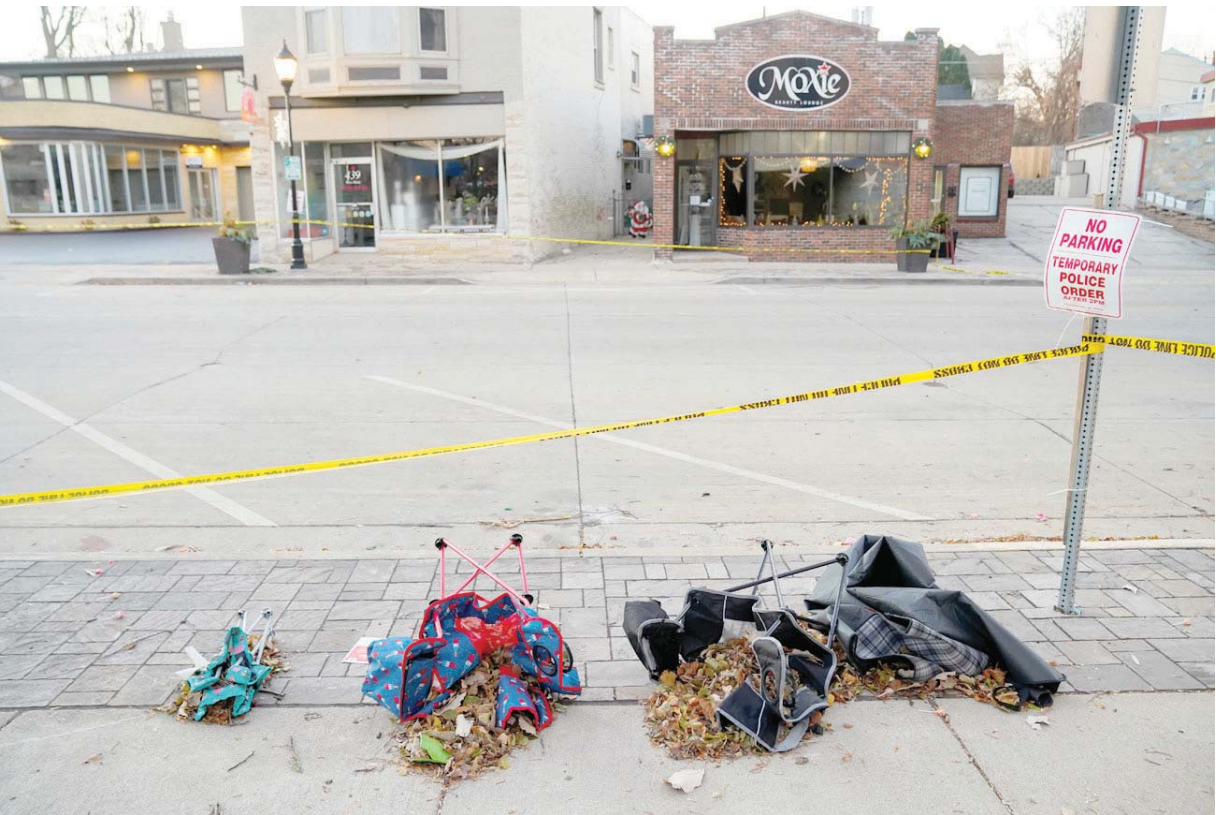
A video posted online showed a red sport utility vehicle driving at speed alongside and into the parade, appearing to run over more than a dozen people before

SUV plows through afternoon Christmas parade in Waukesha as it is not known if incident is related to terrorism

crowds ran from sidewalks to offer assistance.

Thompson said an officer fired shots at the vehicle in an attempt to stop the carnage. Another video on social media appeared to show police firing on the vehicle as it crashed through street barriers. Police did not believe shots had been fired from the vehicle, Thompson added, contrary to earlier reports.

Nurse Jodi Singsime, 42, took shelter in a store with members of her family before going out to help the injured.



Chairs are left abandoned on Main Street the morning after a car plowed through a holiday parade in Waukesha, Wisconsin. — Reuters

“I heard and saw the people being hit, but what you could do more than seeing is hearing, and just that sound was insane,” she said.

She choked up as she described coming across a small boy in the road:

“I felt his neck for a pulse and he had one but his eyes were barely open and his face — all I can remember is his sweet little innocent face was purple. He wasn’t really with us.”

Belen Santamaria, her husband, and their three-year old daughter were planning to join the parade with their Catholic church. But Santamaria, a 39-year-old Mexican factory worker, woke up on Sunday with a backache, so the family watched the procession from the sidewalk instead.

“The SUV came by at full speed,” she said. “Then I started to hear people screaming.” — Reuters



Makeshift shelters are pictured on the Belarusian-Polish border amid the migrant crisis in the Grodno region, Belarus. — Reuters

Belarus wants EU to take migrants

BRUZGI/WARSAW: President Alexander Lukashenko said on Monday Belarus seeks no confrontation with Poland but wants the European Union to take in 2,000 of the migrants stranded on its border, and he added that if the crisis deteriorated “too far, war is unavoidable”.

The European Union accuses Belarus of flying in thousands of people from the Middle East and pushing them to cross into the EU via Poland, Lithuania and Latvia in retaliation for EU sanctions imposed on Minsk over Lukashenko’s crushing of protests against his disputed re-election last year.

Lukashenko denies fomenting the migrant crisis, but EU countries including Germany on Monday again rejected his call on them to accept migrants in limbo

at the frontier.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said on Sunday that the crisis might be a prelude to “something much worse”, and Poland’s border guard said Belarusian forces were still ferrying migrants to the frontier. Lukashenko, as quoted by the state-owned Belta news agency, said he did not want things to escalate.

“We need to get through to the Poles, to every Pole, and show them that we’re not barbarians, that we don’t want confrontation. We don’t need it. Because we understand that if we go too far, war is unavoidable”, he said.

“And that will be a catastrophe. We understand this perfectly well. We don’t want any kind of flare-up.” — Reuters

Austria enters fourth lockdown as Covid cases soar anew in Europe

VIENNA/BERLIN: Austria entered its fourth national lockdown on Monday after tens of thousands of people, many of them far-right supporters, protested in Vienna against renewed curbs on movement as Europe again becomes the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic.

Protests turned to violence in Brussels and across the Netherlands over the weekend amid frustration over yet more government controls nearly two years after the virus was first identified in China.

Austria, introducing the first lockdown in western Europe since vaccines became available, also announced it would make it compulsory to get inoculated as of February 1. Many Austrians are sceptical about vaccinations, a view encouraged by the far-right Freedom Party, the third biggest in parliament.

Vienna’s streets were quieter than usual on a chilly, overcast on Monday as many shops stayed shut, but people went to work, which was still permitted. The government urged people to work from home where possible.

About 40,000 people protested peacefully in Austria’s capital on Saturday, with only six arrests.

“It’s like a luxury prison. It’s definitely limited freedom and for me it’s not great psychologically”, said Sascha Iamkovyi, a 43-year-



People wearing face masks stand in a queue to get vaccinated in the Philharmonic Hall in Hamburg. — AFP

old entrepreneur in the food sector.

“People were promised (by the government) that if they got vaccinated they would be able to lead a normal life, but now that’s not true.”

Roughly 66 per cent of Austria’s population is fully vaccinated against Covid-19, one of the lowest rates in western Europe.

Authorities blame mainly the unvaccinated for the current Covid wave, though experts say vaccine protection appears to wane after some months and that inoculation, while greatly reducing the risk of serious illness or death, does not prevent viral transmission or re-infection.

Under Austria’s lockdown, restaurants, cafes, bars, theatres,

Austria to make Covid-19 vaccinations compulsory as violent protests erupt in French region of Guadeloupe

non-essential shops and hairdressers cannot open their doors for 10 days, and maybe as many as 20. People can leave home for a limited number of reasons like going to workplaces or buying essentials. Going for a walk is allowed with no limit on time or distance. The Czech Republic and Slovakia banned unvaccinated people from pubs and services from Monday.

Stock markets kicked off the week on a cautious note after posting a second consecutive weekly drop, and the euro struggled as traders weighed the risks of new lockdowns.

Christmas markets in Austria, a huge tourist draw that had only just begun to open, must also close but, in a last-minute change, Austrian ski lifts can remain open to the vaccinated. The conservative-led government imposed a lockdown on the unvaccinated last week but daily infections kept extending far above the previous peak, given continued vaccine scepticism as winter draws in, driving more people indoors. — Reuters

SOFIA

Bulgarian President wins presidential run-off

Bulgarian President Rumen Radev has been re-elected with 66.7 per cent of the vote, according to official results. He won the run-off against his challenger Anastas Gerdzhikov, who received 31.8 per cent of vote, the Central Election Commission (CEC) in Sofia announced on Monday after 99 per cent of the votes had been counted. Radev’s term was to end in January 2022, but he will now remain in charge for another five years. Both Radev and Gerdzhikov had run as



independent candidates.

The run-off election was necessary as Radev narrowly missed re-election in the first round of voting a week ago, with some 49% of the vote. — dpa

SANTIAGO

Chile headed for divisive election run-off

Chile is headed for a polarised presidential election runoff next month after hard-right former congressman Jose Antonio Kast finished on top in the first-round vote on Sunday, ahead of leftist lawmaker and former protest leader Gabriel Boric.

With nearly 97 per cent of the vote counted, Kast had won 27.94 per cent of ballots versus 25.75 per cent for Boric, with a sizeable gap between them and the rest of the field, although both were well short of the majority



needed to win outright. More moderate, center-right candidates performed well, a potential boost for Kast, who appears to be in pole position heading into the December 19 run-off. — AFP

BERLIN

German cities launch Christmas markets

Germany’s popular Christmas markets opened for the 2021 season in several cities. But not all places were feeling the festive cheer, after soaring coronavirus infection rates in the states of Saxony and Bavaria forced some of the country’s most-famous markets to stay shut.

The events that are going ahead will take place under strict hygiene measures and often with fewer attractions than usual. Depending on the region, some will deny entry to unvaccinated



patrons.

In the capital Berlin, the first visitors were milling around the Christmas market at the picturesque Gendarmen market square. — dpa

Le Pen facing biggest test in French elections

ADAM PLOWRIGHT

On a tour of a fine-food trade show, surrounded by cheese and truffles, French far-right leader Marine Le Pen admits that the start of campaigning for next year’s presidential election has given her indigestion.

“It’s been Zemmour for breakfast, lunch and dinner,” she complained after more than an hour and half of sampling everything.

Eric Zemmour, a media pundit and best-selling author whose rhetoric on immigrants is more extreme than Le Pen’s, has made a dramatic entrance into French politics since September.

“It’s been incredible. The way he has monopolised the media is absolutely extraordinary,” she said during a weekend trip to the southern port of Marseille.

For the first time in early October, polls showed Le Pen failing to qualify for the second round of next April’s polls, eclipsed by her new rival whose face was on TV screens and newspaper stands around the country.

“When you’ve got experience you have to let the dust settle and the dust is starting to settle,” the 53-year-old said confidently, forecasting that Zemmour’s support would be temporary while hers was permanent.

Three separate polls in the last 10 days indicate Zemmour, who has yet to officially declare his candidacy, is indeed losing steam.

But the outcome of the duel remains uncertain and observers are unsure how it might effect the final result of an election which President Emmanuel Macron remains the favourite to win.

One possibility is that Le Pen and Zemmour eliminate each other by splitting the far-right vote in the first round on April 10.

The latest tracker poll last Thursday by OpinionWay showed Macron top on 24-25 per cent, Le Pen comfortably in second on 19-21 per cent, with Zemmour trailing on 12 per cent.

Under France’s electoral system, the two candidates who get the most votes in the first round advance to a run-off ballot.

Le Pen is convinced that Zemmour will expand the far-right nationalist vote for the second round by attracting traditional right-wing voters who are angry about immigration and crime, as well as abstentionists. — AFP

It’s been incredible. The way he has monopolised the media is absolutely extraordinary

MARINE LE PEN
Far-right leader



THE DAY TO REMEMBER!

A Sudanese girl sits amid bricks forming the number 21 marking the day as protesters rally in 60th street in the capital Khartoum following a deal-signing ceremony to restore the transition to civilian rule in the country in the capital Khartoum, on Monday.
— AFP

Screen, screen on the phone...



Lakshmi Kothaneth
lakshmiobserver@gmail.com

THE ONLINE WORLD IS THE NEW REALITY. EVERYTHING THAT USED TO HAPPEN IN THE REAL WORLD IS ALSO HAPPENING ON THE VIRTUAL WORLD

Having a wonderful moment, but it is incomplete unless it is shared on the social media.

We are almost conditioned to this way of thinking as number of friends on line can go to thousands. However, there are probably no friends to talk to when the blues hit one.

The online world is the new reality. Everything that used to happen in the real world is also happening on the virtual world ranging from emotions being taken for a rollercoaster ride to fraudsters taking victims for a ride.

Has social media taken control of our lives?

It is something that has been talked about in the past as well but now the social media and its impact has reached another level. This does not mean just getting stressed out by comparing with one’s lives to others which for all probabilities are fake or simply a make believe world.

Have the quieter moments been wiped out?

On one extreme there are people who go to any extent to protect their privacy and on the other side of the scale are the others who live on a thin line of exhibitionism. However, the postings do have good causes as well such as staying in touch as well as showcasing talent and passing on important information.

But it is when there is an element of stress

and a lack of well being due to the sense of lacking the situation gets uncomfortable.

How uncomfortable?

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist explains in *Oman Daily Observer* Podcast — Let’s Talk Mental Health.

Social media of course has its advantages so he says the point is to increase the plus points and decrease the negative ones.

Being on social media is an addiction when too much time is being consumed which results in the online world taking over the actual life. So there is literally no personal life, no personal friends instead they are virtual friends, for some it can have an impact on studies as they cannot stop browsing their feed and tweeting, following trends on different social media platforms, according to Dr Hamed. For others, especially if one is following fashionista or lifestyles, there are chances that one can be dissatisfied with their own personal lives.

Dr Hamed said it has even been known to create depression and anxiety because of excess use of social media.

One of the major reasons identified is comparing oneself to others who could even be faking.

Researching on the subject can take you to so many stories of Internet sensations whose real life is far cry from the life of luxury or perfection portrayed online. Lately, it is the filters that have

been creating the discomfort with some individuals opting for cosmetic surgeries to look like the online celebrities who have actually benefited from the filters available on different applications.

In the podcast Dr Hamed talks about body images and not being satisfied. People use filters to get more likes and the look is different from the natural looks — it can only be fun but again imagine if one is never able to like the image they see on the mirror and not on a mobile screen.

The pain one goes through if their online post has been ignored is as real as any other pain for the concerned person because of the emotion that is involved. If that is the case, what about the hurtful comments?

Anonymity or at times just plain satisfaction of hurting someone seems to give satisfaction to others. Would they do so face to face? Whether it is off or on line, bullying is a reality and one must learn to tackle it especially if the individual is ready to spend longer time online.

According to Dr Hamed the fact the bullies cannot see the victim and their reaction can be one of the reasons why there is so much more bullying online.

Once again, this too depicts the mental health of the individuals who indulge in cyberbullying or bullying in general.

Tune into the podcast to find out more omanobserver.om.

Hard-right Kast rises, targeting ‘crime and violence’

NATALIA A RAMOS
MIRANDA

Chilean ultra-conservative Jose Antonio Kast, sometimes likened to Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro, is in the driving seat to become the Andean country’s next president after leading in a first-round ballot on Sunday.

Kast took top spot with some 28 per cent of the vote with most ballots counted, ahead of 35-year-old former student leader Gabriel Boric on 25.6 per cent, meaning the two will head to a polarised run-off on December 19.

The 55-year-old lawyer, a Catholic and father of nine, is disarmingly softly spoken, even as he promises a tough approach on crime and a streamlined state. He has praised the “economic legacy” of former dictator Augusto

Pinochet.

“We are going to work to restore peace, order, progress and our liberty,” Kast said late on Sunday at his election bunker where the mood was jubilant, helped by a strong showing from centre-right parties that should provide a second-round boost.

“We still have a stretch left to cover. We are going to move forward with everyone, because this is a triumph for all of Chile.”

Kast, the candidate for the Christian Social Front, has become a flagbearer of Chile’s “unapologetic” right wing, which has hardened in response to the rise of the progressive political left in the wake of angry and sometimes violent street protests in 2019. “They call us intolerant and extreme, because we speak

the truth and say things head-on. Unlike the left, we have never endorsed violence,” Kast wrote on Twitter in late October.

Critics say his treatment of the political class — he has called Congress a “circus” — and proposals that have included building a ditch to curb illegal immigration are reminiscent of right-wing populist leaders like Bolsonaro and former US president Donald Trump.

But he has played down those comparisons and looked to soften his image ahead of the vote, as well as seeking to maintain distance between himself and the unpopular ruling centre-right government of Sebastian Pinera.

“We want to unite, we want to dialogue with everyone, regardless of political hue,” he

told business leaders in an event on November 11. “I am a direct and frank person, but I am always respectful.”

To his critics Kast is a throwback from the era of brutal dictatorship under Pinochet in the 1970s and 1980s, which while establishing much of Chile’s successful economic model created a wide gap between a small rich elite and most Chileans.

Kast’s brother, Michael, was a minister in the military regime. Jose Kast ran for president in 2017, coming in fourth place, saying then that if Pinochet were still alive he would have voted for him.

Kast has pledged to build back economic growth and “restore” order after the 2019 protests, which saw buildings

around capital Santiago burned and thousands injured in street conflicts with the police.

“We are going to be free from crime and violence,” he said in his speech on Sunday, when he targeted rival Boric over what he said was support for “vandals” and his alliance with the Communist Party in his broad leftist coalition.

“This December we won’t just elect a president, we will choose between liberty and communism, between democracy and communism.”

Kast has little patience with protesters and has questioned the work of an elected assembly that is drafting a new constitution to replace the Pinochet-era text. He also promised to use a strong hand to tackle tensions with indigenous Mapuche in the south. — Reuters

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sport



British, Dutch sailors shine as Worlds conclude

MUSCAT: The 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championships, organised by Oman Sail, concluded with a double for the Dutch, and with the British defending title. Odile van Aanholt and Elise de Ruyter (NED) won the 49erFX world title, while countrymen Bart Lambriex and Floris van der Werken took matching golds in the 49er fleet. Both teams are new pairings since this summer, both teams made it hard on themselves on the last day, and both teams came through in the medal race when they needed to. “It’s been a few years away from the 49er but it’s great to be back,” said Floris van der Werken, who didn’t have confirmation of the win until most of the fleet had finished. “Bart did an amazing job of

putting the boat in the right place.” In the 49erFX, the Dutch pairing proved that a new team can take on the world. Van Aanholt’s and deRuyter’s respective partners were injured leading up to the worlds. But the strong training community in Holland proved that sailors were interchangeable. Happy and loose on shore throughout the week, and with the support of both their parents on shore, the pair made the win look easy. “We’re so happy with what we’ve done here,” said de Ruyter. “It’s great to be out here in Oman with my father, and Odile with her parents, to celebrate together. But I’m looking forward to going back home, even if the weather is cold, just to do normal things again.” Helene Naess and Marie

“It’s been a few years away from the 49er but it’s great to be back. Bart did an amazing job of putting the boat in the right place

FLORIS VAN DER WERKEN
Dutch sailor

Ronningen (NOR) kept their gold medal hopes alive by gaining six points on the Dutch in the last fleet race. In the medal race, the Norwegians sailed brilliantly, smoothly gybing into the top three downwind, but it wasn’t enough to overtake the Dutch. Double Olympic gold medalists Martine Grael and Kahena Kunze (BRA), were also unable to mount

a real challenge, despite passing half the fleet in the last downwind leg and ended up in third. TOO CLOSE TO CALL IN 49ER In the 49er, the points were exceedingly close as the flying Dutchmen won by only two points in the end. In the final fleet race of the series this morning, the Dutch lost a number of points to

the Germans, Tim Fischer and Fabian Graf (GER). A protest was lodged against the Dutch by the Danish team of Frederick Rask and Jacob Precht Jensen, who were sitting in third overall. After considerable deliberation over the port/starboard incident, the Dutch were disqualified from the final fleet race, and went into the medal race having dropped to second. This is the first time any nation has ever won both the 49er and 49erFX titles simultaneously. The Dutch sailing federation went all-in with the 49erFX squad in 2012, bringing all their high performance teams together, continuously rotating the sailors around. They had initial success in the 49erFX, and now, a decade later, it’s paying off in the 49er as well.

Brits Double World Champs, While Young Italians Join Party John Gimson and Anna Burnet (GBR) have won the 2021 Nacra 17 World Championship, the British successfully defending the title they won in Australia back in early 2020. They started the day in the lead, with Paul Kohlhoff and Alica Stuhlemmer (GER) sitting a few points behind and ended up confidently foiling down the last run of the medal race, finishing third, winning the event by nine points. “I think that’s one of our big strengths is resetting in the race to stay focused,” said a visibly relieved Gimson as he hosed down his catamaran in the setting Omani sun. “Identifying what’s paid and getting back on to that. That’s what we spent our whole lives working on.”



Asad al Raisi & Muhannad al Balushi

Oman team heads to Houston for World Table Tennis Championships

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 22

Oman national table tennis team will attend the 2021 ITTF World Table Tennis championship for the third consecutive time which will take place in Houston, US from November 23 to 29. Oman’s delegation, headed by Abdullah Bamakhalf, chairman of Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA), headed to USA on Monday. Oman’s paddlers Asad al Raisi and Muhannad al Balushi will represent the Sultanate of Oman team at the global TT event. The Omani duo will compete in the doubles category in the top event.

Oman’s paddlers Asad al Raisi and Muhannad al Balushi will represent the Sultanate of Oman team at the global TT event. The Omani duo will compete in the doubles category in the top event

The selection of Oman’s players came after their attendance in the 25th edition of Asian Table Tennis Championship in Qatar in October and improving their world ranking.

Oman national TT team made their debut at the ITTF World Table Tennis championship in 2017 in Dusseldorf city, Germany. The second participation was in 2019 ITTF World Table Tennis championship in Hungary. Asad and his team-mate Muhannad will be looking for a different show in a third participation and registering better results in different fixtures. Oman’s newly appointed head coach, Omid Shamas Sharababki, supervised the internal training sessions of the national duo paddlers including Asad al Raisi and Muhannad al Balushi. An intensive training plan took place during the previous

weeks. The Iranian coach worked to develop the paddler’s physical and technical performance ahead of the top table tennis event. Attendance of the national players in the world championship will assist in boosting players’ world ranking. On the other hand, OTTA chief Abdullah Bamakhalf, will be among the candidates for the ITTF board members list for 2021-2025 term. Bamakhalf was elected as board member in the last Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU) Congress which was held in Doha in October. Sajad Mohammed Baqir was elected as ATTU’s treasurer.

ZVEREV DETHRONES MEDVEDEV TO WIN SECOND ATP FINALS TITLE

TURIN, ITALY: Alexander Zverev captured his second ATP Finals title after producing a brilliant performance to defeat world number two Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-4 in Sunday's final in Turin.

Zverev, the Olympic singles gold medallist in Tokyo, won his tour-leading sixth trophy of the season and ended a run of five straight losses to defending champion Medvedev.

The German third seed broke once in each set as he swept US Open winner Medvedev aside in 75 minutes to add to the season-ending crown he won in 2018. "It was great, I won the ATP Finals against someone I'd lost to five times in a row so I had to play one of my best matches," said Zverev.

"I'm happy with that and ready to go on holidays with this win now."

Zverev will skip the Davis Cup finals to be played in Madrid, Turin and Innsbruck

from November 25 to December 5.

"There's no better way to end the season than winning here so obviously I'm incredibly happy. But I'm now very much looking forward to next year already," he said.

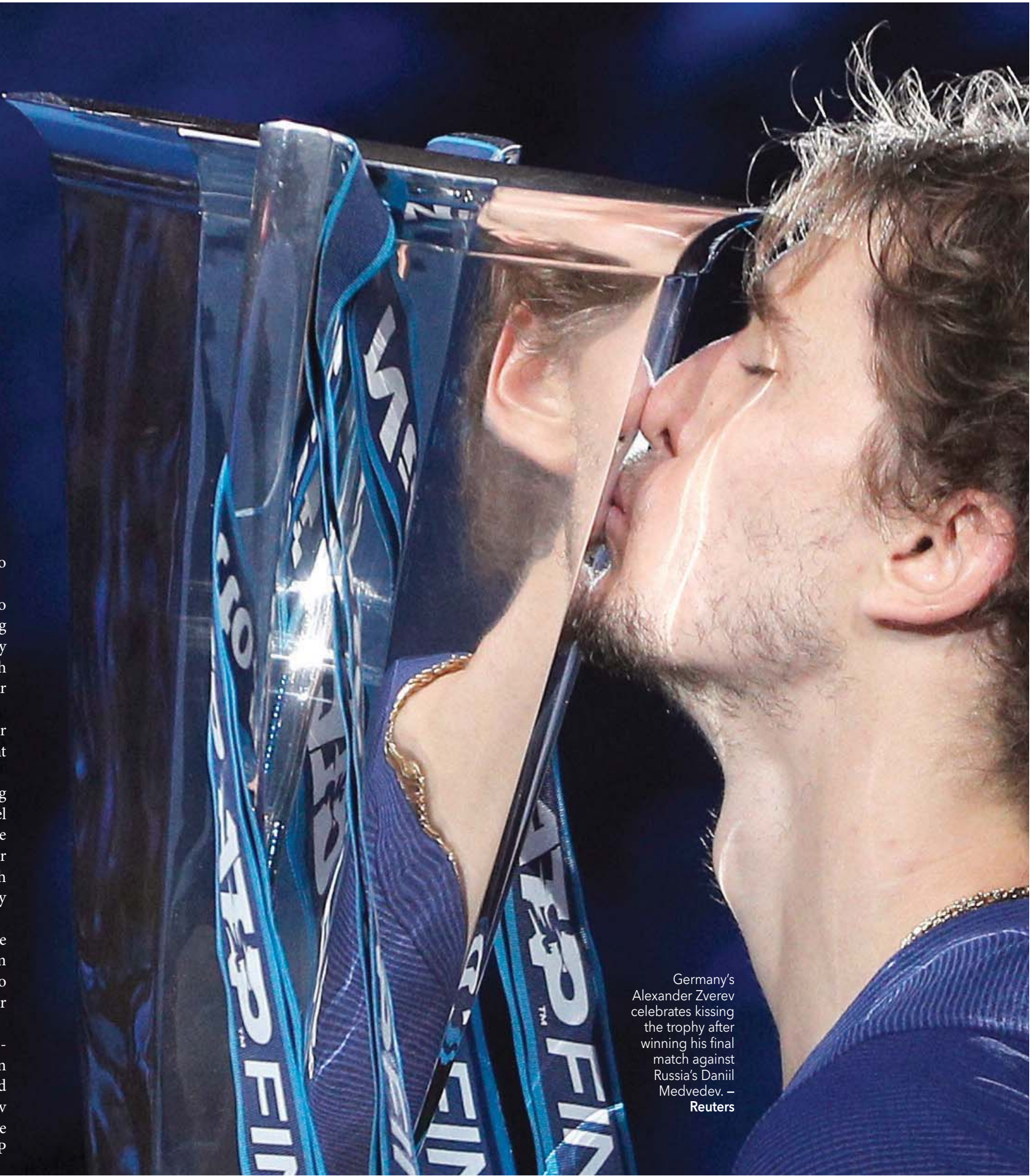
"It's very special, I'm super thrilled and super happy right now."

An event this year missing both Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, the ATP Finals have proved the breakout stage for tennis' new generation with the Grand Slams still largely beyond their reach.

This first final since the tournament's relocation from London was also the first to feature two players aged 25 or younger since 2005.

Zverev, conqueror of top-ranked Novak Djokovic in Saturday's semi-finals, landed the first blow against Medvedev by breaking for a 2-1 lead in the first set.

— AFP



Germany's Alexander Zverev celebrates kissing the trophy after winning his final match against Russia's Daniil Medvedev. — Reuters

Sri Lanka spinners put Windies on the ropes

GALLE, SRI LANKA: West Indies were in deep trouble on Monday in the first Test against Sri Lanka as they collapsed to 113 for six at stumps on day two in reply to the hosts' first innings total of 386 all out.

The tourists, hunting their first ever Test win in Sri Lanka, trailed by 273 runs with four wickets in hand in Galle.

After Sri Lanka's quicks failed to take a wicket, the spinners made hay as off-spinner Ramesh Mendis claimed three wickets and left-arm orthodox duo Praveen Jayawickrama and Lasith Embuldeniya shared three wickets between them.

Openers Kraigg Brathwaite and Jermaine Blackwood had added 46 runs for the first wicket before Embuldeniya provided the breakthrough trapping Blackwood leg-before for 20. Jayawickrama was operating from the City End and Nkrumah Bonner gloved one to first slip where Dhananjaya de Silva took a low catch. He made one.

Then off-spinner Mendis came into the attack in the 32nd over replacing Jayawickrama and claimed two wickets in two balls to put West Indies in



Sri Lanka's Praveen Jayawickrama celebrates after the dismissal of West Indies' Nkrumah Bonner. — AFP

all sorts of trouble. He struck in the last ball of his first over when Brathwaite was caught at leg-slip. Brathwaite had looked solid on his way to 41 off 115 deliveries with seven fours and had successfully overturned a decision before tea.

Mendis struck again in the first ball of his second over

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA FIRST INNINGS	
P Nissanka c Cornwall b Gabriel	56
D Karunaratne st da Silva b Chase	147
O Fernando c Bonner b Chase	3
A Mathews c Holder b Chase	3
D de Silva hit wicket b Gabriel	61
D Chandimal c Cornwall b Chase	45
R Mendis c da Silva b Warrican	13
S Lakmal lbw Warrican	11
D Chameera c Brathwaite b Warrican	3
L Embuldeniya c Blackwood b Chase	17
P Jayawickrama (not out)	8
Extras (B-5, LB-6, NB-8)	19
Total (all out, 133.5 overs)	386
Fall of wickets: 1-139, 2-164, 3-170, 4-281, 5-296, 6-331, 7-355, 8-361, 9-361	
WEST INDIES FIRST INNINGS	
K Brathwaite c Nissanka b Mendis	41
J Blackwood lbw Embuldeniya	20
N Bonner c de Silva b Jayawickrama	1
S Hope c Fernando b Mendis	10
R Chase c Fernando b Mendis	2
J Warrican c Chandimal b Warrican	1
K Mayers (not out)	22
J Holder (not out)	1
Extras (B-8, LB-4, NB-2, W-1)	15
Total (For 6 wickets, 42 overs)	113
Fall of wickets: 1-46, 2-51, 3-80, 4-83, 5-86, 6-100	
Bowling: S Lakmal 5-1-6-0, D Chameera 4-0-8-0, L Embuldeniya 15-4-39-1, P Jayawickrama 12-4-25-2, R Mendis 6-1-23-3	

when Shai Hope was well caught by Oshada Fernando at short leg. He made 10.

Hope came in as concussion substitute for Jeremy Solozano. On his Test debut, Solozano was taken to hospital on the first morning.

— AFP

Pakistan shrug off late jitters to whitewash Bangladesh

DHAKA: Mohammad Nawaz struck a boundary off the last ball as Pakistan overcame late drama to beat Bangladesh by five wickets in Monday's third Twenty20 international for a series whitewash.

The visitors seemed to be coasting in Dhaka after restricting the hosts to 124-7 before Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah Riyad conjured up late excitement in the final over.

With Pakistan needing eight runs for victory, Mahmudullah took two wickets in two balls.

Iftikhar Ahmed struck the fourth ball for a six to deny Mahmudullah and put victory back within grasp before going out with only one left to bowl.

Nawaz came to the rescue to take Pakistan to 127-5 and break Bangladesh's heart.

Mahmudullah, who finished with 3-10, rued their total earlier with the bat.

"Batters from both teams struggled a bit," Mahmudullah said at the end of the match. "(We) needed to spend some time at the crease to capitalise."

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was dismissed for 19 while Mohammad Rizwan's 51-run partnership with Haider Ali gave the tourists an early boost.

Debutant Shahidul Islam bowled Rizwan for 40 to break the



Pakistan's Mohammad Nawaz (R) greets Khushdil Shah after winning the third T20I against Bangladesh. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH		PAKISTAN	
M Naim c and b Wasim	47	M Rizwan b Shahidul	40
N Hossain b Dahani	5	B Azam c Naim b Aminul	19
S Hossain c Iftikhar b Qadir	22	H Ali c Najmul b Mahmudullah	45
A Hossain c Rizwan b Qadir	20	S Ahmed c Naim b Mahmudullah	6
M Riyad c Wasim b Haris	13	I Ahmed c sub b Mahmudullah	6
N Hasan c Qadir b Wasim	4	K Shah (not out)	0
M Hasan (not out)	5	M Nawaz (not out)	4
A Islam (run out)	3	Extras (LB-3, NB-1, W-3)	7
Extras (B-2, LB-1, W-2)	5	Total (For 5 wickets, 20 overs)	127
Total (For 7 wickets, 20 overs)	124	Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-83, 3-117, 4-117, 5-123	
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-37, 3-80, 4-111, 5-116, 6-116, 7-124		Bowling: Mahedi 4-0-19-0, Taskin 3-1-0-16-0, Nasum 4-0-20-0, Shahidul 3-5-0-33-1, Aminul 4-0-26-1, Mahmudullah 1-0-10-3	
Bowling: Nawaz 1-0-2-0, Dahani 3-0-24-1, Wasim 4-0-15-2, Haris 4-0-32-1, Iftikhar 4-0-13-0, Qadir 4-0-35-2			

stand but Haider took Pakistan close with 45 off 38 balls before he became Mahmudullah's first victim in the final over.

Pakistan bowlers earlier kept any momentum in check after the

hosts elected to bat first. Debutant Shah Nawaz Dahani bowled Najmul Hossain for five in the second over of the innings before Mohammad Wasim and Usman Qadir rattled the hosts.

— AFP



Leeds United's Daniel James in action with Tottenham Hotspur's Ryan Sessegnon. – Reuters

SPURS RESPOND TO CONTE PEP-TALK WITH WIN

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, NOV 22

After a bland first-half performance which saw them a goal down, Tottenham responded to their new manager Antonio Conte's half-time blast with a 2-1 win over Leeds.

It lifted them up the Premier League table to within four points of the top four position for a Champions League opportunity – a primary aim of the manager.

Conte, openly delighted with his first Premier League win with the new club, said: "We want to try to improve the position in the table and I must be honest and say that in England the league is very, very difficult and every game is very tough.

"You can lose points with all the teams and at this moment there are four teams who, for many reasons – because they are working with the same coaches and invested a lot of money – have

a gap. I'm not scared about this and I trust in my players."

He added: "After the first half our fans weren't satisfied with the football we had played and I was agreeing with them. I changed the plan tactically but it was the players who played well, with personality, they ran, they put pressure on Leeds. To win in this way is good because I bring with me and also my players, two different situations – the first half and the second half?"

He went on to say: "I have great passion and I want to transfer my passion in all of this environment. You can have quality, organisation but the passion and heart, you have or you don't have."

Leeds were excellent in the first half while Spurs were nervous and sloppy. After the break the difference in their attitude was stark. Leeds took the lead on the stroke of half-time. Jack Harrison put in a lovely cross from the left and Daniel James beat Eric Dier

You can lose points with all the teams and at this moment there are four teams who, for many reasons – because they are working with the same coaches and invested a lot of money – have a gap. I'm not scared about this and I trust in my players

ANTONIO CONTE
Tottenham Hotspur manager

to stroke the ball home.

Having lifted their game in the second half and playing with full commitment, Spurs equalised in the 58th minute. Harry Kane

missed a diving header from a cross by Sergio Reguilon and the ball went to Lucas Moura who passed back from the six-yard box to Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, to drive the ball inside the right post to the cheers of the fans who had booed the team at half time.

By this stage Spurs were in control and the balance of play had shifted totally to the home side. Eleven minutes after the equaliser, came the winning goal.

Liam Cooper gave away a free-kick with a foul on Moura. Dier took the shot which hit the bottom of the post after a deflection from the Leeds' wall and Reguilon was quick to pounce on the rebound to slot it home to the clear ecstasy of Conte and the fans.

Leeds dejected manager, Marcelo Bielsa, felt the second half didn't go according to his plan. He said: "I started to see that problem. My task is to see that problem and solve it and I didn't do this."

All-round display by Awais helps PDO RC outplay OCT Seeb

MUSCAT: PDO RC got the better of OCT Seeb by five wickets in the B Division match of the Oman Cricket League here on Friday, thanks to an all-round display by Awais Mohammed for PDO RC, starring both with the ball and the bat.

Batting first after winning the toss, OCT Seeb inched their way to 162 all out in 29.3 overs, thanks mainly to Samir Othman's sedate 54 run innings, studded with eight boundaries. Awais Mohammed was the pick of the bowlers, scalping three wickets for 42.

Replying to the target, PDO RC knocked off the runs in 24.5 overs for the loss of five wickets. Awais Mohammed starred again with the bat, scoring 46 runs, with four hits to the fence. Issa al Balushi was the sole bowler who made an impact from OCT Seeb, picking up two wickets for 28 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: OCT Seeb 162 all out in 29.3 overs (Samir Othman 54 (67) 8x4; Awais Mohammed - 42/3) lost against PDO RC 163/5 in 24.5 Overs (Awais Mohammed 46 (52) 4x4; Issa al Balushi 28/2) by 5 wickets

In another Division C match of the Oman Cricket League played on Friday; Nibrass Tech completely outclassed OCT Al Amerat by 9 wickets. OCT Al Amerat won the toss and elected to bat first and could muster only 112 for the loss of six wickets in the allotted 20 overs, thanks mainly to Rafeeq Mohammed Siyad's innings of 38. No other batsman could make any impact. Shahid Hassan knocked off two wickets for 19 runs for Nibrass Tech. In reply, Nibrass Tech blazed their way to the target in 14.2 overs, powered by Tarun Bhaskaran's 54 off 41 deliveries. He was ably supported by Baig Saud, who scored 48 runs off 40 balls. Moosa al Balushi took the sole wicket to fall.

BRIEF SCORES: OCT Al Amerat 112/6 in 20 overs (Rafeeq Mohammed Siyad 38 (51) 4x4, Shahid Hassan Mohammad - 19/2) lost against Nibrass Tech 116/1 in 14.2 Overs (Tarun Bhaskaran 54 (41) 8x4; Khalid Moosa al Balushi 26/1) by 9 Wickets

In another closely fought D Division match, Ideal



Sankarlal Sasidharan, Danmark

Technology beat Pitspot by two wickets in the last over. Put into bat after losing the toss, Pitspot scored a respectable 157 for the loss of nine wickets in the allotted 20 overs. Mohazin Moosa top scored with 41 runs off 35 balls, while Arun Kumar

Jeyakumar Esakkiappam's 30-run innings powered Ideal Technology to victory

Ganeshan picked up two for 24 for Ideal Technology. In reply, Ideal Technology got off a decent start with most of the top order batsman contributing. It was left to middle order batsman Jeyakumar Esakkiappam to lead the team to the target, with his quickfire 30 off 22 balls, studded with four boundaries. Monty Navani was the pick of the bowlers for Pitstop, picking up three for 29.

BRIEF SCORES: Pitspot 157/9 in 20 overs (Mohazin Moosa 41 (35) 3x4; Arun Kumar Ganeshan - 24/2) lost against Ideal Technology 159/8 in 19.2 Overs (Jeyakumar Esakkiappam 30 (22) 4x4, Monty Navani 29/3) by 2 Wickets

In another high-scoring match of the D Division, Danmark CC outsmarted OCT Al Maabela by nine wickets, thanks to a brilliant, swashbuckling century by Sankarlal Sasidharan.

BRIEF SCORES: OCT Al Maabela 189/2 in 20 overs (Zafarullah al Balushi 65 (40) 7x4,3x6; Sankarlal Sasidharan - 28/1) lost against Danmark CC 191/3 in 15.4 Overs (Sankarlal Sasidharan 120 (57) 15x4, 5x6; Nabeel Mohd Boota 31/1) by 9 Wickets

Deccan XI wins the Deccan Premier League title

MUSCAT: Indian Social Club, Oman — Deccani Wing organised its fourth edition of Cricket Tournament, Deccan Premier League (DPL) played on 5th and 12th November at Al Hail Cricket Ground, Maabela.

Ten teams participated over two days for qualifying league stage and semifinals were played between Deccan XI vs Deccan Stars and Deccan Challengers Vs Deccan Royals.

Deccan XI and Deccan Royals reached the final.

Final match was keenly fought where Deccan XI after winning the toss scored 88 runs for 3 wickets in 10 overs. Junaid 28, Malik Rashid 23, Javed 18 and Irfan 2/16 were the stand out performers.

In reply, Deccan Royals made 76 runs for 6 wickets in 10 overs. Munavar 19, Farhaan



14, Irfan 14, Ravi 3/26, and Malik Rashid 2/9 contributed significantly.

Man of the Match award went to Malik Rashid. Following were the tournament award winners: Man of the Series — Junaid, Best Batsman — Junaid and Best Bowler — Ravi.

Deccani Wing office bearers

Dr Wasifuddin Convenor, Ismail Baig Co-Convener, Mansoor Sabri Treasurer and Zaheer Al Deen, Head of Organising Committee welcomed the Chief Guest Venkatapathy Raju, famous Indian Cricketer and Guest of Honour Syed Anwar Ahsan, Chief Selector Oman Cricket.

Sathish Nambiar, Chairman



ISC Oman, Babu Rajendran, General Secretary and Suhail Khan Joint Secretary, Avishkar Salve Fast Bowling Consultant to Oman Cricket and Asif Sultan Ex-Cricketer were also present in the event.

Chief guest Venkatapathy Raju handed over the Champions trophy to winning captain Ismail.

Guest of honour Anwar Ahsan gave the Runners up trophy to Munavar. Sathish Nambiar and Babu Rajendran distributed individual medals and other awards.

The organising committee headed by Zaheer Al Deen and members Naimath and Mirza Zulkhader received a lot of

accolade for holding a hugely successful event with full Covid protocols in place.

Zaheer Al Deen, Syed Fasiuddin and Mohammed Saleemudeen thanked the Sponsors of the event Bin Nizadam Enterprises LLC, Dar Al Arab Al Wataniya LLC, HST Signs, National Distribution Company LLC, (Al Wazir and Al Wali), Deccan Darbar & Café Desire, Arab Carvers, Abu Jammuma Tradng LLC, Bait Al Khair Furnishing, Al Safa — The Uniform Makers, Oasis Ideal Trasing LLC, Sahara Furnishing, Asia Furnishing, Nizam Restaurant, Sikandar Restaurant, Al Kazmi Laboratory and Scintillant Infotech.

Deccani Wing and its members wish Citizens and Residents of the Sultanate of Oman a Very Happy National Day.

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بنك ذفان

Oman receives enthusiastic WTO Trade Policy Review

KEY FORUM: Conducted in the presence of representatives from 26 countries, the review provided an opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to outline its investment and trade policies as well as showcase economic development

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 22

The Sultanate of Oman successfully concluded its third World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Policy Review in Geneva on Friday. Conducted in the presence of representatives from 26 countries, the event provided an opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to outline its investment and trade policies

as well as showcase economic development as, under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it progresses towards the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and builds a sustainable and diversified economy equipped to meet the challenges and harness the opportunities of the 21st century.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation to the Geneva WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR) was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion who expressed great satisfaction with the reception and commendation the Sultanate of Oman received from WTO members for its overall trade and investment regime.

The Minister added: "Oman diligently implements trade policies consistent with its WTO obligations, maintaining an open,



It is within this framework that we as a nation move forward with purpose in the international trading arena, enhancing and extending our competitive offer, growing a network of export markets and creating a pro-enterprise environment that is ever more attractive to international investors

QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSUF
Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

free and transparent economy, fully conforming to the basic principles and rules of the multilateral trading system.

It is within this framework that we as a nation move forward with purpose in the international trading arena, enhancing and extending our competitive offer, growing a network of export markets and creating a pro-enterprise environment that is ever more attractive to international investors."

Al Yousuf reported that WTO members welcomed the launch of Oman Vision 2040 and the long-term goals included in the 10th Five-Year Plan along with the continued prioritisation of diversification from hydrocarbons. WTO members complimented the Sultanate of Oman on its generally low tariffs and minimal non-tariff barriers to trade. Also receiving praise was the

10 per cent growth in Oman's GDP in the first half of 2021.

Members acknowledged the double challenge arising from low oil prices and the Covid-19 pandemic that the Sultanate of Oman has faced during the trade review period, and were pleased with the measures taken by government to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, particularly on the most vulnerable in society.

In advance of last week's meetings in Geneva, the Sultanate of Oman received over 240 comments and questions from countries that included China, India, the USA, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Brazil, Singapore and Iceland, an indication of the keen interest taken by the international community in the Sultanate of Oman's continued growth and progress.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Oman waives licensing fees for crowdfunding operators for next two years

LANDMARK GESTURE: The move is aimed at stimulating the economic recovery, spurring various types of crowdfunding platforms, attracting local and foreign investors, supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs, and enhancing GDP growth

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 22

New rules governing the operation of crowdfunding platforms in the Sultanate of Oman are now in force, paving the way for interested platform operators to commence their activities, Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi (pictured), Executive President of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), announced on Monday.

The regulations, posted on the Authority's website, offer a great deal of flexibility in providing crowdfunding services, a statement issued by the Authority said. Under the recent amendments to the Executive Regulation of the Capital Market Law (ERCML) published in the Official Gazette (Issue 1417, companies intending to practice the business will be exempted from the licensing fees of RO 155,000 in total until January 1, 2023.

The move to exempt the fees comes within the endeavours



of the government to ease the commercial business, to stimulate the economic recovery, to encourage the creation of the largest possible number of various types of crowdfunding platforms and to attract both local and foreign investors into the Sultanate of Oman for the purpose of supporting the entrepreneurs and to transform the results of research and development and innovations into small and medium enterprises (SMEs) able to achieve growth to enhance the GDP.

Al Salmi added that the preparation of the regulations were made in consultation with the community and all stakeholders, taking into account best international and regional practices in this field and the nature of the small, medium and micro enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the needs of the national economy in view of the transformation into a productive economy.

Al Salmi added that the Rules for Crowdfunding Platforms are adequately flexible and contribute to supporting SMEs. The regulation states that the capital of the company intending to carry out the activity must not be less than RO 25,000 which is an opportunity for Omani companies to launch or use such funding platforms to finance the investment initiatives in any economic or productive sector.

TURN TO PAGE 14

GREEN HYDROGEN SUMMIT OMAN

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GREEN HYDROGEN SUMMIT OMAN

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Sohar International receives ‘Best Corporate Banking Oman 2021’ Award



MUSCAT: Sohar International has established itself as a preferred financial partner in the Sultanate.

Adding to its accolades, Sohar International was recently conferred the ‘Best Corporate Banking — Oman 2021’ award at the Business Outlook Media Awards based in UAE which further attests to the bank’s strong position in the market.

The award recognises and rewards excellence in businesses around the world with a focus on performance, innovation and drive to create industry value.

While Sohar International has always been revered for demonstrating utmost excellence in its Wholesale Banking services, the bank has also expanded its offering by including an entire suite of financial and business advisory solutions aligned to the overall direction of the economy and Oman vision 2040.

With a team of highly-skilled advisers who reserve a deep understanding of the various sectors within the local market and related business sentiments, Sohar International has been successful in helping its corporate customers make prudent financing decisions thereby expanding their business and positively contributing to the overall economy.

Effectively drawing up a future map of the finance environment, the bank’s financial advisers are able to further highlight potential threats and opportunities, therefore giving business owners a better understanding of the market to strategically plan ahead.

ahlibank receives JP Morgan Chase Elite Quality Recognition Award

MUSCAT: ahlibank has been awarded JP Morgan Chase ‘Elite Quality Recognition Award 2021’ for maintaining an outstanding 99.9 per cent modification-free rate for the bank’s remittance in USD. The award was received by Mohammed bin Abdul Qadir al Balushi, AGM- Head of Treasury, ahlibank; at a ceremony held at the bank’s head office.

This prestigious recognition is a validation of ahlibank’s commitment to ensure absolute accuracy and efficiency while handling electronic fund transactions and commercial payments.

Mohammed bin Abdul Qadir al Balushi, said, “We are honoured and privileged to receive this recognition from JP Morgan Chase Bank. It is an acknowledgement of our constant endeavour to excel; it highlights the innovative measures we adopt to push the envelope when it comes to serving our clients and associates. Such recognition, from a top banking and financial institution, will further leverage



our prospects in the local and regional market and bolster our drive to reach newer success paradigms.”

JP Morgan Chase Bank is a wholly-owned subsidiary of JP Morgan Chase and Company, a global financial services provider that offers investment banking, asset management, treasury and other services. It has been honouring institutions and corporate entities with quality recognition awards; through its STP initiative award, it recognises correspondent banks that have achieved operational excellence in electronic fund transfers and

commercial payments.

Congratulating ahlibank on its new achievement, Nawaf Y Humood, Executive Director, Public Sector Coverage — MENA & Treasury Services, at JP Morgan, stated: “ahlibank’s 99.9 per cent modification-free rate in dollar denominated fund transfers is a proof of its excellence in electronic transactions.

At JP Morgan Chase, we maintain uncompromising standards of quality to ensure accuracy in fund transfers, and ahlibank met every criterion and even exceeded the set parameters

Bank Muscat Premier banking announces discounts on safe deposit rentals

MUSCAT: In line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and commitment to customer service excellence, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of a special offer for Private Banking, Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers under which they can avail of excellent discounts on rentals of Safe Deposit Lockers.

Customers who opt to rent lockers at the Head Office Branch will be eligible for 40 per cent off on the first year and 20 per cent discount on rental fees in the second year.

Customers who opt to rent Safe Deposit Lockers at branches in Al Qurum, The Wave, Al Athaiba Roundabout, Bait Al Reem, Royal Opera House, Burj Al Sahwa, Maabela, Ruwi, Al Ansab, Safalat



Ibra, Tareef, Marfa Daris as well as the Salalah Main branch are eligible for a 20 per cent discount on first year rentals. Customers who do not have a locker at present can easily apply for discounted scheme by visiting any of the above-mentioned branches as per their choice.

Lockers are available in four sizes — small, medium, large and extra-large and the customer can request access to a locker for up to two persons by submitting an authorisation letter at the branch.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnassir al Raisi (pictured), Deputy General Manager — Premier Banking, said: “Bank Muscat Premier Banking is delighted to continue offering a large number of exclusive and innovative products, services and benefits to our valued customers. We expect the latest offer to benefit many of our customers who are looking for secure storage for their valuables. Our valued customers can take full advantage of these innovative benefits, and we look forward to warmly welcoming new Premier Banking customers too.”

Bank Muscat Premier Banking has been continuously launching new offers and benefits for its customers in response to the latest global banking trends and customer feedback.

The bank’s referral scheme for

to qualify for the award. Their expertise in ensuring absolute zero error for remittances is a proof of their commitment to meet global standards of quality.”

ahlibank has enhanced its electronic fund transfer operations to ensure thorough professionalism in handling financial transactions. Its customer centric approach to every banking operation continues to define its vision and mission.

Innovative products and services have spearheaded its drive to attain digital transformation and establish an enviable platform for customers to enjoy technologically advanced services.

JP Morgan has, since 1997, been presenting awards to recognise operational excellence of high-performing clients and employees and reward their outstanding efforts in achieving the best Straight-Through Processing system. STP is a mechanism that automates the end-to-end processing of financial transactions.

Asalah earlier this year offered guaranteed cash rewards of RO 100 to both the refer and the referee for each successful referral.

Al Jawhar customers could similarly win RO 50 each for successful referrals. It must be noted that Asalah customers enjoy a range of benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 35 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre (24779999).

Exclusive lifestyle benefits include the Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 “Buy 1 Get 1 free” offers in Sultanate of Oman and at international destinations, as well as rewards of indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments.

Oman waives licensing fees for crowdfunding operators for next two years

FROM PAGE 13

He emphasised that availing such funding platforms for the entrepreneurs and SMEs addresses one of the key challenges facing companies in obtaining funding due to the inherent risks and lack of adequate guarantees as required by financial institutions.

Commenting on the key features of the crowdfunding regulation, the Executive President said the directives allow the operator of the platform to provide funding through four (4) ways — (1) Donation Crowdfunding, (2) Reward Crowdfunding, (3) Equity Crowdfunding, and (4) Peer to Peer Crowdfunding. Obtaining funding through the platforms will be restricted to companies and enterprises, not individuals.

The directives to limit the risk of investors with low solvency and lack of investment experience, placed limits to the funds that can be invested, based on the type of funding provided by the platform.

The directives allow the operator of the platform to attract investors and donors inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman and may provide funding to any company or enterprise in the Sultanate of Oman or abroad in accordance with the specific terms and conditions.

The directives include a number of obligations to be satisfied by the operator companies of the crowdfunding platforms towards the CMA as the CMA will monitor the performance of the company licensed to operate the platform to ensure compliance with the regulation as well as the obligations of each party in the funding process.

His Excellency emphasised that the key obligation that will contribute to enhancing the confidence and protect all parties is the provision of written information security policy to protect the confidentiality, safety and quality of information and IT assets based on best international and local practices in information security, and the operator will be obliged to display all the information and disclosures issued by the applicant for funding on the same platform and to do the due diligence to ensure they are correct and fair as well as immediate disclosure on the platform of any errors or misleading information or statements or investment risks related to the applicant for funding or their investment undertakings. The rules also oblige the operator of the platform to put in place anti-money laundering and combating terrorism procedures.

Earlier, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Capital Market Authority, issued Decision E/151/2021 amending the ERCML and authorising activities of Crowdfunding Platforms in the Sultanate of Oman published in the Official Gazette issue 1417.

Own Lexus GX with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Own and experience exceptional journeys in the Lexus GX with exclusive benefits. They include free service 3 years / 30,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 1 year free registration. The campaign is valid up to December 30, 2021. (Conditions apply. Visit any Lexus showroom for details).

A dual-purpose luxury vehicle, GX 460 can go from a short work commute in the city, to a long family vacation deep in the Rocky Mountains. The engine is a 292-horsepower 4.6-litre V8 producing 44.7 Kg.M of peak torque. Combine that with a 2,500 kg towing capacity, and you’ve got an ideal boat hauler.

Towing is aided with Trailer Sway Control, a function of the Vehicle Stability Control that enhances straight-line tracking.



Utilising the technology of the Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS), the GX 460 enhances handling and ride comfort by helping to keep the vehicle level in both on and off-road conditions.

When the GX encounters an uneven surface, one compressed cylinder causes fluid to flow to the other cylinder, helping the vehicle

to keep all four wheels on the ground. The system works without any action needed by the driver.

Thanks to an Off-Road Package featuring Multi-Terrain Select, tackling tough terrain is equally as easy. Adding extra peace of mind is GX’s Lexus Safety System+, completing Lexus’ milestone of equipping models with active safety equipment.

A TORSEN torque-sensing limited slip centre differential distributes power under most driving conditions and changes the ratio as needed based on wheel slip. The four-wheel drive system offers a low range for slow speed off-road driving. With Downhill Assist Control (DAC), Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), Active Traction Control (A-TRAC), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and available Crawl Control, the GX can roam unpaved roads, trails, and steep inclines with confidence. Multi-Terrain Select allows you to choose from multiple surfaces such as loose rocks, mud and sand, moguls, and more to optimise drivability.

Activated with the press of a button, the available Crawl

Control system is designed to automatically maintain an optimal slow and steady pace over demanding landscapes. Bolstering this mission is the Lexus Safety System+ suite of technologies that includes Pre-Collision System, Lane Departure Alert, Intelligent High Beams and High-Speed Dynamic Radar Cruise Control.

In the Sultanate of Oman, every Lexus vehicle comes with special benefits and privileges such as manufacturer’s warranty of 4 years/100,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA.

For more information, please visit www.lexusoman.com or www.youtube.com/lexusoman or www.facebook.com/LexusOmanSBA or instagram.com/oman.lexus/.



OPAZ spotlights land selection e-service for investors

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 22

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) shared details of its land selection e-service for investors in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The service, launched at the beginning of October, was showcased at Expo 2020 Dubai as part of OPAZ participation in the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion. Introducing the new service reflects OPAZ efforts to facilitate and expedite procedures for investors in SEZAD, reduce the time and effort, and ensure



transparency and fairness for all investors in the Zone. OPAZ plans to extend this service during the coming period to include other free zones.

Ahmed bin Suleiman al Fazari of OPAZ said: "The service allows investors to select the plot of land in interactive maps for more than 800 different economic activities. It also brings other features, including: The possibility of measuring the distance between the selected land and the key landmarks in SEZAD, providing accurate information about the level of land's altitude above sea level, merging joint lands, getting full measurements of

lengths and spaces, determining the geographical location coordinates and sharing the approximate distance of the land from the nearby utilities such as electricity, water, telecommunications and roads", he explained.

Al Fazari added, "Investors can access the newly launched service through the digital portal (eoss.duqm.gov.om) from all over the world.

To obtain the service, they have to register in the portal, submit the usufruct request, pay the fees and then choose the land, which is appropriate for their projects."

Finalists for Young Omani Water Researchers awards shortlisted



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 22

MEDRC Water Research has announced the names of ten young Omani researchers, shortlisted as finalists for the 'Omani Young Water Researchers Award, 2021.

The high-profile award celebrates the world-class water research being conducted by young Omani students at undergraduate and postgraduate level in universities both in the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The shortlisted students for the Omani Young Water Researchers Award 2021 are: Postgraduate Category — Alaa al Hinaai, Alya al Busaidy, Amira al Gareebi, Halima al Himail and Intisar al Sulaimi; Undergraduate Category — Yasemin al Aamri, Fatema al Muqbali, Amal al Balushi, Moza al Sarihi and Abdulrahman al

Musalami.

A total of 10 researchers with 8 research papers secured their place on the shortlist after being called upon to present their research and defend their findings to a judging panel consisting of the foremost water experts in the Sultanate of Oman.

First launched by MEDRC Water Research in 2017, the Award aims to recognize the valuable contributions of young Omani researchers whose work has, or has the potential to make a positive impact on the water sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Sponsored by the Omar Zawawi Establishment and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Muscat, the winners will be presented with a winner's medal, certificate of achievement, and a trip to the UAE to participate in the Dubai 2020 Expo.

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 22

The Oman American Business Center (OABC) hosted its Annual Thanksgiving Dinner at the Grand Hyatt Muscat last week. The event kicked off with lively business networking, then remarks from OABC Executive Director Rebecca Olson, who thanked the OABC's 175 member companies for their commitment to the mission of OABC.

Olson then highlighted several positive moments from the past two years of OABC events and programming throughout the pandemic, including the online "Doing Business with



the US Military" event, regional LinkedIn networking group for US Chambers of Commerce affiliate members in the GCC, and OABC's new virtual card created for its members.

The guest of honour, Jay Munir, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy Muscat, then shared about his experience of Thanksgiving, growing up in the United States as well as celebrating around the world as

a US diplomat in many different countries and diverse cultures.

"Without making light of what we've all experienced, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, it's good to remember that while there were challenges and completely unexpected moments, months of working from home with kids or pets — some very sad times for many of us — there were also some incredibly bright moments during 2020 and 2021", Olson stated.

"Our team and OABC's Board of Directors are so looking forward to the next year of service and connection on behalf of each of our members, and we thank every one of you for being a part of it all."

Oman receives enthusiastic WTO Trade Policy Review

FROM PAGE 13

Members commended the Sultanate of Oman for its strong commitment to the multilateral trading system and its active WTO participation, including its engagement in the negotiations on fishery subsidies and its track-record of submitting notifications.

The Sultanate of Oman was also congratulated for ratifying the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and for having officially implemented 100 per cent of its commitments under the Agreement since 2020. At the same time, Members encouraged the Sultanate of Oman to join Joint Statement Initiatives, notably on e-commerce and domestic services regulation, and to become party to the Government Procurement

Agreement.

Discussions on foreign investment featured prominently during Wednesday and Friday's sessions in Geneva. Members applauded the Sultanate of Oman for its improvements towards a stable investment environment.

In particular, highlighting the adoption of the Commercial Companies Law and the Foreign Capital Investment Law enacted in 2020, and specifically for the abolition of foreign ownership limits. Improvements to Invest Easy, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion's one-stop-shop portal for registering new businesses were covered by Al Yousuf in his TPR address to WTO members on Wednesday afternoon.

Via Invest Easy, investors can now obtain approval for more than 1,500 economic activities — issuing one single document that includes all necessary licenses from ten leading authorities.

Al Yousuf reported to WTO members that since the launch of the new Invest Easy licensing service in April 2021, nearly 54,000 applicants had already received approvals.

WTO members also noted that reforms related to foreign capital investment, privatisation, public-private partnerships and bankruptcy had improved the Sultanate of Oman's business environment and led to higher inflows of investment.

Al Yousuf pointed out that FDI at the end of Q2 2021 had climbed to \$42.3 billion up from \$39 billion for the same period

in 2020.

The considerable diversification potential of the Sultanate of Oman's transport and logistics sectors was also highlighted by WTO members, particularly given the country's strategic location on international trade routes and the government's sizeable investment in ports, airports, free zones and industrial estates.

Other issues of interest for WTO Members included IPR protection; the participation of women in the Sultanate of Oman's economy; excise tax on carbonated beverages; the development of free zones and special economic zones; public procurement procedures and measures to create jobs for the younger generation.

Vodafone inks agreements to build its brand in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 22

Vodafone, the leading technology communications company, signed on Monday a partnership with creative communications powerhouse Memac Ogilvy and Muscat-based specialised marketing communications agency Alamah Marketing to bring world-class marketing excellence to the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement will see Memac Ogilvy and Alamah Marketing work shoulder to shoulder to



launch and build the Vodafone brand in the Sultanate of Oman while simultaneously advancing the skills of Omanis working in

the marketing sector.

"Vodafone has a long history of connecting global with local to provide our customers

with world-class services that are hyper-relevant to them", commented Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman.

"Our partnership with Alamah Marketing and Memac Ogilvy takes this to new heights as we bring a global marketing leader and an expert local agency together for the good of our brand and the country's communications sector. This partnership will undoubtedly open doors for Oman's youth to pursue a rewarding career in a thriving industry."

Hashar al Mandhari, Alamah

Marketing CEO, commented: "We are proud of our partnership with a global brand as Vodafone and our contribution to the company's efforts to develop the skills of Omani talent so they can pursue opportunities outside of the Sultanate of Oman. The communications and information technology sector is dynamic, and marketing plays a vital role in understanding and connecting with a culture. As a proud Omani company, Alamah Marketing is perfectly placed to help develop global marketing strategies that remain connected

to local roots, backed by our new partner Memac Ogilvy and the expertise they bring."

David Fox, Memac Ogilvy's Chief Executive Officer, MENA, added: "Growing the influence of a major brand such as Vodafone is what we get out of bed for, but this partnership with Vodafone and Alamah Marketing is something special.

"It is a privilege to apply our expertise not only to help launch a company in a new territory, but also to support the development of young communications talent alongside a local agency partner."

Reliance-Aramco no-deal is sign of the ESG times

BY UNA GALANI

Green and black are increasingly clashing. Reliance Industries and Saudi Aramco will re-examine a plan first unveiled more than two years ago for the oil colossus to pump \$15 billion into the Indian conglomerate’s refining operations. The impasse reflects how quickly investment decisions are being upended by the energy transition.

The two titans were natural partners when they sketched out the all-cash deal in August 2019 for Aramco to buy 20 per cent of Reliance’s oil-to-chemicals business, known as O2C. It would have brought together the world’s top crude producer and one of the biggest refinery operations, located in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

As oil prices crashed early in the pandemic, the transaction stalled.

By the time they recovered in February, Reliance boss Mukesh Ambani was gearing up to announce a plan for his Jamnagar complex to house a large integrated renewable energy manufacturing facility.

Using green hydrogen to run the refinery, as is envisioned, would make carving out O2C inefficient.

Following Friday’s news that the deal was off, Aramco lost some \$37 billion of market value. The development, however, avoids a potential embarrassment for Saudi Arabia, which reckons the world is beating too hasty a retreat from fossil fuels. The recent election of Aramco Chairman Yasir al Rumayyan onto Reliance’s board suggests Riyadh will have some security over where it sells oil for some time.

India’s largest listed company fails to crystalise a \$75 billion valuation for O2C, but it can live without the cash. Reliance has reduced debt with proceeds from selling stakes in its retail and digital units.

And if Aramco had paid Reliance partly in shares, an idea that emerged as the deal dragged on, it might have deterred climate-conscious investors from recognising Ambani’s greener pursuits.

Reliance also has attractive ways to finance \$10 billion of planned expenditures on new energy over the next three years. There’s no shortage of affordable capital for large Indian companies seeking to fund such projects.

Issuers including Adani Green Energy and Renew Energy are raising money at within half a percentage point of India’s 4 per cent benchmark interest rate, Jefferies analysts point out. Under the rapidly evolving circumstances, Reliance and Aramco won’t be the last to rethink a relationship. — Reuters

The two titans were natural partners when they sketched out the all-cash deal in August 2019 for Aramco to buy 20 per cent of Reliance’s oil-to-chemicals business, known as O2C



SHOE KING NO MORE

One of the five out of 42 remaining employees working for Jamil al Kopti, the oldest shoemaker in Amman, checks shoe moulds at the workshop in Jordan’s capital. Kopti was once dubbed the ‘King of Shoes’, but after decades of fashioning footwear for kings, queens and presidents, he fears cheap imports are killing off his craft. Kopti says that in the past five years, his profession began to decline dramatically in face of imported foreign shoes that flooded the market. — AFP

Beware of Japan’s ‘new capitalism’



TAKATOSHI ITO

The writer is a professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a senior professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo

NOW THAT KISHIDA AND THE LDP HAVE PREVAILED, THE BIG REMAINING QUESTION IS WHAT “NEW CAPITALISM” WILL MEAN IN PRACTICE

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida survived the general election on October 31, which came just weeks after his arrival in office as the new leader of the nation. Losing only 15 seats, the Liberal Democratic Party performed better than expected and will maintain a comfortable majority in the House of Representatives, with 261 of 465 seats.

The relative loser was the largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party, which lost 13 seats, leaving it with 96. It performed worse than predicted, despite having coordinated its selection of candidates with other opposition parties.

A major winner was the Restoration Party (Nippon Ishin no Kai), which gained 30 seats and now holds 41, making it the third-largest party in the House, after the LDP and the Constitutional Democrats. It attracted voters who are critical of the LDP’s management of the Covid-19 crisis but reluctant to support the Constitutional Democrats, owing to their cooperation with the Communist Party during the election campaign.

Kishida appears to have benefited from a fortuitous decline in the Covid-19 infection rate. His immediate predecessor, Yoshihide Suga, was not so lucky. In late August, Japan’s seven-day average of new cases skyrocketed to their highest level since the start of the pandemic, exceeding 25,000 in the week of August 23. By early September, Suga had announced his resignation.

Since then, however, new infections have fallen rapidly, with the seven-day average falling below 270 by election day. Experts have yet to agree on all of the factors underlying this dramatic turnaround, but an increase in the vaccination rate from 40 per cent to 70 per cent in the same two-month period surely helped. Whatever the full explanation, Kishida was fortunate.

But Kishida also managed to head off the Constitutional Democrats by adopting a more left-wing economic platform. During the campaign, he promised to place special emphasis on income redistribution, and to supplant the prevailing neoliberal approach with what he calls “new capitalism.”

These promises defanged the Constitutional Democrats’ claim that past LDP policies under prime ministers Shinzo Abe and Suga had widened the income gap.

The Restoration Party, however, was able to fill some of the void on the centre-right by criticising Kishida’s emphasis on redistribution, arguing that what the country really needs are structural reforms to boost the growth rate.

Now that Kishida and the LDP have prevailed, the big remaining question is what “new capitalism” will mean in practice. The early signals do not bode well. Kishida’s first concrete policy decision was to disburse 100,000 yen (\$878) to each person aged 18 or under. And though this program contains a means-testing provision (on household income), the ceiling is so high that 90 per cent

of all Japanese minors qualify.

Then, in response to the predictable criticism that cash disbursements will merely increase household saving rather than consumption, Kishida declared that half of the benefit would come in the form of shopping coupons.

But this change hardly guarantees that household consumption will increase, because the coupons can simply substitute for cash that will then be saved.

Ultimately, while Kishida’s goal of helping working parents is laudable, his chosen method is misguided. Worse, another initiative under consideration would subsidize (by tax rebate) firms that raise wages under certain conditions. Such incentives may tilt wages and employment upward, but they are hardly the most efficient way to achieve that goal. A more sensible approach would be to focus on increasing worker mobility within the labour market.

That starts with abolishing the deferred payment structure (increasing severance pay with tenure) and seniority wages (with tenure), together with financial assistance for retraining mid-career workers.

Moreover, the best way to raise productivity and wages in the long-term is to devote more of the high-school curriculum to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) subjects, and to abolish the system of determining college majors at the time of an entrance exam.

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Rebuilding the infrastructure of Sino-American relations



MINGHAO ZHAO

The author is a research fellow at the China Center for Contemporary World Studies, is a member of the China National Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific

US President Joe Biden has been basking in the glow of his \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, which he signed into law on November 15. But Biden’s virtual summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the same day underlined the need for both leaders to invest some of their political capital in rebuilding the infrastructure that supports their countries’ increasingly brittle bilateral relationship.

During their meeting, both presidents expressed a desire to avoid a new cold war. But no amount of summitry will steer US-China relations back on track without some fundamental agreement between the

two countries.

Fortunately, unlike former president Donald Trump’s administration, Biden does appear to want to restore normality to the relationship. As US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said after the meeting, “intense competition” between the two countries “requires intense diplomacy.” Likewise, China is exploring new approaches vis-à-vis the United States.

True, top Chinese diplomats are far more assertive nowadays towards their US counterparts than they had been in the past, and China’s military buildup continues apace. But as the summit began, Xi smiled when greeting Biden, calling him an “old friend.”

Given the unyielding tone

of previous US meetings with senior Chinese leaders during Biden’s presidency, this was a clear indication that Xi wants to change the tenor of the relationship.

Bonhomie aside, China and the US have actually made progress of late, particularly with a joint declaration to work together in the coming decade to avert catastrophic climate change. The move is a possible early sign of a compartmentalised approach that would be conducive to both countries’ long-term interests.

But many Chinese analysts fear that America’s deep political divisions could threaten the sustainability of US-China cooperation on climate change and other issues. A USA Today-Suffolk University poll conducted shortly before the passage

of the infrastructure bill found that Biden’s approval rating had sunk to a new low of 38 per cent.

China is wary of the prospect of Republican victories in the 2022 US midterm elections and the 2024 presidential election, because Trump’s continued grip on the party risks a repeat of the diplomatic ructions that marked his presidency.

At the same time, China thinks that now is an opportune moment to secure its political and economic position in the world. In autumn 2022, the Communist Party of China will hold its 20th National Party Congress. Now unchallenged within the CPC, and with “Xi Jinping Thought” woven tightly into Chinese public life, Xi’s long-term goals — China’s full “socialist modernization”

by 2035, and a “great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious” by 2049 — have become fixed in stone.

Xi is determined to prevent rocky relations with the US from interfering with these objectives.

In many ways, therefore, US-China relations in the coming years may be hostage to both countries’ domestic politics. The looming midterm elections mean that the Biden administration is likely to take further tough measures against China, which will respond in ways that do not project weakness.

Sustaining productive dialogue between Xi and Biden will thus be a constant challenge.

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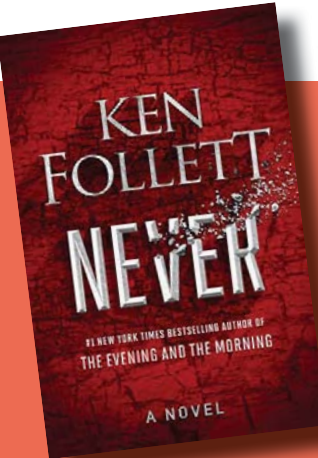


A deep dive into a musician's intimate '2021' journey

In the last eight months, in the middle of the pandemic, emerging artist and musician Fatma Mirza dedicated time to developing her craft. Inspired by her day to day experiences, the result was a seven-song EP which she aptly titled '2021'. Here are a few things you should know about this talented artist and her new music offering... **P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



NEVER
BY KEN FOLLETT

Tensions escalate around the globe as President Pauline Green works to prevent a world war.

K-pop's BTS snags top prize at American Music Awards

K-POP BAND BTS was the big winner at the American Music Awards on Sunday just four years after making their first appearance on the fan-voted show.

The seven member band from South Korea beat veteran Taylor Swift, rapper Drake, pop singer Ariana Grande, teen phenomenon Olivia Rodrigo and Canadian The Weeknd for the night's biggest prize — artist of the year.

Adored by an army of fervent fans, they also were named favourite pop group and won best pop song for their summer hit "Butter."

The band, known for its positive uplifting music, called the artist of the year win a miracle.

"We're truly honoured to be on this stage with such amazing, tremendous artists," said Kim Nam-Joon, known as RM.

"It's been a long and amazing ride ... nobody could have ever bet on the odds of us standing here and receiving this award, except you all," he added referring to the band's fans.

BTS closed the show with a performance of "Butter" and earlier joined Coldplay on stage for a rendition of their single "My Universe,"

marking a post-pandemic return to live performances for the K-pop band.

Swift was among several top nominated artists, including Ariana Grande, The Weeknd and Drake, who did not attend Sunday's ceremony. She took home the trophies for favourite female artist and best pop album for her lockdown album "Evermore."

"I'm so lucky to be in your life, and to get to have you in mine," Swift told fans in a video acceptance speech.

First-time host Cardi B pulled off a series of extravagant costume

changes and confessed she was worried about messing up.

"I'm a little nervous. I'm shaking," the "Bodak Yellow" rapper said, sporting a head-to-toe black feather headdress, as she opened the show.

Rodrigo, 18, who burst onto the charts in January, had gone into Sunday's show with a leading seven nods, but ended up with just one — best new artist.

Doja Cat picked up three awards, including for her "Kiss Me More" collaboration with SZA. Rapper Megan Thee Stallion also won three including favourite female hip-hop artist.

New Edition and New Kids on the Block brought some 1980s nostalgia when they took the stage together to promote their comebacks. Jennifer Lopez sang her new ballad "On My Way," and Italian Eurovision song contest winners Maneskin delivered a rock version of 1960s Four Seasons hit "Beggin'."

The nominees were based on Billboard music chart performance, streaming and album sales, radio play and social media engagement, and the winners were chosen entirely by fans. — **Reuters**





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The Journey of Two Gourmands

CHOOSING WHERE and what to eat is one of life's big questions. Get it wrong and you risk disappointing taste buds, wasted money, and unfulfilled cravings. But get it right and your palate opens to a world of flavours you didn't know existed. The love of food is not a new story but taking that love and turning it into an obsession is an art perfected by Sami al Salmi & Bosky Dutia. Two notorious gourmands who have been eating their way through the restaurants in the Sultanate for seven long years and telling their readers the nitty-gritty of each restaurant, the must-try and the must-avoids and at the same time advising restaurants on what needs to improve. Their brainchild Oman Restaurant Review- a group on Facebook that had humble beginnings, a few friends and family and them, this then imploded into a group of over 24,000 members, spread into other social media platforms. What do they do you ask? Their bio states that they work their way through meals offering up critiques on the best of what any restaurant has to offer - with integrity and utmost passion.

So, who are these two epicureans? Sami al Salmi, an Omani who was born and raised outside the sultanate has had the chance to discover a variety of cuisines during that period. He loves experimenting in the kitchen just to replicate many meals that appeal to his tastebuds. Though his career doesn't involve food, it is something that he is deeply passionate about. He describes himself as an experimentalist who would try any food once, just to broaden his horizons.

Bosky Dutia, an Indian with an Omani heart, born and raised in the nation has been in the F&B industry for over 15 years, if she's not cooking then she is eating out or writing about food. Her ardour stems from the love of good food. Unafraid to get personal, she says she is not a fan of places that cater to "Instagram, not the mouth". She describes her passion for fine dining akin to following a football team and has admitted to spending hundreds on some of her favourite meals.

Since August 2014, Oman Restaurant Review - the first Omani food group on social media has con-

tinued to share experiences with other members. Learning and growing from experiences online, the group now runs with rules and policies to ensure fair, and real reviews from everyone, including our gourmands. Sami and Bosky have one unbreakable policy, they do not write paid reviews in their quest to maintain honesty and professionalism,



which in turn allows them a lot more space to be open.

They say that the journey has not been an easy one, reviews were not something easily accepted in the local market earlier, working with not only group members but also restaurant owners for a well-rounded experience for everyone. They strongly believe any food and beverage business can thrive based on word of mouth alone. Sami and Bosky also affirm the concept of critiquing and blogging are two different worlds. The world of a food critique is oriented towards the food, flavours, ambience, and the experience in totality. Their aim, right from the start was to change perceptions in the local market. For restaurateurs, it was to make the customer's voice and suggestions heard and to improve their offerings to suit the market needs. For consumers, to let them know what's new in town and what to not miss out on.

Most recently, the duo is being published in the features section of our paper every Tuesday. Each week, our readers get an insight into customs and traditions from countries across the globe while they go on to describe various dishes from a particular restaurant in a column aptly named; He said, she said. Their aim remains as clear as it was in the beginning, to not only have a defined purpose but to also add value to the local dining scene.

COMMUNITY



National Museum inaugurates original manuscript of proses on marine sciences

WITHIN THE COOPERATION between the National Museum and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in Saint Petersburg in the Russian Federation, the manuscript "Collection of proses in Marine sciences" (Al-Safaliyah, Al-Mu'allaqiyah and Al-Ta'il) by the Omani navigator Shihab al-Din Ahmad bin Majid al Saadi, was inaugurated today on loan from the Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg.

The event was held under the patronage of Salim bin Mohammad al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism and Chairman of

manuscript "al-Jawhara" and the poetic scrolls of the Omani navigator Ahmed bin Majid al Saadi, as well as addressing the efforts to restore and preserve Arabic manuscripts, and shed light on the expansion operations in the Institutes, structure over the years.

The lecture further referred to the existing co-operation between the Institute and the Sultanate of Oman and the support the Institute received from the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It is represented in restoring the Building's western wing of the institute to be equipped according to the highest international

eration. Coinciding with the Sultanate of Oman's celebration of Unesco's inclusion of the Omani navigator Ahmed bin Majid in the list of globally influential personalities, he became the sixth Omani figure to be included in the program of commemorating important historical events and globally influential personalities. The manuscript on display is considered the oldest in the world, and after five centuries it will be available to all visitors to the National Museum for a period of three months. It is noted that the National Museum also displays the manuscript of the Omani



the Board of Trustees of the National Museum, with the participation of Prof Dr Irina Fyodorovna Popova, Director of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg, in the Maritime History Hall of the National Museum.

After the inauguration of the manuscript, the National Museum held a lecture titled "Some Pearls of the Arabic collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS" presented by Prof. Dr Irina Fyodorovna Popova, Director of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg. It included a number of topics, most notably a historical overview of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts and its most prominent founders. Reference is made to the Arabic manuscripts preserved at the Institute, for example, the

standards in order to preserve the Omani and Arabic manuscripts.

Meanwhile, the Board of Trustees of the National Museum held its eighth meeting under the chairmanship of Salim Mohammad al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Chairman of the National Museum's Board of Trustees.

Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum said, "The presentation of the original manuscript of a group of poetic scrolls in maritime navigation (al-Safaliyah, al-Mu'allaqiyah, al-Ta'il) by the Omani navigator Shihab al-Din Ahmad bin Majid al Saadi came in the context of the existing cooperation between the National Museum and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in the Russian Fed-

navigator Ahmed bin Majid "the Book of the Benefits of the Principles and Foundations of Seamanship" loaned from the al-Assad National Library in the Syrian Arab Republic".

On her part, Prof. Dr Irina Feodorovna Popova said "In history, the name Ahmad bin Majid is very important, where at his time he flourished. Ahmad bin Majid left a collection of poems that represent his navel chats and still exist in the manuscript form that are collected and kept in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg Russia. The poems summarise his navigation in the Indian ocean, where he taught the Europeans a lot within the field of marines and navigation and this represent a cultural bridge between the Arabs and the Europeans." - **ONA**



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Letters on Love and Loss

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):

A GOOD CITIZEN

That desolate man
In the remotest corner of
the tavern
I know very well.
His hand shivers as he
lifts the first cup
But once he mellowes
He can do anything
He can, for example, be a
good citizen,
Be bold
Let his urine gush forth
on the whole world!

Hail, o masculine earth
Liberty, fertility and
growth!

(2)
O roaring waves
Forgive me
I can't write even a single
letter.
Everything delivers me to
silence
And the gaze of empti-
ness!

(3)
Open the window's cur-
tain now
Or let's go to Oman's
shores
A full moon lies there on
the horizon.
I want her to see you
And be ashamed of her-
self!

(4)
Morning star
If you profess to be a
prophets
All the desert's shepherds
Seeking immortality's
fountain
All the poets wandering in
eternal loss
All the saints clinging to
divine love
I, witnessing no beauty
save in your eyes
We all would believe in
you.

(5)
Say to the sand lady:
Be a little late this evening
I'll go to the fount
Search for my soul
To cleanse it like a river
in heaven
For my lady.

(6)
O pure angel
Take me as a dying wish
I'll furnish the whole sky
for you
Asking my dreams to
sleep!

(7)
Surrounded by nothing-
ness
I see no light at tunnel's
end
O lost ark
Where are you taking us?

WINE OF AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR*

What if the herdsmen of
Al Jabal Al Akhdhar
Started to spill their
wine
Through streams and
slopes?
This divine blood
Would it find its way
To the mouths of the
thirsty and wretched
In the bottom of Hell
Or would this giant
seize it
Sip it without mercy?!

A homeland
A homeland
As narrow as a dancer's
waist
Seduces you
But your dreams it can't
contain!

A GIRL PIRATE

No
I'm not alone
I've my solitude
Doesn't it deserve compa-
ny?
Here
On a beach where pirates
left their odaliskues
I'll marry one of them
Savory
With the colour of ripe
dates
And the smell of pollen
I'll envelop her with my
sadness and deprivation
She won't escape the last
pirate's lust!

LETTERS ON LOVE AND LOSS

(1)
A couple of seagulls
Strolling the sky of the
Arabian Sea

*Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) a mountain in the north of Oman (the translator).

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



alikhokha_ • Follow
Al Jabal Al Akhdar - Oman



SPYING ON THE SKY



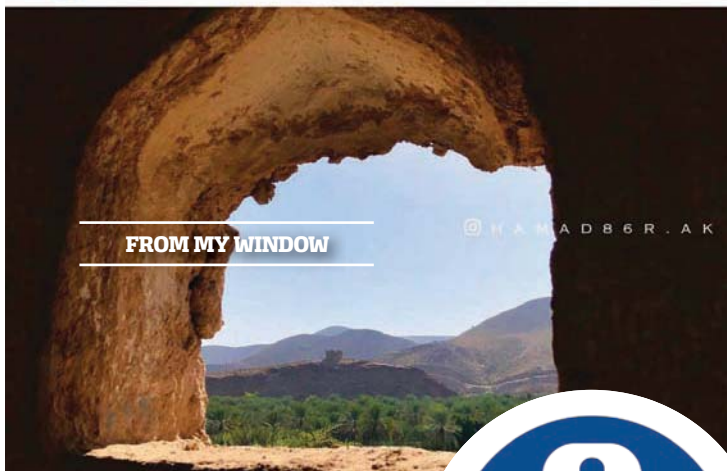
duchessofmuscat
Wadi Dayqah Dam and Reservoir, Quriyat, Muscat



TO ANOTHER ADVENTURE



hamad86r.ak • Follow
Oman



FROM MY WINDOW

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.





A deep dive into a musician's intimate '2021' journey

BY YERU EBUEN

Emerging artist and musician Fatma Mirza confessed that when she was just starting, she was compared to a lot of different artists and singers but despite those comparisons, nothing stuck. This is a good thing as Fatma celebrates her uniqueness saying her style of music now does not necessarily fall under just one genre. In the last eight months, in the middle of the pandemic, she took that depressing turn of events as an inspiration to better her craft learning not only to master playing the guitar but also working on her music. The result is an EP of seven songs long documenting her personal experiences as well as moments that inspired her. It is her

way of sharing her innermost thoughts not minding that it betrays her vulnerabilities. Launching it on November 17, a day short of the Sultanate of Oman's celebration of the 51st National Day, it is Fatma's brave nosedive into the Sultanate of Oman's often unforgiving music industry but something that definitely can use a new voice, a new style and a lot of diversity. The EP includes titles such as 'Am I Running Outta Time', 'Don't Compare Me', 'Dreamer', 'Fear of Death', 'Gave You Light', 'Let it Out', and 'Take it Easy' — one taking strength from each other taking listeners into a journey of an artist finally ready to own her spot in the sun. Providing *Oman Daily Observer* with the first look into her music, we reached out to this Architectural Engineering degree holder slash Art Director and Stylist slash musician to learn more about her latest music offering.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THIS EP?

It's called "2021". It is kind of my formal debut. I released a few songs in the past but this is my biggest release yet. The EP is seven songs long. Each song has its own tone and sound. The lyrics are also so different from each other. It reflects some of my passing thoughts in recent times, from different parts of myself. Shedding a layer with every song. Finding more meaning in my own experience. I actually recorded more than what's here and played around with plenty of ideas but ultimately these tracks, together, made the final cut.

CAN YOU TAKE US THROUGH THE THOUGHT AND CREATIVE PROCESS AND DID YOU COLLABORATE WITH ANYONE TO PUT IT TOGETHER?

It took me around eight months to complete the EP. I wrote the lyrics

and all music was produced by me. My creative process often comes from my personal experiences and what inspires me on a day to day basis. For some of my songs, I would start with the main melody and then add some lyrics to it (I always write down different lines I think of on my notes app to use later), some attempts turn out good and these are the ones that I usually put my focus on and start building a song from there. I like to capture a feeling, keep the tone and emotion and really bring out my experiences from it.

CAN YOU TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT EACH OF THE SONGS?

'Dreamer': The beginning of it all, and you can probably see it from the production. Pushing me to dream bigger, and to see where my potential can take me. 'Fear of Death': A conversation with myself. Aptly

highlight of the album 'Gave You Light' has a regal finish about it. A whole slew of different genres blends into it for it closes the album out on a high note' quoting a review by beachsloth.

PUTTING THE EP TOGETHER WHEN THERE WERE RESTRICTIONS EVERYWHERE MUST BE HARD. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU AS AN ARTIST?

Developing the songs was not easy. I've had one or two tracks that had entirely different mixes that were all viable. I had to really sit down and listen to each sound and how it's played, to the point that I was hearing things that your average listener wouldn't even care about, to really figure out what the song needed most for its sound. The main challenge I think was the mixing and mastering. I'd been levelling up my skillset a lot throughout the years, working with different producers and sound engineers, but I felt I still needed a little more. I'm still unsure how the final product will sound on all different playback devices, but I'm hoping for the best!

CAN YOU SHARE A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOU (FOR OUR READER'S WHOSE FIRST TIME TO ENCOUNTER YOUR MUSIC)?

Music was always my personal thing, it was an outlet for me to express how I felt at any moment. I used to love dancing and performing dance routines with my cousins. In my teen years, I started paying more attention to lyrics and got into writing. I, later on, picked up a guitar and started learning some basics on Youtube and began progressing from there. My style is a blend of many things as I'd been experimenting all through my musical journey. I grew up listening to hip-hop and R&B, tuned to rock and metal music in my teens until finally finding myself attracted to acoustic songs. In 2020, I released three songs "Sunrise" "Time" and "Lying" alongside some really talented artists (Raymen & MO SAUCE, Ashraf Dahab & Ziryab Dahab, SG & Wassupnile) who helped me translate my vision into a final product.

WHERE CAN PEOPLE LISTEN OR DOWNLOAD THE EP FROM? AND WHERE WILL WE SEE YOU NEXT?

The EP was launched on November 17 and is now available on all streaming platforms. I am planning to do some live shows and I'll definitely be producing more and collaborating with all kinds of musicians and artists. I plan to keep expanding my art, always. For those who want to learn more or get updates about my music or events, they can follow me on Instagram: @wndrsmusic

