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SCOTLAND ON VERGE OF SUPER 12 IN T20 WORLD CUP



P15

SULTANATE VULNERABLE TO APT-BASED CYBERATTACKS



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DISCOVERING THE FASCINATING STORY BEHIND AL AYJAH LIGHTHOUSE



TEHRAN

SULTANATE REAFFIRMS ROLE OF COOPERATION

Oman has affirmed that the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik adheres, in its internal and external approach, on the importance of cohesion and cooperation among all. The Sultanate seeks to remind the people of the importance of compassion, mercy, respect to humanity, appreciating diversity and respecting sanctities. The 5-day 35th International Conference on Islamic Unity sees participation of representatives from 52 countries. This was part of the Sultanate's speech delivered by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

DETAILS ON P5

INSIDE



DEVELOPED NATIONS NEED TO COMMIT FOR CLIMATE FUND

P7

BANGLADESH KEEP HOPES WITH WIN



Bangladesh beat Oman by 26 runs at OCA Ground in Al Amerat on Tuesday night to stay in contention for a spot in the Super 12 stage of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Chasing 154 for a win, Oman finished at 127-9 in the 20 overs.

DETAILS ON P10

PHOTO BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI

Tenders for maintenance of dams

AL SUWAIQ:

The Ministerial Committee tasked with assessing the damage caused to citizens' homes and properties in areas which came directly under the impact of the recent cyclone 'Shaheen' looked into updates and efforts made to deal with the aftermath of the tropical cyclone. The meeting, held at the

police station here,

was chaired by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and Chairman of the committee.

RESTORATION

The committee studied efforts for the restoration of properties and electrical networks in houses of citizens and the return

of families to their homes.

The committee noted that the target was largely met, except in the case of some houses where internal electrical connections are still pending.

The committee also looked into the opening of main and internal roads for traffic and removal of debris.

TURN TO P3

More than 29% Omani women own real estate

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnassri

Women are the foundation of the society. If they liked investment and succeeded in it, their family would like it and help it to move forward

SIHAM AL HARTHY

per cent.

According to the company, factors responsible for the high percentage of women in the real estate sector are reviewed law drafts that ensured women access to their real estate rights and separation of their financial liabilities, as well as improvement in the quality of neglected real estate consultancy,

TURN TO P5

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CDAA rescues 544 people during Shaheen



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Since the issuance of the cyclone alerts by the relevant authorities, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), represented by the Directorate-General of Training and Operations began executing its operational plans for dealing with the tropical condition Shaheen putting all its departments and centres on standby to handle the emergency.

Prior to the tropical condition, the CDAA deployed its equipment in the areas that were expected to be the hardest hit by the storm. The authority had a clear plan for quick response and handling of all sorts of reports in coordination with the sub-committees for emergency management in the governorates.

Amidst the direct effect of the tropical condition, the CDAA dealt with 416 reports; the most serious among them were reports about stranded people inside vehicles in wadis. The authority rescued 544 people in the



governorates affected by the tropical storm and handled fire, water rescue and ambulance cases in addition to other reports of humanitarian nature.

The CDAA continued its efforts after the end of the direct effects of the

tropical condition and sent specialist teams and more equipment to North Al Batinah Governorate to ensure a speedy return to normal life.

The CDAA continued to respond to reports by providing support to various sectors. Due to the great scale of the damage caused by the tropical storm and the high number of reports from the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq, the CDAA designated its field operations to its National Search and Rescue Team and set up an advanced field centre in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq to receive reports and direct the field teams to deal with the emergency cases.

The CDAA field teams have handled 1,925 reports since October 8 following the activation of the field centre.

Those reports varied from opening of internal roads in residential quarters, removal of fallen trees on roads and houses, supplying drinking water in the affected areas, draining water, distribution of foods and essentials, cleaning houses and towing vehicles in cooperation with the civil, military and private entities.

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Main Military Committee reviews recovery operations

MUSCAT: The Main Military Committee for Emergency Management held a meeting to review the humanitarian and field operations in North and South Al Batinah governorates, on Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by Brigadier Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Mantheri, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Chairman of the Main Military Committee for Emergency Management.

The committee listened to a briefing via video conference from the two military sub-committees which included the ongoing and accomplished field operations and expressed its readiness to provide support when needed in accordance with the joint action with the National Committee for Emergency Management.

The military units undergo the tasks of engineering work related to the restoration and recovery operations, opening and rehabilitation of roads and the restoration of protection dams that were affected by the tropical condition. — ONA

Motorists seek value for the money as fuel prices go up

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With fuel prices likely to go up in Oman in the coming months, in line with the rising demand for oil worldwide, motorists have been raising the issue of value for the money they spend on a litre of petrol.

Car users have taken to social media and other platforms demanding immediate intervention by the authorities concerned, such as the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) and Consumer Protection Authority (CPA).

Some consumers have been complaining that the mileage they get for a litre of petrol has come

down in recent times. "The shortfall might be different from customer to customer and also governorate to governorate, but what is common is the discrepancy witnessed by the customers," said a citizen.

The fuel prices in October are 229 baisa per litre for M91, 239 baisa per litre for M95 and 258 baisa per litre for diesel.

Crude has gained more than 60 per cent in 2021 after countries eased travel curbs following the successful roll-out of vaccines, which means the demand and price are expected to only rise in the coming months.

In August this year, MoCIIP said that it has been following up on the matter of fuel quality in some

It is very important that samples are taken from time to time because it is not just about the mileage, but also about its impact on vehicles

A MOTORIST

governorates of the Sultanate.

The ministry said that it had taken random samples of liquid fuel from various stations, including tampering with the octane number. "The matter will be taken up with the fuel marketing companies," the ministry

said. "It is very important that samples are taken from time to time because it is not just about the mileage, but also about its impact on vehicles," said another motorist.

According to experts, customers can sample the petrol using the portable octane analyser. "If any doubt, they can raise the matter with the concerned authorities and request for an investigation into the matter," said George Mathews, a mechanic based in Al Seeb.

Speaking to the Observer, a fuel station manager said, "We serve the fuel that we get from the refineries to the company. Customers can always lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the product or the service."

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RO 2.5m to fix dams, aflaj

SUHAIL AL NAHDI

MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has allocated RO 2.535 million for the renovation of two dams and 25 aflaj that were affected by the tropical cyclone Shaheen in North Al Batinah Governorate. The ministry will float other tenders for maintenance of other aflaj and dams in the affected wilayats.

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Haddabi, Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries in North Al Batinah Governorate, told *Oman Arabic*, sister publication of the *Observer*, that the directorate-general of agriculture and fisheries in North Al Batinah Governorate has submitted an initial report to the ministry about the



damages and losses incurred by farmers, fishermen and animal breeders in the governorate due to the tropical cyclone Shaheen. The report

will be discussed with the ministerial committee tasked with evaluating the damages and losses caused by the tropical cyclone.

There are 18 field teams currently assessing the damages in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq and 8 teams in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah. Initial reports show about the losses in the agricultural, fisheries and water resources sectors has been completed while the field survey covered 35 per cent of surveying and field visits in Al Suwaiq and Al Khabourah and more than 95 per cent in the Wilayat of Saham, the official said.

According to the initial evaluation of the losses and damages in North Al Batinah Governorate, 88 per cent of the water sector has been affected with 82 aflaj in three wilayats affected by the tropical condition. Some of these aflaj are currently undergoing maintenance operations.

Sultanate takes part in GCC trade meetings

MUSCAT: The Sultanate will take part in the 61st meeting of the GCC Trade Cooperation Committee, the 48th meeting the GCC Industrial Cooperation Committee and the Board of Directors the GCC Standardisation Organisation, to be held on Wednesday in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.

The Sultanate's delegation is led by Qais



bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and comprises a number of officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Foreign Ministry, the Consumer Protection Authority and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada). — ONA

Govt decision on new houses cheers Shaheen victims



KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Hundreds of people who have been made homeless after the cyclone Shaheen devastated parts of North and South Al Batinah governorates heaved a sigh of relief as the government announced houses for them.

"We are thanking Almighty for this news (being provided with the shelter) after we lost everything to the cyclone. The land where my house used to be is an accumulation of mud now", Hamed al Salhi, a resident of Bidiya, which is the worst-affected area, said.

The Ministerial Committee for the 'Assessment of Damage Resulted from the Tropical Situation Shaheen', announced its plans to build 328 houses in the places of the completely damaged houses in its fourth meeting on Monday.

"We have decided to evacuate the

shelters and relocate the affected citizens to their homes after necessary repairs and cleaning ups were conducted, and directed to make plans to build 328 homes instead of the completely affected homes", a statement from the Assessment Committee said. This announcement is beside the immediate financial aid package announced by the committee immediately after the cyclone.

The Relief and Shelter Sector at the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has distributed an immediate financial aid of RO 1,000 to families whose houses were damaged during cyclone Shaheen after the field teams visited the affected people and houses.

Cyclone Shaheen wreaked havoc in northern parts of the country on October 3 after landfall in these areas. Several houses, roads and bridges bore the brunt of the adverse weather condition. The cyclone claimed lives of 15 people.

Panel urges faster restoration of roads

FROM P1

The committee got updates from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning specialists on impacts on properties. The ministry's team reviewed the outcome of assessment of the stricken homes and presented a set of proposals and solutions for the safety of citizens.

Meanwhile, updates on the repair of internal roads were given by a team comprising the Engineering Services Division of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Water Resources and the municipalities of North Al Batinah and South Al Batinah.

The committee gave instructions to speed up the maintenance of roads. Proposed recommendations in this respect will be submitted to the authorities concerned to avoid the repetition of such damage to roads and culverts during climatic conditions in future.

To this effect, the committee took decisions including to exempt citizens from the stricken areas who lost their documents from relevant fee when they apply for alternative documents.

To float a tender for the maintenance of two protection dams and 24 aflaj damaged during the tropical cyclone. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has been tasked with finalising the related procedures.

At the conclusion of its meeting, the committee expressed thanks and appreciation for the efforts exerted in different sectors to restore normalcy in response to the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) and Oman TV, Al Habsi said that

80 aflaj and five dams were damaged and that a tender was awarded for repairing 24 aflaj and two dams.

The rest of the dams will be repaired as soon as technical procedures are finalised, he said, adding that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources was entrusted to conduct a study for protection dams along the course of wadis.

Al Habsi said that it was agreed with the authorities concerned to chart out temporary solutions for citizens' access to their homes in the affected areas till the internal roads are restored.

— ONA

Higher oil prices, reforms to buoy economic recovery

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samuelkutttyp

In line with the forecast, Oman economy is set for a major recovery led by higher oil prices and reform measures.

The price of Oman oil for delivery in December has reached \$83.06 a barrel on Tuesday in trading at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange.

Accordingly, the monthly average price of Oman crude oil for delivery in October now stands at \$69.38 a barrel.

Data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) shows that the Sultanate's oil production reached 232,942,500 barrels until August 2021, compared to 233,575,200 barrels until the end of August 2020.

Global rating agency Moody's in its estimates last week said that higher oil prices will account for around half of the expected reduction in the fiscal deficit to less than 2 per cent of GDP in 2021 from 18 per cent of GDP in 2020.

The Sultanate's budget deficit dropped to RO 1.205 billion in the first seven months of 2021 from RO 1.550 billion in the corresponding period in 2020.

The NCSI figures indicated



The economy is projected to grow by 2.5 per cent after a contraction of 2.8 per cent in 2020 following the dual impact from the Covid-19 pandemic and the collapse in oil prices last year

that the average daily production till the end of August 2021 increased by 0.1 per cent to 958,600 barrels, compared to 957,300 barrels in the same period in 2020.

Experts expect the crude prices to reach \$90 per barrel on the international market by year-end.

"Oil prices could stay at higher levels in the years to come as demand rebounds while supply remains tight", said Goldman Sachs' head of energy research Damien Courvalin.

The oil market is in "the

longest deficit we've seen in decades", and demand will continue to outstrip supply in winter, he said.

On the international market, crude prices made weekly gains of more than two per cent.

Brent crude rose 0.76 per cent to \$84.97 a barrel, off Monday's three-year high above \$86. US crude gained 1.16 per cent to \$83.4 a barrel. Brent crude prices are up by a third in two months.

During the last one year, the Sultanate has adopted a number of fiscal measures

to support the economy, including interest-free emergency loans, tax and fee reductions and waivers, the flexibility to pay taxes in instalments and a Job Security Fund to support citizens who lost their jobs.

The economy is projected to grow by 2.5 per cent after a contraction of 2.8 per cent in 2020 following the dual impact from the Covid-19 pandemic and the collapse in oil prices last year.

The government's total revenues in the first seven months of 2021 increased by 0.5 per cent to RO 5.214 billion compared with RO 5.188 billion recorded in the same period of last year.

"The fiscal deficit will likely remain small in the medium-term, pointing to a large and likely durable reduction in the government's gross financing needs to less than 10 per cent of GDP per annum during the mentioned time-period from more than 22 per cent of GDP in 2020", Moody's pointed out.

Last month S&P Global Ratings revised Oman's rating outlook to positive from stable, citing its improving fiscal position, progress on reforms and rising oil prices.

THE WORD 'CYCLONE' WAS SPELT WRONG ON PAGE 1 AND 2 IN OUR EDITION DATED OCTOBER 19. WE REGRET THE ERROR. EDITOR

Member of Nama Group

Announcement: Improvement Works in Pumping Stations and Water Transmission Lines

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) announces that it will be carrying out improvement works in the water stations and main water transmission lines in Wilayat Nakhal & Wilayat Wadi Al Maawil, South Al Batinah Governorate and Al Dhakilyah Governorate during the period from 25 to 26 October 2021 for a period of (48) hours.

Apologising for any shortages may occur in the water supplies, (OWWSC) urges all beneficiaries to take necessary measures and continue rationalising water consumption.

For further information, kindly contact the Call Centre on (1442).

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P.O. Box 1047 | PC133, Al Khuwair | Sultanate of Oman | 1442 | www.owwsc.nama.om

LOST LEARNING DURING PANDEMIC

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The clash between ‘normal’ and ‘new normal’ started soon after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the world is yet to settle into any situation fully. Of course, the pandemic did not leave any area which did not have to do amendments to adjust to the new situation, but it is the education that drew maximum attention and debates.

There have been educational debates on learning modes, outcomes, and even the ability of the students to adapt to the new situation. The teachers are put in an entirely different situation of imparting education virtually.

The teachers successfully managed the pressure of the virtual classroom, and they proved to be better learners in the process. Every one of them had to evolve under stressful circumstances, with little time to adjust to the need for remote learning. Nevertheless, the teachers have done a remarkable job by

adapting to the new situation. After massive vaccination, things are improving in terms of decrease in virus infection and sharp fall in fatalities all over.

This is giving the educational authorities a bit of confidence to think of opening the schools in physical form.

However, the teachers are put in a new situation of getting ready for both — the physical and the virtual modes, as no one is still sure about the mood of the virus, which has tested the people’s confidence and proved them wrong.

The blended form of education is to continue for the time being.

The teachers are put in a new situation of covering the academic loss of learning while engaging with the students, many of whom are suffering from loss of confidence. “They have become shy and sound uncomfortable in the classrooms”, said higher grade teacher Usha Roy while commenting on the behavioural changes among the students after joining physical classes after a long time.

The biggest challenge, according to her, is overcoming the loss of confidence and asking them to strike a balance between academic learning and personality development.

“Even though their academic learning has not been disrupted due to hard work of the teachers, their usual social networks have been broken. Mental health issues are on the rise among the students, and like many elderly people, some students are suffering from loss of short memory”, she said.

Roy is hopeful of recovery in these situations, as the students have the ability to adapt to the situations and make pace with the new situation if given the right direction.

“Teachers, however, have an added responsibility to be more interactive in the classrooms, giving the students liberty to build their lost social networks... Everyone, including students, has become susceptible to mental health issues for various reasons, including loss of near and dear ones, financial instability and sense of insecurity due to many factors”, she said.

Even though their academic learning has not been disrupted due to hard work of the teachers, their usual social networks have been broken. Mental health issues are on the rise among the students, and like many elderly people, some students are suffering from loss of short memory

USHA ROY
Teacher



More than 29% Omani women own real estate

FROM PI
to create safe and sustainable real estate investments. Moreover, their financial capability allowed them to start investing through funds or business accelerators. Other factors that led to real estate in women's names are: self-dependence to handle real estate projects, transparent real estate

data, and their ability to assess market indicators. Siham al Harthy, CEO of Asawer Real Estate, said during the Omani Women's Forum, held this week, "Women are the foundation of the society. If they liked investment and succeeded in it, their family would like it and help it to move forward. Many families improved their income

after women's participation in financial decision making." Emphasising that improving women's real estate rights improves their income, investment opportunities and job creation, which increases their potential contribution to economic growth. Al Harthy asserted "Supporting women as entrepreneurs can

boost the global economy's growth to 5 trillion" The Sultanate is one of the first countries in the world that allowed women to obtain land from the country. Omani women obtained the right to conclude legal actions such as selling, buying, owning real estate, and participating in trade with money or personal efforts.

Proceeding from the Basic Law of the State issued by Royal Decree No 101/96, all citizens are equal before the law in public rights and duties, and there is nothing to distinguish between them. Moreover, Clause (4) of Article (37) in the Personal Status Law affirms the wife's right to manage her own property. Article (11) of the Basic Law stipulates the absolute right of a woman to own and monopolise her property and the freedom to dispose of it. It

includes all funds, whether real estate or movable funds. The law allowed them to own residential lands, as well as entitlement to government lands according to Royal Decree No 125/2008, as a partner in development and a contributor to construction and reconstruction. The importance of women having their own land is that this gives them security, stability, self-reliance and safeguards their future and the future of their children later on.

Women need to be more breast aware and go for regular check up

DR NISMA HARIS

Breast cancer is on the rise globally and access to the right information and awareness relating to it can serve immensely towards its prevention and management strategies. We need to know what are the causative factors and how we can control them along with the non-controllable factors and the warning signs so that early access to a healthcare facility can be made and a good prognosis can be inferred and henceforth lives can be saved.

Before anything else, breast cancer is a disease in which cells within the breast grow abnormally and multiply to form a tumour (swelling or a lump). As per CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), studies have shown that a combination of factors puts one at a greater risk for developing breast cancer.

The causative factors which are under our control and can be avoided include being physically inactive, overweight or obese particularly after attaining menopause, prolonged hormonal therapy (for years), delayed first pregnancy (after 30 years), and non-breastfeeding. Whereas certain factors are not under our control such as ageing, gender, family



Remember early detection is the key to survival. Share and spread the word with family, friends and acquaintances so that we can shelter lives and families

history or personal history of breast cancer, faulty genes, longer reproductive age (early menarche and late menopause), or exposure to radiation therapy in response to some other forms of cancers. The alarming signs may vary from person to person and they may range from discomfort or pain in the armpit, swelling or lump in any part of the breast, any irritation or changes in skin colour, dimpling or changes in skin texture of breast (scaly appearance or like

an orange peel), changes in shape and size of the breast, to any sort of fluid discharge from the nipple. It is notable here that these symptoms may occur with any other medical condition other than cancer. Yet, sometimes there are no symptoms at all, and breast cancer is found at screening mammograms (Mammogram is a kind of breast X-Ray). Bursting certain myths is equally significant at this juncture that breast cancer is not just confined to women. It can happen to men too.

Although elderly women are more vulnerable; this does not guarantee that it cannot happen in young women. Moreover, awareness cannot be a substitute for regular mammography screenings. Thereby, all we need to do is be more breast aware and regularly look for any unusual changes in the breast region. Don't hesitate to speak to your physician or gynaecologist for any doubts or guidance. Get the mammography screening as recommended (every 2 years). As there are various types and subtypes of breast cancer, treatment plan varies from individual to individual and is supervised by a panel of experts. Surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy and precision medicine are the available treatment plans that are advocated depending on the type, location, grade and stage of cancer. Remember early detection is the key to survival. Share and spread the word with family, friends and acquaintances so that we can shelter lives and families.

The author is a general physician, content Creator, health and wellness adviser based in Salalah. www.healthyvows.com / dr.nisma.healthyvows@gmail.com



SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF HEALTH SERVICES

AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health - Directorate General of Health Service Al Dhahirah Governorate (DGHS) of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)	Office where Tenders are to be deposited (HQ)
567/2021/ MOH/ DGHSDH-2	Removal Of Drainage Water For Various Healthy Facilities At Al Dhahirah Governorate	Thursday 04/ Nov /2021	At 8 am on Tuesday 30/ Nov /2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25/= Per set	Directorate General of Health Service Al Dhahirah Governorate

Notes:-

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to the Tender Committee in the DGHS before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the tender box in the directorate one day before the submission date for Tender.
- The DGHS is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

Any Clarification, you may contact via

Telephone: 24402200

Email id: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

'Compassion, cooperation important'

TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik adheres, in its internal and external approach, on the importance of cohesion and cooperation among all. The Sultanate seeks to remind the people of the importance of compassion, mercy, respect to humanity, appreciating diversity and respecting sanctities. This was part of the Sultanate's speech delivered by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, at the 35th International Islamic Unity Conference. Al Maamari said that the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan has stressed that approach since the first historical address during which His Majesty affirmed the Sultanate's commitment to peace – **ONA**



Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs hereby announces the following tender:

Tender Number	Name/Description	Grade	Closing Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Closing Date for Submitting Tender	Tender Document Cost
3/2021	Provision of Cleaning Services for the Ministry Building	Excellent Grade	31/10/2021	22/11/2021	RO. 25/-

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and condition of the tender from the Esnad Electronic Tendering Services website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

Offers must be submitted in Esnad Electronic Tendering Services website **before (11) eleven am** on the closing date for submitting Tenders; Tenders submitted after that will not be considered regardless of the reasons for lateness, which is valid for ninety (90) days from the closing date for submitting tenders.

Each company wishing to participate in the Tender must enclose with their Tender a Tender Bond in the form of a Bank Guarantee from a bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of one percent (1%) of the tender value in accordance with the Form of Tender Bond as attached to the Tender Documents; any Tender which does not meet the requirement of Tender Bond will not be considered. Alongside the electronic copy to be submitted on Esnad, the original Tender Bond must be submitted to the Ministry before the Closing Date for Submitting Tenders.

For clarifications, you may contact via Esnad Electronic Tendering Services website mentioned above.

*The Ministry is not obliged to accept the lowest or any Tender.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 43/2021

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated abelow.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/21/002	2021/MM/ QS-12	Proposed Public Walkway in AL Amerat	Rial 25	13/11/2021	28/11/2021	First
PRE/21/043	2021/MM/ QS-13	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (A)	Rial 55	30/10/2021	09/11/2021	Excellent / First
PRE/21/044	2021/MM/ QS-14	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (B)	Rial 50	30/10/2021	09/11/2021	Excellent / First
PRE/21/045	2021/MM/ QS-15	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (C)	Rial 50	30/10/2021	09/11/2021	Excellent / First
PRE/21/048	2021/MM/ QS-16	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Bousher (C)	Rial 55	30/10/2021	09/11/2021	Excellent / First
PRE/21/049	2021/MM/ QS-17	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Muscat & Matrah	Rial 45	30/10/2021	09/11/2021	Excellent / First

Tender Conditions :-

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

2. Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Intrnal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.

3. For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

4. For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

Lebanon goes to polls in March as economic meltdown spirals

BEIRUT: Lebanon's parliament voted on Tuesday to hold legislative elections on March 27, giving Prime Minister Najib Mikati's government only a few months to try to secure an IMF recovery plan amid a deepening economic meltdown.

Lebanon's financial crisis, which the World Bank labelled one of the deepest depressions of modern history, had been compounded by political deadlock for over a year before Mikati put together a cabinet alongside President Michel Aoun.

The currency has lost 90 per cent of its value and three-quarters of the population have been propelled into poverty. Shortages of basic goods such as fuel and medicines have made daily life a struggle.

Mikati, whose cabinet is focused on reviving talks with the International Monetary Fund, had vowed to make sure elections are held with no delay and Western governments urged the same.

But a row over the probe into last year's Beirut port blast that killed over 200 people and destroyed large swathes of the capital is threatening to veer his cabinet off course. Some ministers, aligned with politicians that lead investigator Judge Tarek Bitar is seeking to question over the explosion, last week demanded that the judge be removed from the probe.

Mikati has since said the cabinet will not convene another meeting until an agreement is reached on how to deal with the crisis.

Minister of Culture Mohamed Mortada, who has reportedly criticised Bitar's handling of the probe as being politicised, told reporters he would attend any session of the cabinet Mikati called. He dismissed reports he had demanded Bitar's removal and said he had just made observations about his performance.

On Thursday, Beirut witnessed the worst street violence in over a decade with seven people killed in gunfire when protesters from the Hezbollah and Amal movements made their way to demonstrate against Bitar.

The bloodshed, which stirred memories of the 1975-1990 civil war, added to fears for the stability of a country that is awash with weapons.

— Reuters

Lebanon's financial crisis, which the World Bank labelled one of the deepest depressions of modern history, had been compounded by political deadlock for over a year

SUDAN PM CALLS UP CRISIS TEAM AFTER DAYS OF PROTESTS

FACEBOOK SHUTS FAKE ACCOUNTS AS FIGHT FOR PUBLIC OPINION RAGES ONLINE

KHARTOUM: Sudan's Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok has convened a crisis committee after days of anti-government protests.

The committee's aim is to resolve the "most dangerous political crisis" seen in Sudan since the fall of Omar al Bashir in 2019, Hamdok said following an emergency Cabinet meeting.

Hamdok called on thousands of protesters who have been staging a sit-in outside the Palace of the Republic in Khartoum since Saturday to show restraint and to engage in dialogue.

The protesters are demanding that the army dissolve the transitional government that was supposed to return the country to democracy after the ouster of Bashir.

They blame Hamdok's



Protesters take to the streets in Khartoum during a demonstration demanding dissolution of the transitional government on Tuesday. – AFP

government for the deterioration of economic conditions and rising poverty. In early October, protesters blockaded the largest port for more than two weeks, prompting parliament to warn that Sudan would soon run out of medicine, petrol and wheat. The power supply is also uncertain due to the supply disruptions.

In late September, the military foiled an attempted coup near the capital.

The country was ruled by Bashir for 30 years until his ouster by the army in 2019 after mass protests.

SHUT DOWN

Facebook says it has shut down two large networks targeting users in Sudan in recent months, as civilian

and military leaders spar with one another over the future of an interim power-sharing arrangement.

The battle for public opinion, much of it happening online, is intensifying as Sudan reels from economic crisis and a shaky transition to democracy following 30 years under Bashir, who was ousted in a popular uprising

in 2019.

Facebook said one of the networks of inauthentic pages it took down was linked to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the other was populated with people who researchers, hired by the civilian government, flagged as supporters of Bashir agitating for a military takeover. — Agencies

Drought-hit Iraq's crop farmland to be halved

BAGHDAD: Extreme water shortages in Iraq will halve the area of crops being grown next harvest, the authorities said, following UN warnings calling for "urgent" action.

Iraq's government said the area of farmland with crops would this 2021-2022 season cover "50 per cent of the cultivated area last year", according to a statement published by the state news agency INA.

Iraq is struggling amid the consequences of dire droughts exacerbated by global warming, compounded by the extraction of water from the Tigris and Euphrates, rivers shared with neighbouring Turkey and Syria.

"The impact of water shortages in Iraq is



In this file photo taken on June 24, a boy walks through a dried up agricultural field in the Saadiya area, north of Diyala in eastern Iraq. The climate crisis threatens a double blow for the Middle East, experts say, by destroying its oil income as the world shifts to renewables and raising temperatures to unlivable extremes. – AFP

becoming evident through the lower crop yields for 2021. Urgent action is required to confront climate change," UN agencies

said in a joint statement on Saturday, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme

(WFP).

"Resilient, modern food systems are important for long term food security and the sustainable

economic growth of Iraq," it added.

The FAO estimates that "by the end of the season, wheat production will be 70 per cent lower and barley production negligible."

Agricultural produce of Iraq usually includes wheat, barley, dates, tomatoes and rice.

Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO's chief in Iraq, said that the agency was working with government ministries to support farmers to "increase their income, make better use of available resources and cope with drought".

Funds from the European Union are supporting a project to repair irrigation infrastructure in the north, including canals and pumping stations.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

WASHINGTON

IAEA head expects news soon on Iran travel

The head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said on Tuesday he anticipates news soon on when he may travel to Iran, adding that he expects to go to Tehran before the agency's November Board of Governors meeting.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said in Washington that his expectation was based on his conversations with Iranian officials, but he did not provide details.



"I am expecting news soon about it," he told reporters.

Grossi said the IAEA has been able to service cameras at all sites in Iran aside from the TESA Karaj complex.

GENEVA

10,000 children killed or maimed in Yemen

Ten thousand Yemeni children have been killed or maimed since a military coalition intervened in March 2015 after the Ansar Allah group ousted the government, the United Nations children's agency Unicef said on Tuesday.

"The Yemen conflict has just hit another shameful milestone. We now have 10,000 children who have been killed or maimed since... March 2015," Unicef spokesperson James Elder told a UN briefing in Geneva after



returning from a visit to Yemen. "That is the equivalent of four children every single day," Elder said, adding that many more child deaths or injuries went unreported.

BAGHDAD

Iraq arrests suspect in 2016 attack: PM

Iraq announced the arrest outside the country of the suspect behind a 2016 attack claimed by the IS group that killed more than 320 in Baghdad. It was one of the world's deadliest attacks since 9/11.

"Five years after the terrorist bombing of Karrada, our brave forces succeeded in capturing the terrorist Ghazwan Alzawbaee in a complex intelligence operation outside the country," Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi said on Twitter.



"He is the primary culprit behind the Karrada atrocity and many others." At least 323 people were killed in the car bomb attack on July 3, 2016, when Iraqis were shopping before Eid Al Fitr.

In brief

■ DEHRADUN



24 DEAD AS HEAVY RAINS BATTER NORTHERN INDIA

At least 24 people died and more than a dozen were missing after landslides and flash floods triggered by several days of heavy rain hit northern India, officials said on Tuesday.

Forecasters have also warned of more downpours in the coming days in the southern state of Kerala where floods have already killed at least 27 people since last Friday.

Officials in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand said 18 people were killed in fresh landslides on Tuesday after six died in similar incidents a day earlier. At least 13 of them were killed in three separate incidents in Nainital town early on Tuesday, after a cloudburst.

■ DHAKA



THOUSANDS PROTEST AGAINST COMMUNAL RIOTS IN BANGLADESH

Thousands of activists marched in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka on Tuesday to denounce a wave of violence against minority sections over an allegedly social media post in the country.

The ruling Awami League party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina organised the "harmony procession and peace rally" a day after assailants carried out arson attacks on a remote village in the northern Rangpur district, leaving at least 20 homes burnt to ash. "We will build united resistance against the troublemakers," Obaidul Quader, General Secretary of the ruling party, told a gathering of more than 8,000 people, according to the organisers.

■ YANGON



MYANMAR PROTESTERS REUNITED WITH FAMILIES IN AMNESTY

Newly released anti-coup protesters in Myanmar were reunited with their families outside a Yangon prison on Tuesday in tearful scenes on the second day of a junta amnesty.

The Southeast Asian country has been in chaos since a coup in February, with more than 1,100 civilians killed in a bloody crackdown on dissent and more than 8,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group.

On Monday, the military said it would free more than 5,000 people to mark the three-day Buddhist Thadingyut festival, sending anxious families rushing to prisons, joyful at the prospect of reunions.

Developed nations need to commit for climate funding goals: Widodo

Jokowi says Indonesia wants to invest in renewable projects

BEBATU, Indonesia: Indonesian President Joko Widodo urged developed countries on Tuesday to commit to their pledge to provide financing for poorer countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at this month's UN climate conference.

Rich countries have missed a target to raise \$100 billion a year to support developing countries in their climate action projects, which experts say could break down trust at the October 31-November 12 COP26 conference in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

"It's impossible if we don't get funding help. If we don't have the technology, it's also difficult", the president, who is popularly known as Jokowi, said on Tuesday after planting a patch of mangrove in the village of Bebatu on Borneo island.

Indonesia, the world's eight-biggest greenhouse gas emitter, has pledged to cut back its carbon emissions to 29 per cent below business-as-usual by its own efforts, but with the help of international funding and transfer of technology, it believes it could increase the reduction to up to 41 per cent. The country earlier this year brought forward its long-term target to reach carbon neutrality or sooner, from 2070 initially, which includes plans to phase out the use of coal-fired plants.

Jokowi said Indonesia wants to invest in renewable projects to capitalise on its potential in hydropower, geothermal, wind,



Indonesian President Joko Widodo during an interview in Bebatu, near Tarakan, North Kalimantan province, Indonesia, on Tuesday. — Reuters

I think we still have a shot at getting to \$100 billion. I think it would be very important for Glasgow to do that. Also as a sign of thrust and confidence to the developing world

FRANS TIMMERMANS
EU Executive Vice President

solar and marine current and this will require billions of dollars of funding. A government study has shown the Southeast Asian country needs \$150 billion to \$200 billion per year in investment in low carbon programmes over the next nine years to meet its net zero emission goal.

"This is a big work. It needs investment, it needs technologies", Jokowi said, adding that he did not want "just talk" at COP26.

Indonesia has also launched a programme to restore 600,000 hectares of mangrove forest in the next three years to absorb carbon emission, Jokowi said.

European Union Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans told Reuters on Monday that the EU and the United States would meet their commitments, but he is still urging other rich countries to come on board.

"I think we still have a shot at getting to \$100 billion. I think it would be very important for Glasgow to do that. Also as a sign of thrust and confidence to the developing world", he said.

Indonesia would also promote sustainable economic growth when it takes over the G20 presidency in December, alongside an even economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, Jokowi said.

"We want to fight for the chance for poor countries, developing countries, vulnerable groups, to get back on their feet and not get left behind by developed countries," he said. — Reuters



A man watches a television report showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul. — Reuters

North Korea test-fires submarine-launched ballistic missile

SEOUL: North Korea fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) off its east coast on Tuesday, South Korea's military said, pulling Japan's new prime minister off the campaign trail and overshadowing the opening of a major arms fair in Seoul.

The US military's Indo-Pacific Command condemned the launch as destabilising, but judged it did not pose an immediate threat to the United States or its allies.

South Korean and US officials were investigating if the missile was a smaller, previously unseen version displayed last week at an exhibit in Pyongyang, a South Korean military source said, citing ongoing analysis. They were also examining whether the missile was fired from North Korea's experimental Gorae-class submarine, he added, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The launch, reported by officials in South Korea and Japan, came after US and South Korean envoys met in Washington on Monday to discuss the nuclear standoff with the North. The launch is the latest weapons test by North Korea, which has persisted with military development despite in-

ternational sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile programmes.

"Our military is closely monitoring the situation and maintaining readiness posture in close cooperation with the United States, to prepare for possible additional launches", South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

They said the missile was launched at about 10:17 am from the sea in the vicinity of Sinpo, where North Korea keeps submarines as well as equipment for test firing SLBMs.

It was not immediately clear if the missile was fired from a submarine or from a submersible test barge, as in most previous tests. A military source said it flew about 430 km to 450 km to a maximum altitude of 60 km.

North Korea's last SLBM test was in October 2019, when a Pukguksong-3 missile was fired from an underwater platform, flying 450 km to a maximum altitude of 910 km.

Kim Dong-Yup, a former South Korea Navy officer who is a professor at Seoul's Kyungnam University, said the latest test probably involved an SLBM recently unveiled by North Korea. — Reuters

Surge in onion prices adds pain for consumers

MUMBAI: Buying vegetables at a small market on the outskirts of Mumbai, Shubhangi Patil laments the recent rapid rise in the cost of everyday essentials, from cooking oil to sugar and now onions, a basic ingredient in most Indian food.

After the cost of fuel and edible oils hit record highs, Indian consumers like Patil are likely to be further squeezed by a rally in onion prices after heavy rainfall in the country's key growing regions damaged the summer-sown crop and delayed winter crop planting. Onions are also a politically-sensitive commodity, with price spikes contributing to the fall of more than one state government in the past.

"The price of every essential commodity has gone up. Edible oil, sugar prices rose earlier and now onions and tomato prices have more than doubled in a fortnight, how one can manage a monthly budget when incomes are not rising?" Patil said.

India is also the world's biggest onion exporter and the price rise



A vendor sits on the sacks of onion as he waits for customers at a vegetable market in Ahmedabad. — Reuters

could prompt New Delhi to restrict shipments, potentially lifting prices further afield, especially in Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, traders said.

"Too much rainfall in September led to disease attack and stunted growth of onion bulbs", says Samadhan Bagul, a farmer from

Dhule district, nearly 325 km north of Mumbai, who expects to harvest just one tonne of onions from an acre of land instead of his usual five tonnes. Key onion producing states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka received as much as 268 per cent more rainfall than normal

in September, according to the weather department.

The crop damage limited supplies, more than doubling wholesale prices at India's largest onion trading hub, Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, to Rs 33,400 (\$444.82) per tonne in just a month. Retail prices in metro areas such as

Mumbai have jumped above Rs 50 a kilogram. Onion prices are likely to remain firm during the current festive season before starting to moderate from mid-January when supplies rise from the new season crop, said a Mumbai-based dealer, who declined to be named.

The higher Indian prices have prompted importing countries to shift to other suppliers such as Turkey and Egypt, said Ajit Shah, President of the Mumbai-based Onion Exporters' Association.

SHORTAGE

India banned onion exports in 2019 and 2020 for a few months to calm local prices, creating a shortage in neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The government has also been trying to bring down food prices this year and has taken measures such as cutting duty to lower the cost of edible oils. "India could ban exports like in the past if the government feels onion prices have risen too much and too fast", said a Mumbai-based onion exporter. — Reuters

New Zealand reports record daily cases as Delta spreads



A member of the public receives a Pfizer vaccine at a drive-through Covid-19 vaccination clinic in Otara during a single-day vaccination drive in Auckland. — Reuters

WELLINGTON: New Zealand recorded its highest number of daily coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic on Tuesday as a Delta-variant outbreak that dashed the nation's "Covid Zero" hopes showed no signs of easing.

Health authorities announced 94 new virus cases, exceeding the previous daily record of 89 set in April last year during the first wave of Covid-19 infections.

While case numbers remain low by most international standards, they have been steadily growing since the highly transmissible Delta variant was first found in New Zealand in mid-August.

The outbreak, centred on Auckland, has forced Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to drop her core policy goal of eliminating the virus in favour of ramping up vaccination efforts.

The centre-left leader is set to unveil a new strategy on Friday that will allow for greater freedoms once vaccination targets have been reached.

Around two-thirds of the eligible population have now been fully inoculated.

"We know that vaccinations are already making a significant difference to the outbreak in Auckland, but so too are people following the rules," Ardern told reporters. — AFP

Polish PM warns EU not to 'blackmail' on rule of law

BRUSSELS: The European Commission's chief executive warned Poland on Tuesday that its challenge to the supremacy of European Union law called into question the very foundations of the 27-nation bloc and could not go unpunished.

Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled last week that parts of EU law are incompatible with the Polish constitution, undermining the legal pillar on which the union stands and raising fears that Poland could eventually leave the bloc.

Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice party says it has no plans for a "Polexit" and — unlike Britain before its Brexit referendum in 2016 — popular support for membership of the EU remains high in Poland.

Nevertheless, other member states have been dismayed by Warsaw's defiance of the EU, including Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's complaint in a letter on Monday of mission creep that he warned would lead to a "centrally managed organism, governed by institutions deprived of democratic control".

Speaking ahead of Morawiecki in a debate on the row in the EU's parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen laid out three options for a response to the Polish court's attack on the primacy of EU law.



Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki delivers a speech during a debate on Poland's challenge to the supremacy of EU laws at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. — Reuters

"The European Commission is, at the moment, carefully assessing this judgment. But I can already tell you: I am deeply concerned," she said. "This ruling calls into question the foundations of the European Union. It is a direct challenge to the unity of the European legal order."

She said a first option is so-called infringements, where the European Commission legally challenges the Polish court's judgment, which could lead to fines.

A 'direct challenge to EU's legal order', says Von der Leyen

Another option is a conditionality mechanism and other financial tools whereby EU funds would be withheld from Poland. Until Warsaw's clash with Brussels is resolved, it is unlikely to see any of the €23.9 billion in grants and 12.1 billion in cheap loans that it applied for as part of

the EU's recovery fund after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EU could even block Polish access to EU grants for development and structural projects in the 2021-2027 budget worth around €70 billion.

Von der Leyen said a third option is the application of Article 7 of the EU's treaties. Under this, rights of member states — including the right to vote on EU decisions — can be suspended because they have breached core values of the bloc. — Reuters

Johnson urges green investment in post-Brexit Britain

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday urged foreign investors to buy into post-Brexit Britain, as he seeks to power the country's future prosperity on renewable energy.

The UK leader kicked off a Global Investment Summit in London by announcing a £400 million partnership with the Bill Gates Foundation to invest in emerging green technologies. The tie-up, which will see both sides stump up £200 million, follows Spanish renewable energy giant Iberdrola announcing late on Monday plans to invest £6 billion creating Britain's biggest offshore wind development.

Johnson, who has outlined plans for the UK to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, is hoping to burnish his green credentials before hosting world leaders at a critical UN climate change gathering in Glasgow next month.

He also wants to boost investment to grow Britain's economy as it grapples with the fall-out from the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit, which have combined to strain the logistics sector, labour market and other areas.

In his sales pitch, Johnson promised government backing for private investment in sustainable projects, promising Britain was now "moving in an exciting new direction with a green, industrial revolution, with new regulatory freedoms".

But some government plans to cut carbon emissions have come under fire for not going far enough.

Homeowners in England and Wales will be offered subsidies of



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Bill Gates during the Global Investment Summit at the Science Museum in London. — Reuters

£5,000 from next year as part of a £450 million scheme to help them replace old gas boilers with low-carbon heat pumps.

But experts pointed out that the grants will fund just 90,000 of the

motorways and main roads in recent weeks.

The Gates Foundation tie-up — run through the Microsoft co-founder's Breakthrough Energy Catalyst arm, set up in 2015 alongside private investors — will focus on four key green technology areas.

They include green hydrogen, long-term energy storage, sustainable aviation fuels and so-called direct air capture, which harnesses carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Appearing with Johnson, Gates said the joint investment would begin next year and he hoped that at least one of them would be "ready to scale" within five years and the remainder within a decade.

"We're going to take these technologies which are not yet economic... and we will scale those

up and bring down that cost, so we'll get these to the same place we are today with solar and onshore wind," he added.

Meanwhile, once operational Iberdrola's wind project off the east coast of England — involving its subsidiary Scottish Power — would supply enough energy to power 2.7 million homes and create 7,000 jobs.

The project, which still requires planning consent, is one of 18 deals worth a total of £9.7 billion and creating a potential 30,000-plus jobs to be formally announced at the summit.

The government said it will also launch a new "Investment Atlas" showcasing strategic investment opportunities across the UK as it seeks to deliver on one of its central 2019 election pledges to reduce regional inequality. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

GENEVA Swiss glaciers shrink despite heavy snow in 2021

Switzerland's glaciers are continuing to shrink as a result of climate change, even if snowfall was heavy this year and the summer comparatively cool, a top scientific panel said. "The volume of Swiss glaciers decreased by almost one per cent in 2021, in spite of plentiful snow in winter and a pretty cool summer," the Cryospheric Commission of the Swiss Academy of Sciences said in a report. "In terms of weather, the conditions were right in 2021 to give the glaciers a breather."



"Unfortunately, in times of climate change, even a 'good' year is not good enough for the glaciers: The loss of ice continued, albeit at a slower pace, despite abundant snow in the winter and a comparatively cool and mixed summer weather." — AFP

WASHINGTON US to allow vaccine booster 'mix and match'

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is preparing to allow "mix and match" coronavirus vaccine boosting, in which people get a different additional shot to the dose they initially received, US media reported. Citing sources familiar with the situation, the *New York Times* said the FDA might make the announcement on Wednesday when it is also expected to authorise boosters for the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.



A preliminary study released in the United States last week showed that people who have received the J&J vaccine may benefit from a booster dose of a different, messenger-RNA vaccine such as Pfizer or Moderna. — AFP

QUITO Ecuador's president declares state of emergency

Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso has declared a state of emergency in the fight against crime in the South American country.

"There is only one enemy in the streets of Ecuador: drug trafficking," Lasso said in a TV address. The state of emergency will initially be in effect for 60 days. Among other things, it provides for the police and the military to ensure security on the streets of particularly affected provinces.



As drug trafficking increases, so does the number of crimes such as murder and theft, Lasso said. More than 70 per cent of the violent deaths currently occurring in the province of Guayas are related to drug trafficking. — dpa

Japan’s Kishida woos voters with Abenomics critique

LINDA SIEG

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is seeking to steal opposition thunder at this month’s general election by mimicking their criticism of predecessor Shinzo Abe’s “Abenomics”, promising to shrink income gaps and bolster the middle class.

Kishida, who served as foreign minister under Abe, could help his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) limit losses in the October 31 poll by blurring differences to the opposition by calling for a “new capitalism” that would spread the benefits of growth.

The LDP faces an opposition more united than at any time in nearly a decade and is expected to lose seats after a huge win in 2017. Although the ruling bloc is likely to keep its lower house majority and hence, its grip on power, big losses would make it more likely Kishida ends up another short-term premier. Borrowing from the opposition’s policy playbook is a tactic the long-ruling LDP has often used with success.

“If voters can’t understand the difference, it favours the party in power,” said Steven Reed, professor emeritus at Chuo University.

The mild-mannered Kishida won a four-way party leadership race last month after then premier Yoshihide Suga bowed out after just one year in office, his ratings in tatters over his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kishida - whose victory in the party race ultimately relied on Abe’s help and whose cabinet includes Abe acolytes - has not abandoned central tenets of Abenomics massive monetary and fiscal stimulus.

“Kishida acknowledges that Abenomics ended deflation, so rather than criticising it, he’s saying disparities grew and distribution of wealth to those who didn’t benefit is needed,” said an LDP lawmaker, speaking on condition of anonymity. Still, Kishida’s campaign acknowledges that nearly nine years of “Abenomics” stimulus under Abe and Suga failed to cure gaps that widened as the ranks of workers in less-secure, low-paid jobs grew. — Reuters

Kishida acknowledges that Abenomics ended deflation, so rather than criticising it, he’s saying disparities grew and distribution of wealth to those who didn’t benefit is needed

AN LDP LAWMAKER



CELEBRATION TIME

An aerial picture shows Iraqi Kurds gathering in Nowruz Square in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk in the autonomous Kurdish region on Monday, on the eve of celebrations marking the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). – AFP

T20 Cup puts Oman on world cricket map



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

IN TERMS OF GLOBAL TV AUDIENCES, IT IS BELIEVED TO REACH OVER 3 BILLION VIEWERS

Picturesque Al Amerat Stadium which is nestled in the Al Hajar Mountains is the cynosure of cricket fans around the world for hosting the T20 Challenge.

Think of a country, which was considered as a minnow when compared to cricket-playing giants like Australia, England or India, with limited history of cricket as host to global showpiece like the current world cup.

October 17, 2021 will go down in history not only for the Omani cricket team’s win over Papua New Guinea that brought laurels to the country but also for becoming part of a global event. It is something to cheer as the Sultanate is picking up pieces after cyclone Shaheen ravaged the two northern governorates.

Oman is in the thick of things both as a host country and a participating team doing well in the home conditions.

If the win was a watershed moment for the sport in the country, the T20 World Cup has facilitated the Sultanate to highlight its best kept tourism potential to the world.

The T20 World Cup, which is being described as the biggest sporting event in the Middle East till the Fifa World Cup to be played in Qatar, is one of the largest

televised events after international soccer tournaments and the Olympics.

With ICC bosses, players and commentators waxing eloquent over the Al Amerat pitch, Oman holds potential in the region to host coveted neutral international matches.

BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly has rightly compared the scenic Al Amerat Cricket stadium to English countryside when he said, “It is good to get Oman in the frame of world cricket with the hosting of the T20 World Cup. It will help a lot of young players take an interest in the game. We know it will be a world class event in this part of the world.”

If the words of BCCI Secretary Jay Shah are to be believed, “Co-hosting the World Cup will put Oman Cricket on the global stage. They are also playing the qualifiers and it will be an icing on the cake if they make it to the Super 12s”.

In terms of global television audiences, it is believed to reach over three billion viewers, which will unquestionably boost Oman’s grand prospects of hosting more international games in the future. And the Al Amerat Stadium, with its beautiful surroundings

should be a pleasing sight for billions of viewers watching worldwide.

At the same time, the Sultanate has much to offer to the visitors with its diverse attractions. By hosting the World Cup, Oman’s name will reach people who are yet to know about the country’s hidden treasures including its natural beauty and culture.

No doubt, cricket in Oman has received enough encouragement from the authorities. The Oman Cricket Association has been making all-out efforts to develop interest in the game by setting up grass-root training opportunities, especially in schools.

Oman are playing in their second T20 World Cup having shocked Ireland in 2016, the last time the tournament was held before the planned 2020 edition in Australia fell victim to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ranked 18 in the world, the Oman team achieved the status to play one-day internationals in 2019. It has to negotiate the qualifying round comprising Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and Scotland to get into the Super 12 which is being played in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Accountability for climate catastrophes needs to be fixed



VINOD THOMAS
The author is a former senior vice-president at the World Bank and former director-general at the Asian Development Bank, is a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Scientific evidence can now link specific weather disasters to human-induced climate change. This connection should finally dispel the misconception that nature’s wrath alone is to blame for these disasters, and make it possible to hold industries and governments that are hooked on fossil fuels accountable for their actions.

At least 15 million people today are stateless, and millions more are threatened with national exclusion. The issue of statelessness thus demands urgent attention, as do works of history that shed light on the problem. Climate data clearly show that high-carbon energy is responsible for the atmospheric shifts that cause more extreme floods, droughts, and wildfires. But much of the global public has yet to connect these disasters

to climate change – much less recognise the role of big polluters in causing them.

Media reporting on disasters also does not highlight the strong connection between these events and global warming. For example, an analysis by the news-monitoring organisation Media Matters revealed that cable news in the United States largely ignored the role of climate change when covering last year’s wildfires along the West Coast.

Scientific research directly linking smoking to cancer played a major role in changing public opinion about tobacco use. Something similar must happen to encourage meaningful action to combat climate change.

The growing body of evidence making the connection between global warming and natural

disasters is becoming harder to ignore. According to the World Weather Attribution initiative, a global collaboration of climate scientists, climate change made this summer’s floods in Belgium and Germany significantly more likely to occur. The initiative also determined that the heatwaves in the Pacific Northwest and Siberia would have been “almost impossible” without human-caused climate change.

Like the tobacco companies that sought to hide the data connecting tobacco use and cancer, big polluters are doing their best to inject doubt into the science on global warming. The oil industry has known about its contribution to greenhouse-gas emissions since the 1970s, but has downplayed the repercussions.

Meanwhile, the global

incidence of climate-related disasters has risen sharply since the 1970s. There has not been a similar increase in natural disasters that are not influenced by climate change, like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Many governments contribute to the problem through politically popular fossil-fuel subsidies, which the International Monetary Fund estimates amount to \$5 trillion per year. In 2019 and 2020, governments spent 20 per cent more on financing fossil-fuel projects than they did on reducing emissions. China is the largest public financier of coal-fired power plants globally, and Japan and the US are close behind. In 2020, the nine major multilateral development banks, including the World Bank and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment

Bank, together provided \$3 billion for fossil-fuel projects.

This financing continues even though the danger global warming poses to the environment and the economy has been recognised for decades. In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and former US Vice-President Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to raise awareness about “man-made climate change.”

And economist William D Nordhaus won a Nobel Prize in 2018 for “integrating climate change into long-run macroeconomic analysis.” But that work seriously understated the need for climate action, because it did not recognise exponential damages, tipping points, and the irreversibility of certain losses.

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Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (R) and teammate Mohammad Naim run between the wickets during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup match against Oman at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Muscat. – AFP

Bangladesh stay afloat with win

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Oman put up a gallant performance against the much fancied Bangladesh side but went down by 26 runs in their highly anticipated Group B encounter of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 at Oman Cricket Academy Ground, here on Tuesday.

After a spirited bowling effort ensured that Bangladesh were bowled out for 153 in 20 overs, Oman sniffed a monumental victory when they were 70/2 after 10 overs with Jatinder Singh going great guns. However, Bangladesh smarting from their shock defeat to Scotland in their opening game, brought all the experience in their ranks including that of their IPL superstars Shakib al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman as Oman's innings was wrapped up for 127/9 in 20 overs to hand Bangladesh

two crucial points in their quest to progress to the Super 12 stage.

Shakib struck a crucial 42 runs when Bangladesh batted and then came away with match-winning figures of 3/28 to rattle Oman. Mustafizur scalped 4/24 in 3 overs with his wrong uns, slower balls and subtle changes in line and length upsetting the inexperienced Oman batters.

POOR FIELDING

Earlier in Oman's innings, they kept up with the required run-rate and were also helped by some ridiculous fielding from Bangladesh.

Mahmudullah dropped Prajapati off Mustafizur Rahman in the sixth over and the Oman batsman made the most of it by tonking a six. Mustafizur had the last laugh though as he got Prajapati out caught behind by wicket-keeper Nurul Hasan.

At the halfway stage, Oman were 70/2 after 10 overs with Jatinder Singh batting on 30 and the T20 World Cup co-hosts dreaming of an improbable victory.

In the 11th over, Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood flicked Taskin Ahmed for a disdainful six over the square leg boundary as Bangladesh searched for a wicket.

Maqsood was later snapped up by Mahedi Hasan as he was brilliantly caught at deep square leg by Mustafizur. Oman then suffered a huge setback when star batsman Jatinder was out at square leg off Shakib as Bangladesh brought the game back on even terms.

When Sandeep Goud was lapped up at cover by Mushfiqur, Oman's chase was faltering and losing direction. Ayaan Khan wanted to press the pedal and was caught at long off by Mahmudullah and then in no time he found another catch coming his way the

next ball when Naseem Khushi got out.

DISCIPLINED BOWLING

Earlier, Oman produced a disciplined bowling performance to get Bangladesh bowled out for 153 in 20 overs.

Bilal Khan, Kaleemullah and Fayyaz Butt were all among the wickets as they scalped eight among them.

Oman's bowlers were initially let down by their fielders as three catches were dropped, two by Kashyap Prajapati and one by Jatinder Singh, which had its impact on the match.

Mohammad Naim, who topscored with a classy 64, was dropped by Prajapati in the eighth over with Bangladesh still building their innings. There were flashes of brilliance from Oman when Fayyaz Butt pulled off a stunning caught and bowled opportunity to

send Mahedi Hasan packing.

It then took a match-turning 80-run partnership between the vastly experienced Shakib al Hasan (42) and Naim to get Bangladesh back on track for a competitive score.

Bangladesh began their onslaught by the 10th over with Shakib going on the offensive against Kaleemullah with some innovative scoop shots through the leg slip area.

Shakib cut loose in the 12th over when he carted Mohammad Nadeem for two consecutive boundaries, first straight down the ground and the second through square leg. Bangladesh were looking ominous at that stage. Nadeem went for 17 overs in the 12th over. However, Aqib Ilyas's excellent direct hit nailed Shakib as Oman looked to put brakes when Bangladesh appeared to be heading towards a big total.

When Naim brought up his fifty

in the 15th over with a boundary, Bangladesh looked set for a 160 plus score. But when Bangladesh lost three wickets for 10 runs to slide from 112/3 to 122/6, Oman had found their way back into the game and hoped to restrict the Bangladesh outfit for under 150.

When the seasoned Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah came to the crease, they wanted to inflict some serious damage but that didn't quite happen.

Mushfiqur was caught at slip for a soft dismissal off Fayyaz Butt and Mahmudullah perished for 17 after a six and a four. Bangladesh eventually folded up for 153 as Oman kept themselves in the match.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 153 all out in 20 overs (Mohammad Naim 64, Shakib al Hasan 42; Bilal Khan 3-18, Fayaz Butt 3-30, Kaleemullah 2-30) bt Oman 127-9 in 20 overs (Jatinder Singh 40, Kashyap Prajapati 21; Mustafizur Rahman 4-36, Shakib al Hasan 3-28)

Scotland on verge of Super 12

BERRINGTON’S 70 POWERS SCOTS TO 17-RUN OVER PNG

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Scotland survived a late fightback by Papua New Guinea (PNG) to post their second straight win in the Group B of ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2021 at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds in Amerat on Tuesday.

With the 17-run win, Scotland boosted their chances of making it to the Super 12s with four points from two matches.

Scots, who upset group favourites Bangladesh in their first match, posted their highest total in the T20 World Cup by reaching 165-9 in 20 overs after deciding to bat first.

Richie Berrington’s 49-ball 70 was the highlight of the Scotland total.

Berrington hit three sixes — including one of the longest in the tournament at 97 metres — and six fours in his 49-ball knock.

Scotland were 37-2 in the Powerplay.

After losing openers George Munsey and captain Kyle Coetzer, Scotland innings was strengthened by a vital 92-run third-wicket partnership between Berrington and Matthew Cross, who scored 45.

In efforts to raise the run-rate, Scotland lost six wickets in the last two overs for 15 runs but managed to surpass their previous best T20 World Cup score of 156 against Afghanistan in 2016.

Left-arm pacer Kabua Morea took four wickets including three in the last over, while fellow seam bowler Chad Soper bagged three.

Chasing 166 for a win, PNG had a disastrous start with 35-5 at one stage.



Scotland’s Richie Berrington plays a shot against PNG at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Muscat. – AFP

SCOREBOARD	
SCOTLAND	
G Munsey c Siaka b Soper	15
K Coetzer b Morea	6
M Cross c Amini b Atai	45
R Berrington c Amini b Soper	70
C MacLeod c Morea b Soper	10
M Leask run out	9
C Greaves c Siaka b Morea	2
M Watt b Morea	0
J Davey c Siaka b Morea	0
A Evans not out	0
Extras (lb4, nb1, w3)	8
Total (9 wickets, 20 overs)	165
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-26, 3-118, 4-151, 5-153, 6-158, 7-165, 8-165, 9-165	
Bowling: Pokana 4-0-37-0, Amini 4-0-41-0, Morea 4-0-31-4, Soper 4-0-24-3, Siaka 1-0-8-0, Atai 3-0-20-1	
PAPUA NEW GUINEA (target 166)	
T Ura b Davey	2
L Siaka c Cross b Wheal	9
A Vala c Wheal b Evans	18
C Amini run out	1
S Bau c Wheal b Greaves	24
S Atai c Berrington b Davey	2
N Vanua c Cross b Davey	47
K Doriga st Cross b Watts	18
C Soper c Cross b Davey	16
N Pokana run out (Evans)	1
K Morea not out	6
Extras (lb2, w2)	4
Total (all out, 19.3 overs)	148
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-20, 3-30, 4-33, 5-35, 6-67, 7-120, 8-128, 9-135	
Bowling: Wheal 4-1-41-1, Davey 3-3-0-18-4, Evans 3-0-22-1, Watt 4-0-23-1, Leask 2-0-11-0, Greaves 3-0-31-1	

FIGHT FROM THE TAIL
In the final phase, Norman Vanua and Kiplin Doriga added 53 from 29 balls for the seventh wicket to create panic in Scotland side.

Vanua hit a fighting 47 from 37 balls, while Doriga added 18.

Fast bowler Josh Davey who claimed a career-best 4-18 sent back Vanua to swing the pendulum towards a Scottish victory.

Charles Amini continued his bad luck with running as he was run-out for a second straight

match after a fine throw from Michael Leask from the deep behind square.

Three balls later, Berrington was air-borne to send back Simon Atai off the bowling of Davey.

PNG’s challenge ended at 148 in 19.3 overs, 17 short of the target. Captain Coetzer appreciated the vital contribution of Berrington.

“Richie has been making crucial contributions consistently for us.”

“Berrington and Cross played outstandingly well to put us in good position today,” he added.

PNG skipper Assad Vala rued lack of exposure for their inconsistent performance. “We need more games and exposure against quality opposition that would serve us well in these kind of situations,” Vala said.

“Scotland bowlers put our top-order under pressure and we crumbled.”



India chase down 189 to beat England

DUBAI: India chased down 189 to beat England with an over to spare as bat dominated ball in Dubai in a warm-up match on Monday night.

In other match, Australia beat New Zealand.

Against India, Johnny Bairstow (49), Liam Livingstone (30) and Moeen Ali (43 n.o.) upped the pace in England’s first innings. Bairstow was dismissed just shy of his half-century by a blistering yorker from Jasprit Bumrah, but, after some fireworks from Livingstone, Ali smashed 21 off the final over to lift England to 188/5.

India lit up the powerplay in reply, with KL Rahul’s stunning 51 off 24 balls getting the chase off to a lightning start. Ishan Kishan top-scored in his role as opener with 70(46), and it was Rishabh Pant 29(14) and Hardik Pandya 16(10) who finished it off in style. Five England bowlers went at more than 10-an-over, while Chis Jordan’s penultimate over leaked 23 runs with the

match on the line.

LAST-OVER DRAMA SAVES AUSTRALIA

Australia had Josh Inglis to thank for a three-wicket win over neighbours New Zealand in Abu Dhabi. There was eight required from three deliveries when Inglis came to the crease following the dismissal of Ashton Agar, but he smoked consecutive fours to seal the win with one delivery to spare in a dramatic finish to the chase.

Earlier Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa were the pick of the bowlers as New Zealand were restricted to 158/7 off their 20 overs, with four batters passing 30 but none going on, Kane Williamson top-scoring with 37(30).

Australia’s reply stuttered in the middle overs as Steve Smith and Marcus Stoinis struggled to prevent the run rate from rising. But a late cameo from Mitchell Starc and Inglis’ heroics made up for it at the death. — ICC

Theekshana, Hasaranga help Sri Lanka hammer Namibia

ABU DHABI: Spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga set up a comprehensive seven-wicket win for Sri Lanka against debutants Namibia in round one of the Twenty20 World Cup on Monday.

Theekshana returned figures of 3-25 and Hasaranga took two wickets to help dismiss Namibia for 96 in the second Group A encounter of the day in Abu Dhabi.

Namibia hurt Sri Lanka with three wickets in the chase but Avishka Fernando (30) and Bhanuka Rajapaksa (42) put on an unbeaten stand of 74 to steer the team home in 13.3 overs.

“We want to get through this qualifying stage. All well went for us,” skipper Dasun Shanaka said after the win.

Shanaka praised man of the match Theekshana and said, “He has been outstanding. He has been training with Ajantha Mendis back home and has a lot more to offer in the future.”

The 21-year-old Theekshana’s off spin and his carrom ball troubled the opposition batsmen as he sent back



Sri Lanka’s Maheesh Theekshana (C) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Namibia’s Jan Frylinck during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Monday. – AFP

both the openers and later bowled Jan Frylinck for two.

Sri Lanka were in trouble at 26-3 while batting but the left-handed Rajapaksa, who survived a dropped catch on 18, smashed four

fours and two sixes in his 27-ball blitz to ease the pressure.

Rajapaksa admitted their top-order inconsistency will be looked into before the remaining games.

“We have a bit of a concern when

it comes to top order batsman. We have been struggling to get runs and not lose wickets at the same time,” Rajapaksa told reporters.

“It has not been in favour of us but going forward we are looking

SCOREBOARD	
NAMIBIA	
S Baard c de Silva b Theekshana	7
Z Green c Shanaka b Theekshana	8
C Williams lbw De Silva	29
G Erasmus c de Silva b Kumara	20
D Wiese lbw Karunaratne	6
JJ Smit not out	12
J Frylinck b Theekshana	2
J Nicol Lofthie-Eaton lbw De Silva	3
R Trumpelmann c Shanaka b Chameera	1
P Ya France b Kumara	1
B Scholtz run out (Nissanka)	0
Extras (lb2, nb1, w4)	7
Total (all out, 19.3 overs)	96
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-29, 3-68, 4-73, 5-79, 6-84, 7-90, 8-93, 9-96	
Bowling: Karunaratne 4-0-17-1, Chameera 4-0-19-1, Theekshana 4-0-25-3, Kumara 3-3-0-9-2, Hasaranga 4-0-24-2	
Sri Lanka (target 97)	
P Nissanka lbw Scholtz 5	
K Perera c Smit b Trumpelmann 11	
D Chandimal c Green b Smit 5	
A Fernando not out 30	
B Rajapaksa not out 42	
Extras (lb4, w3) 7	
Total (3 wickets, 13.3 overs) 100	
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-19, 3-26	
Bowling: Wiese 2-0-11-0, Trumpelmann 3-0-27-1, Scholtz 3-0-16-1, Smit 1-0-7-1, Ya France 1-0-6-0, Nicol Lofthie-Eaton 1-0-7-0, Frylinck 1-3-0-17-0, Erasmus 1-0-5-0	

to correct the mistakes that we have done in past games.”

Bowlers remained key to victory with quick Lahiru Kumara also chipping in with two wickets

“We have a bit of a concern when it comes to top order batsman. We have been struggling to get runs and not lose wickets at the same time

**BHANUKA
RAJAPAKSA**

to bowl out Namibia in 19.3 overs after Sri Lanka chose to field first.

Craig Williams with his 29, skipper Gerhard Erasmus, 20, and JJ Smit, unbeaten on 12, were the only three batsmen to manage double figures.

Sri Lanka, champions in the 2014 edition, top the group table ahead of Ireland, who thrashed Netherlands by seven wickets in the first match that witnessed Curtis Campher taking four wickets in four balls. — AFP



Al Bashaer lift OBA League title for first time

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Al Bashaer club were crowned as champions of 2020-21 Oman Basketball League for the first time after beating Nizwa 74-65 on Monday at the indoor hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Al Dakhiliyah representatives broke Nizwa domination in the basketball titles. Al Bashaer club registered with the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) in the 2020-21 season.

The team managed to clinch the historic title despite postponement of the league during the last period due to the circumstances of the Covid-19 outbreak and keep the momentum high to

snatch the league shield.

Dr Marwan al Juma was the chief guest in presence of Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, Chairman of OBA, and other top dignitaries.

The chief guest delivered the awards the gold medals and shield to Al Bashaer club team members while Nizwa club handed the silver medals. Ahli Sidab took the third-place award.

Said al Saadi from Al Bashaer club received the top-scorer award, while Mahmood al Souli from Al Bashaer club was named as the most valuable player of the league. Osama al Riyami from Nizwa club won the award for best assists and grabbed the top-three scorer prize.

Oman's Asad, Muhannad to take part in 2021 ITTF World TT

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Oman's paddlers Asad al Raisi and Muhannad al Balushi will take part in the 2021 ITTF World Table Tennis championship which will be hosted in Houston, USA from November 23 to 29. The Omani duo will compete in the doubles category in the global event.

The ITTF selected the Omani paddlers after their attendance in the 25th edition of Asian Table Tennis Championship in Qatar last month. The Asian event assisted both players to improve their world ranking.

This is the third appearance of the Omani paddlers in the ITTF World Table Tennis championship after they made their debut in the 2017 ITTF World Table Tennis championship in Dusseldorf city, Germany. The second participation was in Hungary in 2019 while the third attendance will be in coming November in USA.

An intensive training plan was set for the Sultanate's paddlers who will represent the team in 2021 ITTF World Table Tennis championship. The camp is under watchful eyes of the newly appointed coach Amid Shams Shahrbabaki from Iran who replaced the former Jordanian coach Mohammed Atoum.

The underway warm-up programme witnessed many



training sessions to enhance the technical and physical sides. The Iranian head coach will focus on developing the tactical sides of the players ahead of taking in the world class event. Attendance

of the national players in the world championship will assist in boosting players technical performance.

Recently, the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA)

concluded hosting of 2021 WTT Youth Contender Muscat on a successful note. The event featured participants of more than 100 paddlers representing 16 countries from different part of the world. World Table Tennis (WTT) appreciated the OTTA efforts to organise this events despite the challenges of Covid circumstances.

"The 2021 WTT Youth Contender Muscat delivered and showcased to the world your ability to hold events and sets the bar for others to follow. It is an incredible and impressive accomplishment," the WTT officials said.

Late Lacazette equaliser spoils Vieira's Arsenal return



Arsenal's Alexandre Lacazette celebrates scoring their second goal. – Reuters

LONDON: Patrick Vieira nearly enjoyed a dream return to Arsenal but Alexandre Lacazette's 96th minute equaliser salvaged a 2-2 draw for the Gunners against Crystal Palace on Monday.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's seventh-minute strike gave the hosts the perfect start.

But a five-game unbeaten that had lifted the mood around the Emirates looked set to be punctured as Christian Benteke and Odsonne Edouard struck in the second-half to give the Eagles a deserved lead.

Vieira's men failed to hold out,

though, as with seconds to spare Lacazette scrambled home from a corner.

"It was so close but we have been saying that a little bit too often," said Vieira, whose side have drawn five of their eight league games this season.

"I am really disappointed because the way the team came back in the second half, they deserved to win the game."

A share of the spoils moves Arsenal up to 12th, but the performance did little to suggest they will trouble the contenders for places in next season's

Champions League come the end of the season.

A run of 10 points from a possible 12 had eased an early season crisis at Arsenal after their worst start for 67 years.

That upward curve looked set to continue early on as Aubameyang was in the right place to turn home the rebound after Vicente Guaita parried Nicolas Pepe's shot.

But despite the loss of Wilfried Zaha due to illness, Palace went on to boss the first-half to continue their impressive start to life under Vieira.



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates after Alexandre Lacazette scored their second goal. – Reuters

"After the goal we didn't manage the game well enough," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta.

"We didn't have composure or control. "The most positive thing is we kept going. They kept believing until the end. That's how we managed to get a point.

"I am disappointed with the result. We threw it away."

A three-time Premier League winner as Arsenal captain, Vieira has been overlooked by his former club for coaching roles.

But the Frenchman has lost just two of his opening eight league matches in charge of Palace,

which came away to Chelsea and Liverpool.

PALACE WARNING

Palace fired a warning just before half-time as only a fine save from Aaron Ramsdale denied Connor Gallagher an equaliser in first-half stoppage time.

The visitors got their rewards after the break, but Arsenal were the orchestrators of their own downfall for both goals.

Thomas Partey was robbed of possession inside his own half for the equaliser as Jordan Ayew played in Beneteke to finish

calmly into the bottom corner.

Albert Sambi Lokonga was the guilty party for Palace's second as he gave the ball away and Edouard drilled home his third goal since a summer move high past Ramsdale.

Edouard's former Celtic teammate Kieran Tierney was inches away from an equaliser as he fired off the underside of the bar. But there was still late drama to come deep into stoppage time as Lacazette swept home another rebound after Guaita had saved Benjamin White's deflected effort.

— AFP

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Renewables, economic diversification to drive Oman’s low carbon economy strategy

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (COP26): OCT 31 - NOV 12, 2021

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A large-scale renewable energy development programme, combined with the Sultanate’s aggressive push to grow its non-oil economy, will go a long way in helping the country’s meet its commitments to the Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation, a key report has stressed.

The 2nd Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) report — setting out Oman’s pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming — outlines pathways charted by key sectors, such as Oil & Gas, transportation, and so on, to narrow their respective emissions contributions.

The latest NDC update, compiled on the country’s behalf by the Civil Aviation Authority (Directorate-General of Meteorology), commits the Sultanate to whittling down GHG emissions by 7 per cent in 2030 compared to the Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenario.

Significantly, government strategies in support of economic diversification will play a key role in slashing Oman’s carbon footprint — a goal also enshrined in the Oman Vision 2040, says the Civil Aviation Authority’s report.

“According to the Vision 2040, the strategic economic direction is towards a diverse and sustainable economy anchored on technology, knowledge and



innovation that operates within integrated frameworks, ensures competitiveness, embraces industrial revolutions and achieves fiscal sustainability. The Omani economy is heading for the next 20 years to expand the production and export base, diversify trading partners, deepen investment in high value-added sectors, and enhance non-oil sectors’ contribution to the GDP”, it noted.

ROADMAP: Government strategies in support of economic diversification will play a key role in slashing Oman’s carbon footprint – a goal also enshrined in the Oman Vision 2040

With economic diversification, the share of the hydrocarbon sector is projected to decline from 39 per cent of GDP in 2017 to 16 per cent in 2030, slumping further to 8.4 per cent by 2040. The share of the non-oil sector, on the other hand, is expected to climb to eventually hit 91.6 per cent by 2040.

Thus, while the shift to a predominantly non-oil economy will inevitably bring down

GHG emissions, the increasing penetration of renewable energy will also help accelerate this downward trajectory, says the NDC update. Energy from solar and wind resources will account for 20 per cent of the energy mix in 2030, rising to 35 -39 per cent in 2040.

“The Government Carbon Control Target Plan is rooted in the Oman Vision 2040 and the National Energy Strategy to

support a gradual transition to a low carbon economy and an energy matrix significantly lower in carbon emission by 2030. The massive deployment of renewable energy and the deepening of energy efficiency actions are the pillars of the 2030 carbon control plan in the Sultanate”, the report noted.

The government’s renewable energy strategy envisions the procurement of at least 2,660 megawatts (MW) of solar PV (79 per cent) and wind (21 per cent) based capacity over the 2021 — 2027 timeframe.

Substantial improvements in the energy efficiency of gas-fired power projects — which rose to as much as 55 per cent last year — also contributed significantly to decarbonisation goals.

Not factored into the NDC pledges is the potentially game-changing role that green hydrogen — billed as the energy of the future — will play in fuelling Oman’s transition to a green economy.

With at least three world-scale schemes planned for implementation in the Sultanate over the next several years, their contribution to the decarbonisation of the Omani economy is expected to be immense.

All of these key developments will reflect well on the Sultanate when the country takes part in the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) due to be held in Scotland (UK) during October 31 to November 12, 2021.

Explore opportunities linked to climate solutions: MoCIIP

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has urged researchers and entrepreneurs to explore innovations linked to climate mitigation technologies and solutions that can be commercialised not only for the benefit of the Omani economy, but globally as well.

An official said that, under international conventions signed by the Sultanate, private investments in innovations that offer solutions to climate risks will be protected for their intellectual property rights.

Patented solutions will ensure a return on investments in innovative green solutions, while

geographical indicators and brands play an important role in the marketing and development of these solutions, said Fatima bint Khalfan al Balushiyyah, a biotech patent specialist at the National Intellectual Property Office of the Ministry.

“Patents are an important economic tool for stimulating and developing much required technologies and given the urgent need for global access to effective emission reduction techniques and the economic crises that climate change has left behind, the role of the patent system will help spur innovation”, she said.

she explained that the creation of an effective and unified ip system with other corresponding alternatives to stimulating environmentally sound



technologies (green technologies) enhanced the resilience of climate change in accordance with the terms of the trips

convention, which set minimum standards for compliance with obligations and conditions and left national regulations and

laws in proportion to the nature of each member state free to determine the appropriate way to implement the provisions of the

trips convention.

Technological innovation, the official said, is key to uncovering solutions that help mitigate climate change and gradually reduce all harmful emissions that cause environmental consequences to the planet in one way or another. Existing technologies are cost-prohibitive or difficult to implement.

She stressed the importance of ‘green’ or environment-friendly technologies in the areas of energy efficiency, alternatives to fossil fuels, carbon capture, pollution alleviation, water purification, recycling, renewable resources, energy conversion systems, development of hybrid and electric vehicles and other means of transport, and so on.

(With inputs from ONA)



Bank Nizwa receives Oman Domestic Forex Bank of the Year Award

MUSCAT: Leading the way in Sharia compliant banking in Oman, Bank Nizwa has yet again proven its expertise by winning the Oman Domestic Foreign Exchange Bank of the Year award at the prestigious Asian Banking & Finance (ABF) Wholesale and Retail Banking Awards 2021. As the first dedicated Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa has successfully pioneered Sharia compliant banking in the country in all aspect of its products and services.

Expressing pride at the global accolade, Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa, said, “We are delighted to receive this coveted recognition which underlines our global standards in providing Sharia compliant products and services that are described meticulously and are delivered to exceed expectations. Our unfaltering approach is to continue providing the people of Oman a unique banking experience that combines Islamic banking with today’s dynamic financial requirements. The ABF Award honours this commitment and is an endorsement of the bank’s innovative propositions that caters to diverse banking requirements.”

“The utilisation of FX Waad is multifold given its market competitiveness and ease of usage, in addition to the assertion of Islamic principles. Over the past two years, the bank has witnessed steady growth in its

customer-base as more people seek an alternative solution to conventional banking”, he added.

Bank Nizwa’s Treasury department caters to Retail, HNIs and Wholesale banking clients. As a specialised function, the department has played a significant role in supporting the government’s diversification plan as well as Oman’s vision 2040.

The function has effectively closed several milestone transactions with SMEs, mid and large sized corporates, and government projects in the manufacturing, utilities, construction, retail, hospitality, aviation, logistics, tourism, education, waste management, metals and mining, medical, and food sectors. The treasury department plays an important role in reduction of cost of fund to our bank.

A recently launched weekly newsletter, and networking with international and GCC banks, participating in reciprocal lines, has ensured that the bank stays connected to its various stakeholders at all times.

It is worth a mention here that while ensuring the highest level of cyber and data security, Bank Nizwa has infused innovation in all its operations and built a digital ecosystem that strengthens its position as a much-revered bank that has been leading the way to promote awareness and bring about innovation in the Islamic financing sector.

Imdaad Al Batinah plays vital role as cyclone clean-up efforts continue

MUSCAT: Imdaad Al Batinah, a leading waste management services provider in Oman, is playing a major part in ongoing clean-up operations in the aftermath of cyclone Shaheen in the Sultanate.

The company has mobilised personnel and equipment in support of efforts to assist communities affected by the storm, which caused extensive damage to homes and infrastructure across the country’s Al Batinah Governorate.

Imdaad Al Batinah, which provides municipal waste collection for the Government of Oman, is based within one of the most badly affected areas. Despite the challenges posed by the storm at its facilities and labour accommodation in the city of Al Khabourah, the company was quick to lend support to local relief and clean-up efforts in the aftermath of the extreme weather event.

Since cyclone Shaheen hit the north of the Sultanate between October 2 and 3, there has been a huge requirement for emergency cleaning operations across Oman.



In addition to its scheduled waste collection operations, Imdaad Al Batinah has been lending support to the authorities through the provision of specialist equipment and highly trained personnel to cope with the surge in demand.

The company succeeded in sourcing and mobilising an extra 50 pieces of equipment in the days following the storm, including 37 CBM tippers and 13 construction loaders. A further 40 vehicles are

The company swiftly deployed additional resources to help communities hit hardest by the storm

set to be brought in as the scope of cleaning continues to increase, together with an additional 200 personnel.

Imdaad Al Batinah was launched in 2017 to provide collection, transportation and

treatment services for municipal solid waste for the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (OESHCO), also known as be’ah.

The groundbreaking project represents the biggest privatisation of waste management services in the region and encompasses both the North Al Batinah and Musandam governorates with a total population of 800,000 spread across a combined area of 14,300 km2.

Oman Oil celebrates Customer Care Week till Oct 21

MUSCAT: As part of the annual celebration held to advance, strengthen, and promote customer services, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) celebrates ‘Customer Care Week’ from October 17-21.

Each year, the company participates in a week-long celebration, honouring its community and providing customers with authentic and enriching experiences. The celebration was observed through a number of activities including an interactive social media competition, various customer care activities and the distribution of assorted gifts to customers at its service stations throughout Oman including Al



Khamis al Shuhaibi

Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah and Dhofar.

This celebration marks OOMCO’s ongoing efforts to improve its customers’ overall experience. As a leader in the fuel marketing sector in the

Sultanate, it has dedicated itself to being the most customer-centric fuel marketer in the region and delivering a unique, and innovative, re-tail experience.

Its mega service stations, being rolled out at flagship OOMCO fuel stations across the country, have been designed to include coffee shops, car care centres, convenience stores, shopping complexes with global brands, separate gyms for men and women, children’s play areas, pharmacies, nurseries, ATMs, and business centres for students. But more than that, they offer a hub for community-based activities, and a stop to look forward to, on every journey.

“The fuel retail industry isn’t one where customer service would spring to mind; traditionally it was a necessary, but mundane, part of owning a car. But there is so much more potential”, said Khamis bin Nasser al Shuhaibi, General Manager of Shared Services at OOMCO.

“For us, it’s not only about what we offer, but how we offer it. What are the things our customers need to do in their daily lives and how can we help them achieve them in an enjoyable and convenient way. A warm and friendly environment, extra rewards and incentives, are all plus points for us, and of course, the digital aspect.”

Carmakers shift up a gear in race to go electric

LONDON: With electric car sales soaring and regulations increasingly favouring zero-emission vehicles, a flurry of announcements on Monday showed how the global auto industry has kicked into a higher gear as it races to speed past the fossil-fuel car era.

As part of its own €30 billion (\$34.7 billion) electrification plan Stellantis born out of a merger of PSA and Fiat Chrysler earlier this year — said it had entered a preliminary agreement with battery maker LG Energy Solution to produce battery cells and modules for North America, where the world’s No. 4 automaker expects more than 40 per cent of its US sales will be electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030. read more

That follows a recent announcement that Daimler AG will take a 33 per cent stake in battery cell manufacturer

Automotive Cells Company (ACC), founded in 2020 by Stellantis and TotalEnergies in 2020. read more

Carmakers are racing to secure battery supplies as they switch to electric, with dozens of new battery plants planned across Europe and America.

Ford Motor Co’s plans to go electric in Europe received a boost on Monday as the company said it would invest up to 230 million pounds (\$316 million) to retool an engine factory in northern England to produce electric car power units instead of combustion-engine transmissions. read more

The No 2 US carmaker has said its car lineup in Europe will be all-electric by 2030. read more

Companies like Mercedes-Benz Daimler maker have warned that shifting to electric will cost jobs at combustion-



engine plants, so Ford’s announcement is a boost for workers making fossil-fuel engines at its Halewood plant near Liverpool. The shift to electric has also been accompanied by changes in the

automotive landscape, with a large number of startups hoping to become the next Tesla Inc.

That has attracted the attention of Taiwan’s Foxconn, which has ambitious plans to diversify away from its role of

building consumer electronics for Apple Inc and other tech firms.

Indeed, Foxconn unveiled its first three EV prototypes on Monday — an SUV, a sedan and a bus — made by Foxtron,

a venture between Foxconn and Taiwanese car maker Yulon Motor Co Ltd.

It first mentioned its EV ambitions less than two years ago and has moved relatively quickly, this year announcing deals to build cars with US startup Fisker Inc and Thailand’s energy group PTT Pcl.

The need for speed was also a reason Volkswagen AG had Tesla CEO Elon Musk address top executives at the German carmaker over the weekend.

Volkswagen’s CEO Herbert Diess has made no secret of his ambitions to chase and overtake Tesla, the world’s leading electric carmaker. But in a LinkedIn post, Diess said he had invited Musk as a “surprise guest” to drive home the point that VW needs faster decisions and less bureaucracy for what he called the biggest transformation in the company’s history. — Reuters

MSX30 grows steadily with Industrial Index witnessing highest growth

NIDHI NEGANDHI

MUSCAT: The shock waves of the global economic downturn arising out of the pandemic and slump in oil prices have also had an impact on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The MSX30 Index comprising of 30 companies from the three major sectors, financial, service and industrial, slumped lowest in six years to a value of 3,383 points in April 2020, a 17.5 per cent month-on-month drop from 4,101 points in March 2020.

However, as we have witnessed, the effects of the pandemic fade with life and business returning to normalcy, the MSX30 too has shown resilience and recovery. The index has since then grown 17 per cent to 3,955 points in October 2021.

Similarly, the MSX Shariah Index, constituting of Shariah compliant companies, too witnessed growth in the post pandemic era. The Index grew 17 per cent to 577 points in October 2021 versus 492 points in April 2020.

Looking at the sectorial indices, the financial index, following the MSX30 trend, dropped to 5,371 points in May 2020. The lockdowns imposed by the government to curb the spread of coronavirus in 1H21 further impacted the index, touching 5,249 points in February 2021.

Nevertheless, the financial index has shown resilience since the opening up of businesses and has climbed 20 per cent in eight months to 6,293 points in October 2021.

The lockdowns in 1H21 and slow growth of the economy along with a steep decline in worldwide tourism majorly impacted the service index, valuing at 1,534 points in March 2021. The index has grown 10 per cent since then to 1,680 points in October 2021.



The industrial index too witnessed a slump in April 2020 to 3,834 points.

However, of all the indices, the industrial index has witnessed the highest growth of 62 per cent to 6,199 points in October 2021 since the lows of the 2020. The growth is attributed to businesses and industries returning to normalcy along with the government's effort to support the companies for the Oman Vision 2040.

While the MSX 30 of Oman slowly is recovering from the depths of 2020, countries in the GCC region have witnessed faster growth. The countries also benefited from rising oil prices and fast paced vaccination.

The UAE's ADX General index has seen the highest growth in the GCC with the index growing multiple-folds

to 7,787 points in October 2021 from 3,400 points in March 2020, while the DFM general index jumped to 2,790 points in October 2021 from 1,663 points in April 2020.

Qatar's QE Index witnessed growth of 41 per cent in a year and half to 11,751 points in October 2021 from 8,310 points in March 2020, while Bahrain General Index (BHBX) recovered 37 per cent to 1,710 points in October 2021 from 1,246 points in May 2020. Saudi Arabia's MSCI Tadawul index grew twice its value to 1,619 points in October 2021 from 814 points in March 2020.

Albeit, the growth of Oman has been slow relative to its peers, the government's effort to vaccinate the local population as quickly as possible

along with other measures implemented is aiding economic recovery.

Rising oil prices throughout 2021 have also played an important role in Oman's recovery from the economic downturn and as a result, the international rating agency, Moody's changed Oman's outlook to stable from negative while S&P changed the outlook to positive from stable, both affirming the long-term ratings at Ba3 and B+ in October 2021.

The expected narrowing of sovereign debt from rise in oil prices along with planned fiscal reforms would aid in faster economic growth and the same would reflect on the MSX 30 Index.

(The writer is a Muscat-based credit analyst. Email: nidhinegandhi12@gmail.com)

IEF to host Special Gas Market Dialogue



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The International Energy Forum will host a Special Gas Market Dialogue on Thursday, October 28 to give a platform to producers, consumers, industry leaders and analysts to discuss the recent rise in global natural gas prices.

Ministers speaking at the event include Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Housing and Urban Affairs of India; Dr Tawfiq e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram, Adviser (Minister) to the Prime Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs of Bangladesh; and Mohamed Arkab, Minister of Energy and Mines of Algeria.

Industry leaders featured at the event include Patrick Pouyanné, Chairman & CEO, TotalEnergies and Charif Souki, Executive Chairman of the Board, Tellurian Inc. Dan Yergin, Vice Chairman, IHS Markit and Chairman CERAWeek is among the leading industry analysts also expected to speak.

"There is an urgent need for international dialogue and cooperation to strengthen the resilience of energy systems, protect the vulnerable and mitigate the risks to the global economy recovery", said Joseph McMonigle, Secretary General of the IEF.

"Gas markets in Europe and now Asia are on red alert. Low inventory levels are a challenge for energy security and market stability, with impacts that will be costly and potentially dangerous for consumers", he added.

The meeting will be held on the virtual IEF platform and livestreamed to the public via the IEF website and social media channels.

In brief

■ LONDON



TESCO LAUNCHES FIRST CHECKOUT-FREE HIGH STREET STORE

UK retailer Tesco is launching its first checkout-free high street store where shoppers can pick up their groceries and leave without the need for a till. It is latest retail giant to open a store where checkouts are replaced by high-tech cameras designed to track the items shoppers place in their baskets. The firm's high street store trial, which it has called GetGo, launches in High Holborn in London on Tuesday.

■ BRUSSELS



EU PLANS TO BOOST REACH OF PFIZER COVID-19 SHOT

Europe's drug regulator said it was evaluating use of the Pfizer-BioNTech, Covid-19 vaccine in children as young as five, while also taking steps to aid an increase in production and boost the shot's reach.

— Reuters

OPAZ launches drive to reduce single-use plastic bottles



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) started this month an environment-friendly initiative aimed to reduce the use of single-use plastic water bottles at work places. This initiative aims to dispose an approximately 3,000 kg of plastic waste annually in the buildings of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones in Muscat and Duqm as a first phase.

Commenting on the initiative, Zakiya bint Mohammed al Balushiyyah from OPAZ, pointed out: "This green initiative was picked from the box dedicated for 'Share Your Ideas' Programme, which was introduced by OPAZ to urge employees share their creative ideas. Accordingly, a number of employees presented

different outstanding ideas aimed to improve the work environment and adopt various projects, which serve making the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the free zones more attractive and environment-friendly."

"Glass water bottles have been approved as an alternative for the single-use bottles at work places of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and Oman Company for the Development of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer).

Furthermore, OPAZ intends to promote the culture of minimising the use of plastic bottles and bags on a larger scale to include the free zones and companies operating within all zones during the next phase", Zakiya explained.

Sultanate vulnerable to APT-based cyberattacks

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Cybersecurity researchers have kept a close eye on the MENA region for Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) and have worked on 68 investigative reports related to 29 cyber gangs actively targeting the Middle East since the start of the pandemic in 2020

Kaspersky researchers issued 49 threat intelligence reports as a result of investigations associated with cyberattacks on the United Arab Emirates, which is the most number of reports coming out of all the Middle Eastern countries. The second highest is Saudi Arabia with 39 reports followed by Egypt with 30 reports. Kuwait and Oman followed suit with 21 reports each, while Jordan had 20 reports. Other investigative reports issued were from Iraq, Qatar and Bahrain, which had below 20 reports from each country.

The Middle East region has always been a hotbed of such targeted attacks due to geopolitical factors. The highest number of APT attacks primarily targeted governmental agencies: Government institutions where the most targeted followed by Diplomatic institutions, Education and Telecommunication institutions. Other targeted sectors on the list include Financial institutions,



Our reports are the product of their visibility into the cybersecurity landscape and promptly identify what poses a threat

AMIN HASBINI

Head of Global Research and Analysis team at Kaspersky

IT Companies, Healthcare, Law firms, Military and Defence. Some of the notorious APT groups investigated are the Oilrig, WIRTE, Lazarus and Sofacy.

Amin Hasbini, Head of Global Research and Analysis team for Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Kaspersky commented: "Our reports are the product of their

visibility into the cybersecurity landscape and promptly identify what poses a threat. We use these insights to of course alert the concerned organisations on time and provide them with the protection as well as intelligence needed against both known and unknown threats. As companies move towards digitisation especially due to the pandemic, it is more important now than ever before to know about the threats that are constantly evolving."

Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) attacks as the names suggest are ongoing threats that are active for years on end. Evaluating these attacks allows cybersecurity teams to make connections and try to measure the motivation behind why these attacks took place. It also helps teams to calculate what the attacker's next moves could be and accordingly take the necessary steps to protect themselves against future incidents.

Financiers return to Beverly Hills for Milken conference

Once again, some of Wall Street’s wealthiest financiers and other luminaries are descending on the Beverly Hilton Hotel this week for a Milken Institute Global Conference — a year after Covid-19 forced them to participate virtually from behind their desks. But like much else in the pandemic era, it’s not quite what it was before. A vaccine is required for entrance; attendance is capped at half the usual 5,000; a virtual option is available; and inside the tony hotel, the look should be more masked ball than power gathering, given face-covering mandates.

Still, tourism officials say the return of the live event to Beverly Hills is a heartening sign, despite the unexpected complications caused by the Delta coronavirus variant.

“Delta threw a little bit of a curve ball for everybody, but I think people are starting to put their toes in the water”, said Julie Wagner, Chief Executive of the Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau. “Group business is starting to come back”

The four-day conference began on Sunday with a series of invitation-only events, then formally kicked off on Monday with remarks about the state of the global economy and the prospects for full recovery by Scott MinerD, chief investment officer of Guggenheim Partners; Julie Gerberding, Executive Vice President of Merck, which has a Covid-19 viral medication before the Food and Drug Administration; and John Gerzema, Chief Executive of the Harris Poll.

Like at previous conferences, the theme is topical: “Charting a New Course” will look at how “the disruptions and innovations of the recent past can be reframed for a thriving future.”

More than 180 sessions will include such topics as how fintech can increase social mobility, the disparate effects of climate change, food sustainability, affordable housing and beating future super bugs. Some 600 speakers are scheduled.

Aside from the vaccine requirements, Covid-19 protocols require attendees to wear CDC-approved masks indoors, except when speaking on panels or eating or drinking in designated areas. They must also provide a negative PCR or antigen test taken within 72 hours of attending the conference and wear visible badges showing vaccine and test status. Doctors and medical personnel will be on hand.

“We spent a lot of time and energy — and consulted with experts — to design an environment that reflects local and federal guidelines and provides for the safety for our attendees, speakers and staff”, Chad Clinton, the institute’s Director of Media Relations, said in an email. “We’ve intentionally capped attendance at a level approximately half as large as in years prior as part of safety protocols and have hit the maximum number we wanted.”

The Beverly Hills affair follows by one month a similar event held at the Javits convention center in New York. — dpa

Delta threw a little bit of a curve ball for everybody, but I think people are starting to put their toes in the water

JULIE WAGNER
Chief Executive,
Beverly Hills Conference &
Visitors Bureau



HIGH TECH CONFERENCE

A visitor tries a virtual reality (VR) glasses as he watches a digital engine during the Apsara Conference, a cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI) conference, in Hangzhou, in China’s eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

FCA to take tough approach when Brexit permissions lapse



ANDY JALIL
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KEY SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY ARE STILL STRUGGLING, NOTABLY RETAIL, CONSTRUCTION, AND MANY SECTORS ARE BEING HIT HARD BY SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has said it will take a “tough, assertive approach” to firms operating in the UK with temporary permissions in the wake of Brexit when their deals expire.

In the run-up to Brexit, the FCA had set up a temporary permissions regime allowing firms to continue to trade in the country during the transition period, ahead of when the UK would eventually leave the bloc.

Firms in Europe that were passporting into the UK when the transition period ended have been allowed to continue operating temporarily in the UK, as long as they applied before December 30, 2020.

While trading under temporary permissions, firms could seek full authorisation from the FCA or sister regulator the Prudential Regulation Authority to continue to access the UK market.

In March, the FCA began reaching out to firms using the regime to confirm the so-called ‘landing slot’ — the opening and closing dates — for them to either make their case to become permanently regulated in the UK or stop operating in the region by ditching their temporary powers.

Speaking at the regulator’s annual public meeting on September 28, Executive Director for Markets Sarah Pritchard said that the watchdog would

be “taking a tough, assertive approach to those firms that want to continue to operate in the UK continue to meet our standards.”

“For firms that don’t meet (UK standards) or no longer wish to continue to be UK regulated, we will be taking steps to remove their permissions”, she added.

“There will be lots of activity in the weeks and months ahead. It is an important area for us to work not just with government but with firms as they seek to adapt to this new future.”

The comments will add to concerns that many UK financiers have about business heading out of London’s financial district and onto the continent in the wake of Brexit.

In the absence of widespread regulatory equivalence between the firms in the financial district and their European peers, sectors such as clearing are currently operating on short-term extensions to existing deals.

SLOW GROWTH

Meanwhile, weak UK economic growth figures and a warning from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are adding to the concerns in the department of trade and at the Bank of England about the current health of the economy. Fresh data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that

the UK economy grew by just 0.4 per cent in August.

While an improvement on the prior month, it was weaker than the 0.5 per cent economists had expected. The ONS also revised down its numbers for July, saying it now believes the UK economy contracted slightly rather than grew. The ‘pingdemic’ — in self isolation — which forced many people to stay home, was blamed for the slump.

The UK economy remains 0.8 per cent smaller than it was prior to the pandemic and is struggling to get back to its pre-Covid position.

“Key sectors of the economy are still struggling, notably retail (and) construction, and many sectors are being hit hard by supply chain issues”, said Jonathan Gillham, Chief Economist at PwC.

“High gas prices are also damaging the economy and there are still issues relating to self-isolation that are particularly affecting the parts of the economy that sell goods overseas.”

The downbeat data came a day after the IMF downgraded growth forecasts for the UK, in line with worsening conditions around the world. The IMF now expects the UK economy to grow by 6.8 per cent this year, against an earlier forecast of 7 per cent.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

The real rot at the International Monetary Fund



JAYATI GHOSH
The writer is
Executive Secretary
of International
Development Economics
Associates

THE ‘DOING BUSINESS’ CONTROVERSY HAS SHAKEN CONFIDENCE IN THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF

There are many reasons to be critical of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, but the legitimacy crisis now confronting both institutions is not based on any of them. Instead, it has arisen for the wrong reasons, and this is serving to reinforce the real problems that have plagued the Bretton Woods institutions’ functioning.

The current controversy stems from the World Bank’s alleged manipulation of its annual Doing Business index in order to improve the rankings of China and Saudi Arabia. It threatens to claim the scalp of IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, who

was the World Bank’s Chief Executive Officer at the time of the alleged improprieties.

The World Bank appointed a US law firm, WilmerHale, to investigate the matter. But its report relies on innuendo rather than evidence, prompting the Nobel laureate economist and former World Bank Chief Economist Joseph E Stiglitz to describe it as “a hatchet job” and part of an attempted coup against Georgieva. The investigation also conveniently focused primarily on China, thereby underplaying the possible role of World Bank President David Malpass in influencing the ranking of Saudi Arabia, which was surprisingly

declared the world’s top reformer in the 2020 Doing Business report.

The WilmerHale report is manna from heaven for Republicans in the US Congress, who are demanding that Georgieva resign.

But the current moralistic fervor about data manipulation overlooks the fact that the Doing Business index — which has now been discontinued — was deeply flawed and overtly political from the beginning. Unfortunately, it became hugely influential in driving investors’ perceptions and policymakers’ choices.

The problems were legion. For starters, the indicators it

used emerged directly from an orthodox “Washington Consensus” economic-policy approach, irrespective of its validity or applicability in different contexts.

As the Columbia University historian Adam Tooze has noted, Doing Business was always “a rickety and unpredictable construction shot through with discretion and complex judgments.” My own critique centered on how the index viewed any government regulation as costly and undesirable, and treated taxation only as a cost rather than as a means of ensuring the infrastructure, institutions, and educated workforce that

businesses need in order to function.

In 2018, Paul Romer, then the World Bank’s chief economist, said that right-wing ideology at the Bank played a critical role in methodological changes that altered countries’ rankings, and apologised to Chile’s left-wing government for the artificial lowering of its rank.

A more recent independent academic evaluation pointed out that the index measures only de jure rules rather than their de facto implementation, and “sometimes rewards policies that benefit business at the expense of broader social objectives.”

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features

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Discovering the fascinating story behind Al Ayjah lighthouse

An imposing structure in the sprawling city of Sur, the Al Ayjah lighthouse has become a landmark where people come to visit and take Insta-worthy photos. But did you know that the structure we know today is very different from how it looks in the past?... **P20**

DISCOVERY

READ

THE LOVE HYPOTHESIS
BY ALI HAZELWOOD

A young professor agrees to pretend to be a third-year Ph.D candidate's boyfriend.

Sharp-eyed diver recovers crusader sword from Med seabed

A SWORD BELIEVED to have belonged to a crusader who sailed to the Holy Land almost a millennium ago has been recovered from the Mediterranean seabed thanks to an eagle-eyed amateur diver, the Israel Antiquities Authority said on Monday. Though encrusted with marine organisms, the meter-long blade, hilt and handle were distinctive enough to notice after undercurrents apparently shifted sands that had concealed it. The location, a natural cove near the port city of Haifa, suggested it had served as a shelter for seafarers, said Kobi Sharvit, director of the authority's marine archaeology unit. "These conditions have attracted merchant ships down the ages, leaving behind rich archaeological finds," he said. The sword, believed to be around 900 years old, will be put on display after it has been cleaned and restored. — **Reuters**





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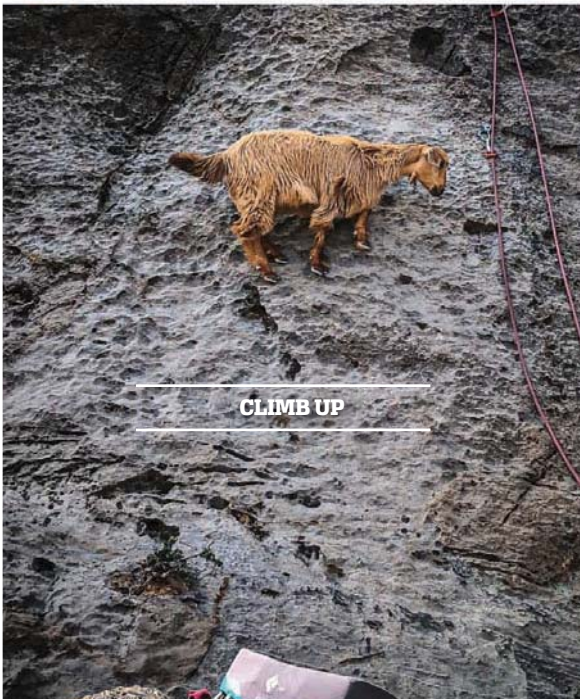
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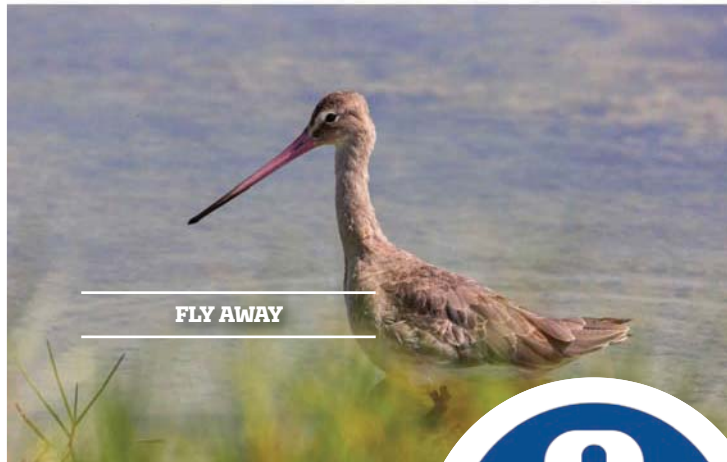
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

'Eternals' movie, boasting a diverse cast and Marvel's first deaf role, premieres



ACTORS ANGELINA Jolie and Salma Hayek brought Hollywood glamour to the world premiere of Marvel Studios' latest comic book adaptation, "Eternals", on Monday.

Directed by Chloe Zhao, who won best director and best picture for the film "Nomadland" at the Oscars earlier this year, "Eternals" boasts one of the most diverse casts of any Marvel movie.



"I hope it just starts to normalise what should have been there in the first place", Jolie told Reuters. "I hope people watch these films in years to come and we don't even think about it as being diverse, it just becomes what's normal and what's right, and what's appropriate representation of the world we live in."

Gemma Chan plays the lead role of Sersi, one of the Eternals, a group of aliens who have lived on Earth and secretly guided humanity for 7,000 years.

"It's got a different tone, visually it's going to be quite different", said Chan. "Obviously the cast is huge and it spans 7,000 years so it's really an epic story. One of the themes of the film is connection, connection to one another, connection to earth. I hope that resonates with people in some way."

"Eternals" also features the Marvel Cinematic Universe's first deaf character in Lauren Ridloff's Makkari. Delayed a year due to the pandemic, "Eternals" will finally hit cinemas on November 5. — Reuters

COMMUNITY AFFAIR

Dar Al Atta'a 'Let's Read' visits cyclone-hit Al Khabourah



BY JANE JAFFER

EIGHTEEN 'LET'S READ' volunteers from Oman, Zanzibar, Lebanon, India, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Algeria drove along the Batinah Coast in a six-car convoy.

We were chatting away quite happily to each other until we reached the outskirts of Al Khabourah and witnessed, first-hand, the terrible impact the tropical cyclone Shaheen had on the area when it made landfall on October 3, 2021. No one spoke, scenes of devastation were everywhere. In its wake, the cyclone had tragically left more than a dozen people dead.

We saw hundreds of fallen trees, abandoned vehicles and destroyed crops. People had lost their lives and their livelihoods. Houses and cars had been washed away in the torrent of fast-flowing muddy water which had raged through the town destroying everything in its path. We drove through the town and parked outside a large majlis hall.

Al Khabourah residents were still cleaning up as we arrived and we thanked them for providing us with a space. Luckily, the electricity supply had been restored. We quietly carried bags of books, stationery, craft activities, face paints, toys, clothes, shoes and refreshments into the hall and set things up. Children who had been affected by the cyclone soon started arriving. We noticed they were quiet and subdued.

We knew that they had all gone through a very frightening experience. Some had lost everything. Life would never be the



same again. Many families had taken shelter in schools, others had been moved into hotels or were staying with relatives. We gathered the children together, sang songs, told stories, and encouraged the children to talk about the traumatic experiences they had been through.

It's good to talk. When we share our experiences in group discussions, we realise we are not alone. We feel united. There is hope. We realise that lives and houses can, and will, be rebuilt. We wanted the children to know they would be supported and life would eventually get back to normal.

We played games, drew pictures, read stories, painted faces, made finger puppets and ate refreshments. Maythaa al Mandhary, leader of the Let's Read Team, told the children a story with the use of colourful visual aids. Then, three Omani guys arrived and told stories with the use of almost life-sized puppets. It was wonderful to hear the children laughing, to see them having fun and

playing together. Two days later, a group of Let's Read volunteers joined a Dar Al Atta'a Team on a similar mission.

This time, the team played with children at a housing complex in Al Suwaiq. The cyclone had done a lot of damage to the houses and there was still no electricity. The Dar Al Atta'a team cleaned twenty houses.

The conditions were a little more taxing this time as there was no electricity and all the activities took place outside. There is still much to be done before life can return to normal in this cyclone-stricken governorate of Oman.

But it is wonderful to see people coming together to help those in need. We would like to thank the following companies for providing supplies and entertainment: Al Diwaniya Omani Sweets, Mursid Magazine, Masar Learn, Al Bitrik BookShop, Popular Theatre Group and Wander Graphics. And to the anonymous donors who provided clothes, shoes, toys and refreshments.

COLUMN



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Get rid of phone addiction!

ALMOST EVERYONE knows that we can get addicted to our digital devices. And those who check social media might have felt this or a bit of this anxiety earlier in the past days when almost all the social media applications disappeared from the Internet for a few hours.

In a way, the addiction to the device, we cannot say that it is not harmful. It is associated with depression and anxiety, as well as falls disproportionately on lonely or isolated people.

Many of us are aware of how most car accidents today are due to the use of smartphones while driving. Indeed, these problems have become clear to almost everyone, but the solutions, less than that!

Not to mention that in the world of electronic payments, digital documents and remote work, a smartphone-free lifestyle is becoming less and less practical.

Perhaps the best — and most logical for many of us — to manage addictive behaviour is by modifying device usage. This is not just a matter of setting screen time limits that you can easily break!

Instead, you can start developing specific, tangible habits to replace the unhealthy ones that keep bringing you back to your phone.

Your addiction quotient may vary based on your values, how useful your smartphone is to you and perhaps also your brain chemistry.

From here you can set some personal goals: If you use social media more than you want to, your goal — at least to start — could be to reduce the time you spend with it by about a third. Perhaps the best way to counter reckless using, if I may say so, is watchful phone use. Set times each day or week to look at your smartphone and focus on it.

Don't do anything else. Be everything to the phone for those minutes, as if it were your business. And this is very real related to the concept of vigilance, meaning while washing the dishes one should only wash the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be fully aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes! Finally, this practice may also show you how little you enjoy staring at your phone.

On the other hand, we are all aware that most addictions are related to a neurotransmitter called dopamine. It controls craving and it is triggered when we get environmental cues like advertisements and reminders to do something fun, like smoking or checking the phone for example. Here if I could say, playing Smartphones are our dopamine game, most importantly through sounds or notifications that someone texted or mentioned you and you should look now to satisfy your curiosity! So the solution is simple: If you have a smartphone, turn off all notifications, except for those you need to stay at work and ring when your dad or mum calls.

In addition, keeping the phone away from you anywhere in your home so that it is not close to you may be a solution, especially when sleeping, as it is certainly a personal strategy that ensures your psychological and physical comfort without thinking about the phone.

In end, addiction is a nasty thing that strips us of freedom — if I may say so — so be alive here now and stop giving yourself unnecessary trouble. On the contrary, live fully in the situation you are in now!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer



Discovering the fascinating story behind Al Ayjah lighthouse

Story by Mazoun al Ghailani
Photos by Abdulaziz al Alawi
Instagram: @mazoun_alghailani

THE SPRAWLING city of Sur has been described as the “pearl of the East Coast of Oman” and one of its imposing structures is the Al Ayjah lighthouse that signals those coming from the sea that they are approaching a storied and historic city tracing its origin to nearly hundreds of years.

I stood by this giant structure one day admiring the beauty of Sur from this viewpoint and I can't help but wonder: What is the historic importance of its location? Why was it necessary? The more I dwell on its beauty, the more I was motivated to find out more about its story.

The location of the lighthouse is strategic. Geographically, its elevation makes it visible from the sea and it alerts ships and naval fleets that they were entering an important old port that has been on the world's maritime map.

The Al Ayjah lighthouse is based in “Ras Almeel”, which extends on the coast of Sur overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman. Ras Almeel is a local name that means the head of the ship as its shape resembles a ship bow. Ships enter through Khor Al Batah and because of the narrowness of the creek, the lighthouse offers an important help to help navigate the water properly.

In the past, the lighthouse is very different from what we see today. It was simply a structure that is enclosed in a semi-circular wall the “purpose of which was for protection and defence of the entrance of the creek and the surrounding area.”

“The walls also had strategic windows where cannons and riffle nozzles were installed but only three of these cannons remain until today”, said Ahmed bin Musalam al Alawi, one of the citizens who is familiar with the history of Al Ayjah.

He added, “The perimeter of the lighthouse is locally called “Algilla” which, to the residents mean “the place high off the water.” While the locals call it by that name, this is not known to many people”, Al Alawi said.

Shaikh Hamood bin Hamed al Ghailani, a historic researcher, said that the simpler protective walls of Algilla used to stand up to 130 cm.

“Some people attribute the building of the lighthouse to the Portuguese but this information is incorrect. During the Portuguese invasion, Al Ayjah is still not inhabited by people”, he explained.

During the Renaissance in the early 90s and 2000s, the simpler form of Algilla was handed over to the Diwan of Royal Court. At that time, late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, may God have mercy on him, ordered the construction of the lighthouse in 1996, coinciding with His Majesty's celebration of the National Day in Sur.

During this renovation process, more spaces were added and the designs were refined with the walls properly built and elevated from the sea. That development will eventually lead to the lighthouse structure we see today including the addition of the night beacon. Once the project was completed, it was eventually called Al Ayjah lighthouse.

Today, the lighthouse is consists of three floors and a domed roof. It has inscriptions on the door, which indicate the beautiful traditional Omani architecture.

There are still a lot of things to discover about the Algilla but so far, the things I learned established the long history of the place and the lighthouse. During the night-time, with its flickering light, the lighthouse reminds passers-by that they are in one of Oman's most beautiful coastal cities — the still growing and mesmerising city of Sur.

