

HM condolences to King of Morocco

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco on the death of Princess Lalla Malika. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in peace in paradise and grant King Mohammed and his family fortitude to bear the loss. – ONA



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OMAN OBSERVER

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US OVERWHELM EUROPE IN RYDER CUP ROUT



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ME ECONOMY SET TO RECOVER TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS



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SWIMMING WITH THE WHALE SHARKS?



MUSCAT

OMAN, TURKEY TO BOOST RELATIONS

Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy held a virtual meeting with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on the sidelines of the 76th meetings of the UN General Assembly. During the meeting, Sayyid Badr and Cavusoglu stressed the need to upgrade bilateral coordination to keep pace with the two countries' growing economic and investment cooperation. They also exchanged views on key regional and international developments, including climate challenges. **DETAILS ON P2**

OIL PRICES HIT \$77.37 A BARREL

Oman oil price for November delivery on Tuesday reached \$77.37, comprising an increase by \$1.21 from the price of Monday, which was \$76.16. The average price of Oman oil for September delivery has stabilised at \$72.73, thus \$1.07 per barrel higher than August delivery. Brent crude oil jumped above \$80 per barrel for the first time in almost three years on expectations for surging demand and concerns about tight supplies as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic crisis.



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I've made it to become an author!
Samuel Kutty

Hope and optimism amid the pandemic!
Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

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THUNBERG SLAMS 30 YEARS OF CLIMATE 'EMPTY WORDS' **P8**

INTERNET QUALITY IS 10% BETTER THAN GLOBAL AVERAGE

Oman ranks high in Digital Quality of Life Index

LIJU CHERIAN @lijucherianoman

The third annual edition of the Digital Quality of Life Index (DQL) ranks Oman 55th among 110 countries.

Covering 90 per cent of the global population, the DQL study was conducted by Surfshark, a cybersecurity

company which evaluates countries based on a set of five fundamental digital well-being pillars.

However, the Sultanate shows promising results in Internet quality (ranks 39th), e-government (38th), and e-infrastructure (48th) but lags in Internet affordability

(74th), and e-security (74th).

Moreover, the Internet has become even less affordable since 2020. People in Oman have to work 6 hours to afford the cheapest broadband Internet package, 1 hour 27 minutes more than in 2020.

Nevertheless, Oman's Internet quality is around 10

per cent better than the global average, and it ranks 15th in broadband speed growth, surpassing the UAE, Saudi Arabia and even the US.

The global digital wellbeing study shows that Oman has dropped by 3 places since last year and is now surpassed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

DETAILS OF INVESTMENT RESIDENCY SCHEME TO BE UNVEILED

SAMUEL KUTTY @samkuttyvp

As part of its efforts to attract high-impact foreign investment, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion is expected to release details of the Investment Residency Programme on Wednesday.

The programme will provide five and 10-year renewable long-term residency visas to foreign investors who contribute to vital sectors of the local economy, such as tourism, industry, education, health, information and technology, mining, logistic services, green economy and agriculture and fisheries.

According to the ministry, the scheme has been created out of the Oman Vision 2040 government programme to boost the economy and generate more employment opportunities.

Foreign nationals have previously only been able to secure residency visas for a few years which were tied to their employment.

According to the information, "today's announcement will allow eligible foreign nationals who make real estate and commercial investments in Oman will be able to obtain either a five or 10-year renewable residency visa based on certain criteria".

It will help foreign investors looking to extend their stay or retire in Oman.

The Government of Oman is

➡ MOVE TO ATTRACT HIGH-IMPACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT

➡ TO PROVIDE FIVE AND 10-YEAR LONG-TERM RESIDENCY VISAS

➡ SCHEME HAS BEEN CARVED OUT OF OMAN VISION 2040

➡ AIMS TO ATTRACT MORE FOREIGN TALENT AND INVESTMENT

in the process of developing new opportunities to attract more foreign talent and investment into the economy as part of Oman Vision 2040 plan.

Currently, 61.2 per cent of the Sultanate's population is nationals and 38.8 per cent are expatriates. The total population of the country is 4,507,468.

Oman's economy is set to recover in 2021, with non-hydrocarbon GDP growth of 1.5 per cent as vaccine rollout gradually restores domestic activity along with the recovery of external demand.



AL MAZARA VILLAGE IDEAL FOR ECOTOURISM

Al Mazara village, which is located about 25 km from the Wilayat of Qurayat, is distinguished by green orchards of corn, mangoes, dates and lemons, which are fed by the water which flows from the Wadi Dayqah Dam. The village has all ingredients to transform it as an ideal location for ecotourism with its proximity to the largest dam in the Sultanate, and its people's association with many traditional crafts like palm fronds and pottery. **DETAILS ON P3**

North Korea fires 'ballistic missile'



People watch a television news broadcast showing file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on Tuesday. – Reuters

SEOUL: Nuclear-armed North Korea fired what appeared to be a short-range missile into the sea on Tuesday, the South's military said, as Pyongyang's UN ambassador insisted it had an undeniable right to test its weapons.

The device was fired from the northern province of Jagang into waters off the east coast, according to the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a Japanese defence ministry spokesman said it "appears to be a ballistic missile". Less than an hour later, Pyongyang's United Nations ambassador Kim Song told the UN General Assembly in New York: "Nobody can deny the right to self-defence for the DPRK", the North's official name. **SEE ALSO P7**

Bangladesh mother and son reunited after 70 years

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi man in his 80s has been reunited with his nearly 100-year-old mother after about 70 years thanks to social media. Abdul Kuddus Munsu was sent to live with his uncle when he was about 10, but lost touch with his family after running away and being adopted by two sisters.

"This is the happiest day of my life," the 82-year-old said from Brahmanbaria, the eastern



Abdul Kuddus Munsu with his mother Mongola Nessa in Brahmanbaria, following their reunification after 70 years through a social media post. – AFP

border district where he was born in 1939. In April a businessman posted a video of Kuddus on Facebook, appealing for help finding his parents. All Kuddus could remember about his first decade was the name of his parents and his village. A distant relative in the village spotted the post and informed Kuddus that his mother, Mongola Nessa, thought to be in her late 90s, was still alive. — AFP

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 36°C Min 29°C SALALAH: Max 35°C Min 25°C NIZWA: Max 39°C Min 27°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:58 FAJR: 04:43 DHUHR: 12:02 ASR: 15:27 MAGHRIB: 18:02 ISHA: 19:12

■ UNDER-SECRETARY MEETS US OFFICIAL



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, met Anna Morris, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Global Affairs at the Department of the Treasury, in Muscat on Tuesday. During the meeting, they discussed cooperation between the two friendly countries and means to develop it in the financial and economic fields. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Humaid bin Ali al Ma'ani, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, Leslie M Tsou, US Ambassador to the Sultanate and officials. – ONA

Rabies is a preventable disease with vaccine

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The Sultanate marked the World Rabies Day, which falls on September 28, on Tuesday.

Rabies, a viral zoonotic disease, is prevalent in more than 150 countries worldwide. Though rabies is a vaccine preventable disease, nearly 60,000 people, including 40 per cent of children, contract the fatal illness each year. With an aim to educate the public on risks of rabies and carry out an anti-rabies drive, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health dedicated September 28 as World Rabies Day. In the Sultanate, foxes living in caves and deserts are the main sources behind rabies cases reported in the Sultanate.

The Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources has implemented many measures to protect the lives of people and animals alike.



It has enacted the necessary laws and rules to combat and control the disease. The ministry is conducting many awareness programmes to educate livestock breeders about the risks of the disease and how to prevent it. It has provided the rabies vaccine to immunise animals, which are at risk of contracting the infection.

Employees in veterinary clinics, laboratories, children who play

with stray animals and livestock keepers are the most vulnerable group to contracting the disease through direct contact with infected animals.

SYMPTOMS

The animal's saliva is the most common source of transmission. The rabies virus gets infected through bites and wounds. After a bite or other rabies exposure, the

rabies virus has to travel through the body to the brain before it can cause symptoms. This time between the exposure and the appearance of symptoms is called the incubation period, and it may last for weeks to months.

The incubation period may vary based on the location of the exposure site (how far away it is from the brain), the type of rabies virus, and any existing immunity. The first symptoms of rabies may be very similar to those of the flu including general weakness or discomfort, fever, or headache. These symptoms may last for days.

There may also be discomfort or a prickling or itching sensation at the site of the bite, progressing within days to acute symptoms of cerebral dysfunction, anxiety, confusion, and agitation. As the disease progresses, the person may experience delirium, abnormal behaviour, hallucinations, hydrophobia (fear of water) and insomnia.

Expo showcasing modern Omani women opens at Bait Al Zubair



Artist Enaam Ahmed at work.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

An art exhibition with focus on the distinguished place of women in the Omani society opened on Tuesday in the Bait Al Oud hall of the Bait Al Zubair Museum. The exhibition will run till October 21.

The exhibition is a tribute to the memory of the late Sultan Qaboos who ensured Omani women are given equal status in the Omani society. Artist Enaam Ahmed is exhibiting a set of 59 solo artworks in mixed media, themed 'Riding Glory'.

The exhibition is being held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the office of



the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs.

The artist has chosen a unique and befitting theme, to portray the empowerment of Omani women through their participation in and contribution to Equestrian sports in full measure.

"The exhibition is a tribute to the memory of the late Sultan Qaboos, - may God rest his soul in

peace - who gave utmost priority to ensure Omani women were given equal status in Omani society and every opportunity to reach their full potential in every facet of social and public life," she said while explaining about her works for the show.

Enaam asserted, "The Arabian people's pride and love for horses is legendary; that's the reason why they excel in horsemanship and

equestrian events". The Arabian thoroughbred horse is the perfect symbol of grace, beauty, power and strength. And women too are no less, once they are given equal opportunities," she said.

Emaan is one of the most prominent Omani artists. She participated in many national and international exhibitions, including in Gulf countries, Europe, America and Australia. She is also the recipient of several, prestigious awards and accolades.

As a token of her concern and sympathy for those affected by the tragic events brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, Enaam has decided to donate 30 per cent of the sales proceeds from the exhibition to Dar Al Atta'a, a prominent social welfare and charitable organisation.

Oman, Turkey to boost economic cooperation

MUSCAT: Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy held a virtual meeting with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on Tuesday on the sidelines of the 76th meetings of the UN General Assembly.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr and Cavusoglu stressed the need to upgrade bilateral coordination to keep pace with the two countries' growing economic

and investment cooperation.

They also exchanged views on key regional and international developments, including climate challenges, efforts for recovery from Covid-19 pandemic and the UN agenda for sustainable development.

The meeting was attended by Dr Qasim bin Mohammed al Salhi, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Turkey. — ONA

MWASALAT COMMUTERS SEEK SEASON TICKETS

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

People who use Mwasalat many times a day are seeking season tickets, which allows them hassle-free journeys.

"I travel at least 4 times a day on these public transport buses to and from different stations and each time I'm supposed to stand in the queue for a ticket. Had there been a single ticket for a day or for a week, it would be of great help to me and many others without the need to buy a ticket each time," said Vinod, an expatriate salesperson with a printing company.

Commuters say it would be cheaper and attract more people to use public transport. The cost of the commute can be worked out taking into consideration various facts such as frequency, demand and the places to be promoted, etc.

"Such a move will certainly help many labourers who use the service as we travel to our workplace and back daily," a labourer whom this reporter met at the Ruwi bus station said.

Many companies give their workers a lump sum amount as conveyance to go to their work site and return on a regular basis.

Vinod adds that such a season ticket concept would also attract more visitors to Oman to travel to various locations of interest when they are on a short visit to the country.

"I've personally seen tourists queuing up for the ticket along

I travel at least 4 times a day on these public transport buses to and from different stations and each time I'm supposed to stand in the queue for a ticket. Had there been a single ticket for a day or for a week, it would be of great help to me and many others without the need to buy a ticket each time

VINOD
Expatriate salesperson

with others and a ticket for a day to select destinations will be desirable," he said.

Many advanced countries have implemented this concept and there are season tickets for every kind of traveller, with weekly, monthly, flexi-season and annual to choose from.

According to a recent report published by Mwasalat, it had transported a total number of 3,453,645 passengers on domestic routes in Muscat Governorate in a year besides thousands for interstate transport. Thousands of commuters use this public transport system regularly and their schedules are planned according to the timing of the buses.



INDIAN NAVY CHIEF TOURS SHABAB OMAN SHIP II



Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of the Indian Naval Staff, on Tuesday toured *Shabab Oman Ship II* of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO). The Indian military official and his accompanying delegation were received on board by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, RNO Commander. During the tour, the members of the Indian military delegation met with the commander and crew of *Shabab Oman Ship II*. They got acquainted with the ship's national roles, its naval achievements, community participations and international voyages. – ONA

Al Mazara village ideal location for ecotourism

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Al Mazara village, which is located about 25 km from the Wilayat of Qurayat, is distinguished by green orchards of corn, mangoes, dates and lemons, which are fed by the water that flows from the Wadi Dayqah Dam.

The village has all ingredients to transform it as an ideal location for ecotourism with its proximity to the largest dam in the Sultanate and its people's association with many traditional crafts like palm fronds and pottery.

This village, nestled between the highest point of Al Hajar Mountains is home to historical landmarks that bear heritage of previous generations. It overlooks the banks of Wadi Dayqah opposite to the village of Hail Al Ghaf.

Over 300-year-old Falaj Hail Al Ghaf is situated on the edge of the mountain. It extends from Al Mazara through Al Khabeel area to reach at the end the centre of Hail Al Ghaf farms. The falaj is situated 4 km away from the road which leads to Al Mazara village.

There are also many mosques and ancient Aflaj in this stunning village, which flows through most of its residential neighbourhood



including the Al Qayta'i and the Al Seih.

Many of the archaeological sites in this village suffer from

neglect and are on the verge of extinction. Most walls and towers on these premises are falling. Elements and termites have

destroyed doors and windows. "These archaeological sites need special attention, because they represent the cultural value of this village. Its towers, forts and Afalaj are all symbols that exemplify Omanis' life through the ages. The authorities should seriously consider the possibility of restoring it to its original glory for future generations", the villagers said.

Al Mazara Castle, which is located in one of the highest mountain peaks in the village, is witnessing a steady deterioration. "Dozens of tourists flock every day to this historical landmark, as its location provides a panoramic view of the village farms. Tourists can take many unique photographs, but entry to this historical landmark is not safe, and does not meet the safety conditions."

One of the tourists expresses his anguish despite enjoying the ambience of the village. "Al Mazara village is one of the most beautiful tourist villages that I visited in the Sultanate. This village offers a range of options like camping on the banks of the wadi, hiking in the mountains surrounding the village and ending with getting to know an important part of the village."

EDUCATION MINISTRY CONDUCTS TRAINING



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Qualification and Training at the Directorate-General of Administrative Affairs in cooperation with the Main Committee of the Individual Performance Measurement System and Institutional Proficiency, conducted a training programme entitled "Individual plans according to the Objective and Key Results (OKR) methodology in the Individual Performance Measurement System and Institutional Proficiency".

The training programme targeted thirty-three trainees selected on the basis of individual performance measurement system and institutional proficiency at the Ministry and the governorates' education Directorate-Generals.

Dr Salwa al Qasabiah, Director of Implementation of the Individual Performance Measurement and Institutional Proficiency System Project, delivered a speech in which she said, "This meeting comes with the aim of forming the members of the sub-teams affiliated with your administrative division. The programme seeks to spread the culture of work in the system and deliver the desired results from its application to the educational field, whether at the level of the employee, the official, the unit or the community in general."

The programme includes a

The programme seeks to spread the culture of work in the system and deliver the desired results

DR SALWA AL
QASABIAH
Director of the project

paper entitled "Preparing trainers in the field of operational planning and building individual plans according to the OKR methodology". Dr Ali al Darmaki, Head of the Quality Systems Department in the Quality Department, Hilal al Ameri, Head of the Education Economics Department in the Educational Needs Planning Department and Ali al Rashidi, Assistant Director of the Financial Affairs Department at Al Buraimi Governorate, delivered the paper on the course of two days covering a variety of topics.

The programme aims to provide all participants with the skill of formulating smart goals, familiarising themselves with the OKR methodology, building individual plans according to the OKR methodology, and evaluating the extent to which participants are able to transfer their training experiences to all employees of the Ministry of Education.

Hybrid flexible system makes students key decision makers

DR KIRAN G R

British sociologist Sir Antony Giddens points out that unlike in pre-modern societies where time and space were "attached to place", in modern societies "time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence".

In other words, 'time-space distanciation' 'stretches' the relations of time and space beyond the actual locale. The pandemic has further fuelled this phenomenon along all time-space dimensions. Online platforms such as Teams, Zoom and Google facilitated interactions within and across time zones in synchronous and asynchronous manner, whether co-located or remote.

The Hybrid Flexible (HyFlex) approach provides the right opportunity for educational institutions in this context. HyFlex combines face-to-face (F2F) on campus and online sessions simultaneously, while also providing access to learning resources and recorded sessions asynchronously.

Theoretically, students could decide on the diverse combinations of how to participate in class sessions of a course/module — a particular session or a few sessions or a complete course/module.

For example, a student may choose to only opt for asynchronous recorded sessions along with pre-class and post-class online learning resources.



She or he may alternately attend on campus sessions or online (synchronous as the class is delivered by the faculty), and yet use other learning materials

asynchronously.

This hybrid flexible system makes students the key decision makers and enables autonomous learning. It also helps student

HyFlex combines face-to-face (F2F) on campus and online sessions simultaneously, while also providing access to learning resources and recorded sessions asynchronously

learning independent of the circumstances that would otherwise constrain them from attending classes and continuing their learning journey.

Providing students complete flexibility of choice may lead to a situation where some of them may only opt for the online experience, whether synchronous or asynchronous.

One can argue that students need to spend enough time on campus for enhancing their social and soft-skills and fulfilling disciplinary requirements. Institutions can mandate an appropriate level of attendance on campus to overcome this issue. This would bring down the "flexibility" of the HyFlex mode to some extent. It would, however, still retain the advantages that the HyFlex model offers in providing a hybrid solution, namely, to address the complexities created by the pandemics of today and tomorrow, and nurture the agile learners required for the workplace and society of today and beyond.

The author is Dean, Middle East College

ENCOUNTERING POST-COVID FATIGUE

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvvp

A large number of people who have recovered from coronavirus infection still complain about continuing breathlessness and fatigue even months after the onset of the disease. The infection often does not end with the acute phase of the disease but leaves medium and long-term effects.

The experience can be harsh and make many feel discouraged to perform daily tasks and experience difficulty in concentrating and recalling memories.

While coronavirus induced fatigue can be exhausting, fatigues are somehow common after a viral infection. In research report published in *Oman Medical*

Journal, experts following up with patients discharged from the hospital have found that fatigue appears as a prominent feature, even at 12 weeks post-discharge.

According to the report, there is no clear definition of post-acute Covid-19 syndrome. In general, it is an illness described among patients who have recovered from Covid-19 but still have ongoing symptoms or among those who continued to have symptoms for longer than normally expected.

British Medical Journal defines 'long Covid' as "illness in people who have either recovered from Covid-19 but are still reporting lasting effects of the infection or have had the usual symptoms for far longer than would be expected

"Patients assert that they were unable to return to their baseline

activity level. They find trivial daily activities fatigue-inducing. This is a major complaint that has been acknowledged by the literature", says the report.

Another prominent feature of long Covid-19 experienced by the patients is shortness of breath, points out the report prepared jointly by Issa al Jahdhami, Khalid al Numani and Adhra al Maawali at Department of Medicine, Armed Forces Hospital, Muscat.

"This was more significant among patients with severe Covid-19 who were admitted to ICU and required either non-invasive or mechanical ventilation", the physicians opine in the report.

Further investigations have revealed mild anaemia in some patients, evidence of pulmonary embolism in some, and changes

suggestive of pulmonary fibrosis in computer tomography of the chest among others. Cardiac causes such as heart failure with preserved ejection fraction or impaired ventricular function were found in a small number of patients.

However, there was no cause identifiable in the majority of patients.

A recent observational survey conducted in Italy involved about 200 subjects reporting chronic fatigue after Covid-19 infection.

There is no consensus on the benefit, or duration, of prolonged prophylaxis, with low molecular weight heparin, post-discharge. Management of post-Covid-19 pulmonary fibrosis is also unclear.

Clinical, radiological and biochemical markers are required to help clinicians anticipate

which patients with Covid-19-related ARDS are susceptible to developing pulmonary fibrosis following the resolution of Covid-19.

"We have used systemic steroids in some patients with good results. The role of the antifibrotic drugs, pirfenidone and nintedanib, is awaiting clinical trial evidence", the doctors reveal in the report.

A unified definition of long Covid-19 and characterisation of its manifestation are important for early detection. In addition, more research should be directed to identify risk factors and exact mechanisms leading to the development of long syndrome.

Such knowledge may enhance further research aimed at the prevention of such a complication, adds the report.

Patients assert that they were unable to return to their baseline activity level. They find trivial daily activities fatigue-inducing. This is a major complaint that has been acknowledged by the literature



Ministry team records folk games to revive them

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, SEPT 28

A team of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth continued its visits to the governorates of the Sultanate to learn about the folk games to list and revive them.

The team met a number of women in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate to learn about traditional and popular games. The meetings were held in cooperation with the Omani Women's Associations.

The team listened to the experiences of women in the games, which were played in the wilayats of Nizwa, Izki, Al Hamra, Bahla and Manah.



The team will also continue its visits this week to Adam, Jabal Al Akhdhar, Samayil and Bidbid. The team is keen to meet women from different towns of the governorate.

The team is comprised of Salim al Sinani, Younis al Harrasi, Qusai al

Kalbani and Sultan al Harrasi.

Al Harrasi said, "The Omani traditional games and sports team of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth strives to learn about the various games that Omani girls played in the past. The team



seeks to document this intangible heritage for future generations. Competitions for these games between clubs and sports teams require accuracy, transparency and credibility in extracting information from its sources."

Zahra al Abri, President of the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, said: "One who has no past has no present. Our society is full of folk games, and the revival of these games and sports is a national duty."

One who has no past has no present. Our society is full of folk games, and the revival of these games and sports is a national duty

ZAHRA AL ABRI
President of OWA, Al Hamra

"It is also considered a sport for the body and mind, as well as entertainment for a child. The revival of these games for the next generation will teach them about the most important games that their fathers and mothers used to play."

■ CYBERSECURITY EXERCISE KICKS OFF



The 9th Cybersecurity Exercise of Arab and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) states began on Tuesday via videoconferencing under the motto of "Enhancing Cybersecurity Readiness". The exercise is organised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology's Informatic Safety Centre. The drill is being organised by the Sultanate for the fourth consecutive time. The event included a simulation of cyberattacks and IT security incidents aimed at testing the readiness and capabilities of cybersecurity units and their response to offensives. The exercise seeks to enhance coordination and cooperation among different establishments and upgrade their ability to address security incidents.

It also raises awareness about mechanisms and procedures to be undertaken when tackling electronic hazards and threats. — ONA

Scientist uses social media to educate on environmental threats



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Nature is a delicate balance. One that is easily disturbed, and difficult to repair. Wherever there are people, there are challenges to the balance of the natural environment, this is especially true in the current age. As globalisation and development continually progress, so too do the threats which face the natural environment. The question of how to protect and preserve the environment is an important one, especially in the context of a developing country, such as Oman.

After completing his Master's degree of Environmental Science at University of Glasgow,

My final goal is to put environmental issues in a scientific manner on the table of this society, regardless of whether the community agrees with me or not

**MOHAMMED
AKAAK**

Mohammed Akaak has chosen to utilise social media to educate Omanis on a variety of issues facing the natural environment in Oman. "My final goal is to

put environmental issues in a scientific manner on the table of this society, regardless of whether the community agrees with me or not."

According to Mohammed, the situation of the Omani environment is critical in several regards, with the most serious issues being those of invasive species, pests, tourism, overgrazing, desertification and climate change.

"Invasive species are one of the five major threats to biodiversity in the world." Oman is threatened by a number of invasive species, including Parthenium Hysterophorus, Mexican Prickly Poppy, the Common Myna and the House Crow. "They are alien organisms that invade other

ecosystems and compete very heavily with local species until they are completely eliminated." In order for the environment to heal from invasive species, as well as other environmental issues, there are three key conditions: Monitoring, control and restoration. When asked if he has any plans to expand what he is doing in the future, Mohammed said, "Our only role is to present these issues to the community in a scientific manner. The community, as we have seen it, deals with these issues according to its capabilities."

He also added that "the government has an important role in the future. This can be seen in projects such as the one to plant ten million local trees."



OMAN UNITED INSURANCE CO. SAOG

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Announcement to the Shareholders of Oman United Company SAOG with regard to the Unclaimed Dividends for the year ended 31st December 2020

Oman United Insurance Company SAOG is pleased to announce to its honored Shareholders that we have authorized Muscat Clearance & Depository Company SAOC to distribute the cash dividends of 35 Baizes per share to the shareholders who are registered in the shareholders' register on 31 March 2021. The Shareholders who did not receive their dividends have to contact Muscat Clearance & Depository Company SAOC located in Commercial Banking District CBD Area – Ruwi. In order to receive their dividends, the shareholders have to update their personal information and submit their identity cards along with the other supportive documents that proof their rights to MCD.

You also could obtain the dividend claiming form from the below website

<https://www.mcd.gov.om>

For further inquiries please contact with
Muscat Clearance and Depository (SAOC)
Phone No. +968 24822222

Spokes person
Nassir Bin Salim Al Busaidi



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

TENDERS NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
167/2021/MAFWR/HQ-13-Recall - 1	General Maintenance of Net Repair Sheds and Fishier Harbor at the Wilayat of Quriyat	25/-	Fourth	Monday 4-10-2021	Wednesday 13-10-2021
270/2021/MAFWR/HQ-24-Recall - 1	Maintenance Works of Wadi Alawabi in South Batinah Governorate	25/-	First	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
275/2021/MAFWR/HQ-29-Recall - 1	Maintenance Works of Wadi Sahalnawt Recharge Dam in Wilayat Salalah in Dhofar Governorate	25/-	Third	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
276/2021/MAFWR/HQ-30-Recall - 1	Maintenance Works of Storage Dam in Wadi Akmon, Nyabet of Shahab Assaib in Wilayat Rakhut in Dhofar Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
278/2021/MAFWR/HQ-32-Recall - 1	Maintenance Works of Storage Dam in Wadi Athashkes, Jebel Samhan in Wilayat Mirbat in Dhofar Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
370/2021/MAFWR/HQ-42	Rehabilitation and Maintenance of the Veterinary Clinic in Mudhaibi	25/-	Third	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
373/2021/MAFWR/HQ-43	Maintenance Works Recharge Dams on Wadis Haywan and AbuQala in Wilayat Mahda in Al-Buraimi Governorate	25/-	Third	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021
374/2021/MAFWR/HQ-44	Drilling Bore Well Supply & Installation of Pump And Pipeline for Supporting Karsha Falaj's in Karsha Village's in Wilayat Nizwa in Al-Dakhliyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Wednesday 13-10-2021	Wednesday 03-11-2021

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

Turkey to press Russia to restore calm in Syria’s Idlib



President Tayyip Erdogan

ANKARA: The presidents of Russia and Turkey will hold talks on Wednesday on curbing renewed violence in northwest Syria and possibly expanding Moscow’s sales of military defence systems to Ankara, Turkish officials said. Vladimir Putin is hosting Tayyip Erdogan at Russia’s Black Sea resort of Sochi, where the Turkish leader will press for a return to a ceasefire they agreed last year to end a Russian and Syrian army assault on Turkey-backed fighters in Syria’s Idlib region. The ceasefire has prevented another major military escalation, but rebel fighters say Russia has stepped up air strikes around Idlib over the last week.

“We are abiding by the principles of the agreement reached with Russia,” Turkey’s Defence Minister Hulusi Akar told reporters. “We expect the other side to also abide by their responsibilities under the agreement.” Russia’s defence ministry said that work to implement an earlier Russo-Turkish deal on Syria was continuing, including joint patrols involving Russian military police. It said there had been heavy shelling by fighters in the Idlib area. Moscow says Russian forces are in Syria at the official invitation of President Bashar al Assad and that the presence of other forces is hindering his efforts to reunite and rebuild the war-shattered country. Turkey has thousands of troops in northern Syria and supports insurgents opposed to Assad, who with Moscow’s support has driven them back to a small pocket of territory on the Turkish border.

— Reuters

SEIZING MARIB WOULD BE A GAME-CHANGER IN THE BATTLE FOR POWER

Battle for ‘future of Yemen’ as Ansar Allah closes on key city

SANAA: Yemen’s Ansar Allah fighters could be on the verge of changing the course of the war as they close in on a key northern city, experts say, warning millions of refugees are at risk. Hundreds of fighters have died in fierce clashes this month after Ansar Allah renewed their campaign for Marib, the government’s last bastion in the oil-rich northern region. Seizing Marib would be a game-changer, completing the rebels’ takeover of Yemen’s north while giving them control of oil resources and the upper hand in any peace negotiations. It also raises fears for the more than two million refugees living in camps in the region after fleeing other frontline cities during the long-running conflict. “The battle of Marib will determine the future of Yemen”, Abdulghani Al Iryani, a senior researcher at the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies, said. “Ansar Allah controls most of the governorate and are closing in on the city.” The severe threat to Marib comes just over seven years after the rebels overran the national capital Sanaa, just 120 km to the east, in 2014. The



Fighters loyal to government are pictured on the frontline facing Ansar Allah fighters in the country’s northeastern province of Marib on Monday. – AFP

takeover prompted the Saudi-led intervention to prop up the government the following year. The grinding war has created what the United Nations calls the

world’s worst humanitarian crisis with millions of displaced people on the brink of famine. “The refugees will probably pay the highest price for this destructive

war”, said Iryani. Marib sits at a crossroads between the southern and northern regions and is key to controlling Yemen’s north. If it

falls, the Ansar Allah could be emboldened to push into the government-held south, analysts say. Ahmed Nagi, of the Malcolm H Kerr Carnegie Middle East Centre, said they have made significant advances after opening new fronts around Marib in recent weeks. If they seize the city, “the Ansar Allah will use Marib to advance towards the southern governorates bordering it”, he said. The Ansar Allah began a big push to seize Marib in February and, after a lull, they renewed their campaign this month, prompting intense air bombardments from coalition forces. “Losing Marib to the Ansar Allah could change the course of the war”, said Elisabeth Kendall, researcher at the University of Oxford’s Pembroke College. “It would be another nail in the coffin of the government’s claim to authority and would strengthen Ansar Allah leverage in any projected peace talks.” According to Iryani, there still lies the possibility that Marib’s tribes and parties, which fight on the government side, accept a Ansar Allah deal to spare the city destruction.

— AFP

Iraqis to vote in ballot marked by growing social fractures

NASSIRIYA: Elections in Iraq next month are being held early in response to mass protests against the government in 2019, but there is scant evidence the vote will improve matters in a country where powerful armed groups still hold sway. Iraqis crave drastic change after years of conflict and corruption following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. A brutal war to fight off IS that ended in 2017 was followed two years later by protests against the ruling elite in which hundreds died. Iraq’s tortured politics are graphically illustrated in a town square in the south, where weathered portraits displayed on large hoardings honour those killed fighting for causes they hoped would help their country. The images of thousands of militiamen whose paramilitary factions battled IS hang beside those of hundreds of young men

Iraq’s next vote on October 10, by contrast, is set to lay bare growing rifts that have since emerged, none more than among the majority that was catapulted to power by the US invasion of 2003

killed two years later protesting against the same paramilitaries. Defeating IS united Iraqis, who voted victorious militia commanders into parliament at the last election in 2018. Iraq’s next vote on October 10, by contrast, is set to lay bare growing rifts that have since emerged, none more than among the majority that was catapulted to power by the US invasion of 2003. Militia groups are facing off at the polls against other armed



A child is seen at an apartment building with an election campaign poster ahead of the parliamentary election, in Baghdad, Iraq. – Reuters

groups that oppose outside influence. The activists who took to the streets in protest in 2019 are split among themselves, some boycotting the election and others taking part. Reuters interviews ahead of the election with a cross-section of

people in southern Iraq, as well as some in the north, paint a picture of a country whose politicians, armed groups and communities are more fractured than ever. “Even within my family we don’t agree”, said Mohammed Yasser, a rights activist from the

city of Nassiriya, where security forces gunned down scores of demonstrators in 2019. “I refuse to vote, others want to vote for reformist parties, and one of my sons is for the Sadrist Movement”, he said, referring to cleric Muqtada al Sadr. Some politicians say Iraq is moving forward. The election is being held six months early under a new law meant to help independent candidates, with 167 parties running, according to Iraq’s election commission. Ordinary Iraqis, foreign diplomats and analysts say the reality is a contest dominated by heavily armed groups which control state bodies and resources and are willing to resort to force to retain power. They say popular resentment over corruption and lack of public services could play into the hands of groups like IS or push more Iraqis to migrate to the West. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

CAIRO

Egypt allows fast vaccination amid fourth wave

Egypt is now providing immediate Covid-19 vaccinations at youth centres across the country without prior online registration, a step aimed at encouraging vaccinations and relieving pressure on hospitals and health units amid a fourth wave of infections. Nearly 270 youth centres are now open for citizens to get the vaccines, the health ministry said, bringing the total number of vaccination sites across the country to 1,100. The move is part of the “Together We Are



Assured” campaign, launched by the health ministry in mid-September, that allows citizens to register and receive vaccinations immediately after complaints of a large time gap between doses.

AMMAN

Jordan’s state carrier to resume flights to Syria

Jordan’s state carrier, Royal Jordanian, will resume direct flights to Damascus from October 3 for the first time in nearly a decade in the latest step to restore extensive business ties with Syria hurt by the conflict, officials said. Flights had been suspended at the start of the decade-old conflict in Syria even though other airlines continued to fly to Amman from Damascus. The decision was part of several steps taken at the end of a two-day ministerial meeting held in



Amman between the two countries on boosting trade, investment and transport ties. Jordan will fully reopen its main border crossing with Syria from Wednesday.

TUNIS

Parties urge president to reverse power grab

Four Tunisian political parties on Tuesday urged President Kais Saied to reverse a recent power grab, warning that his controversial moves could stoke violence. At a press conference in Tunis, the four left-leaning parties accused Saied of violating the country’s 2014 constitution, after he moved on July 25 to sack the government of Hichem Mechichi, suspend parliament, scrap MPs’ immunity and seize control of the prosecution. The president last week sus-



pended parts of the constitution and installed rule by decree, sparking angry weekend protests in the only democracy to have emerged from the 2011 Arab uprisings.

In brief

■ SINGAPORE



SINGAPORE POPULATION SEES BIGGEST DROP SINCE 1950

Singapore's population size this year saw its sharpest percentage drop since 1950, a report said on Tuesday, as coronavirus-induced travel restriction kept foreigners away from the Asian financial hub. It was the second consecutive year the city-state saw its population shrink and only the third time it had negative growth since 1950, according to an official report.

The total population, which includes foreigners who live, work and study in Singapore but are not permanent residents, dropped by 4.1 per cent to 5.45 million people. That was largely as a result of a 10.7 per cent decrease in its non-resident population.

■ NEW DELHI



INDIA REPORTS SMALLEST RISE IN COVID DEATHS

India reported 179 Covid-19 deaths on Tuesday, the smallest rise since the middle of March, taking the total to 447,373. Infections rose by 18,795, the smallest increase since early March, lifting the total to about 33.7 million, health ministry data showed.

Meanwhile, India's drug regulator allowed vaccine maker Serum Institute to enrol kids aged 7-11 years for its trial of US drugmaker Novavax's Covid-19 vaccine, as the country prepares to protect children from the novel coronavirus.

The country has already administered more than 870 million doses to adults among its population.

■ WASHINGTON



STATE DEPT NO 2 TO VISIT PAKISTAN AND INDIA

US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman will travel next month to Pakistan and India, the State Department announced on Monday.

Sherman, after CIA chief Bill Burns, will be one of the first high-level officials under President Joe Biden to visit Pakistan, which has long irritated the United States over its relationship with the Taliban.

Sherman will meet senior officials in Islamabad on October 7-8 after an earlier visit to New Delhi and Mumbai on October 6-7, when she will meet officials and civil society leaders and address the US-India Business council's annual meet.

ACCUSES US OF 'DOUBLE STANDARDS' ON WEAPONS PROGRAMME

North Korea fires missile in 'self-defence'

SEOUL: North Korea fired a missile towards the sea off its east coast on Tuesday, South Korea's military said, as Pyongyang called on the United States and South Korea to scrap their "double standards" on weapons programmes to restart talks.

The missile was launched from the central north province of Jagang at around 6:40 am (21:40 GMT), the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Japan's defence ministry said it appeared to be a ballistic missile, without elaborating.

The latest test underscored the steady development of North Korea's weapons systems, raising the stakes for stalled talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear and ballistic missile arsenals in return for US sanctions relief.

The launch came just before North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations urged the United States to give up its hostile policy



A boy stands in between his parents as they look towards the north through a pair of binoculars near the demilitarised zone separating the two Koreas in Paju, South Korea, on Tuesday. — Reuters

towards Pyongyang and said no one could deny his country's right to self defence and to test weapons.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in ordered aides to conduct a detailed analysis of the North's

recent moves. "We regret that the missile was fired at a time when it was very important to stabilise the situation of the Korean peninsula," defence ministry spokesman Boo Seung-chan told a briefing.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said the launch highlighted "the destabilising impact" of the North's illicit weapons programmes, while the US State Department also condemned the test.

At the UN General Assembly, North Korea's UN envoy, Kim Song, said the country was shoring up its self-defence and if the United States dropped its hostile policy and "double standards," it would respond "willingly at any time".

"But it is our judgment that there is no prospect at the present stage for the US to really withdraw its hostile policy," Kim said.

Referring to a call by Moon last week for a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War, Kim said Washington needed to permanently stop joint military exercises with South Korea and remove "all kinds of strategic weapons" on and around the

peninsula.

The United States stations various cutting edge military assets including nuclear bombers and fighter jets in South Korea, Guam and Japan as part of efforts to keep North Korea in check.

Kim's speech was in line with Pyongyang's criticism that Seoul and US denounce its weapons development while continuing their own military activities.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, has said the North is willing to improve inter-Korean ties and consider another summit if Seoul abandons its double standards and hostile policy towards Pyongyang.

"The conditions she suggested were essentially to demand that the North be accepted as a nuclear weapons state," said Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy in Seoul. — Reuters

■ CONNECTING SRINAGAR WITH LADAKH



India's Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari (C), his wife Kanchan Gadkari, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, General V K Singh, and engineers pose for pictures during an inspection at the Zojila tunnel under construction which connects Srinagar to the union territory of Ladakh, at Baltal, some 93 km northeast of Srinagar, on Tuesday. — AFP

Japan to lift emergency Covid-19 curbs, but gradually

TOKYO: Japan will lift a coronavirus state of emergency in all regions on Thursday for the first time in nearly six months, as the number of new cases and deaths falls and the strain on the medical system eases, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said.

Daily cases have fallen nationwide from more than 25,000 last month to 1,128 on Monday, but the opening will be gradual with some curbs on restaurants and large-scale events staying in place for about a month.

The government will introduce a certification system whereby only approved restaurants can stay open until 9 pm.

"Thanks to progress in vaccination and administration of neutralising antibody drugs, we are entering a phase where medical services can be offered in a stable manner even if a certain degree of infections take place," Suga told a coronavirus task force



People wearing protective masks make their way at a shopping district in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters

meeting.

Japan has largely avoided explosive outbreaks seen in countries like the United States and India although it fared poorly by East Asian standards with about 1.7 million cases and just over 17,500 deaths.

The Delta variant sparked a fifth wave of infections in Japan that drove infections to record levels last month, putting so much strain on hospitals that some patients ended up dying at home without receiving care.

To prevent hospitals from being

overwhelmed, the government extended emergency restrictions covering about 80 per cent of the population until the end of September, resulting in the Tokyo Olympics being held without spectators this summer.

The emergency will be lifted shortly after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) picks its new chief, who will replace Suga as premier thanks to its parliamentary majority.

Suga decided not to run in the election after his approval ratings tanked due to his handling of the pandemic.

Initially criticised for its sluggish vaccination rollout, his administration in the last month has caught up with many developed economies. Now nearly 60 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated and the government has said all those who want shots will have had them by November. — Reuters

China's Xi calls for nurturing of patriotic scientists



President Xi Jinping

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping wants to increase the talent pool of scientists and intellectuals in China who have the "correct political inclination" and are imbued with patriotic feelings to serve their nation, state news agency Xinhua said on Tuesday.

China, the world's second biggest economy, aims to greatly increase investment in research and development by 2025 and its ability to nurture domestic talent by 2030, Xinhua reported, quoting comments made by Xi at a conference in Beijing.

Fostering intellectual talent, especially in the sciences, has become a more urgent priority for China as the United States increasingly shuts its doors to Chinese students and scholars studying sensitive topics and restricts the export of technology and sharing of ideas.

"We must have determination and confidence in nurturing our talent indigenously," Xinhua quoted Xi as saying during the two-day gathering in Beijing.

"(We must) insist on the correct political inclination, continuously improve the work of intellectuals, inspire talented people to feel a deep patriotism," the president added. — AFP

Greece to buy French warships in boost for EU defence

PARIS: France and Greece on Tuesday signed a multibillion-euro deal for Athens to buy three French warships, in an accord hailed by President Emmanuel Macron as a major boost for the EU's defence ambitions.

The memorandum of understanding for the purchase of the Belharra frigates was inked less than two weeks after France was left reeling by the cancellation by Australia of a contract to buy French submarines as part of a new defence pact with Britain and the US.

Macron said after meeting Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Elysee Palace that Greece would buy the three frigates from France as part of a deeper "strategic partnership" between the two countries to defend their shared interests in the Mediterranean.

The deal marks "an audacious first step towards European strategic autonomy", Macron said.

He called Athens' decision to buy the Belharra ships "a sign of confidence" in France's defence industry, against competition notably from the American group Lockheed Martin, according to press reports.

The deal also sent a clear signal from Paris after its stinging loss



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greek Defence Minister Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Nikos Dendias, French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Defence Minister Florence Parly and French President Emmanuel Macron take part in the signing ceremony of a new defence deal in Paris. — Reuters

this month of a multibillion-euro contract for submarines with Australia, which announced it would instead buy nuclear-powered subs from the US.

"It contributes to European security and the reinforcement of Europe's strategic autonomy and sovereignty, and therefore to international peace and security," Macron said.

The French leader has long

insisted that Europe needs to develop its own defence capabilities and no longer be so reliant on the United States, even warning that Nato was undergoing "brain death".

"Today is a historic day for Greece and France. We have decided to upgrade our bilateral defensive cooperation," Mitsotakis said.

He said the agreement involves

THE DEAL MARKS 'AN AUDACIOUS FIRST STEP TOWARDS EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY', SAYS MACRON

"mutual support" and "joint action at all levels," as well as an option to purchase a fourth frigate.

No financial details were

provided on the value of the deal, but the ships are set to be delivered starting in 2024.

The accord did not include the sale of any French Gowind corvettes, a possibility that had been evoked in Greek media reports.

"The construction by France of this state-of-the-art equipment contributes to an ambitious European defence," said French

Defence Minister Florence Parly.

Mitsotakis added that the French deal would not affect talks on extending a longstanding defence cooperation agreement between Greece and Washington, despite the tensions sparked between the EU and Washington after the Australia submarines row.

The agreement is "not antagonistic" to the Greek-US relationship, he said, citing how "France stood by us during difficult times in the summer of 2020", a reference to Turkey's challenging of Greek territorial rights in the Aegean Sea.

Macron added that the frigate sale was not meant to be seen as a threat against Ankara, but a means to jointly ensure security in the Mediterranean as well as in North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans.

Greece and France had already roused Ankara's ire in January, when they signed a €2.5-billion deal for 18 Rafale jets — 12 used and six new — as part of a burgeoning arms programme to counter Turkish ambitions.

Earlier this month, Mitsotakis surprised many observers with plans to buy an additional six Rafale jets, bringing the total order to 24. — AFP

Thunberg slams 30 years of climate 'empty words'

MILAN: Swedish activist Greta Thunberg opened a youth climate summit on Tuesday by lambasting three decades of government inaction, accusing world leaders of having "drowned" future generations with "empty words and promises".

Speaking weeks ahead of a crunch UN climate meeting in Glasgow, Thunberg accused governments of "shamelessly congratulating themselves" for insufficient pledges to cut emissions and promises of financing.

Hurling leaders' own words back at them, the 18-year-old laid bare to delegates at the Youth4Climate event in Milan the gap between words and action.

"There is no Planet B, there is no planet blah, blah, blah," Thunberg said to warm applause.

Echoing a speech by COP26 summit host Boris Johnson in April, she continued: "This is not about some expensive politically correct dream of bunny hugging, or build back better, blah blah blah, green economy, blah blah blah, net zero by 2050, blah blah



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg delivers a speech during the opening plenary session of the Youth4Climate event in Milan. — AFP

blah, climate neutral blah blah blah.

"This is all we hear from our so-called leaders: words, words that sound great but so far have led to no action, our hopes and dreams drowned in their empty words and promises," said Thunberg.

The three-day event in Milan gathers some 400 youth activists from nearly 200 countries, who will submit a joint declaration to a ministerial meeting at the end of the week as a lead-in to COP26 in November in Glasgow.

"Our leaders' intentional

THE THREE-DAY EVENT GATHERS SOME 400 YOUTH ACTIVISTS FROM NEARLY 200 COUNTRIES, WHO WILL SUBMIT A JOINT DECLARATION TO A MINISTERIAL MEETING AT THE END OF THE WEEK

lack of action is a betrayal of all present and future generations," said Thunberg.

She said governments had been "shamelessly congratulating themselves while still failing to come up with the long overdue

funding" for developing nations.

Ugandan youth activist Vanessa Nakate echoed Thunberg's exasperation at leaders' lack of urgency.

"How long must children sleep hungry because their farms have been washed away, because their crops have been dried up because of the extreme weather conditions?" she asked attendees.

"How long are we to watch them die of thirst and gasp for air in the floods? World leaders watch this happen and allow this to continue."

COP26 is being billed as vital for the continued viability of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which saw countries commit to limit global temperature rises to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius. The landmark deal aims for a safer warming cap of 1.5C.

But six years after the accord was struck, countries still haven't agreed how it will work in practice.

Among long-overdue issues still outstanding for COP26 is how each country's carbon cuts will be counted, as well as how the fight against climate change is financed. — AFP

COCA PRODUCERS PROTEST



A demonstrator carries a slingshot while confronting police officers during a protest by coca producers for control of the coca market in La Paz, Bolivia. — Reuters

ROME

Hundreds of migrants land in Lampedusa

Hundreds of migrants have arrived by boat in the southern Italian island of Lampedusa, the interior ministry said. A large boat carried 686 people to the island overnight, local authorities said, while another 67 people later reached port on smaller vessels after being rescued by police.

The ministry said the migrants will now be moved to another vessel for Covid-19 quarantine.

"International judicial cooperation is fundamental to contain irregular immigration and stem the



unprecedented violence and tragic violations of the most basic human rights of the migrants," Luigi Patronaggio, chief prosecutor in the southern Sicilian city of Agrigento, told local media. — Reuters

GOTHENBURG

Swedish police investigate Gothenburg blast

Four people were seriously hurt in an explosion and fire on Tuesday in the Swedish city of Gothenburg and police are investigating whether an explosive device was placed at the scene. At least 16 people were taken to hospital after the early morning blast set ablaze an apartment bloc in a central residential area. Fire fighters pulled people from the building as grey smoke billowed out of stairwells and windows.

Three women and one man were treated for serious injuries,



a Sahlgrenska University Hospital spokesperson said. Swedish public services radio SR reported that about 25 people had been taken to hospitals around Sweden's second largest city. — Reuters

LONDON

UK govt takes over train operator after tax breach

Britain's government said it would take over the running of a privately-run train operator serving London and surrounding areas after a tax breach, further knocking a sector badly hit by the pandemic. Southeastern will fall into state control from October 17, the day after its current franchise agreement ends.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said Southeastern had failed to return more than £25 million owed to the taxpayer. "The decision to take control of services



makes unequivocally clear that we will not accept anything less from the private sector than a total commitment to their passengers and absolute transparency with taxpayer support," Shapps said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

The ‘climate chancellor’ who faced two ways

ARTHUR NESLEN

Feted as Germany’s “climate chancellor”, Angela Merkel won international plaudits for her efforts to tackle global warming, but as she prepares to leave office, critics say domestic emissions cuts stagnated under her 16-year watch.

Merkel’s conservatives were narrowly defeated in Sunday’s election while the Greens emerged in a kingmaker role, suggesting climate issues will have an even higher profile in German politics over the years ahead, political analysts said.

“(The election result) will also shape next year’s German G7 presidency, with Germany now set to solidify the G7 as an engine for climate action”, said Jennifer Tollmann, a senior policy Adviser for the E3G think-tank in Berlin.

Merkel won plaudits from campaigners for persuading the leaders of the (G7) Group of Seven wealthy countries in 2015 to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. She was credited by a senior official in former president Bill Clinton’s administration with making possible the Kyoto Protocol — a 1997 climate pact that preceded the Paris agreement.

“The election result will also shape next year’s German G7 presidency, with Germany now set to solidify the G7 as an engine for climate action

JENNIFER TOLLMANN
A senior policy Adviser

“There is no doubt that she personally helped to advance international climate action at critical moments, despite multiple challenges”, Christiana Figueres, the former UN climate chief, wrote in emailed comments. But Merkel’s critics say the centre-right leader also approached the climate crisis as an everyday issue of give and take that could be balanced by concessions from all sides.

“Merkel’s record on climate policy over the last 16 years is disastrous”, Juergen Trittin, a Green former German environment minister between 1998 and 2005, said. “In the past 16 years, Germany has lost its leadership in technologies such as wind power and (solar) photovoltaics to China and the US, investments into clean energy have decreased and tens of thousands of jobs in these future technologies were lost”, he added.

In 2019, Merkel accepted a target for Germany to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050. But in the same year she postponed a coal phase-out until 2038 under industry pressure, raising questions about how the 2050 goal could be achieved.

In April, her 2050 emissions-cutting blueprint was declared unconstitutional by the German courts because it loaded the burden of painful emissions cuts onto future generations.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



THE LITTLE AMAL

Little Amal, a 3.5-metre-tall puppet depicting an unaccompanied Syrian refugee, is seen in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday. – Reuters

I’ve made it to become an author!



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

NOW I FEEL LIKE I’VE STARTED OVER AGAIN. I DON’T WORRY ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED

First of all, thank you for being a reader of my column. I am grateful for the support you have given me over the years. Your comments, emails, shares and telephone calls keep this space alive.

Now, let me say without any rambling, I am more excited to share the good news that I have become an author. Even though I have been part of several publications, it’s for the first time that I penned a book. Of course, there is a co-author.

My excitement is more because the event marking the release of the book came after my months-long ordeal with coronavirus infection. It was a period of anxiety and desperation! Besides health problems, the microbe had robbed me of my peace of mind and all the more my personal freedom.

But I was incredibly blessed that I won the battle for survival.

Let me stress that Covid-19 is nothing to play with. A lot of people don’t make it. I was one of the lucky ones! No words can express how grateful I am to the Almighty and all of you!

Now I feel like I’ve started over again. I don’t worry about the happenings of the past. The bitterness of the past is gone now. I’ve started enjoying life everyday right now. And the book, the event that saw its release and the drizzle of positive comments make me more enthusiastic.

I am grateful and blessed that the book — *Oman-India Ties Across Sea and Space* — came at an important time in my journalistic career that covers a span of over two decades in the Sultanate alone.

The book, a tribute to the people of Oman and India is believed to be the first of its kind that brings together historical accounts of the rich historical relationship between the two great civilisations which go back to more than 5,000 years.

The concept of the book came from the inspiration of seeing the developments in Oman and understanding of the depth in the centuries-old relationship between the two countries. Facilitated by physical proximity and long standing cultural ties, India and Oman share a deep cultural and commercial geography which has also led to influences in popular culture

as well as literary and linguistic heritage.

It is a celebration of the close ties of India with Oman, going back to the prehistoric past, enriched in the present with ties which are strategic, economic and scientific, but also familial, educational and cultural.

Since the time Omanis started navigation activities and reached Indian seaports, there has been a protracted history of interactions between the two countries, which have contributed to lasting imprint on both cultures.

I cannot forget to mention that there have been several officials in various ministries both in Oman and India, the Editor in Chief and my colleagues at *Oman Daily Observer*, the Indian Ambassador and other staff at the embassy, citizens and residents, participated in the book by providing me with their views, interviews, photographs and other support.

I thank all of them for sharing their memories as well as their vision for the future of relations between Oman and India.

Hope and optimism amid the pandemic!



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

PERHAPS IN LIGHT OF THIS THERE IS A BELIEF THAT YOU CAN IMPROVE THINGS WITHOUT DISTORTING REALITY

Despite all the pain the Covid-19 pandemic has caused to many and how it has slowly transformed from also a temporary inconvenience to many into a new way of life. Those who suffered the most were the optimists who had always expected a return to normalcy, but were disappointed as the pandemic continued. There are some people who did their best and were completely pessimistic about the outside world, yet paid less attention to those external conditions and focused more on what they could do to persevere.

Perhaps in light of this there is a belief that you can improve things without distorting reality:

Not with optimism, but — if I may say so — with hope. During the last period of the pandemic, optimism was often not the best way to improve your well-being, while some research shows that hope is a more effective force.

However, people tend to use hope and optimism as identical synonymous, but this is not accurate. Hope focuses directly on the personal achievement of specific goals, while optimism focuses more broadly on the expected quality of future outcomes in general.

On the other hand, hope and optimism can go together, but they don’t have to. What I

mean here is that you can be a hopeless optimist and feel personally helpless but assume that everything will be fine. While you can be a pessimist an optimist makes negative predictions about the future but have confidence that you can improve things in your life and the lives of others.

So sometimes you can imagine a better future and explain in detail what makes it so. Perhaps then you will begin to convince yourself that better times lie ahead and you will have engaged in optimism, but not yet hope. The fact that envisioning a better future will not make it so on its own, but it can help the world

when it changes our personal behaviour from complaint to action! Thus, the next step is to imagine yourself helping in a reasonable way to achieve a better future for you, those around you or your community.

Now that you are armed with hope, you can move on to the most important step of all, action. Take for example, your vision for improvement and the humble ambition to be a part of it in a specific way and implement it accordingly. And follow through with your ideas to help people, maybe you can recommend trying two or three ideas, as your first idea is likely to prove impractical

or unrealistic.

Your specific actions may seem like steps in absurdity, because they are so small. Then don’t listen to it, that’s the sound of despair in your head. May be I will advise here saying: Your little path will change your heart and may affect the hearts of others, especially when they see the effect of practicing hope and love on you.

Finally, for some lucky souls, optimism appears uninvited and makes a nest, while hope requires that we make a nest for it and put some delicious bird seed as well.

(The author is a physician, medical innovator and a writer)

sport

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US OVERWHELM EUROPE IN RYDER CUP ROUT

KOHLER, United States: The United States crushed Europe 19-9 to recapture the Ryder Cup on Sunday in a performance captain Steve Stricker called the “greatest of all time.”

Collin Morikawa, the 24-year-old world number three, delivered the winning half point when he tied his match with Viktor Hovland at Whistling Straits.

He was one of eight 20-somethings on a US team that featured nine players in the world's top 11 — all gunning to regain the coveted trophy won by Europe in France three years ago. “Speechless,” US captain Steve Stricker said, tearing up as he talked of the commitment that resulted in dominant victory.

The Americans became the first team to notch 19 points, beating the previous record of 18.5 achieved twice by each team before.

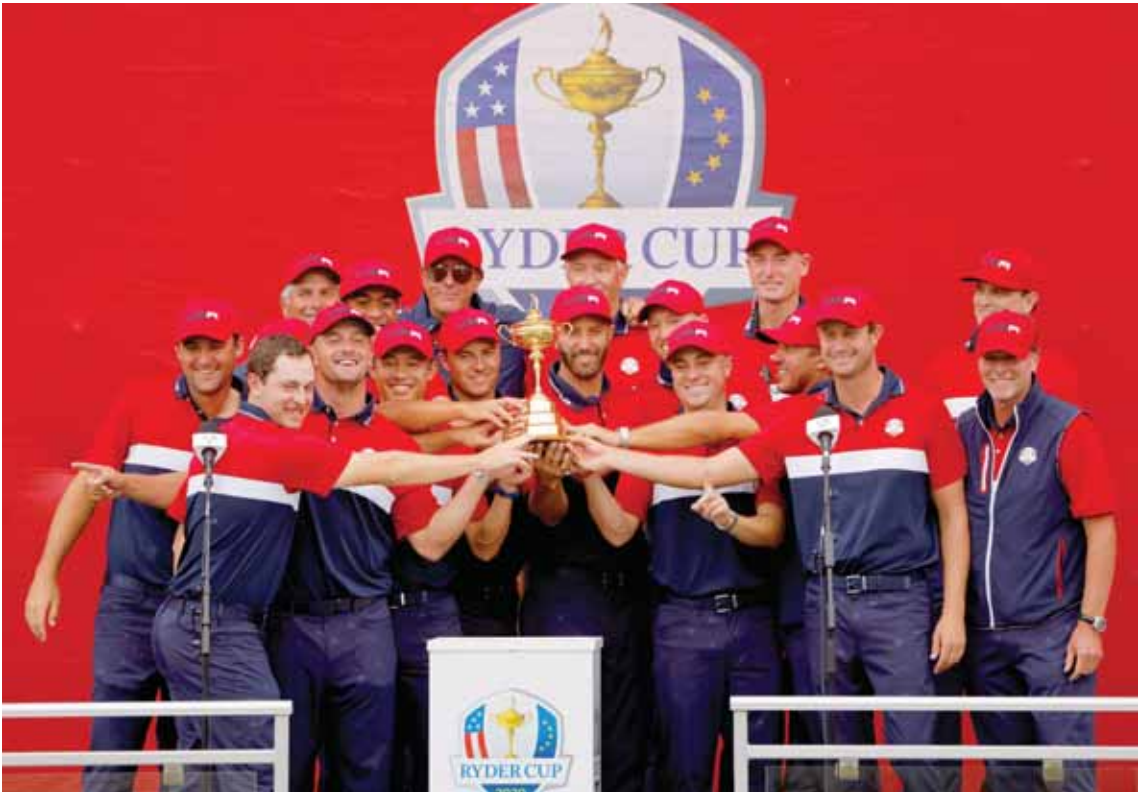
“This is the greatest team of all time right here,” Stricker said. “These guys are unbelievable.

“They come with a lot of passion, a lot of energy, a lot of game. They are just so good.”

World number two Dustin Johnson, at 37 the oldest member of the team, provided a template for his younger colleagues, his 1-up victory singles victory over Paul Casey giving him a perfect 5-0 record in a maximum five matches.

He became the first American since Larry Nelson in 1979 — and just the fifth player ever — to go five-for-five when he prevailed in a tightly contested battle with Casey that saw them tie the first five holes.

Johnson took the lead for good at the eighth, but he never led by more than two and



Team USA celebrate with the Ryder Cup trophy at Whistling Straits in Wisconsin, US. – Reuters



Team USA's Collin Morikawa celebrates with Bryson DeChambeau and Scottie Scheffler on the 18th green after halving his match resulting in Team USA winning the Ryder Cup. – Reuters

couldn't put Casey away until the bitter end.

Johnson said he shared a key trait with his young teammates in that fuelled their bid to stop Europe winning a fifth Ryder Cup in six editions.

“We do not like to lose,” he

said. “We had a lot of rookies on the Ryder Cup, but it didn't feel like they were rookies ... and they didn't play like they were rookies. They stepped up to the plate and the all wanted it.”

They made that clear from the start and took an 11-5 lead into

“This is the greatest team of all time right here. These guys are unbelievable. They come with a lot of passion, a lot of energy, a lot of game. They are just so good

STEVE STRICKER
US captain

Sunday's 12 singles matches, the six-point gap more than either team has ever overcome on the final day to lift the trophy. It meant the Americans needed just 3.5 points to win the Cup.

Padraig Harrington's Europe needed nine to retain it, and it was clear when the US powered to the lead in most of the early

matches that they wouldn't do it.

Morikawa, who won his second major title at the British Open this year, had assured the US of victory with a brilliant birdie at the par-three 17th, where he blasted his tee shot to three feet, going 1-up with one to play. He missed a six-footer at 18 to win the match outright, but thanks to his half-point the American celebrations were already underway.

Scottie Scheffler, a Ryder Cup newcomer with the lowest ranking in the US team at 21 in the world, had opened the floodgates when he took out world number one Jon Rahm 4&3. Rahm, who had excelled all week amid Europe's overall struggles, became just the third world number one to lose a Ryder Cup singles match.

“We all saw it, we knew it was happening,” Jordan Spieth said of Scheffler's convincing victory, which Johnson called “one thing that could really push the US team.”

‘BEST EVENT IN GOLF’

Rory McIlroy gained the first point of the day with a 3&2 victory over Olympic champion Xander Schauffele, but his first win of the week was no cause for celebration as he contemplated the flood of red on the scoreboard. “(I'm) incredibly proud to be a part of this team,” McIlroy said, his voice cracking. “I've been extremely disappointed that I haven't contributed more for the team.”

Patrick Cantlay, the US PGA Tour's player of the year and FedEx Cup play-off champion, polished off European rookie Shane Lowry 4&2. — AFP



Richie Berrington of Scotland bats against Oman at the Al Amerat Ground on Tuesday.

SCOTLAND OVERCOME RESURGENT OMAN

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Scotland held their nerves to overcome a fully charged up Oman by 18 runs in a World Cricket League (WCL) Division 2 game at Oman Cricket Academy Ground 1 in Al Amerat on Tuesday.

Requiring 122 runs in the last 13 overs with only 3 wickets in hand, Oman rattled Scotland by pressing on the pedal, Naseem Khushi and Sandeep Goud stealing 56 in the next seven overs to reach 209 before the former perished in the 45th over. Power-hitting specialist Goud found a capable ally in Kaleemullah and the duo took Oman to 243 in the 48th over before the latter was out hit wicket while trying to hit another boundary.

Scotland bounced back from thereon. Needing 31 to win in two overs, Goud brought Oman closer to the target hitting the first two balls for a six and a four. However, Chris Sole bowled four dot balls to leave Oman a monumental task of having to score 21 in the last over.

Safyan Sheriff did exceptionally well to concede only one run in the final over to help Scotland to a sensational win. Goud remained unbeaten at 54 with 3 fours and 4 sixes.

Opener Jatinder Singh top-scored for Oman with a typically fluent 64.

BERRINGTON SHINES

Earlier, Scotland rode on a brilliant 97 by Richie Berrington who mixed caution with aggression to build a platform for his side to attack the hosts who have looked pretty strong on home turf.

The tourists got off to a good start reaching 107 for 1 in 23 overs before a couple of quick wickets slowed them down. While the first half clearly belonged to opener Kyle Koetzer who struck a fluent 60, it was Berrington all the way in the second half, shifting gears to put Oman on the defensive. His five hits over the ropes were instrumental in help the tourists to a good score of 273 for 6 in 50 overs.

BRIEF SCORES: Scotland 273 for 6 in 50 overs (Richie Berrington 97 - 5x4, 5x6, Kyle Koetzer 60 - 7x4, 2x6, Dylan Budge 32 - 2x4, Calum Macleod 26 - 2x4, Mathew Cross 25 - 4x4, George Munsey 25 - 2x4) beat Oman 255 for 9 in 50 overs (Jatinder Singh 64 - 5x4, 3x6, Sandeep Goud 54 not out - 3x4, 4x6, Aqib Ilyas 33 - 2x4, Naseem Khushi 27 - 1x4, 3x6, Kaleemullah 20 - 1x4, 2x6, Chris Sole 3-79) by 18 runs.

Italy to face Copa winners | UEFA TO SET UP JOINT OFFICE WITH CONMEBOL

PARIS: European Championship winners Italy will face Copa America winners Argentina in June 2022, the soccer governing bodies of Europe and South America said on Tuesday.

“The agreement reached by the two organisations currently covers three editions of this match between the respective continental winners,” Uefa said in a statement.

No venue or competition title name was given for the match but a source said the game has been given the working title of the ‘Finalissima’.

The announcement comes after both European governing body Uefa and their South American counterparts Conmebol came out strongly against Fifa's plans for a biennial World Cup. The matches form part of what Uefa called an “expansion of the cooperation” between the two organisations.

“The organising of this match



is part of the expansion of the cooperation between Uefa and Conmebol, which notably includes women's football, futsal and youth categories, the exchange of referees, as well as technical training schemes,” Uefa said.

There was no mention of Fifa, who organise international competitions between different confederations at various age-

groups as well as in the form of



Uefa and Conmebol had came out strongly against Fifa plan for a biennial World Cup

the World Cup.

Uefa also announced they were setting up a joint office with Conmebol in London, which

will be in charge of coordinating “projects of common interest”.

Earlier this month, Uefa president Aleksander Ceferin warned of a potential European boycott of the World Cup if Fifa's plans to stage the tournament every two years go ahead.

World soccer's governing body is carrying out a review of the international match calendar, led by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger who is



proposing a major tournament every year. Under the proposals the World Cup would rotate with continental tournaments such as the European Championship and be played every second year instead of every fourth.

“We can decide not to play in it,” Ceferin told the Times newspaper. “As far as I know, the South Americans are on the same page. So good luck with a World Cup like that.” — Reuters

Narine stars as Kolkata down Delhi

DUBAI: Sunil Narine shone with bat and ball as Kolkata Knight Riders boosted their play-off hopes with a three-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

Narine returned figures of 2-18 with his spin to limit Delhi to 127 for nine and then hit a crucial cameo innings of 21 as Kolkata reached their target in 18.2 overs on a slow Sharjah pitch.

Eoin Morgan's Kolkata have won three of their four matches in the resumed Twenty20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates to be placed fourth in the eight-team table.

Delhi are second behind Chennai Super Kings.

Kolkata were in trouble when Morgan fell for nought and Dinesh Karthik, for 12, but Narine stayed calm to get the two-time champions close to victory.

Narine, a left-handed batsman, smashed South African quick Kagiso Rabada for two sixes and a four to help get his team 21 runs off the 16th over.

He finally fell to Anrich Nortje after his 10-ball blitz but Nitish Rana took the team home with a winning boundary in his unbeaten 36.

Narine returned figures of 2-18 with his spin to limit Delhi to 127 for nine and then hit a crucial cameo innings of 21 as Kolkata reached their target in 18.2 overs on a slow Sharjah pitch

Opener Shubman Gill hit a useful 30. Delhi quick bowler Avesh Khan took three wickets.

Earlier Australia's Steve Smith and skipper Rishabh Pant both made 39 and Shikhar Dhawan hit 24 in Delhi's innings but the rest of the batting faltered against the Kolkata bowlers.

Kolkata fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, Narine and Venkatesh Iyer claimed two wickets each.

Holders Mumbai Indians take on Punjab Kings in the second match of the day in Abu Dhabi.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi Capitals: 127/9 in 20 overs (Steve Smith 39, Rishabh Pant 39; Sunil Narine 2-18) It to Kolkata Knight Riders: 130/7 in 18.2 overs (Shubman Gill 30, Sunil Narine 21; Avesh Khan 3-13).



RCB back to winning ways



RCB's Harshal Patel celebrates his hat-trick wicket against Mumbai Indians. — BCCI



The race to the play-offs is getting more intense with each passing game. While Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings look well set to take the top two spots, the other franchises are battling for the other two. Royal Challengers Bangalore are on the third spot with 12 points from 10 games. 16 is expected to be the comfortable qualification mark, but considering the situation, it's expected to be a multiple team fight on net run-rate at 14 points. Rajasthan Royals, with 8 points from 10 games as well, are at No 6 on the table. With Kolkata Knight Riders, Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians also in a similar situation, the finish should be more than interesting.

Bangalore finally found the winning way against Mumbai after putting themselves and the fans in a state of panic by losing two back-to-back games against Kolkata and Chennai. RCB made a number of changes to their line-up for the game against Mumbai. As this turned out to be a winning

combination, the franchise is likely to stick to the same XI.

Bangalore have 4 games left in the league stage and need to win 2 games to qualify, while also having an eye on the top 2 spots, for which they would need a few results to go their way. Specially, Virat Kohli pulling out of captaincy after this season, Bangalore fans are highly hopeful of lifting the championship for the first time ever this year.

SANJU LONE HOPE

This edition of IPL hasn't been memorable for Rajasthan Royals so far, but things can change if they can get to winning ways in their next four games. But this looks highly unlikely with the way story has gone so far. Although, there has been a ray of hope, with Sanju Samson's form, which allowed him to pick the orange cap (highest run scorer) for the time being.

Back to back losses against the Delhi and the weakest team of the season Sunrisers Hyderabad, broke the back of the Rajasthan, but captain Sanju is still trying to fly the flag with his sole warrior attitude.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

The match is at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium,

which has not been the easiest pitch to bat on. However, teams are now scoring in excess of 160 and it was even chased down recently. The spinners will still be hard to get away and the pacers need to rely on change-ups.

Royal Challengers might feel that they have found the right team combination finally and will look forward to go unchanged in this encounter. Although, they are definitely playing a spinner less and this being covered up with the pacers bowling a lot of slower ones. Expect Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal and Glenn Maxwell to get runs. Ab de Villiers might get a special one this game.

Rajasthan are in a very difficult situation and they really don't know what needs to be done. Cricket is a batsman's game and they are struggling with the consistency with the bat, specially with game finishing capabilities. Royals need Chris Morris to fire and he needs some company, but these slow low wickets aren't ideal ground for him. Shreyas Gopal has always done well against Bangalore and he needs a walk into the team. Liam Livingstone might get a game more. Karthik Tyagi, if fit might come back in for Jaydev Unadkat.

Roy, Williamson help SRH to second win

DUBAI: Jason Roy and skipper Kane Williamson hit half-centuries as Sunrisers Hyderabad thrashed Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets on Monday to record just their second win in this year's Indian Premier League.

Roy, who made his debut for Hyderabad after replacing struggling David Warner, made 60 off 42 balls to set up Hyderabad's chase of 165 in Dubai.

Williamson smashed an unbeaten 51 and steered the team home in 18.3 overs with two successive boundaries that brought up his fifty in 41 deliveries.

Hyderabad, who won their only crown in 2016 under Warner, still stay bottom of the eight-team table with little chance of qualifying for the play-offs.

"We obviously had a tough tournament, but to come out and play like that with a smile on the face, we got to keep our feet grounded and keep doing the right things," said man of the match Roy, who sat out the first half of the Twenty20 tournament in India.

The England opener stood out with his second IPL fifty-plus

score in his first match of this Covid-hit season that resumed in the United Arab Emirates earlier this month.

Roy, who hit eight fours and one six, put on a key partnerships with fellow opener Wriddhiman Saha, who made 18, and Williamson of 57 each.

He finally fell caught behind off left-arm quick Chetan Sakariya, but Williamson stood firm to take the team home and give them their second win in 10 matches.

Earlier Royals skipper Sanju Samson hit 82 off 57 deliveries to guide the team to 164-5 after they elected to bat first.

Samson overtook Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dhawan as the tournament's leading batsman with 433 runs in 10 matches and his team still in the hunt for the play-offs.

Royals are sixth in the table led by Delhi.

BRIEF SCORES: Sunrisers Hyderabad 167/3 (Jason Roy 60, Kane Williamson 51*; Mahipal Lomror 1/22) beat Rajasthan Royals 164/6 (Sanju Samson 82, Yashasvi Jaiswal 36; Siddarth Kaul 2/36) by 7 wickets.



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Jason Roy in action. — BCCI

In brief

■ KUALA LUMPUR



OMAN TO PLAY AUSTRALIA IN DOHA

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said on Tuesday that Australia and Iraq will continue to play "home" qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup at neutral venues, with Doha confirmed for October 7 games against Oman and Lebanon.

Australia are unable to host qualifiers due to the country's strict Covid-19 quarantine regime, while the AFC moved Iraq's home game against Iran to Doha last month due to the security situation.

The October 7 matches would take place at the Khalifa International Stadium in Qatar's capital, the region's football governing body said.

■ LOS ANGELES



BARTY WITHDRAWS FROM INDIAN WELLS

Australia's Ashleigh Barty, the number one ranked female in the world, has withdrawn from the WTA India Wells singles draw, tournament organisers announced on Monday.

Officials gave no reason for Barty's decision to pull out of next month's women's draw which was already suffering from the absence of several top-ranked players, including Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams.

Barty, winner of two Grand Slam tournaments (Roland Garros in 2019 and Wimbledon in 2021), had a disappointing performance at the US Open earlier this month when she lost in the third round against American Shelby Rogers. — AFP

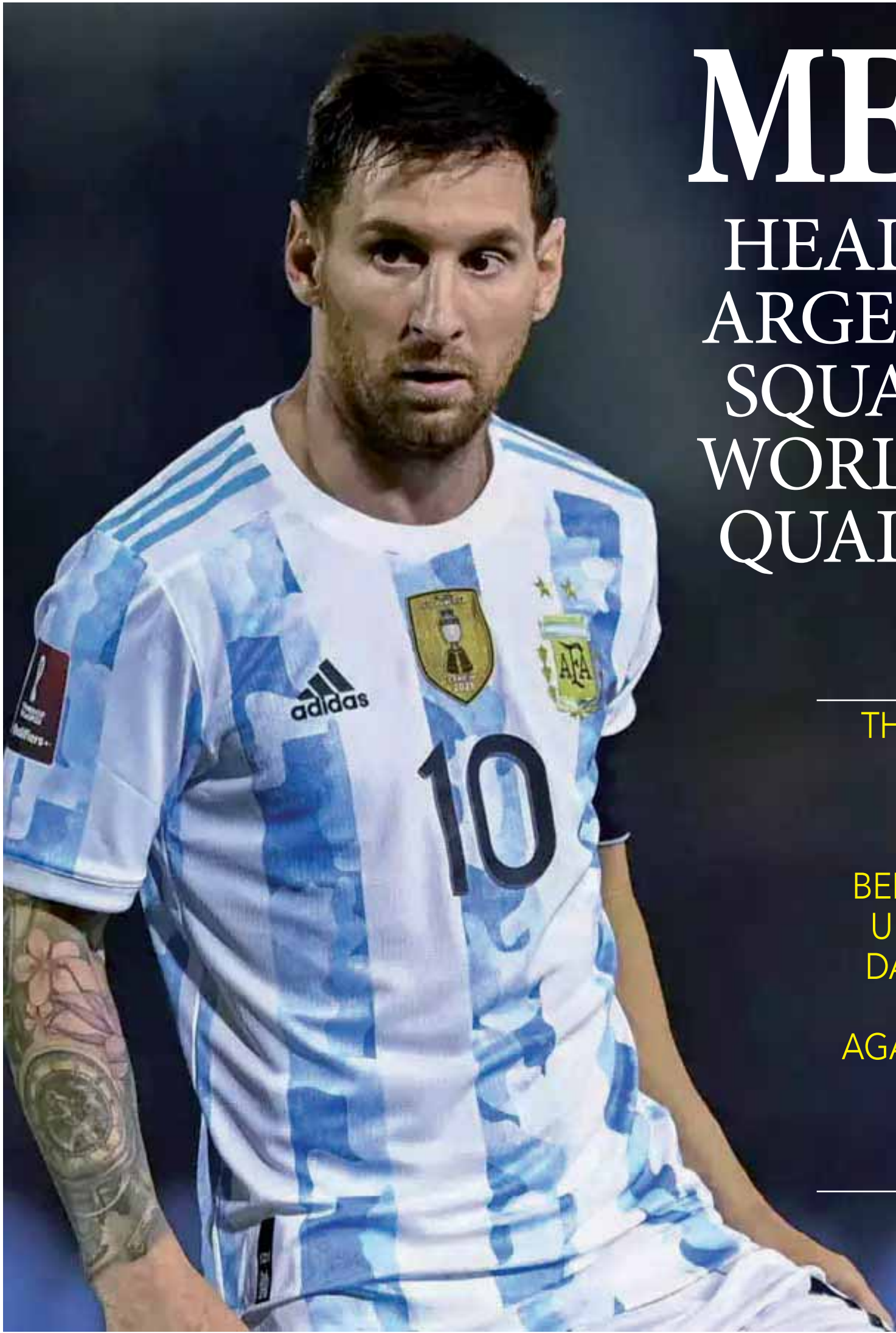
■ LOS ANGELES



CLIJSTERS FALLS SHORT AGAINST HSIEH

Kim Clijsters remained winless in her WTA comeback bid, crashing out of the Chicago Fall Tennis Classic in the opening round on Monday after losing in three sets to Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei.

In the first career meeting between the pair, Hsieh battled past the former world number one 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 in two hours and 18 minutes in Chicago, Illinois. Clijsters, who was playing in her first match of 2021, is trying to make a comeback after retiring from the Tour in 2012. The four-time Grand Slam singles winner is 0-4 since rejoining the Tour last year. — AFP



MESSI HEADLINES ARGENTINA SQUAD FOR WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

THE ARGENTINES
ARE AWAY TO
PARAGUAY ON
OCTOBER 7
BEFORE HOSTING
URUGUAY THREE
DAYS LATER AND
WRAPPING UP
AGAINST PERU ON
OCTOBER 14,
ALSO IN
BUENOS AIRES

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi headlines the Argentina squad for three South American World Cup qualifiers in October announced on Monday.

The Argentines are away to Paraguay on October 7 before hosting Uruguay three days later and wrapping up against Peru on October 14, also in Buenos Aires.

Argentina, with 18 points, are second in the standings behind Brazil, who have amassed 24 points in eight matches.

The 2022 World Cup will feature 32 teams and is to be held in Qatar between November 21 and December 18.

Three Premier League players — Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and Tottenham pair Giovani Lo Celso and Cristian Romero — are in the Argentina squad even though the country is on Britain's coronavirus travel red list.

Travellers from red-listed countries must quarantine for 10 days after arriving in the UK.

Villa and Tottenham each have top-flight fixtures on the weekend of October 16/17.

Most English clubs refused to release players called up by South American countries for qualifiers staged earlier this month but Martinez, Villa team-mate Emiliano Buendia, Lo Celso and Romero were permitted to join up with their national team.

That led to the dramatic abandonment of Argentina's qualifier against Brazil in Sao Paulo when health officials came onto the pitch to stop the match, saying the England-based players needed to quarantine. The quartet returned to Britain via Croatia to avoid having to quarantine. — AFP

ARGENTINA SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Franco Armani, Emiliano Martinez, Juan Musso, Esteban Andrada
Defenders: Gonzalo Montiel, Nahuel Molina Lucero, Juan Foyth, Lucas Martinez Quarta, German Pezzella, Cristian Romero, Nicolas Otamendi, Lisandro Martinez, Marcos Acuna, Nicolas Tagliafico
Midfielders: Rodrigo De Paul, Exequiel Palacios, Leandro Paredes, Guido Rodriguez, Nicolas Dominguez, Giovani Lo Celso, Alejandro Gomez
Forwards: Angel Di Maria, Lucas Alario, Paulo Dybala, Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martinez, Angel Correa, Joaquin Correa, Nicolas Gonzalez, Julian Alvarez

England World Cup winner Roger Hunt dies aged 83

LONDON: England World Cup winner and Liverpool's record league goalscorer Roger Hunt has died at the age of 83, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

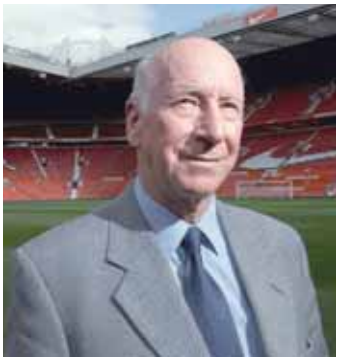
Hunt, who played in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, which England won 4-2, scored an unrivalled 244 league goals for the Reds.

"We are mourning the passing of legendary former player Roger Hunt," the club said in a statement posted on their official Twitter account.

"The thoughts of everybody at Liverpool Football Club are with Roger's family and friends at this sad and difficult time. Rest in peace, Sir Roger Hunt 1938-2021."

Hunt joined Liverpool, then a tier-two team, as a 20-year-old in 1958 and played his last game for the club in 1969.

The forward's overall Reds record of 285 goals was broken by Ian Rush in 1992



but nobody has scored more league goals for the club.

Hunt won two English top-flight titles and the FA Cup under manager Bill Shankly.

He scored three goals in six appearances for Alf Ramsey's England team during the 1966 World Cup on home soil and 18 goals in 34 caps overall for his country.

Current Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said: "It's really sad news and our thoughts and our love go to his family. "Unfortunately, it feels too frequent in this moment we are saying farewell to these giants of our club.

"Roger Hunt comes second to no one in his importance in the history of Liverpool FC, that much is clear."

Former Liverpool striker John Aldridge paid tribute to Hunt, writing on Twitter: "I'm absolutely gutted to hear of the passing away of one, if not THE BEST Lfc strikers SIR ROGER HUNT." — AFP

Bale out of Wales World Cup qualifiers with hamstring injury

LONDON: Gareth Bale has been ruled out of World Cup qualifiers against the Czech Republic and Estonia next month with a "significant hamstring tear", Wales boss Robert Page said on Tuesday.

The Welsh captain has not played since the goalless draw against Estonia on September 8 after being injured on his return to Real Madrid.

The absence of the 32-year-old for October's double-header deals a serious blow to Wales' qualification hopes for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Page is confident Bale will be fit for November's closing two World Cup qualifiers against Belarus and Belgium but said: "You grade hamstring injuries from one to four and his is nearer the four. "So it's quite a significant hamstring tear. We've been in close contact with him to see how it's progressing but this camp has come too soon for him.

"Originally it might have been progressing into November's camp, that's the significance of the injury.



"Thankfully he's recovering better than anticipated. We're pretty certain we'll have him for November."

Bale's eight-year stay in Spain has been dogged by injury and his regular absences in recent seasons have not gone down well with Real supporters.

"Gareth is a very special player and we know he will be missed," said Page.

"But we can't cry about it. We've got to get on with it and

look at it in a positive frame of mind."

Juventus midfielder Aaron Ramsey, who missed this month's qualifiers, is named in a 28-man squad for the Czech Republic clash in Prague on October 8 and the trip to Estonia three days later.

The 30-year-old could take over the captaincy. Wales are third in their World Cup qualifying group, level on points with the Czechs but nine points behind leaders Belgium. — AFP

business

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ME economy set to recover to pre-pandemic levels

ACCELERATION: GCC economies have benefited from domestic and global reopening, and the positive momentum should carry into 2022 as they raise oil output

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East, compiled by Oxford Economics, reveals the Middle East economy has almost recovered from pandemic losses, aided by higher oil output, progress in vaccination rollouts and easing of coronavirus related

restrictions. Despite growing concerns globally and regionally over the delta variant, GDP in the Middle East is forecasted to grow by 2.6 per cent this year, 0.2 percentage points (pp) higher than ICAEW’s estimate last quarter. An uptick in economic activity will see GDP growth accelerate further to 4.4 per cent in 2022. According to the report, GCC economies have benefited from domestic and global reopening, and the positive momentum should carry into 2022 as they raise oil output. GCC GDP should return to pre-crisis levels in the first quarter of 2022, with growth accelerating from 2.2 per cent this year, 0.1pp higher than Q2 projections, to 5.1 per cent in



2022. The GCC economy shrank by 5.1 per cent in 2020, according to ICAEW. Regional Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMIs) show continued expansion in the non-oil sector across the region. Business conditions are

improving, boosted by rapid vaccine roll-outs and stronger global growth. Improved levels of output, new business and employment also point to further recovery. Preparation for major regional events, including the delayed

Expo 2020 Dubai in the UAE and 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar, and Saudi Arabia’s aggressive investment strategy are also supporting expansion of activity. Overall, ICAEW forecasts GCC non-oil growth of 3.1 per cent and 3.9 per cent this year and in

2022 respectively. Despite the rise in prevalence of the Delta variant and concerns over future Covid-19 variants, governments in the region have re-opened borders, mostly to vaccinated travellers. Several countries, including the UAE and Qatar, have among the highest vaccination rates globally, putting them in good stead to attract tourists and workers, even as travel takes time to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels. The UAE is pioneering new visa categories for freelance workers and entrepreneurs, offering greater flexibility for sponsoring families and more time for expatriates to find a job before leaving the country after redundancy.

Omani firm secures accreditation to issue Renewable Energy Certificates

ENERGY TRANSITION:
Three Pillars Consulting (TPC) named by International REC Standard Foundation as the local issuer of I-RECs for the Omani market

CONRAD PRABHU
 @conradprabhu



With electricity generation from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, set to grow exponentially in the Sultanate in line with the government’s ambitious energy transition goals, a local Omani firm has been accredited by an international body to issue ‘Renewable Energy Certificates (I-RECs)’ that help validate a producer’s claim that their energy output indeed comes from carbon-free sources. Well-known Omani energy services specialist Three Pillars Consulting (TPC) has been named by the Netherlands-based International REC Standard Foundation, which administers the world’s leading certification programme for renewable energy, as the local issuer of I-RECs for the Omani market. An agreement to this effect was signed by Dr Michael Tsang, Founder of Three Pillars Consulting, with Jared Braslawsky, Secretary General of the I-REC Standard Foundation. As the accredited issuer of I-RECs in the Sultanate, TPC will also help support and implement the development of a renewable energy tracking system to track

the ownership of renewable generation throughout the country. I-RECs can be effectively monetised by renewable energy producers to create secondary revenue streams in a market where some customers, eager to burnish their environmental credentials, are increasingly willing to pay a premium for sustainable electricity supply. Moreover, I-RECs are key to validating commitments made by businesses and organisations towards climate mitigation goals. Speaking to *Observer*, Dr Tsang explained that Renewable Energy Certificates (sometimes referred to as Energy Attribute Certificates (EAC)) make it possible to link ownership rights of electricity from the place of production to the place of consumption. “I-RECs are a powerful tool because they allow end-users and energy consumers to make a reliable and meaningful claim that they are consuming clean, carbon-free, renewable energy. Consequently, they can provide a secondary revenue stream for renewable energy producers,

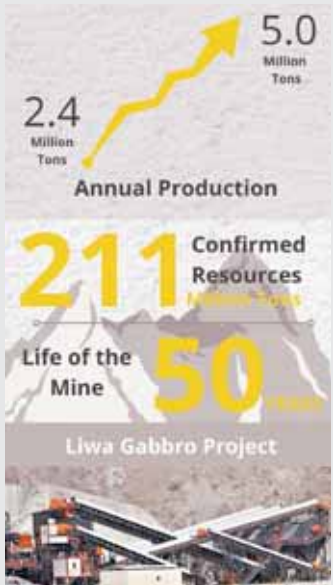
allowing them to generate additional revenue from their renewable energy production, strengthening the market conditions and supporting the development of these in-demand projects over time.” The I-REC Standard Foundation, a non-profit organisation, promotes an internationally recognised and standardised methodology for the creation of I-REC systems and implements this system with the support of local governments and stakeholders in countries across the globe, said Tsang. The appointment of a local I-REC issuer in the Sultanate comes against a backdrop of important developments in the country’s renewable energy space. Over the past two years, Oman has witnessed the launch of the region’s first wind farm — a 50 MW capacity scheme in Dhofar, as well as a 100 MW solar PV project at Amin in the south of Petroleum Development Oman’s (PDO) Block 6 concession. Soon, a 500 MW solar PV scheme — the biggest in the country to date — will come on stream in Al Dhahirah Governorate as well.

And with Oman committed to secure a third of its electricity from clean energy sources by 2030, major investments in solar and wind capacity are anticipated in the coming years too. According to Dr Tsang, the I-RECs will help distinguish between carbon-free output and supply from fossil fuels like natural gas which get mixed once they enter the national grid. “Without any way to track renewable energy-based output, it is not possible for any single user to claim they are consuming carbon-free energy supplied through the grid. I-RECs make it possible for companies to claim that their consumption is 100 per cent carbon-free”, he stressed. Jared Braslawsky, Secretary General of the I-REC Standard Foundation, stated: “Our standard allows for robust, transparent, and reliable implementation of I-REC systems that adhere to international best practices and end-user expectations. With this system, generators can retain the highest possible value for their renewable energy generation and support for demand-driven growth for renewables in Oman and around the world.” Muscat-based TPC provides advisory services to public and private sector organisations in the formulation of policies related to material conservation, energy efficiency and carbon management, in addition to developing software for sustainability reporting, and helping projects register carbon credits, renewable energy certificates and green building certification.

Major gabbro quarry commences production in Liwa

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Minerals Development Oman (MDO), a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), has announced the start of commercial operations of a major gabbro quarry in Wilayat of Liwa with a production capacity of 2.4 million tonnes of gabbro per annum. A geological and economic feasibility study conducted by MDO that revealed a recoverable amount of about 211 million tonnes of gabbro in a mine life of about 50 years, covering an area of 2.2 square kilometres. Based on the feasibility study, Ahjaar Mining Company was established in 2019 to operate the project in partnership with local Omani firms Assarain Group and Al Fajar Al Alamia Company. Offtake agreements were also signed for 2.4 million tonnes of gabbro. The company has ambitious plans to increase the production to reach 5 million tonnes in the next phase. Significantly, this is the first mining licence obtained by MDO in January 2019. Gabbro is witnessing an increased demand by a number of



AHJAAR MINING COMPANY WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2019 TO OPERATE THE PROJECT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL OMANI FIRMS ASSARAIN GROUP AND AL FAJAR AL ALAMIA COMPANY

Gulf and regional markets, due to its rapid importance to the construction sector. MDO was established with a strategic vision to invest in the mining sector in the Sultanate, and to increase its contribution to the growth of the economic and social sectors by creating job opportunities and building local capacities and competencies, in addition to supporting small businesses and developing the local added value.

Mazoon Electricity issues recalculated bills for May, June and July as per new tariff

MUSCAT: In line with government's orientation to amend approved tariff categories for a citizen's account for the residential category, Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman, issued recalculated bills for the months of May, June and July as per the new categories last week.

Mazoon Electricity Company also issued a regular bill for July 2021 which included all details as per the new tariff updates issued by Authority for Public Services Regulation.

The July bill is currently available in the standard format on mobile apps ONEIC Bill&Pay and OIFC Khedmah.

The company offered installment service for bills due for the months of May, June, and July 2021 by contacting the Contact



Centre 80077771.

In case the customer has already paid the dues for May and June, the amounts paid will

be deducted and that will appear in the total dues field of the July bill.

Mazoon Electricity issued a

intention to spread awareness about the newly announced category, all updates are published on the Mazoon Electricity's social media accounts and dedicated staff respond to all customer queries through social media accounts and Contact Centre.

Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC (MZEC) is a closed Omani joint stock company registered under the Commercial Companies Law of Oman. The company is primarily undertaking regulated distribution and supply of electricity in Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Batinah governorates and Suwaiq in North Al Batinah Governorate under a licence issued by the Authority of Public Services Regulation, (Previously known as Authority Electricity Regulation).



Ahmed al Abri

Ooredoo renews contract with Huawei

MUSCAT: Ooredoo, one of the largest communications service providers in the Sultanate, and Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) solutions, have announced the signing of a three-year contract for CT and telecom managed services, starting from January 1, 2022.

The contract, which extends a five-year relationship between the two parties, will see Huawei provide operations and maintenance as well as network performance management services for Ooredoo, as it continues to harness the latest digital technologies and position itself as a market leader.

"Our industry is changing faster than ever before, and by working with industry leaders like Huawei we are making sure we stay ahead of the curve. Our partnership, which began in 2012, will focus on optimising our digital operations using state-of-the-art artificial intelligence and machine learning-based technologies and tools," said Dr Ahmed bin Abdullah al Abri, Chief Technology and Information Officer at Ooredoo.

"As we continue to accelerate our digital transformation and supporting the Sultanate's 2040 Vision, we look forward to launching even more innovative services to enrich our customers' digital lives."

Robin (Chen Bing), Omani Huawei GM, added, "Huawei and Ooredoo have had the privilege to work together for many years. This further collaborative step is an important milestone for both parties, marking the phase in the transformation into more automated and intelligent operations."

OIH welcomes medical students from Portugal for elective rotation

MUSCAT: Oman International Hospital (OIH) has welcomed two senior medical students (MD6) and a faculty member from the University of Porto (UoP), Portugal, as part of its affiliation agreement with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto (FMUP) and Idealmed Global Healthcare Services (IGHS), the international operator of OIH.

The University of Porto, founded in 1901 and the second largest university in Portugal with excellent research facilities, enables its students to visit, stay and study at OIH in an elective clinical rotation within their integrated studies cycle.

Beatriz Bernardes, one of the visiting sixth year medical students (MD6), stated that, "OIH is world class not only because of the modern and well-equipped installations, but also due to its staff, who are always available to help and take care of people. On the other hand, Oman is simply stunning, and its people are so full of warmth and friendly. I thank everyone for this valuable opportunity to be visiting Oman International Hospital as part of my medical



studies."

"Visiting and spending my days at Oman International Hospital, its dedicated healthcare providers and staff, as well as its facilities is a remarkable experience. Besides, I am overwhelmed by the simplicity and hospitality of Omani people," stated José Paiva, another visiting student from UoP.

"I welcome this collaboration between OIH and UoP, which will strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries. It is an honour and a huge privilege to have students from the Faculty of Medicine of University of Porto doing elective clinical rotation at OIH. I have no doubt that this affiliation will be extended to other areas of

medical and academic," says Dr João Araújo Teixeira, Associate Professor of Surgery, University of Porto, and one of the most noted general surgeons in Portugal.

Dr José Alexandre Cunha, Chairman of IGHS, said, "These students are the future of medicine and IGHS is glad to support them with out-of-the-box training, knowledge and experience to shape them into better medical professionals. Through these affiliations, we aim to make OIH not just a hospital but an international medical destination for learning, knowledge-sharing and innovation. We look forward to signing agreements with local universities and welcoming students."

National Finance awarded 'Best NBFC'

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's largest finance company, National Finance, recently won four awards at the Oman Banking and Finance Awards 2021 which was co-located at the sixth edition of the New Age Banking Summit Oman. National Finance was honoured with coveted titles including the 'Best Non-Banking Financial Corporation (NBFC)', 'Excellence in Customer Experience in Finance and Leasing', 'Excellence in Mobile App based Finance and Leasing Services' and 'Excellence in Fintech'.

Tahir al Amri, the Executive President, Central Bank of Oman (CBO), was the chief guest of the event, and presented the awards to Ali al Mani, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, at an event that took place at the Al Bustan Palace, Muscat.

Expressing his pleasure on this milestone, Ali al Mani said: "These prestigious awards add yet another feather to our cap. They recognise our objectives in achieving



excellence in customer experience and uplifting the finance sector in the Sultanate. These achievements cement our leading position in the market and strongly align with our robust growth strategy that focuses on the clients as a first priority. The company will continue marching towards market excellence and innovation to deliver high end services and add value to its clients."

This accomplishment is exemplary of National Finance's outstanding performance, that is backed by unique solutions for customers and a diverse portfolio of easily accessible products.

Own a Kia Sonet and get a chance to win it back

MUSCAT: The compact yet thrilling Kia Sonet SUV is now available with this year's most exciting offer from Kia.

As part of the campaign, customers owning the Kia Sonet can look forward to a chance to win the Sonet back instantly through Scratch & Win Offer, or chance to win 50 per cent value of the Sonet back through Scratch & Win Offer, or Chance to Double Your Cash Gift, or Win Periodic Services up to 100,000 km and yes VAT is on Us which can be used as part of Down Payment.

The campaign is valid until December, 28, 2021. Since the introduction of this campaign, two customers have already

doubled their cash gifts and received a price rebate of about 30 per cent.

The powerful and affordable 5-seater Sonet SUV has a 1.5L Engine paired to a CVT Transmission and offers 17.5KmpL fuel average.

Designed around the driver with a well laid-out, intuitive infotainment and cluster interface, the Sonet was built taking into consideration the end user's experience.

The Sonet comes with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay feature, Audio Remote Control, Bluetooth and USB charger.

Underlining the Sonet's attractive looks are the body colour outside mirror, 2-tonne



bumper, power outside mirror, body colour door handles, side repeater lamps in outside mirror, 16" alloy wheels, chrome radiator grille, rear fog lamps, LED front fog lamps, roof rack, LED headlamps, LED daytime running lamps and more.

Boasting multiple segment-first features that offer the ultimate driving experience for customers, the Sonet provides comfort, convenience and safety.

Fitted with 8" Audio Display, the Sonet also comes with other smart features such as remote

engine start, auto cruise control and more. Adding to increased levels of convenience are features like keyless entry system, smart key with button start, central door lock and more.

Kia has ensured that every drive with the Sonet is as hassle free and safe as possible, thanks to a rigorous set of measures created in line with Kia's pillars of safety.

Among the Sonet's key safety features are driver and front passenger airbags, ABS (anti-lock braking system), ESP (Electronic Stability Program), rear parking assist system, rear view camera, tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS) and ISOFIX child-seat anchoring points.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman, provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership Award', 'Family Like Care Service Award', and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction Award'.

Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.



In brief

■ BERLIN

**GERMAN CONSUMER MORALE BRIGHTENS HEADING INTO OCT**

The mood among German consumers brightened unexpectedly heading into October to reach its highest level in a year and a half, a survey showed, in a sign that households continue to support the recovery in Europe's largest economy.

The GfK institute said its consumer sentiment index, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, rose to 0.3 points for October, from a revised -1.1 points a month earlier. Both economic and income expectations improved significantly while the propensity to buy rose slightly, GfK said. — **Reuters**

■ WASHINGTON

**US SENATORS CALL FOR 'FULL ACCOUNTABILITY' IN DATA CONTROVERSY**

The top Democrat and Republican on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee have urged President Joe Biden to "ensure full accountability" over a World Bank data-rigging controversy that has embroiled IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva.

The panel's chairman, Senator Robert Menendez, a Democrat, and Republican Senator James Risch, said in a letter released that Biden should direct the US Treasury Department to "do their due diligence with all due haste and, as necessary, ensure full accountability."

— **Reuters**

■ DETROIT/SEOUL

**FORD, SK TO INVEST \$11.4 BN TO ADD ELECTRIC F-150 PLANT**

Ford Motor Co and its Korean battery partner SK Innovation will invest \$11.4 billion to build an electric F-150 assembly plant and three battery plants in the United States, accelerating the US automaker's push into electric vehicles.

Ford said it now expects to have 40 to 50 per cent of its global vehicle volume to be all-electric by 2030, up from its prior forecast of 40 per cent. The companies intend to create nearly 11,000 jobs by opening assembly and battery plants in Stanton, Tennessee, and two additional battery factories in Glendale, Kentucky, as part of Ford's previously announced plan to spend more than \$30 billion through 2030 on electrification, Ford said.

— **Reuters**

UK firms bank on London's status as top financial centre

More than two thirds of the UK's financial firms believe that London will retain its status as one of the world's leading financial centres even now after Brexit.

Just under a third (32 per cent) of the financial firms said they believed the competitiveness of their own sector would improve over the next year — almost double the 17 per cent of firms who thought it would worsen.

When Britain completed its exit from the EU in December last year, it divorced from its biggest single export customer, casting doubts over its status as a leading global financial hub. And not just that, but there were thoughts in Europe as well as among those against Brexit in the UK, that the country may lose ground in some other sectors as well.

But city firms were bullish about the future of their business in the UK, according to an annual sentiment survey of more than 100 banks, asset managers and insurers conducted by Lloyds Bank.

Changes in the regulation that governs the sector post-Brexit was the main sticking point for City firms: Almost half (48 per cent) of the firms that believed



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

THECITYUK, WARNS THAT LONDON IS AT RISK OF LOSING ITS STATUS AS A GLOBAL FINANCIAL POWERHOUSE WITHIN FIVE YEARS, AND SET OUT INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY PROPOSALS TO HELP RETURN THE UK TO HAVING THE 'WORLD'S LEADING FINANCIAL CENTRE'

the UK's competitiveness would improve in the next year cited regulation diverging from the EU model as the key factor.

But at the other end of the spectrum, three quarters (78 per cent) of the firms that were more pessimistic about the UK's competitiveness cited regulation

as a commanding factor.

"This year's survey emphasises the belief in London as a global centre for trade and finance as firms anticipate and adapt to the new regulatory environment", said Adrian Walkling, head of financial services at Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking.

CONFIDENCE IMPROVING

Compared to the same time last year, the firms surveyed by Lloyds were significantly more confident about the growth of the British economy and the UK financial sector's prospects.

The vast majority (88 per cent) expected British economic growth to improve over the next year, up from just a fifth (20 per cent) in 2020, while 32 per cent believed the UK will achieve stronger growth than other G7 nations, up from just 7 per cent last year.

And when it comes to the UK financial services sector, just over half (55 per cent) expected growth to improve over the next year, up significantly from 13 per cent last year. This confidence spread to individual business outlook, as 65 per cent expected their revenues to rise compared to 31 per cent in 2020.

DIVIDED OPINION

It comes just a week after London's financial district's

most influential lobbying body, TheCityUK, warned that London is at risk of losing its status as a global financial powerhouse within five years, and set out international strategy proposals to help return the UK to having the "world's leading financial centre".

A vastly changing international economic landscape is chief amongst the reasons that the UK has seen a decline relative to its global competitors such as New York and Hong Kong over the past decade, according to TheCityUK.

Despite the UK's growing size and volume of many market segments, it has paled in significance compared to the rapid growth of new financial centres in Asia and continued growth in the US.

"Europe is littered with cities that were once the leading international centre of their day", said Miles Celic, chief executive of TheCityUK, who called for the government to do more so that London avoids the same fate."

He added: "The last decade has been one of growth for our industry, yet global competitors have grown faster."

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

Brent tops \$80 a barrel on tighter supplies

LONDON: Oil markets climbed for a sixth day on Tuesday, boosted by a tighter supply and firm demand outlook, but power shortages in China which hit factory output tempered the rally. Brent crude futures gained 67 cents, or 0.8 per cent, to \$80.20 a barrel at 1016 GMT, after reaching their highest level since October 2018 at \$80.75. Brent gained 1.8 per cent on Monday.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 79 cents, or 1 per cent, to \$76.24 a barrel, after hitting a session high of \$76.67, its highest since early July. It jumped 2 per cent the previous day.

Hurricanes Ida and Nicholas, which swept through the US Gulf of Mexico in August and September, damaged platforms, pipelines and processing hubs, shutting most offshore production for weeks.

Also weighing on supply, top African oil exporters Nigeria and Angola will struggle to boost output to their quotas set by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) until at least next year due to underinvestment and maintenance problems, sources at their respective oil firms warn. — **Reuters**

PDO signs 11 MoCs to support social investment initiatives

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has committed to support a host of new initiatives to benefit communities and boost sustainable development across the Sultanate.

The initiatives include commitments in the key areas of health, safety and the environment, community infrastructure development as well as youth and women empowerment all of which are fully aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Eleven Memorandums of Collaboration (MoCs) confirming these commitments were signed at an official ceremony held under the auspices of Her Excellency Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, at the PDO Knowledge World venue in Muscat on Wednesday.

To support the provision of providing the best health services to citizens residing within the Company's concession area, PDO is funding the purchase of a new mini Dialysis unit for Al Mazyona Hospital.

The project will ease the suffering of patients that would otherwise have had to travel 280 km to Salalah for treatment.

Other HSE pledges include PDO's support to people with disabilities and genetic diseases. As part of this, the Company is backing five non-governmental organisations by providing assistive devices for people with mobility disabilities to the Association for the Welfare of



Handicapped Children and the Oman Association for the Disabled in Ibri and Suhar. PDO will also fund awareness and therapy programmes to be provided by the Oman Down Syndrome Association and Oman Hereditary Blood Disorders Association.

Providing job opportunities to enable Omani youth to earn a decent living is one of PDO's main priorities. In line with that, PDO is funding the establishment of four kiosks to create 15 job opportunities for recovered drug addicts with the Amanah Waqf Funds Management Company.

PDO will also sponsor the establishment of five Agricultural Reserves which will be used to train people with low income on growing seasonal agriculture products to be sold in different

PDO IS FUNDING THE PURCHASE OF A NEW MINI DIALYSIS UNIT FOR AL MAZYONA HOSPITAL. THE PROJECT WILL EASE THE SUFFERING OF PATIENTS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE HAD TO TRAVEL 280 KM TO SALALAH FOR TREATMENT

outlets creating an extra income, which is fully aligned with the government's efforts in achieving the no poverty goal of the UN SDGs and supervised by Dar Al Atta'a Association. The Company will also support the distribution of 116 laptops manufactured by an Omani SME for low income students.

PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister said: "PDO continues

to continuously expand its social responsibility umbrella to include various aspects related to the communities in which we work, making every effort to provide the necessities for a decent life for all segments of the community. Our commitment and support are targeted at meeting pressing community needs through the provision of important facilities and services to support in areas such as health and employment."

Another agreement signed at the event aims to establish a multi-purpose centre for the Omani Women Association and Al Wafa Centre for Rehabilitation for the Directorate of Social Development in Shaleem.

In addition, to support the Company's efforts in reducing carbon emissions and raising public awareness in this field,

PDO is launching the Dheyaa Solar Project, which will include installing solar panels on the roofs of public buildings in both Al Ghubra South and North in Wilayat Al Jazir.

The MoCs confirming these commitments were signed by Phimister and External Affairs and Value Creation Director Eng Abdul-Amir al Ajmi and senior government officials including Her Excellency Dr Laila al Najjar, Minister of Social Development; Dr Fatima al Ajmiyah, Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial, and Planning Affairs — Ministry of Health; HH Sayyida Hujaija bint Jaifar al Said, Chairperson of the Association for the Welfare of the Handicapped; and Hamed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Wali of Al Jazir.

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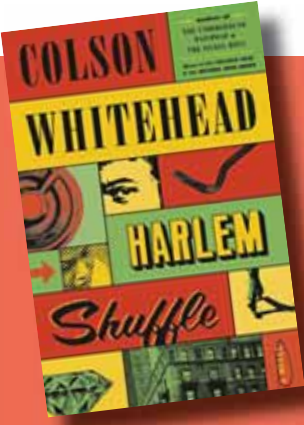
Swimming with the whale sharks?

Here are some key facts that you should know

The whale shark season in Oman occurs during the warmer months of the year that usually ranges from July to October becoming a seasonal attraction both for locals and tourists alike. But while it's a fun activity to try, marine biologist and technical and scientific diver Ahmed N al Lawati shares some key facts regarding interacting with these gentle giants of the oceans... **P18-19**

Photo by Ahmed N Al Lawati

READ



HARLEM SHUFFLE
BY COLSON WHITEHEAD

Ray Carney, a family man who sells furniture on 125th Street, gets a new clientele made up of vicious and unsavory characters.

ART

Exhibition in Cologne highlights Picasso in divided Germany

DURING HIS LIFETIME, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was appropriated by both the communist Eastern Bloc and the West. He was a member of the French Communist Party, but lived in the West, preferably in castles. The "Picasso Divided" exhibition at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne is now showing how different the image was that was conveyed in West Germany and East Germany of what was probably the most important artist of

the 20th century. Some 150 exhibits are on display, including political paintings such as "Massacre in Korea" (1951) from the Picasso Museum in Paris. A special find is a theatre curtain from the Berlin Ensemble in the Communist east of the city on which Socialist Realist playwright, poet and director Bertolt Brecht had "my brother Picasso's belligerent dove of peace" painted. — dpa



ART

Artist Alia al Farsi signs MoU with Saudi Gallery



OMANI ARTIST Alia al Farsi has signed last week a Memorandum of Understanding with Saudi-based O15 Gallery to work on multiple art projects with the aim of sharing the best art experiences and practices in the GCC and the Arab World.

This agreement comes as the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia are accelerating their cooperation and investments in various sectors, as both parties seek to encourage investment in fine arts and promote local artists.

The Omani-Saudi ties are expected to see notable economic integration that constitutes an opportunity for the two countries' people.

This agreement is the first of its kind signed by the artist since the

opening of Alia Gallery in 2020, and it is the beginning of a series of joint projects.

It is noteworthy that His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, paid a visit to O15 Gallery in Riyadh at the invitation of Princess Sarah bint Abdullah bin Musa'ed, the Gallery's founder, who welcomed all possible means of cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Several art projects will be announced soon in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, with the participation of Alia Gallery represented by Alia al Farsi, and O15 Gallery.

FASHION

Burberry shows 'animal instinct' with deconstructed trench for spring



BRITISH FASHION house Burberry deconstructed its camel trench coat for its women's spring line on Monday, removing sleeves and in some cases, its back.

The collection, called "Animal Instinct", saw Chief Creative Officer Riccardo Tisci reinvent the label's trademark piece, adding short capes, turning lapels into long scarves, cutting out slits as well as making the coats collarless or bottomless.

In a video shared online, models, some with stuck-on drooping animal ears, also wore dresses and shirts in colorful abstract geometric and camouflage-like prints.

They walked in different spaces — including a rave and a room padded with trench coats — instead of the traditional catwalk.

"To me, this presentation really represents the freedom of our imaginations: How we dream to come alive", Tisci said in a statement.

"I wanted to move through a series of immersive spaces, each of them

unique and unexpected in their sound, texture and experience. It's that idea of flicking between the endless realities and fantasies we have at our fingertips each day."

The designer dedicated the show to his mother, who died last month, "and to a journey full of new possibilities".

Tisci, who has targeted a younger clientele with more youthful sporty looks, added oversized hoodies to the spring/summer 2022 line and layered his casual wear designs with sheer and mesh tops.

There were also oversized waistcoats, plenty of long swaying fringes as well as tight-fitting tops and leggings with cut-outs. One model wore a sparkling silver bodysuit.

For his colour palette, Tisci mainly used beige, fawn, brown, black and white with dabs of pink, red, orange and yellow for the geometric print designs.

Accessories included tall caps and chokers. — **Reuters**

Swimming with the whale sharks?

Key facts that you should know

By Yeru Ebu
Photos by Ahmed N al Lawati



They can grow to as big as a school bus and seeing them up close can be intimidating but there is a reason why they are called the gentle giants of the oceans.

And NO, they are not going to eat you. As a marine biologist and technical and scientific diver, Ahmed N al Lawati has first-hand information and experience about whale sharks.

He has a bachelor's degree in marine biology from Hawaii Pacific University where he "learned and got hands-on experience with various marine life ranging from microscopic planktons to larger megafauna such as sharks, whales and dolphins." His credential also boasts being a research assistant for the Whale shark and Oceanic Research Center in Utila, Honduras where "along with collecting various data such as leading coral and fish identification dives, I was also collecting crucial data about whale sharks whenever the opportunity presented itself."

Also holding a master's degree in aquaculture science and technology from James Cook University in Australia and currently working as a marine environmental consultant at Five Oceans Environmental Services here in Oman, Ahmed is one of the prolific personalities who champion marine life.

"As a marine biologist, I am passionate about the ocean as a whole with a big emphasis on protecting coral reefs which serve as crucial habitats for numerous marine life as well as for us as humans. I am also passionate about tackling the challenges that our current

oceans are facing, such as overfishing, pollution (waste, ex: Plastic wastes, ghost fishing), global warming and establishment proper eco-touristic approach to the marine life in Oman (such as establishing proper eco-tours for snorkelling with whale sharks), among others", he shared.

Ahmed shares some very important recommendations of why, more than just an attraction, we should be more aware of whale sharks and the role they play in the environment.

WHEN IS THE WHALE SHARK SEASON IN OMAN AND WHY IS IT THAT THEY ARE SEASONALLY MAKING A STOP IN THE SULTANATE?

The whale shark season in Oman occurs during the warmer months of the year that usually ranges from July to October, with the peak between late August to early October. However, this can vary from year to year depending on various factors such as temperature and nutrient availability.

Whale sharks (classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red list) are filter feeders, meaning that they feed on planktonic and nektonic organisms. They tend to aggregate seasonally in what is known as "Hot spots" in response to regular or seasonal (in the case of Oman) driven planktonic food sources.

In Oman, we are fortunate to have upwelling events that bring nutrient-rich deep water to the surface, creating the perfect conditions for planktons and zooplanktons to thrive and form feeding hot spots for filter feeders such as whale sharks. The seasonality of whale sharks

in Oman also depends on their migratory routes, however, this is an area of study as little is known about the pelagic "lifestyle" of whale sharks. Though, some studies have shown that due to the geographic position of Oman, it is a popular hot spot for whale sharks that are making their way to the Al Shaheen region in Qatar (where one of the world's largest aggregations of whale sharks occur).

WHAT MAKES WHALE SHARKS SPECIAL? WHY SHOULDN'T PEOPLE BE AFRAID OF THEM?

They are known to be the gentle giants of the ocean. Whale sharks are the largest fish known that can reach a maximum length of about 18 metres and weighing more than 15 tonnes. They are known for the spots on their body that mimics a starry night and serve as camouflage to deter predators away.

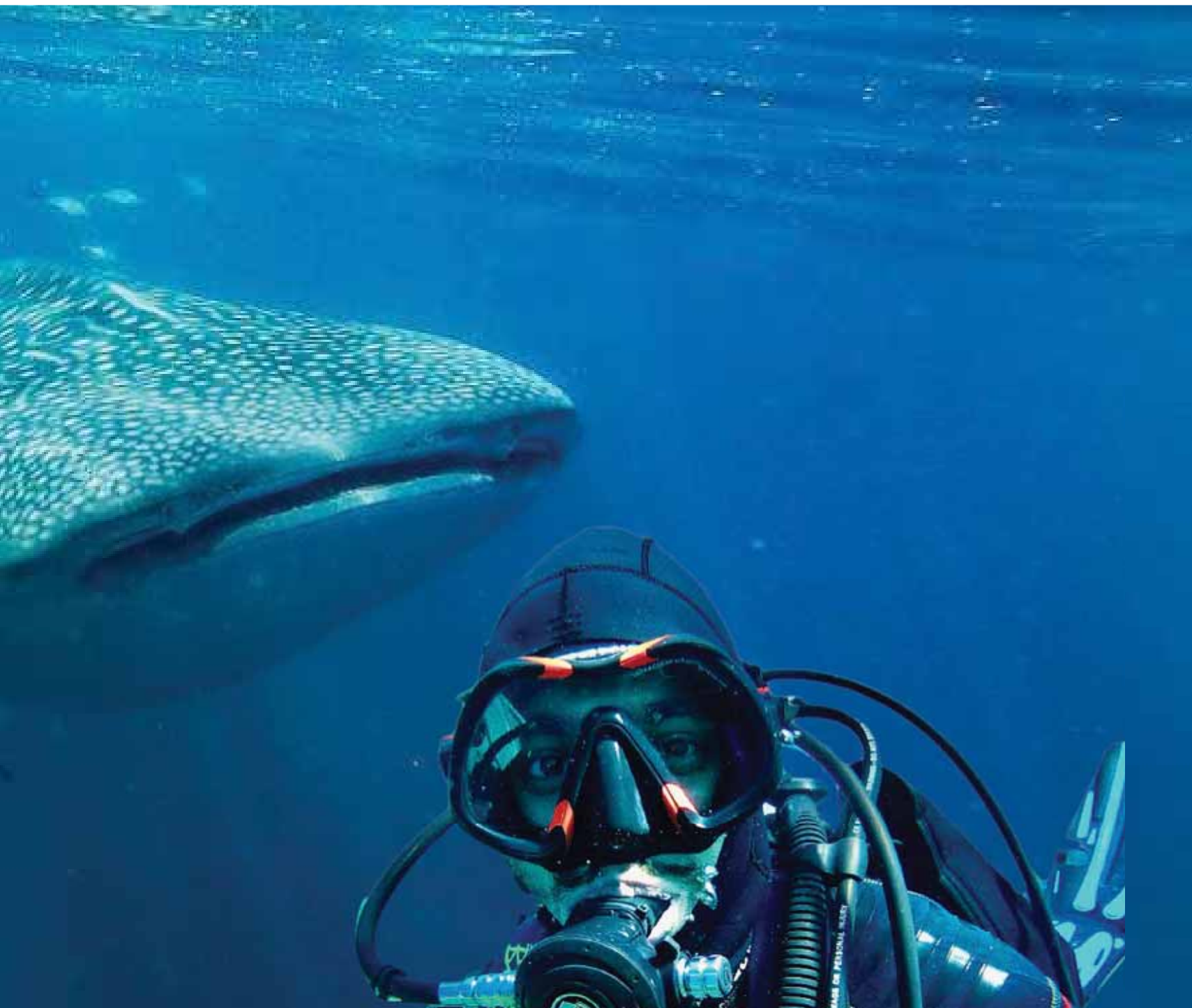
The spots on each whale shark are different from another, thus they serve as an important identification feature like our fingerprints. This unique feature allows scientists to photo-identify each individual thus allowing them to gather important information such as population size and migration patterns.

People should not be afraid because they are extremely gentle and can't bite or chew (they are filter feeders). They feed by processing large quantities of water (up to 6,000 litres an hour) through their gills. As long as people follow the whale shark watching guidelines set, the safety of both the individual and whale sharks can be maintained.

WHAT ARE THE BEST SPOTS TO



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WATCH WHALE SHARKS IN OMAN? HOW CAN ONE FULLY ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE?

Although whale sharks can be encountered year-round in Oman, during the season (July-October), whale sharks usually aggregate between the wave and Daymaniyat Island nature reserve to feed on planktons. However, it is also common to spot them at Fahal Island and Bandar Al Khayran in Muscat. Another whale shark hotspot in Oman is in Musandam in northern Oman.

To fully enjoy the experience, it is important to follow the guidelines set by the Environmental Authority in Oman such as staying at least three (3) metres away from the head of the whale shark and 4 metres from the tail.

OTHER REGULATIONS INCLUDE:

- No touching, riding or chasing the whale sharks
- No flash photography
- Do not block their movement
- Less than 10 swimmers at a time, and no swimming underneath the whale shark
- No jet skis, underwater scooters and loud noises.
- Maximum viewing time is 20 minutes per vessel

WHILE SWIMMING WITH A WHALE SHARK IS A GOOD SEASONAL ATTRACTION, WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE REMEMBER?

People should always remember that as gentle as they are, they are still wild. Respecting wildlife is crucial for maintaining the safety of swimmers, promoting sustainable tourism and not disturbing those animals.

In Oman, I noticed that boats tend to surround the whale sharks. This can disrupt

their natural behaviour and increase incidences such as boat strikes. Furthermore, such disturbances can alter the behaviour of whale sharks and discourage them from visiting those hot spots again. Whale sharks are valuable to Oman's tourism vision as they provide the essence and foundation of sustainable marine eco-tours and thus should be protected and monitored by law.

IN SOME COUNTRIES, TOURISTS ARE REMINDED TO 'NOT' WEAR SUNSCREEN WHEN SWIMMING WITH WHALE SHARKS. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE SCIENCE BEHIND THIS?

As a rule, when participating in an ocean activity whether it be snorkelling with whale sharks or having a family day at the beach, reef-safe sunscreen should be worn instead of a regular sunscreen.

The reason for this is because most sunscreens use ingredients such as "Oxybenzone, Benzophenone-1/8, Octinoxate, nano-zinc oxide". Those chemicals wash away in the ocean and are absorbed by marine life especially corals. Those toxic chemicals in sunscreens and other skincare products accumulate in marine organisms inducing damage in DNA, coral bleaching, coral deformation, damages in immune systems of sea urchins, reduction in fertility in fish, among other effects. Thus, it is highly recommended to wear reef-safe sunscreens.

Touching whale sharks other than being dangerous can disturb the protective mucous layer on their skin. This mucosal layer is important in protecting whale sharks against pathogens and is an essential element in their immune system. Thus, by touching a whale shark you can infect them with diseases. Furthermore, whale sharks

have tiny tooth-like scales known as dermal denticles that cover most of the whale sharks skin. Touching them can cause a painful graze (shark graze) and can also bruise the shark. Additionally, harassing whale sharks by touching them can cause an alteration in their behaviour thus stopping them from feeding (avoidance) and in turn will discourage them from visiting the location again affecting the tourism industry.

FROM AN EYE OF A MARINE BIOLOGIST AND A SCUBA INSTRUCTOR, WHY SHOULD PEOPLE GIVE THIS EXPERIENCE A CHANCE?

To protect and save the current whale shark population that is in decline due to challenges such as being fished for their fins, net entanglement and boat strikes, it is important to get to know them in person and spread awareness about them.

Swimming with a whale shark is one of the most humbling yet mesmerising experiences a person can have. Those gentle giants will charm you with their elegance and fill your heart with inspiration. They will also dwarf you with their size and makes you wonder about all the secrets our oceans hold. An alien-like experience on earth.

In Oman, we are lucky to have such unique marine life ranging from amazing coral reefs to blue whales, thus it is important to spread awareness, reduce plastic wastes as it ends in the ocean, and start discovering Oman's marine life.

Furthermore, proper monitoring practises should be implemented to ensure the sustainability of marine tours.

To learn more of Ahmed's adventures and marine conservation efforts, you can follow him on Instagram: [@ahmedallawati](#)

MUSIC



BTS to hold first live concert since Covid-19 pandemic in LA in Nov

SOUTH KOREAN boy band BTS plans to hold live concerts in Los Angeles in November for the first time since the coronavirus outbreak, forcing it to cancel global tours and resort to online performances, the band's management said on Tuesday.

The concerts, titled "Permission to Dance on Stage", will take place in SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles on November 27-28 and December 1-2, Bit Hit Music said.

"Holding an in-person concert in the midst of Covid-19 is not easy", the company said in a statement posted on its online fan platform Weverse.

"We are able to hold the concert in the United States after taking the national and regional health regulations and circumstances into consideration."

The events will be the seven-member group's first live performances since they wrapped up their tour from North America to Europe to Asia in April 2019.

The band had to call off what was meant to be its biggest international tour involving nearly 40 concerts as Covid-19 spread around the world.

It has played virtual concerts instead, including one last October that garnered more than 990,000 viewers from 191 countries and some 50 billion won (\$42.4 million) in ticket sales.

BTS said its members were fully vaccinated against the virus. Last week, they attended an event in person at the United Nations General Assembly, as the global body's special envoys for future generation and culture, to promote its agenda including combating poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change. — **Reuters**

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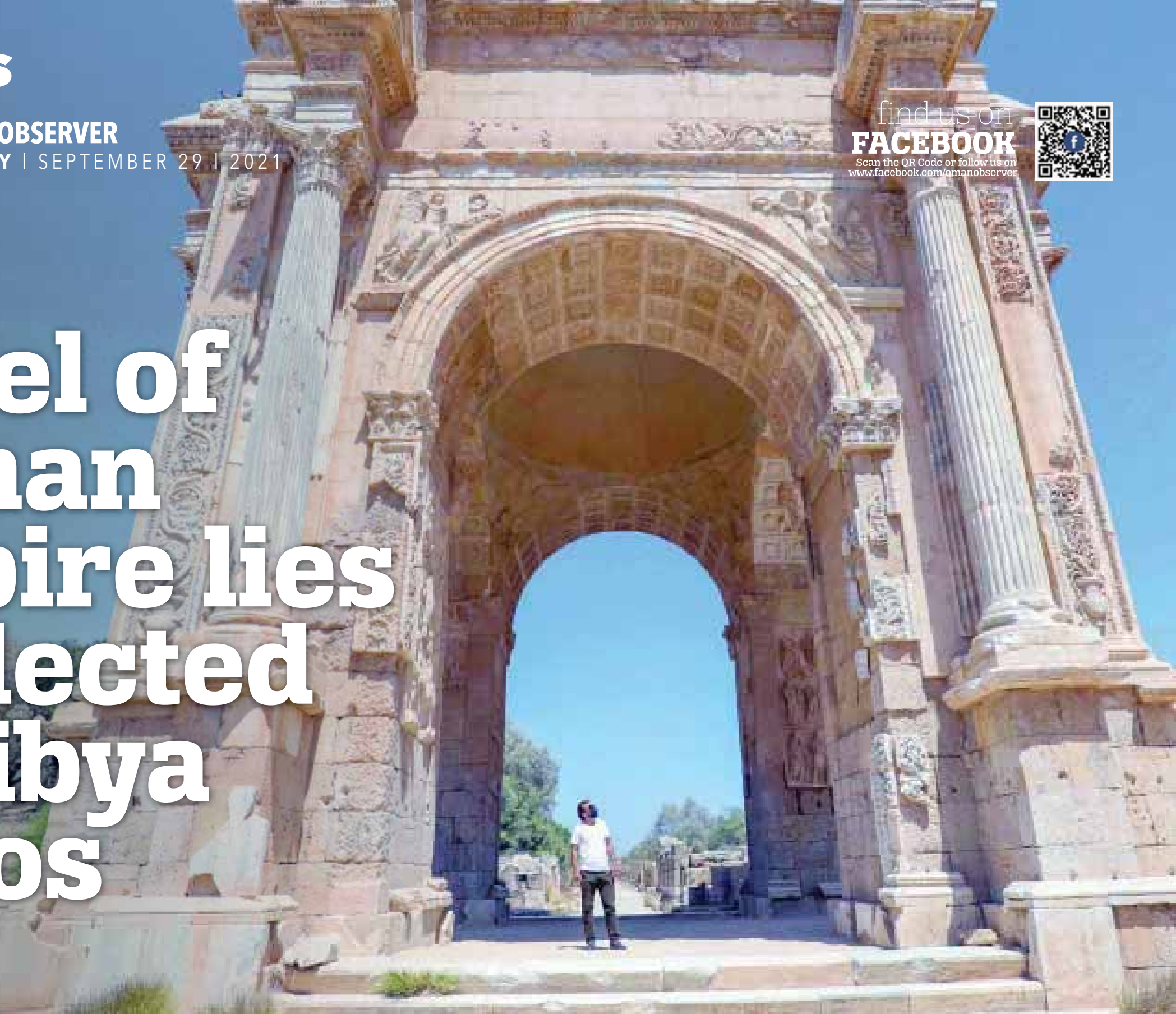
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Jewel of Roman Empire lies neglected in Libya chaos



ONCE AMONG the Roman Empire's most beautiful cities, Leptis Magna lies neglected and shunned by tourists after a decade of war, but some see its potential for rebirth.

There is no queue at the gate and only a handful of visitors, almost all Libyans, wander among the imposing ruins at the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Visiting the area, a former Roman outpost on the south coast of the Mediterranean, is "a voyage in time, a dive into history", enthuses Abdessalam Oueba, a Libyan visitor in his 60s. Founded by the Phoenicians then conquered by Rome, the city was the birthplace of Septimius Severus, who rose to become emperor from 193 until 211.

The ruler waged military campaigns across Europe and into modern-day Iraq before dying in York, England, far from the hometown on which he had lavished resources.

Perched on a hillside with a striking view of the Mediterranean, the well-preserved ruins include a large basilica, a racecourse and a theatre seating up to 15,000 spectators on arched terraces overlooking the sea.

Among the few visiting tourists are Ihab, from Tripoli, who made the 120-kilometre (75-mile) trip to show his children a site he had visited during his own childhood.

"Leptis Magna is beautiful, the most beautiful Roman site outside Italy," the 34-year-old doctor said under a clear blue sky.

"Yet it's barely been discovered."

- 'NEGLECT' -

The violence that wracked Libya after the 2011 revolt that toppled Moamer Kadhafi stirred fears for the ancient ruins, prompting United Nations cultural agency UNESCO to place them and four other Libyan sites on a list of global heritage in danger.

But so far, the areas have been mostly spared from the fighting, which has largely paused since an October 2020 ceasefire.

"There haven't been any direct attacks or threats against Leptis Magna, despite the conflict," said Azeddine al Fakih, head of the site's antiquities department.

Yet it faces other threats: a lack of resources and government support.

"In 2020, we were finally able to launch projects that should have been finished 50 years ago," he said, listing toilet facilities, offices and a perimeter fence. "But archaeological digs have stopped, and maintenance operations are rushed and superficial."

Fakih admitted that after 10 years of conflict and state collapse, Libya's current unity government "has bigger problems to deal with".

There was almost no tourism in Libya under Kadhafi, whose rule from 1969-2011 depended heavily on the country's vast oil wealth. Tense foreign relations and



sanctions also discouraged foreign visitors.

Kadhafi began issuing tourist visas for the first time in 2003 and even created a ministry of tourism as the regime began mending ties with the West.

But all that stopped in 2011, when a Nato-backed revolt overthrew and killed Kadhafi, plunging the country into years of chaos.

- MORE VALUABLE THAN OIL -

Now, a year-long lull in violence has sparked hopes the country can move on. Omar Hdidan, a civil engineer who volunteers to pro-

mote and maintain Leptis Magna, believes in its potential for tourism.

"It has always been neglected by the state," the 49-year-old said.

"There are no digs, no new discoveries, no campaign to encourage tourism. But Leptis Magna is more valuable than 10 oil wells."

Fakih agreed.

Leptis Magna "could be a source of income if it was managed properly", he said. "It could create thousands of jobs, welcome millions of tourists and bring in billions of dollars. There will come a day when the oil runs out, but Leptis Magna will remain." — **AFP**

Long Lost John: Unheard Lennon tape goes on sale in Denmark



A 1970 TAPE of John Lennon singing a hitherto unheard song called "Radio Peace" and expressing frustration at his Beatles image to a group of Danish schoolboys goes under the hammer on Tuesday in Copenhagen.

The 33-minute tape was recorded on January 5, 1970 when the former Beatle spent winter in a remote corner of Jutland in western Denmark with his wife Yoko Ono. Back then four eager boys, writing for their high school newspaper, braved a snowstorm in the hope of interviewing their idol.

They clinched the interview. The topics ranged from the couple's peace campaign, the Beatles, Lennon's hair and his frustration with his image as part of the "Fab Four". Lennon and Ono were famous for staging lie-ins and singing songs of peace as the Vietnam War raged.

"We went into the living room and saw John and Yoko sitting on the sofa, it was fantastic. We sat down with them and were quite close to each other," Karsten Hojen, one of the tape's owners, said.

"I was sitting next to Yoko Ono and John Lennon was sitting next to Yoko and we talked, we had a good time," said Hojen, who is now 68.

Lennon and his wife arrived in Denmark in December 1969 to sort out the future of Ono's five-year-old daughter Kyoko, who was living with her father in northern Jutland. By then, the Beatles had recorded their last album, Abbey Road, and even though it was not official, the group had parted ways.

- FOR A MUSEUM OR YOKO? -

Although Lennon and Ono spent their first week in Denmark incognito, the press found out and the singer organised a news conference that coincided with the first day of the school term.

Hojen and his friends convinced the headmaster to let them skip class to talk peace and music with the singer, a few months before the Beatles officially disbanded.

Hojen and his friends said they decided to part with the audio cassette because they could not imagine sharing it among their numerous children.

"We would be happy if a museum was interested, or why not Yoko Ono herself?" the cultural consultant said.

The recording is of decent quality. "You have to sit back and take some time to listen to it and hope for the best," said Alexa Bruun Rasmussen, director of branding at Bruun Rasmussen Auction House which is handling the sale.

"They actually play 'Give Peace a Chance', but with different words," she said. The recording also includes the unreleased song "Radio Peace", and is "heartfelt" and "unique", Bruun Rasmussen said, adding that the tape and photos could fetch up to 40,000 euros (\$46,000).

"John Lennon is talking to young schoolboys, they share the passion of the peace message. And it comes across clearly that there's a connection between them," she said.

Although Hojen has recounted that winter day in detail to his children and grandchildren, he will no longer have any trace of it after the sale as the owners have not digitised the recording. — **AFP**