



P11

OMAN CRICKET VOLUNTEERS ALL SET FOR T20 WORLD CUP



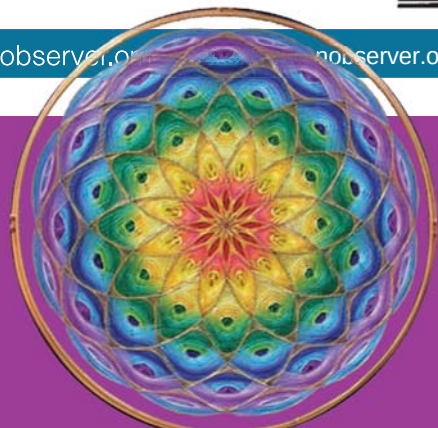
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CYCLONE DAMAGE: UTILITIES GO ON A WAR-FOOTING TO RESTORE KEY SERVICES



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HIS CREATIVITY BRINGS NAIL AND THREAD TO LIFE



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO EGYPT PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the occasion of October 6 Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Abdel el Sisi. His Majesty also wished the brotherly people of Egypt further welfare and prosperity. — ONA

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's National Day. In his cable, King Salman expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's honest sentiments and prayers. He wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. — ONA

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Together we work for recovery and survival

Samuel Kutty

Plan ahead... don't delay!

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

INSIDE



JUDGE SURVIVES BID TO REMOVE HIM FROM PROBE

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RUSSIAN CREW BLAST OFF TO FILM FIRST MOVIE IN SPACE

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JOIN HANDS TO BRING LIFE BACK TO NORMAL

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REVIEW EFFORTS MADE TO RESTORE SERVICES



A view shows the aftermath of tropical cyclone Shaheen in Al Khabourah on Tuesday. — AFP

MUSCAT: In continuation of His Majesty the Sultan's attention to the nation and citizens and his Royal keenness to protect the safety of citizens and residents and, in constant follow-up of the impacts of the adverse climatic conditions (Shaheen) on parts of Oman, the Council of Ministers on Tuesday held a session during which it reviewed the efforts exerted by all departments and sectors to restore normalcy to the affected areas.

The Council of Ministers expresses heartfelt condolences and deep sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives and those who went missing during the climatic conditions,

wishing that the departed would have the Almighty's greatest mercy.

The Council of Ministers also expressed thanks and appreciation for all efforts made to diminish the damages and impacts incurred to citizens and their properties.

This humanitarian contribution, the Council said, had a positive effect in tempering the condition, thanks to the efforts of the National Committee for Emergency Management, the state's military, security and civil sectors and the private sector, in addition to the National Committee for Civil Defence, the Civil Aviation Authority and

Relief operations to continue till normalcy returns

Rescue and relief operations will continue till the last person returns to normal life, affirmed Maj Gen Abdullah al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations. "All state agencies will continue to work in a state of emergency till the last person affected by the tropical cyclone returned to normal life", he said in a television interview.

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media organisations.

In implementation of the Royal directives to form a committee to assess the impacts of the climatic conditions, the Council of Ministers listened to a preliminary assessment report about the case and the steps that the committee intends to undertake as instructed.

The Council of Ministers prays to the Almighty Allah to protect citizens and residents against all harm.

The cabinet urges all parties to cooperate to bring back life to normal as soon as possible in the cyclone stricken areas. May the Almighty Allah protect Oman and its people. — ONA

His Majesty receives phone calls from Arab leaders

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received phone calls on Tuesday evening from King Abdallah II of Jordan, Gen Abdel Fattah Al Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in the United Arab Emirates, to reassure themselves about conditions in Oman after the tropical cyclone Shaheen that hit the Sultanate.

During the calls, they stressed their countries' solidarity with the Sultanate while it tackles impacts of the tropical cyclone. They also expressed their heartfelt condolences and sympathies to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people on victims of the cyclone, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest their souls in peace in paradise and grant their families fortitude to bear the loss, and protect the Sultanate against all harms.

On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation for their kind gesture and sincere sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect them and people of their countries against all harms. — ONA

Sciences said in a statement. "Giorgio Parisi is rewarded for his revolutionary contributions to the theory of disordered materials and random processes."

Hasselmann, who is at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg, said from his home that he did not want to wake up from what he described as a beautiful dream. "I am retired, you know, and have been a bit lazy lately. I am happy about the honour. The research continues", he said.

— Reuters

Trio win physics Nobel for work deciphering chaotic climate

STOCKHOLM: Japanese-born American Syukuro Manabe, German Klaus Hasselmann and Italian Giorgio Parisi won the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics on Tuesday for work that helps understand complex physical systems such as Earth's changing climate.

In a decision hailed by the UN weather agency as a sign of a consensus forming around man-made global warming, one half of the 10 million Swedish crown (\$1.15 million) prize goes in equal parts to Manabe, 90, and Hasselmann, 89, for modelling

earth's climate and reliably predicting global warming.

The other half goes to Parisi for discovering in the early 1980s "hidden rules" behind seemingly random movements and swirls in gases or liquids, which can also be applied to aspects of neuroscience, machine learning and starling flight formations.

"Syukuro Manabe and Klaus Hasselmann laid the foundation of our knowledge of the Earth's climate and how humanity influences it", the Royal Swedish Academy of



Members of the Nobel Committee for Physics announce the winners of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden. — Reuters



Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), and Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), went on tour to military units deployed in the Governorates of North and South Al Batinah.

Those units are deployed as part of the responsibilities of the military subcommittees in the two governorates.

The two military officials met with the heads of the two subcommittees originating from the Main Military Committee for Emergency Management and in coordination with the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM).

SAF Chief of Staff commended the efforts exerted in lending all means of support in rescue operations, providing

water and various other food supplies, as well as contributing in reopening and rehabilitating damaged roads. He urged everyone to harness all efforts and capabilities, in coordination and cooperation with other government units, to restore normalcy.

During the field visit, the two military officials met with Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector

General of Police and Customs for Operations and Deputy Chairman of the NCEM. Al Harthy gave a briefing on assessing the current situation, the steps previously taken, as well as requirements of the current phase to get things back to normalcy. The military subcommittees continue activating operation plans as per instructions of the Main Military Committee for Emergency Management and the NCEM.

ARMED FORCES LEND SUPPORT TO RELIEF OPERATIONS



Helicopters of the Royal Flights (at the Royal Court Affairs) coordinated with the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) in operating flights to lend support to relief missions in areas affected by the tropical cyclone Shaheen. Rescue and relief teams, operating under the supervision of the National Civil Defence Committee, provided logistic support in the Wilayats of Al Suwaiq, Al Khabourah and Saham. Meanwhile, a number of technicians kept working to repair a breakdown in telecommunication stations in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

COMMERCIAL SUPPORT EXECUTIVE

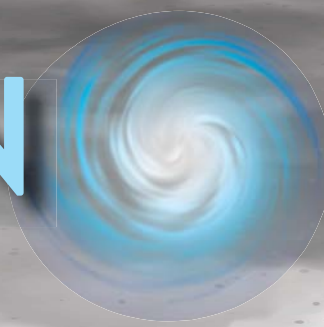
A leading medical equipment distributor in Oman is looking for a commercial support executive. The Candidate should be in the age group of 30 to 35 years with the following requirements:

- Should have a minimum experience of 4 to 5 years in Managing Commercial Department of a distribution company. Exposure to Oracle ERP system would be an advantage.
- Should be a graduate preferably in Biomedical or Electronics Engineering.
- Should have good communication/writing skill in English Language.

Salary will be commensurate with the qualification & experience and the preference will be given to Omani Nationals.

Interested candidates may forward their CV along with recent passport size photograph to: o2mhealth@gmail.com





RESTORATION WORKS IN FULL SWING

The NCEM responded to 231 Mayday calls and rescued 654 people, among them 57 stranded in wadis, 66 trapped inside their vehicles and 91 whose homes submerged

The National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) is pressing ahead at different levels to lend support to citizens and residents in areas hard-hit during the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

Over the past three days, the cyclone claimed the lives of 11 people and search operations are under way to find people who went missing.

So far, the NCEM responded to 231 mayday calls and rescued 654 people at different sites, among them 57 stranded in wadis, 66 trapped inside their vehicles and 91 whose homes submerged.

As part of the ongoing efforts, the Police Aviation yesterday conducted 138 operations of rescue, evacuation and airlifting, in addition to aerial surveillance

of the affected areas. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) operations centre received more than 36,000 reports and opened new emergency lines to accommodate the rising number of reports.

The NCEM activated a provisional operations centre in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, North Al Batinah Governorate, with the aim of restoring basic services and repairing damaged incurred to homes of citizens and residents.

The Sultan's Armed forces (SAF), the ROP, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority and civil sectors join hands in a collective search and mission. Some roads are opened and citizens and residents are cautioned against approaching hazardous areas. — ONA

Medical response, public health sector meets

The Medical Response and Public Health Sector held a meeting at the Ministry of Health today. The meeting was headed by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. The meeting discussed the health effects that may result from the recent tropical cyclone. It also confirmed the health and safety of food and drinking water, safe disposal of waste, sewage and stagnant water ponds in order to prevent the spread of disease vectors, such as mosquitoes, rodents and others. Additionally, the meeting underscored the importance of intensifying epidemiological surveillance of diseases that may be transmitted in such circumstances.

OCA collecting, sending relief materials

Mohammed bin Hamoud al Dhuhli, CEO of Oman Charitable Organisation (OCA), affirmed that the OCA is still collecting and distributing relief aid materials to areas affected by the tropical cyclone Shaheen in the governorates of South Al Batinah and North Al Batinah. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Dhuhli said that the OCA earlier announced a national campaign to collect donations from individuals, establishments and traders to offer assistance to people who sustained damages in the aftermath of the cyclone. Al Dhuhli pointed out that the OCA prepared for emergency situations since the announcement of the climatic condition.

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttvvp

Although the Sultanate is one of the leading countries in dealing with all issues related to the environment and climate, the country is not new to tropical storms.

The last to hit the country is Shaheen, which has ravaged many parts of Oman and reported to have claimed 11 lives and caused widespread damage to properties.

Tropical storm Shaheen, which began to emerge in the Arabian Sea on Saturday, was named by Qatar and it translates to “royal white falcon” in English or “Hawk”. The initial storm was named ‘Gulab,’ which translates to ‘Rose’.

Looking at the years from 1977, Oman has been a target of frequent storms accompanied by heavy downpours.

Although literature of the history of natural disasters in Oman is very sparse, like many other countries in the Arabian Peninsula, the *Observer* looks at the tropical storms that lashed the Sultanate during the last five decades.

Till 2000, naming of the cyclonic storms was not done. It was under the initiative of the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific naming of the cyclonic storms started in the same year.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) names the cyclones developing over the north Indian Ocean, including the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. It also issues advisories to 12 other nations in the region on the development of cyclones and storms.

In 2000, a group of nations — Oman, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand — decided to name cyclones in the region.

In 2018, five more countries were added — Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

1977: According to available reports, the worst storm in terms of fatality that the country suffered was in June 1977 when 105 Omanis reportedly lost their lives in addition to damage to properties.

However, in terms of severity, the number of people affected and the economic loss, Cyclone Gonu in 2007 tops the list.

The 1977 storm formed off the west coast of India in the Arabian Sea, and curved westward to reach peak winds of 110 km per hour. It struck Masirah Island and later southern Oman on June 13, before dissipating the next day over Saudi Arabia.

Producing wind gusts to 230 km per hour, the storm was the strongest cyclone on record to hit the Arabian Peninsula until Cyclone Gonu hit in 2007. About 95 per cent of Marisah Island was damaged by the strong winds, including much of the military base.

2002: The Oman cyclone in May 2002, which was officially known as Cyclonic Storm ARB 01, brought Dhofar its heaviest rain in 30 years and caused heavy damage to properties. It reached cyclonic storm status on May 9, with wind speed of more than 65 km per hour and made landfall near Salalah.

2007: Cyclone Gonu was the most devastating cyclone which reported to have claimed the lives of 49 people. Its effects began before the arrival of the actual cyclone. Seven hours before the centre of the cyclone hit the north-eastern coastline, Oman was already experiencing the impact of rough winds, torrential rain falls reaching 24 inches near the coastline leaving many areas flooded.

Strong winds knocked down power lines and communication poles across the coastline of the country leaving thousands stranded and isolated. The most effected cities were Sur and the Capital City of Muscat where infrastructure facilities were severely damaged in the early hours of the event.

More than 2,000 people were airlifted from damaged areas and water was delivered by fishing boats to isolated towns near the coastline. Like all other public infrastructures, hospitals were flooded and cut off because of damaged roads. The Omani authorities have estimated the direct cost of the event to be \$4 billion.

2012: Cylone Phet was the third named cyclone of the 2010 North Indian Ocean tropical season. Phet, a Thai word meaning Diamond, developed from a low pressure area in the Arabian Sea that turned into a tropical cyclone on May 31.

The rains flooded arid areas and collected into wadis — normally dry river beds. The fatalities have been reported to be 24 with thousands of homes were wrecked across Oman.

2014: Nilofar, which means Water Lily, hit the Oman coast in August 2014 bringing heavy rainfall and severe flooding in the wadis near Qurayat. No casualties, except damage to property, were reported

2015: Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm Chapala was a powerful tropical cyclone that passed Oman without causing much damage in the country. Chapala was the third named storm of the 2015 North Indian Ocean cyclone season.

It developed as a depression on October 28 off western India, and strengthened a day later into a cyclonic storm. Chapala then rapidly intensified amid favorable conditions. After peak intensity, Chapala skirted the Yemeni island of Socotra on November 1, becoming the first hurricane-force storm there since 1922.

2018: Cyclone Mekunu hit Dhofar and Al Wusta provinces in May after intensifying from a category one to a category two cyclone, with winds of up to 170 km per hour after it made landfall on Socotra. It left a trail of destruction and multi million-dollar damages.

The name ‘Mekunu’ was chosen by the Maldives. In Dhivehi, the country’s national language, the term means “Mullet fish”. The storm was formed in the aftermath of tropical storm ‘Sagar’, which hit northwestern Somalia after forming in the Gulf of Aden.

THE TRAIL OF TROPICAL STORMS SINCE 1977



MUTTRAH SOUQ BEARS THE BRUNT OF ANOTHER TRAGEDY

Muttrah Souq, the largest traditional souq in the Sultanate was just limping back to regular business after extended closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but now it has been hit with another adversity



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Prone to adverse weather impacts, Muttrah Souq bore the brunt of the tropical cyclone Shaheen that caused extensive damage to property and infrastructure in Muscat before making landfall in Al Batinah Governorate on Sunday.

It is a different matter, however, that the damage would have been much more had the cyclone made landfall in Muscat, as per its earlier route.

The largest traditional souq in the Sultanate is also the source of livelihood for thousands of citizens and expatriates. It was limping back to regular business after extended closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We faced another adversity this week and majority of our goods got damaged in the storm and rain that triggered flashflood from one side to other side of the souq," said Mohammed Ameen, a vendor of traditional medicines in the market.

From Saturday, Muttrah was under scanner, and the people were being dissuaded from visiting the corniche as high tidal waves, as high as 15 metres, flooded the roads and surroundings.

"We were expecting the

worst since Saturday evening. Each time we have flash floods, the gushing water wipes out everything on its way, from north to south," Firos, an expatriate who runs an antique shop, told the *Observer*.

Later that day, there was a decision to close down the Muttrah area from both sides to ward off any untoward incident. Some vendors were also evacuated from the market area.

The civic workers wasted no time cleansing the debris inside the souq and washed the walls and wooden decors with the help of water tankers.

5,000 VENDORS

The loss suffered by the souq that houses more than 5,000 vendors, salespeople and artisans from across the world, along with citizens, and traditional merchants and residents around, is colossal.

Besides the daily walk-ins, the souq lives on major seasons like two Eids, Ramadhan and cruise season. However, 2020 and 2021 proved terrible for the souq due to the pandemic and now the cyclone.

"We hope to see early removal of stagnant water from the area to restart the business activities," a vendor who deals in fancy accessories in the souq said.

We faced another adversity this week and majority of our goods got damaged in the storm and rain that triggered flash flood from one side to other side of the souq

MOHAMMED AMEEN

Vendor, Traditional medicines



Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Non-refundable)	Tender Purchase Deadline	Clarification Deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/10/01	Construction of New Filling Station at Tawi Ayshah in Wilayat Al Kamil & Al Wafi in Al Sharqiya South Governorate	150.000	13.10.2021	18.10.2021	21.10.2021
Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)					

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om. The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co. (SAOG)
PO Box No: 57, PC: 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman

INVESTIGATION INTO BEIRUT EXPLOSION HAS MADE LITTLE HEADWAY

Judge survives bid to remove him from probe

BEIRUT: The judge investigating Beirut's catastrophic port explosion survived attempts to have him removed from the inquiry when a court dismissed two complaints against him.

The investigation into the August 4, 2020 explosion, one of the biggest non-nuclear blasts in history, has made little headway amid a smear campaign against Judge Tarek Bitar and pushback from powerful Lebanese factions.

A senior official in the Hizbullah had warned Bitar last month the group would remove him from the inquiry, according to a journalist and a judicial source.

The complaints against Bitar were lodged by three former ministers he had sought to charge with negligence leading to the blast, which was caused by a massive amount of ammonium nitrate left in the middle of Beirut. All three have denied any wrongdoing.

They questioned his partiality. Bitar has not commented on the accusations. He is not allowed to speak to the media.

Following Monday's decision by the court of cassation, Bitar will



A file photo of the site of the 2020 Beirut port explosion, Lebanon. — Reuters

now be able to resume requests to interrogate top officials.

But his efforts to question former and serving state officials — including the prime minister at

the time of the blast, ex-ministers and senior security officials on suspicion of negligence — have been repeatedly denied.

Many in Lebanon, particularly

families of the victims of the blast which killed more than 200 people, are furious that no senior official has been held accountable more than a year on.

The ministers who sought Bitar's removal from the investigation were Nohad Machnouk, an MP who was formerly interior minister, and two MPs from the

Muslim Amal Movement — Ali Hassan Khalil, the former finance minister, and Ghazi Zeaiter, the former public works and transport minister. They did not immediately respond on Monday to requests for comment on the dismissal of their complaints.

While Bitar has sought to question several politicians who are allied to Hizbullah, including Khalil and Zeaiter, he has not sought to question any members of Hizbullah itself.

Bitar took over the case when his predecessor, Judge Fadi Sawan, was removed from the investigation in February, on the basis of complaints alleging bias.

The Hizbullah official who delivered the warning to Bitar was Wafik Safa, according to a journalist who says she conveyed the oral message and a judicial source. Safa has not responded to repeated requests for comment.

Bitar described the message in a letter to the public prosecutor and the justice minister and judiciary are following up on the matter, the judicial source said last week.

— Reuters

After wildfires, dry year leaves Syrian farmers facing crop failure

TAL SHAEER, Syria: After Syrian farmer Abdelbaqi Souleiman lost his last wheat crop to a wildfire, he had hoped for a better harvest this summer. But this spring there was hardly any rain.

“Last year the field I planted was burnt to the ground,” said the 48-year-old.

“This year there wasn't enough rain, and we didn't harvest any wheat.”

As man-made climate change increases the likelihood of drought and wildfires worldwide, Syria has also been hit hard by low rainfall this year, especially in its breadbasket Hasakeh province.

In the Kurdish-run northeastern region, dismal wheat harvests have raised alarm about food security in a war-torn country where 60 per cent of people already struggle to buy food.

In Hasakeh, humanitarian agencies estimate crop production to have dropped by more than 95 per cent compared to last year in large parts of the province. Souleiman said the lack of downpour, coupled with the high price of fuel for irrigation, seeds



Syrian farmer Abdelbaqi Souleiman speaks during an interview as he checks on his agricultural land in the countryside of the northeastern city of Qamishli. — AFP

and fertiliser, had made growing the rain-fed cereal a near mission impossible.

“At this rate, we'll have to stop growing wheat,” he said in the village of Tal Shaeer.

“Farmers are going to have to start planting herbs like coriander and cumin because it's cheaper and they sell for more.”

Outside the town of Qahtaniyah in the same province, Hajji Mohammed, 71, said he and his neighbours had also fallen on

rough times.

“Farming has become a loss-making business,” said the agricultural worker of 45 years in the village of Kardeem Haleema.

“If there's no rain this year, most people will move away.”

After years of losses, the family had next to no resources left with which to launch into another season.

“We're trying to sell our women's gold or furnishings so we can buy the seeds,” he said.

Before the war erupted in 2011, Syria produced up to 4 million tonnes of wheat a year — enough to feed its entire population, but harvests have since plunged to record lows, increasing dependence on imports.

The agriculture minister in Damascus said last month the country produced 900,000 tonnes of the grain this year, less than half of the two million tonnes needed.

Salman Barodo, co-president of the economy and agriculture commission with the Kurdish authorities, said this year's harvest had fallen far short of demand for the region's bakeries.

“In previous years, we'd reap more than 600,000 tonnes of wheat,” he said. It was enough for flour, seeds for the following season, and a little left over in reserve. “But this year it was just 184,000 to 185,000.”

The poor harvest comes as the whole of northeast Syria is already facing a humanitarian disaster this year, aid agencies have warned, as low rainfall has also drastically depleted water levels along the Euphrates river. — AFP

Youth in Iraq protest hub vow to boycott ‘rigged’ elections

NASIRIYAH: Iraq will hold early elections on Sunday as a concession to a youth-led protest movement, but in Nasiriyah, the city at the heart of the revolt, most young people won't vote.

Ahead of the parliamentary polls, the mood in Nasiriyah and much of Iraq is sombre with little hope the election will bring much-needed change to the war-scarred country. “Elections in Iraq are rigged,” said 21-year-old Anas, echoing a common sentiment among young adults in the impoverished southern city.

“They are corrupted by arms and money, and I can't be made to vote with a gun to my head.”

Anas, who declined to give his full name, is an economics graduate but, like 40 per cent of Iraqi youths, he is unemployed.

In October 2019, anti-government protests erupted in Baghdad and cities in the south like Nasiriyah against corruption, unemployment, poor public services and foreign influence over Iraq. Two years

on, the protests have died down across much of the country. But in Nasiriyah, simmering public anger is still palpable. From time to time, young demonstrators still take to the streets, which are filled with posters of “martyrs” killed in clashes with security forces.

Anas said the protests changed his life and opened his eyes to the problems facing his country.

“Before, I was a normal person who went to university. I studied or texted my girlfriend,” he said.

“But after the October revolution, I felt I had a responsibility to assume, a place to fill within society, and that my voice was being heard.”

Nearly 600 people died across Iraq and tens of thousands were wounded in violence related to the protests. More activists have been murdered since, kidnapped or intimidated, but there has been no accountability. Activists have blamed armed groups, part of the Hashed al Shaabi paramilitary coalition that helped defeat the IS group. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

ANKARA

Turkey says sent Cypriot vessel away

Turkey sent a Greek Cypriot research vessel away from what it says is its continental shelf in the Mediterranean on Sunday, Turkey's Defence Ministry said, in a sign of renewed tensions in a hotly contested region.

For decades, Turkey has been at odds with Greece and Cyprus over competing territorial claims in the east Mediterranean, air space, energy, the status of some islands in the Aegean, and the ethnically-split island of Cyprus.

Turkey's defence ministry said



the Maltese-flagged *Nautical Geo*, a research vessel contracted by Greek Cypriots, was ‘taken away’ from the Turkish continental shelf at the weekend after being warned.

TEHRAN

Iran urges UN to condemn Karaj nuclear site ‘sabotage’

Iran on Tuesday urged the UN atomic agency to clearly condemn a “sabotage” attack on a nuclear facility west of Tehran that it has accused Israel of carrying out.

Tehran said on June 23 that it had thwarted the attack on the building belonging to its own nuclear agency near Karaj, about 50 km from the capital. At the time, it did not identify the nature of the attack, with state television saying only that “saboteurs failed to carry out their plan”.



On Sunday, Iran's atomic agency chief Mohammad Eslami said the UN watchdog and Western powers had failed to condemn the “terrorist act” that “severely damaged” the site.

DUBAI

UAE spacecraft to explore asteroid belt beyond Mars

The United Arab Emirates will launch a spacecraft to explore a major asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, officials said on Tuesday, after a UAE probe reached the red planet early this year. The five-year journey from 2028 will traverse 3.6 billion km, with the unmanned craft drawing on gravity assists from Earth and Venus to reach the main asteroid belt beyond Mars, officials said.

“The mission will make its first close planetary approach



orbiting Venus in mid-2028, followed by a close orbit of Earth in mid-2029,” the UAE Space Agency said in as statement. “It will make its first fly-by of a main asteroid belt object in 2030.”

In brief

■ KABUL



TALIBAN EXECUTES 13 PEOPLE IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN

Taliban killed 13 people of Hazara ethnicity — including 11 former members of Afghan security forces and two civilians — in the central province of Daikundi on August 30, Amnesty International said in a report on Tuesday.

Nine of the former security personnel were killed even after they surrendered to the Taliban in the Khidir district of the province, the rights organisation said. The two civilians were trying to flee the area, Amnesty said.

The Hazara are Afghanistan's third-largest ethnic group, and one persecuted by the Taliban during its rule in the late 1990s.

■ ISLAMABAD



MAJOR AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN BORDER CROSSING CLOSED

A key border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been closed, according to border officials and media reports, leaving trade suspended and hundreds of travellers stranded.

"The Afghan side sealed the border without any advance notice", a Pakistani border security officer from Chaman said on Tuesday. The Chaman crossing links Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan with Spin Boldak in the Afghan province of Kandahar, the birthplace and stronghold of the Taliban.

They put down cement blocks as a barrier on the Afghan side on Monday, the border official said.

■ YANGON



NO DEFENCE WITNESSES AT SUU KYI INCITEMENT TRIAL

Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi will not call any defence witnesses at her incitement trial in a junta court, her lawyer said on Tuesday, as the military hit a detained US journalist with another criminal charge. Suu Kyi went on trial in June, four months after she was taken into custody in a coup that sparked huge democracy protests.

The 76-year-old faces a raft of charges, from sedition to illegally importing walkie-talkies, which could see her jailed for decades.

Suu Kyi and former president Win Myint "would show no witness" in their defence, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said after the latest hearing in their trial for incitement.

FUMIO KISHIDA TO DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE QUAD

New Japan PM Kishida affirms US alliance



Japan's new Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (C) and Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi gesture before posing for pictures with members of his cabinet at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo on Monday. — AFP

TOKYO: New Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday affirmed Tokyo's alliance with Washington and signalled concerns about China's posture over Taiwan, his foreign minister saying Japan would "consider options" and prepare for "various scenarios".

Taiwan and broader relations with Beijing are likely to dominate security policies and foreign relations from the outset of Kishida's tenure, and could emerge as a key issue in the upcoming general election, analysts say.

Underscoring the new cabinet's China focus, Kishida created a new post of economy security minister, filled by an official who helped craft policies aimed at protecting sensitive technologies in supply chains and cyber security from China.

Asked about Taiwan, which has reported 148 flights by Chinese military planes into its air defence identification zone since Friday, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said he hoped "this matter is resolved peacefully between the two parties through direct talks."

"Additionally, instead of simply monitoring the situation, we hope to weigh the various possible scenarios that may arise to consider what options we have, as well as the preparations we must make", Motegi said.

Kishida's retaining of Motegi, along with Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, signalled his desire to continue ex-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's push to boost security ties with the US while preserving trade relations with China, analysts say.

Kishida, a former foreign minister, on Monday unveiled a cabinet line-up mixing allies of Abe and ex-finance minister Taro Aso in key posts with relative political novices, in keeping with his promise to give younger lawmakers a chance.

Shortly after being formally confirmed by the parliament in the top job, the 64-year-old Hiroshima native surprised the opposition by calling an election for October 31 and vowed to bolster the country's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Kishida told reporters on Tuesday morning in Tokyo he had received a "strong" message from President Joe Biden about the United States' commitment to defending the disputed East China Sea islets known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan. China also claims the islands, which it calls the Diaoyu.

In phone conversation that lasted roughly 20 minutes, the allies also confirmed their cooperation towards achieving a free and open Indo-Pacific,

Kishida told reporters.

Kishida, who is from a traditionally dovish faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), had tacked to the right as he campaigned to be the party's leader, reflecting a broader shift in the LDP spurred by Abe's record-long tenure.

Kishida has said that acquiring the ability to strike enemy bases, a controversial step backed by Abe, was a viable option and that he would appoint an aide to monitor China's treatment of its Uyghur minority.

The new prime minister is also expected to deepen engagement with the United States, Australia, India and Japan — known as the Quad — which Beijing sees as an effort to contain its rise.

His economic security minister is 46-year-old Takayuki Kobayashi, a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School and Tokyo University, who has worked closely on economic security policies with the new secretary general of the LDP, Akira Amari, another Abe ally.

In his first news conference, Kobayashi aimed to strike a balance between pressuring China and maintaining good relations, saying the ties were of great importance to both countries.

— Reuters

SC orders Indian states to pay \$672 Covid compensation

NEW DELHI: India's top court ordered state authorities to pay \$672 (Rs 50,000) as compensation for each death caused by Covid-19, as a way to help families cope with the loss, according to its order reviewed by Reuters on Tuesday.

India has recorded 449,260 deaths overall, a tally experts say is a massive undercount, as millions more may have died in the vast hinterlands. In major cities including the capital New Delhi, experts said a large number of deaths were unreported as hospitals ran out of beds and oxygen supplies.

Petitioners had appealed to the Supreme Court to provide at least eight times the compensation, or Rs 400,000, under the National Disaster Management Authority, through which the government provides some financial help in natural disasters such as earthquakes.

The government, in its affidavit, which was approved by the top court, agreed to the minimum payable amount to be disbursed by local authorities under the State Disaster Response Fund.

These funds would be over and above those paid by federal and state authorities under various other schemes, it said.

"All concerned authority shall act as a helping hand, so as to wipe off the tears of those who have suffered due to loss of a family member due to Covid-19", the Supreme Court said in its order.

It is not known how many countries have offered such compensation for Covid-19 deaths. In Thailand, a man filed a lawsuit against the government's Covid-19 task force and the prime minister and two other government officials, demanding a compensation of 4.53 million baht (\$134,000) for negligence of duty causing his brother's death.

India's Supreme Court ordered state administrative bodies to brush past long bureaucratic procedures and settle all claims within 30 days of submission. The country's healthcare system buckled under a devastating rise in infections in April and May, driven largely by the more infectious and dangerous Delta variant, which killed at least 170,000 people in May alone, official data showed. Deaths have since come down sharply, and daily infections have settled around 34,000 since August.

India's health ministry did not respond to a request for comment on determining the allocation amount.

India has reported 33.85 million infections overall, the second-highest globally behind the United States. — Reuters

Some girls return to school as Taliban seeks to manage image

KABUL: Girls have returned to some secondary schools in a northern province of Afghanistan, Taliban officials and teachers said on Tuesday, but they remain barred from classrooms in much of the country.

The new government also announced at a stage-managed rally that some women civil servants have been called back to work and a backlog of salaries would be paid, signs the Taliban may be trying to soften their public image after 50 days in power.

A video posted by the group's spokesman Suhail Shaheen showed dozens of schoolgirls in black, some wearing white head scarves and others with black face veils, sat in chairs waving Taliban flags.

"Girls are going to high schools in Khan Abad, Kunduz Province", tweeted Doha-based Shaheen, who has been nominated as the new Afghan government's permanent representative to the



Afghan girls and women, who are among displaced families, sit in front of a tent at a makeshift shelter at Shahr-e Naw park, in Kabul. — Reuters

United Nations.

But in Kabul, Education Ministry official Mohammad Abid

said there had been no policy change from the Taliban's interim central government, telling on

Tuesday: "High schools still remain closed for girls."

The Taliban, notorious for

their brutal and oppressive rule from 1996 to 2001, have faced international fury after effectively excluding women and girls from education and work across the country, while incrementally stripping away at Afghans' freedoms.

They permitted girls to attend primary school from the start, but have maintained that neither they nor their female teachers could return to secondary school yet.

The group have said girls can return to high school once their security and strict gender segregation under the group's restrictive interpretation of religious law can be ensured.

Last month Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a press conference that work was "continuing over the issues of education and work of women and girls", saying schools will reopen "as soon as possible", without providing a timeframe.

— AFP

COP26 president denies UK rift over climate

MANCHESTER: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's pointman for the COP26 climate summit insisted on Tuesday that his own Conservative party was on board with the ambition of saving the planet.

COP26 president Alok Sharma said that despite grumbling on the party's right wing at its annual conference, MPs all saw the potential for a green economic revolution.

"Sometimes people don't perceive the Conservatives as leading on this," the former business minister said on the sidelines of the conference in Manchester, northwest England.

"Cabinet colleagues actually understand why it's vitally important to get this right," he said, ahead of the two-week COP26 summit in Scotland starting on October 31.

"And we're seeing the benefits of that coming through in terms of growth, in terms of cutting emissions.

"This is a real, real opportunity to create jobs, to create growth, to have a healthier country, a healthier planet."



COP26 president Alok Sharma at the annual Conservative Party Conference in Manchester.

In his speech closing the Conservative gathering on Wednesday, Johnson is also expected to talk up Britain's action on climate change and the need for global coordination. Touring exhibitors' stands at the conference on Tuesday, Johnson rode an e-bike, got in a electric tractor, and played with a puzzle to assemble a zero-carbon energy house.

But at the Manchester gathering as a whole, the topic of climate change has been relegated to the back burner this week.

Sharma was not given one of the headline speaking slots. — **AFP**

Germany's kingmakers pause to reflect on forming new coalition

BERLIN: Germany's would-be kingmakers will take the next two days to consider how they will proceed with negotiations to form a new coalition to govern Europe's largest economy, the Green party's co-leader Robert Habeck said on Tuesday.

Speaking after talks with the conservatives, Habeck said the Greens and the Free Democrats, who are being courted as joint junior partners by the first-placed Social Democrats and the second-placed conservatives, would now reflect on what they had learned.

"The FDP and we will certainly now evaluate the talks as a whole ... we will take time for that today and tomorrow," Habeck told reporters, referring to both "kingmaker" parties' talks with their larger suitors.

Meanwhile, the leaders of outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative alliance and the Greens met in Berlin on Tuesday to sound out the chances for forming a coalition to govern Germany for the next four years.

The talks, held under conditions of an information blackout, were the last in the first round of exploratory manoeuvring between the four largest parties following the September 26 elections. Merkel's Christian Democrats



Co-leader of Germany's Greens and the party's candidate for chancellor Annalena Baerbock, Secretary General of Germany's conservative CDU party Paul Ziemiak, co-leader of Germany's The Greens party Robert Habeck and leader of Germany's CDU/CSU party union candidate for chancellor Armin Laschet, leave after exploratory talks with members of Germany's Greens in Berlin. — **AFP**

(CDU), now led by Armin Laschet, along with their Bavarian allies, the Christian Social Union (CSU), are seeking to cobble together a three-way government with the Greens and the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP).

The Social Democrats (SPD) who narrowly emerged as the largest party with just 25.7 per

Leaders of Chancellor Merkel's conservative alliance and Greens met to sound out the chances for forming a coalition to govern Germany for the next four years

cent of the vote ahead of the CDU/CSU on 24.1 per cent, are also seeking to build a coalition with the Greens and FDP.

The two smaller parties, the Greens on 14.8 per cent and the FDP on 11.5 per cent, were the first to meet last week to sound out common positions.

— **Agencies**

Russian crew blast off to film first movie in space

MOSCOW: A Russian actress and director blasted off to the International Space Station on Tuesday in a historic bid to best the United States to film the first movie in orbit. The Russian crew is set to beat a Hollywood project that was announced last year by "Mission Impossible" star Tom Cruise together with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

Actress Yulia Peresild, 37, and film director Klim Shipenko, 38, took off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan at the expected time of 0855 GMT, with docking expected at 1212 GMT.

Led by veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov, they will travel in a Soyuz MS-19 spaceship for a 12-day mission at the ISS to film scenes for "The Challenge". The movie's plot, which has been mostly kept under wraps along with its budget, was revealed by Russia's space agency Roscosmos to centre around a female surgeon who is dispatched to the ISS to save a cosmonaut.

Shipenko and Peresild are expected to return to Earth on Oct 17 in a capsule with cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky

Shkaplerov and two other Russian cosmonauts aboard the ISS are said to have cameo roles in the film.

"For me, space is alluring, welcoming and has no boundaries," Peresild — who was selected out of 3,000 candidates for the role — said in remarks broadcast by Roscosmos on Tuesday.

Several hours ahead of take off, the trio arrived at the launchpad clad in heavy spacesuits, waving to the crowds as they boarded their spacecraft.

True to a pre-flight tradition religiously observed by cosmonauts, the crew said that on Sunday they watched the classic Soviet film "The White Sun of the



The ISS crew members Russian cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov and actress Yulia Peresild board the Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft for the launch at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan. — **Reuters**

Desert".

Shipenko and Peresild are expected to return to Earth on October 17 in a capsule with cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, who has been on the ISS for the past six months. "Not only do we need to make a film, we need to come back to Earth alive," Shkaplerov said.

If successful, the mission will add to a long list of firsts for Russia's space industry.



The Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft carrying the crew blasts off to the International Space Station (ISS) from the launchpad at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. — **Reuters**

The Soviets launched the first satellite Sputnik, and sent the first animal, a dog named Laika, the first man, Yuri Gagarin, and the first woman, Valentina Tereshkova, into orbit.

But compared to the Soviet era, modern Russia has struggled to innovate and its space industry is fighting to secure state funding with the Kremlin prioritising military spending.

Its space agency is still reliant on Soviet-designed technology and has faced a number of setbacks, including corruption scandals and botched launches. Russia is also falling behind in the global space race, facing tough competition from the United States and China, with Beijing showing growing ambitions in the industry.

Roscosmos was also dealt a blow after SpaceX last year successfully

delivered astronauts to the ISS, costing Russia its monopoly for journeys to the orbital station. For political analyst Konstantin Kalachev, the space film is a matter of PR and a way to "distract" Russians from the "problems" that Roscosmos is facing.

"This is supposed to inspire Russians, show how cool we are, but I think Russians have completely lost interest in the space industry," Kalachev said. In a bid to spruce up its image and diversify its revenue, Russia's space programme revealed this year that it will be reviving its tourism programme to ferry fee-paying adventurers to the ISS.

After a decade-long pause, Russia will send two Japanese tourists — including billionaire Yusaku Maezawa — to the ISS in December, capping a year that has been a milestone for amateur space travel.

Last month, SpaceX completed the first all-civilian mission to space that took four untrained astronauts on a three-day loop around the Earth's orbit. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

ATHENS

Robots give Greece's postal service speed boost

There's a new addition to Greece's postal service: a fleet of yellow robots sorting through the mail. Fifty-five small, four-wheeled autonomous mobile robots — or AMRs — powered by artificial intelligence, glide around Hellenic Post's sorting centre in Athens, speeding up an often arduous process. They scan the postal code, weigh the package and, directed by sensors, empty it into the corresponding mail sacks set up around a platform.

The robots are part of the



state-owned company's digital restructuring programme, which aims to tackle growing numbers of parcels from online shopping during the coronavirus pandemic. — **Reuters**

PARIS

Macron hosts Africa 'summit' without leaders

President Emmanuel Macron will host a conference on Africa on Friday billed as a summit but with no other leaders attending, as he aims to readjust France's relationship with the continent. Instead of other heads of state and premiers, Macron is inviting hundreds of young business people, artists and sporting figures to Montpellier.

The aim is "to listen to the words of African youth" and "to leave behind obsolete formulas and frameworks", said a French



presidential official who asked not to be named. The meeting comes at a delicate moment between France and many of its former colonies in French-speaking Africa. — **AFP**

BUCHAREST

No-confidence vote brings down Romania govt

The Romanian government of liberal Prime Minister Florin Cîtu was brought down by a no-confidence vote on Tuesday, threatening to plunge the country into fresh political instability. The result of the vote showed 281 MPs voting in favour of the no-confidence motion, with none against as the government and its allies boycotted the poll.

The crisis comes as Romania, battles a deadly fourth wave of coronavirus and as Romanians risk huge bills over the coming



winter due to spiralling energy costs. The centre-right USR party last month withdrew from his liberal coalition, complaining about Cîtu's "dictatorial attitude". — **AFP**

UK tries to kick 25-year imported labour habit

GUY FAULCONBRIDGE

The United Kingdom’s 25-year-old model of importing cheap labour has been up-ended by Brexit and Covid-19, sowing the seeds for a 1970s-style winter of discontent complete with worker shortages, spiralling wage demands and price rises.

Leaving the European Union, followed by the chaos of the biggest public health crisis in a century, has plunged the world’s fifth-largest economy into a sudden attempt to kick its addiction to cheap imported labour.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Brexit experiment —

unique among major economies — has further strained supply chains already creaking globally for everything from pork and poultry to medicines and milk. Wages, and thus prices, will have to rise.

The longer-term impact on growth, Johnson’s political fortunes and the United Kingdom’s on-off relationship with the European Union is unclear. “What I won’t do is go back to the old failed model of low wages, low skills, supported by uncontrolled immigration,” Johnson, 57, said when asked about the shortages.

He said Britons had voted for change in the 2016 Brexit referendum and again in 2019, when a landslide election win made Johnson the most powerful Conservative prime minister since Margaret Thatcher.

Stagnant wages, he said, would have to rise — for some, the economic logic behind the Brexit vote. Johnson has bluntly told business leaders in closed meetings to pay workers more.

“Taking back control” of immigration was a key message of the Brexit campaign, which the Johnson-led “Leave” campaign narrowly won. He later promised to protect the country from the “job-destroying machine” of the European Union.

Johnson casts his Brexit gamble as an “adjustment” though opponents say he is dressing up a labour shortage as a golden opportunity for workers to increase their wages.

But restricting immigration amounts to a generational change in the United Kingdom’s economic policy, right after the pandemic triggered a 10 per cent contraction in 2020, the worst in more than 300 years. — Reuters

What I won’t do is go back to the old failed model of low wages, low skills, supported by uncontrolled immigration

BORIS JOHNSON
Prime Minister



WEAVING BEAUTY!

A carpet dealer shows a silk carpet at a factory in Srinagar, India, on Tuesday. — AFP

Together we work for recovery and survival

Once again I have become witness to the fury of nature. The capital city of Muscat along with many other areas in the Sultanate was beaten black and blue by the severe cyclonic winds.

‘Shaheen’, which means Royal White Falcon, began to emerge in the Arabian Sea on Friday was a powerful tropical cyclone that caused widespread damage.

It wreaked havoc with a package of petrifying winds, consistent rainfall, collapsing of buildings, fall of trees, landslide, shattering of glass windows, blowing off roofs and many other things to recall and revisit.

Lull before the storm was particularly very peculiar on Saturday when the climatic conditions roughly changed from humidity to a sudden drop in the temperatures followed by winds in several areas.

The ferocious high speed cyclonic winds accompanied by rains ravaged many parts of the country. Flash floods prompted evacuation from coastal areas. Movement of vehicles came to a halt and flights were delayed or put off to and from Muscat.

Since my arrival in Oman in 1998, Shaheen is the seventh cyclone that I have been witness to. Cyclone Gonu in 2007 was the strongest of all, leaving a trail of destruction which will never fade from the memories.

Even after 14 years, the terrible memories still haunt those who were living in Muscat or Sur, the most affected

areas, during the devastating days.

I remember spending three days without communication, water and electricity even as officials, workers and volunteers worked day and night to clean, repair damages and drain flood water and remove slush.

The way people rallied and helped each other irrespective of nationality was astounding. The government was quick to step in to provide care to people who were required shelter and other needs.

Good quality food, water, and juices have been provided for everyone, and the authorities had also organised medical care for those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart ailments.

From the ferocious Gonu to the strong Mekunu, the Sultanate was able to survive all the calamities with a united fight.

At the same time, let me say that all these natural disasters underscore the need for further strengthening of disaster planning. I do not deny the fact that natural disasters are by their very nature unpredictable and more can always be done to limit their impact when they strike.

Of course, the country has a well-orchestrated mechanism in place to cope in the face of natural catastrophes thanks to various authorities in national emergency, crisis and disaster management.

This has been evident from the way the country was able to manage and

reduce the damages and fatalities during the devastating Shaheen storm. The healthcare infrastructure along with other official machinery was geared to respond quickly.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued orders to form a ministerial committee to assess the damages that were caused to citizens’ homes and properties in the governorates that took the brunt of the tropical condition.

The committee is tasked to act immediately to provide all forms of support and assistance to citizens and alleviate the impacts.

The Oman Charitable Organisation and a number of charities and volunteer teams announced on Monday the opening of the donation portal. Various other teams have also announced that they are running voluntary groups to help with damages and clean-up operations.

In addition, a number of companies announced donating sums for the benefit of those affected. Omantel and Sohar International Bank announced the allocation of five million in interest-free loans to the affected people. A number of electrical and home maintenance shops announced that they would provide their services for free.

Whatever comes, whether natural calamities like tropical storms or catastrophes like Covid-19 pandemic, Oman has a good leadership and loyal people to live up to the situation. United we will fight for recovery and survival!



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

THE WAY PEOPLE RALLIED AND HELPED EACH OTHER IRRESPECTIVE OF NATIONALITY WAS ASTOUNDING

Plan ahead... don’t delay!



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

ONE OF THE GREATEST SOURCES OF HAPPINESS IS THE ANTICIPATION AND EVEN PREPARATION FOR IT

After several months of travel restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the pressure to take a vacation is increasing, everyone wants different things from their vacation and this is normal.

Unfortunately, we notice that a number of individuals are trying to skip the vacation, which is really a mistake and harmful to their health, while repeating that. In fact, vacations increase the perceived quality of life for most people more than health, money and work. Of course, one needs health and money for a vacation and even being with the people they love is key to a good vacation, so these things

cannot be completely separated. True, this effect may be short-lived, but the point remains that most people find that vacations enhance their happiness.

However, different people enjoy different vacation spots, depending on their tastes, the memories associated with them and even their own psychological behaviours. Regardless of your motives and vacation goals, you will surely get more happiness through your vacation if you share it with the people close to you.

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest sources of happiness from a pleasurable activity is the anticipation and even

preparation for it. Some neuroscience research suggests that anticipation stimulates one of the reward-processing areas of the brain. However, keep in mind that excessive anticipation can backfire if you imagine your vacation will put you in a state of constant bliss! You may notice how the satisfaction we get from escaping tends to wear off rather quickly. While on vacation, people are healthier, less stressed, more energetic, more satisfied and in better spirits. Unfortunately, these effects may largely disappear within the first week of returning to work.

On the other hand, you notice that some people engage in work-

related activities and this fact reduces the positive effects of the holiday after one and three days of returning to work. Taking a mental break from work is one of the main points of vacation and perhaps here we fail to achieve that goal when we are not ready to disengage!

Of course, if all goes well and you get a great vacation, it will increase your enjoyment and life satisfaction with your current situation. This is good news, but the bad news is that a return to normal life can be surprisingly disappointing for some people. And here I think the best way to prepare for this disappointment is to understand that such

interaction is to be expected, not necessarily an indication that something in your ordinary life is badly wrong.

Finally, you can not make any significant changes in your life for at least two weeks after the vacation and that to allow time for your measure of happiness to return to normal and also to realise the value of the experience during the vacation. After all, the goal is not just a great post-pandemic vacation or associated period, but the idea of creating a post-pandemic routine to be happier as well.

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

Sport

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Italy's players attend a training session at the San Siro (Giuseppe-Meazza) Stadium in Milan, on the eve of their Uefa Nations League semifinal match against Spain. – AFP

Italy, Spain open Nations League Final Four

MILAN: Italy and Spain will again face off in a semifinal on Wednesday when they take to the field at the San Siro for the Nations League Final Four opener, a replay of their epic Euro 2020 semifinal.

Spain finished on the losing side back in July's European Championship semifinal as the Azzurri prevailed on penalties and went on to win the tournament, beginning an unforgettable summer of sport for Italy.

Roberto Mancini's Italy are on a world-record run of 37 matches without defeat and have a squad predictably stuffed full of players who took part in their run to glory in the Euro final over England at Wembley.

"We'll be facing a great Italy team: they deservedly beat England in the final of the Euro and they've kept their long unbeaten run going," said Spain coach Luis Enrique after announcing his squad on Thursday.

"But like our psychologist says, defeat comes to every team. And that means that they're closer to losing, that time is getting nearer."

Mancini admitted that "Spain were the team we struggled against most during Euro 2020".

"They are a good team with good players. It will be a good match," he told uefa.com.

The only different face from the Euro crowd was supposed to be in-form Roma midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini, who on Sunday scored his sixth goal of the season in all competitions.

However injuries in the run-up to and during the weekend's Serie A fixtures mean Juventus striker Moise Kean, AC Milan defender Davide Calabria and Inter Milan youngster Federico Dimarco have all been drafted in at the last minute.

The trio have respectively come on board in place of Italy's usual starting centre-forward Ciro Immobile and Atalanta's Rafael Toloi and Matteo Pessina.



Italy's coach Roberto Mancini (second right) supervises a training session with Italy's forward Lorenzo Insigne (2ndL) at the San Siro (Giuseppe-Meazza) stadium in Milan. – AFP

Nations League 2020-2021

Finals of the competition's 2nd edition



"We'll be facing a great Italy team: they deservedly beat England in the final of the Euro and they've kept their long unbeaten run going"

LUIS ENRIQUE
Spain coach

For Dimarco it's a first ever call up and comes from the man who in 2014 gave the 23-year-old his debut at Inter Milan, where he has impressed so far this season.

SIMILAR PHILOSOPHIES

The match will also see the return of Gianluigi Donnarumma to the San Siro after leaving AC Milan on a free transfer to go to Paris Saint-Germain this summer.

Asked whether he might be harangued by Milan fans following a move which left a bad taste in the mouth of supporters, Donnarumma said: "It would be sad if that happened."

"I always gave everything for Milan and I hope the subject can be put to one side," he added.

Luis Enrique has too had injury problems with club

matches coming thick and fast between last month's international break and the Final Four.

Teenage sensation Pedri will not take part after getting injured for the second time in less than a month, missing out on similarly young squad to the one which surpassed expectations at the Euro.

Pedri was one of the best performers of the tournament and gave a celebrated Italy midfield of Jorginho, Marco Verratti and Nicolò Barella a tough time for much of their thrilling semifinal.

Tottenham's Bryan Gil has also been brought in after Marcos Llorente picked up a thigh injury during Atletico Madrid's 2-0 win over Barca at the weekend, while the Catalan giants' 17-year-old midfielder Gavi has been picked despite only having four La Liga appearances to his name.

Former Barca coach Luis Enrique was lauded by the Italians after he heaped praise on them despite what must have been a painful defeat at Wembley, and he continued his charm offensive ahead of what promises to be a worthy opener to the Final Four.

"We could have beaten them but we didn't manage to do it, we're two teams with a similar philosophy and we hope to take part in another exciting match," he said. — AFP

Hetmyer steers Delhi to top of IPL table

DUBAI: West Indies batsman Shimron Hetmyer produced a match-winning cameo as Delhi Capitals edged out Chennai Super Kings by three wickets to go top of the Indian Premier League table on Monday.

Chasing 137 for victory, Delhi depended on a brisk 39 by Shikhar Dhawan and Hetmyer's 18-ball 28 to achieve their target with two balls to spare in Dubai.

"Very important for me to finish games," said the left-handed Hetmyer. "I tell the guys that is what I am paid for and I try to finish as many games as possible."

Spinner Axar Patel set up victory with impressive figures of 2-18 as Delhi kept down M.S. Dhoni's Chennai to 136 for five despite an unbeaten 55 by Ambati Rayudu.

Delhi, who inched closer to a top-two finish in the league stage, made Chennai slip to second while Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore stay third. All three teams have made the playoffs.

Finishing in the top two gives the teams a second chance among the four teams to make the finals on October 15.

"Not a bad birthday present, but



Very important for me to finish games. I tell the guys that is what I am paid for and I try to finish as many games as possible

SHIMRON HETMYER
Delhi Capitals batsman

in the end we made it tough for us," said Delhi skipper Rishabh Pant who turned 24 on Monday.

"Absolutely big win, and want to be absolutely sure we finish in the top two."

Delhi were in trouble at 99-6 after pace bowler Shardul Thakur struck twice in an over to send back Ravichandran Ashwin and Dhawan back to the dug out.

Number seven Hetmyer then stood firm and smashed fellow West Indian Dwayne Bravo for two boundaries in one over and hit a six off Josh Hazlewood in the next to ease the pressure.

Bravo got Patel out in the final over but new man Kagiso Rabada hit the winning runs to take Delhi to 20 points in 13 matches.

Earlier Patel took two key wickets including Faf du Plessis for 10 and Moeen Ali for five to hurt Chennai's batting which was later boosted by a 70-run fifth wicket stand between Rayudu and Dhoni. — AFP

Brief Scores: Delhi Capitals 139/7 (Shikhar Dhawan 39, Shimron Hetmyer 28*; Shardul Thakur 2/13) beat Chennai Super Kings 136/5 (Ambati Rayudu 55*, Robin Uthappa 19; Axar Patel 2/18) by 3 wickets.

Winner's Jotun, Ideal Tech launch B Division campaign on winning note

MUSCAT: Rahul Sasidharapanicker's game-turning spell of 3 for 27 fetched Winner's Jotun an exciting 21-run win over Pispot in a Senior Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality Ground 3 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Jotun posted 176 for 8 on the board thanks to vital knocks from Prasad Nagesh (44) and Prajeesh (30). Monty Navani's 4 for 36 was the principal reason Jotun could not compile a bigger total.

Pitspot got off to a flyer, openers Wajid Ali (27) and Fahad Hamza (28) putting on 55 in only 4.3 overs before Rahul trapped the latter in front. Wickets continued to fall at regular interval and Pitspot had to be content with 155 for 8 in 20 overs.

Brief Scores (D Division): Winner's Jotun 176 for 8 in 20 overs (Prasad Nagesh 44 – 4x4, 1x6, Prajeesh 30 – 6x4, Monty Navani 4-36) beat Pitspot 155 for 8 in 20 overs (Sanjo Chandran 40 – 2x4, Rahul Sasidharapanicker 3-27) by 21 runs.

Ideal Tech beat Safara

In another D Division match at the same venue, Ideal Technology defeated Safara International by 33 runs. Ideal scored 165 for 8, Sooraj Raj and Arun Kumar being its notable scorers with 27 and 25 respectively. Syed Uzair was the pick of Safara bowlers, taking 3 for 31 whereas Sandesh Pusalkar bagged 2 for 26.

Safara could not offer much competition getting restricted to 132 for 7 despite Pusalkar's unbeaten 63. Arun Kumar bowled exceptionally well, taking 3 for 13.

Brief Scores (D Division): Ideal Technology 165 for 8 in 20 overs (Sooraj A Raj 27 – 2x4, Arun Kumar 25 – 3x4, Syed Uzair Saman 3-31, Sandesh Pusalkar 2-26) beat Safara International 132 for 7 in 20 overs (Sandesh Pusalkar 63 — Arun Kumar Ganeshan 3-13) by 33 runs.



Junaid stars in Aflag victory

Junaid Iqbal's superb 61 off 36 steered Aflag Group to a thrilling 5-wicket victory against Capital Star in an E Division match at Muscat Municipality Ground 4.

Maheswaran Annadurai's brilliant 89 off 61 was the highlight of Capital Star's 152 for 4. Awais Mohammad claimed 2 for 17.

Aflag fought hard to snatch victory in the 20th over thanks to brilliant batting by Junaid and fellow opener Syed Osama Afaq (40) who put on 83 for the opening wicket in less than 9 overs. Aflag sealed the win with 3 balls yet to be bowled, scoring 155 for 5. Tejesh Shetty bagged two wickets.

Brief Scores (E Division): Capital Star 152 for 4 in 20 overs (Maheswaran Annadurai 89 – 11x4, 1x6, Awais Mohammad 2-17) lost to Aflag Group 155 for 5 in 19.3 overs (Junaid Iqbal 61 – 11x4, Syed Osama Afaq 40 – 4x4, Tejesh Shetty 2-24) by 5 wickets.

Ajeesh shines in Al Muthla win

There is no bigger weapon in cricket than a red hot cherry in capable hands and Ajeesh Puyuveettil proved this with his

opening spell that took the life out of Landmark Group's chase, fetching Al Muthla Golden a well-deserved 40-run win in another E Division match at the same venue.

Chasing 172 to win, Landmark was jolted by Ajeesh's twin blows as he removed the openers without letting them open their account in his first two overs. The pressure became unbearable as it lost a few more wickets to reach 47 for 6 by the 9th over, limping to 131 for 7 in 20 overs. Asjad Mohammed was the highest scorer with 51.

Earlier, finding solace in building partnerships, Al Muthla scored a respectable 171 without a big individual score, Viswanath Sree (34) and Jeason Jacob (29) being the main scorers. Kugan Kuganeswaran was the pick of Landmark bowlers, taking 4 for 28.

Brief Scores (E Division): Al Muthla Golden CT 171 for 9 in 20 overs (Viswanath Sree 34 – 6x4, Jeason Jacob 29 – 3x4, Kugan Kuganeswaran 4-28, Khuram Rashid 2-15, Ajay Kumar 2-27) beat Landmark Group 131 for 7 in 20 overs (Asjad Mohammed 51 – 4x4, Ajeesh Puyuveettil 2-12) by 40 runs.

Poonacha powers TCM to victory

Poonacha Pattada's brilliant

all-round performance lifted Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) to a 4-wicket win over KCA Deutag in an F Division game at OAC 3 ground in Seeb.

Poonacha first picked up 2 for 16 in KCA's 171 for 7 in 20 overs that saw a brilliant 58 from opener Mujtaba Ahmed, and that led the chase with a topscore of 44 off 35. TCM surpassed the total in the 18th over, scoring 174 for 6 including 33 off from opener Bronal Barboj. Irtaza Ahmed claimed 3 for 26.

Brief Scores (F Division): KCA Deutag 171 for 7 in 20 overs (Mujtaba Ahmed 58 – 7x4, 2x6, Poonacha Pattada 2-16, Dinal Napanda 2-28, Thimmaiah Alemada 2-39) lost to Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) 174 for 6 in 17.5 overs (Poonacha Pattada 44 – 7x4, Bronal Barboj 33 – 6x4, Irtaza Ahmed 3-26) by 4 wickets.

OCT Al Hail B beat OCT Al Nahdha

In another F Division match at OAC 3, Khalid Rahim's 3 for 21 was the highlight of OCT Al Hail B's nail-biting 2-wicket victory against OCT Al Nahdha.

Aiman Khalid (54) and Nadil Al Balushi (30) were the main contributors to OCT Al Nahdha's 153 for 5 that was kept n check by Khalid Rahim's brilliant bowling.

OCT Al Hail B built up its chase brick by brick, reaching the target in the final over as it scored 157 for 8 thanks to Adil Ishaq's topscore of 38 and Hassan Mohammed's 28. Nathar Pashambeh picked up 3 for 23.

Brief Scores (F Division): Oct Al Nahdha 153 for 5 in 20 overs (Aiman Khalid 54 – 6x4, Nadil Al Balushi 30 – 4x4, Khalid Rahim 3-21) lost to Oct Al Hail 'B' 157 for 8 in 19.2 overs (Adil Ishaq 38 – 4x4, Hassan Mohamed 28 – 5x4, Nathar Pashambeh 3-23, Sharif Albalushi 2-18, Nadil Albalushi 2-19) by 2 wickets.



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

MUSCAT: Scores of volunteers speaking different languages have been selected and trained on Friday to facilitate the watching experience of the upcoming T20 World Cup Qualifiers at the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium.

Each volunteer, deputed to help nearly 3,000 viewers from across the globe to the stadium at different gates, has been given proper briefing on how to carry out his/her task for the successful implementation of the mega event from October 17 to 21.

"We are all set to play host to the upcoming T20 qualifiers with the Scotland, Papua New Guinea, and Bangladesh, besides Oman," said Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket.

The major sports event that has already made Oman the cynosure of global attention will see 16 national teams attend the first round. Out of this, 8 teams

will be qualified for the second round. India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies, England and Afghanistan are in the fray.

Ireland, Sri Lanka, Netherlands, and Namibia will play the first round in the UAE. Two teams will qualify for the second stage with the another two coming from the Oman group.

The classification of the International Cricket Council (ICC) says that 12 teams, divided into 2 groups, will play in the second round, and will continue until November 8.

This is the first time that an event of this magnitude in terms of cricket is happening on Oman soil. The Sultanate is set to receive plethora of benefits in terms of branding as a cricket destination. Aviation, various hospitality channels, transportation and healthcare are going to be receiving the end benefits of this event.



EKANSH EMERGES RAPID CHESS CHAMPION



MUSCAT: Ekansh Goel, a class 9 student of Indian School Muscat, won the back to the board Panorama Mall Open rapid chess tournament held on October 1 at the Panorama Mall, Bausher. Ekansh won all his games and finished first. Imran (Oman) claimed the second spot, while Said al Maamri took the third spot. Shaurya Sawlani was fourth and Abdullah Basheer (Oman) finished fifth. Sultan Habsi won the best Omani player prize and Shybi Binoj claimed the best girl player prize.

Royal Challengers Bangalore look to finish strong



Three teams have qualified and one team is out, while other four are fighting for open spot. With just three days to go for the completion of the league stage of the Indian Premier League, the action and drama are at its peak. Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bangalore have qualified. Sunrisers Hyderabad are out of the race.

Kolkata Knight Riders, Punjab Kings, Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals are all fighting for that fourth open spot. But, it's not just about qualification, Chennai, Delhi and Bangalore are fighting to seize their place in the top two slots.

RCB IN GOOD WICKET

After beating Mumbai, Rajasthan and Punjab, RCB are in a brilliant position to win the remaining two and have a chance to finish in the top two, which would have two opportunities to reach the final. Glenn Maxwell's form has been a big plus for Virat's men at crucial



times, while Harshal Patel has been in sensational form with the ball. But most importantly, RCB fans would be looking at AB de Villiers to come back to his best and get a big knock.

There is nothing on line for Hyderabad and it looks as if that's the attitude which this young team needed to play from the start. SRH might have just won one game from the last four matches, but

none of these games were one-sided. They have started to fight hard, but the young Hyderabad team lacks the experience of closing matches in their favour. SRH have dropped experienced

Manish Pandey and Kedar Jadhav, while investing in Priyam Garg and Abhishek Sharma, who have done decently well to start off. Pacer Umran Malik clocked 150+ kmph and earned a lot of praises.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

The match is at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium, Abu Dhabi, where 379 runs were scored in the last match between Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals. It was an absolutely belter of a track for the batters, where they scored runs freely. We can expect a similar kind of a surface for this match as well.

Considering the pitch, SRH should consider bringing Manish Pandey back for this match. He likes to commit and play through the line, and this pitch should really suit him. Jason Roy and Kane Williamson would shine. With the ball, Umran Malik should get some good pace and bounce from this wicket and if he hits good areas, he could yield great benefits. The all-experienced Rashid Khan is Sunrisers sole main hope in bowling.

The strong batting line-up of Royal Challengers Bangalore would be expected to post a massive score and the fans would be looking forward to a 100 from Virat Kohli. Devdutt Padikkal, Glenn Maxwell and AB de Villiers would like to get in a good score behind their back. Harshal Patel and Yuzvendra Chahal have been their key bowlers and a lot will be expected from them.

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CYCLONE DAMAGE: UTILITIES GO ON A WAR-FOOTING TO RESTORE KEY SERVICES



SHAHEEN AFTERMATH:
Many neighbourhoods in Barka, Musannah, Al Suwaiq and Al Khabourah still without electricity and potable water supply, as well as telecom services

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Technical teams fanned across flood-damaged parts of North and South Al Batinah to restore electrical, telecommunications, water supply and sewerage networks wrecked by cyclone Shaheen as it swept through northern Oman with devastating consequences on Sunday night.

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), which regulates the electricity, water supply, sewerage and

natural gas transportation sectors in the Sultanate, announced that it was coordinating with all of the utilities operating under its regulatory supervision in the speedy restoration of services.

But with Shaheen having downed hundreds of electrical poles, inundated substations, damaged telecom networks, and put pumping stations out of commission, the task before the various utilities has been described as daunting and potentially protracted.

On Monday, Shaikh (Dr) Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of APSR, undertook a field tour of badly impacted neighbourhoods of the wilayats of Barka, Musannah, Al Suwaiq, and Al Khabourah to gauge the magnitude of the destruction caused by Shaheen to utility networks in these areas. He was joined by representatives from Oman Water and Wastewater



Services Company (OWWSC), Majan Electricity, Mazoon Electricity and Oman Electricity Transmission (OETC) — all subsidiaries of Nama Group.

Majan Electricity Company, which is responsible for power supply and distribution in the badly impacted governorates

of North and South Al Batinah, said it was making gradual headway in restoring power supply to the affected areas.

The utility, member of Nama Group, said earlier that supply to the wilayats of Barka, Musannah and Al Suwaiq had been severed due to the effects of cyclone

Shaheen.

In a series of posts on social media platforms, the various utilities operating in the flood-damaged areas said they were initially focused on addressing breakdowns in the high-voltage networks before attending to localised supply problems.

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWSC), also a member of Nama Group, said it had brought back into operation a key water transmission pipeline serving Al Khabourah Wilayat.

Supply to parts of Al Suwaiq has been restored as well, it said.

On Tuesday, the company said it would supply potable water by tanker at distribution points to be announced shortly in the affected areas. A fleet of water tankers will be contracted to supply water free of charge at select locations that currently lack access to piped supply, it said.

Parts of Muscat Governorate, which suffered a major outage even before Shaheen made landfall on Sunday night, continued to suffer a blackout for the third day running. Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) said it was working round the clock to restore supply to affected neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, with landline, mobile and Internet connectivity on the blink in many neighbourhoods worst hit by cyclone Shaheen, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said that over 60 technical teams are currently deployed in the affected areas.

Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO, said the country's service providers are installing generators to help get damaged stations working again. Alternative telecommunications channels are being explored as well, he added in a statement.

Corporates pledge funds for cyclone-hit communities

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Leading public sector organisations, financial institutions and other corporates began pledging financial and other assistance for the victims of this week's disastrous floods unleashed by Cyclone Shaheen.

Responding to appeals by the Council of Ministers for support, Oman LNG — which owns and

operates a major liquefied natural gas plant at Qalhat — pledged RO 6 million in assistance for communities impacted by the cyclone.

“This translates our robust commitment towards touching lives and standing with the community at all times,” the company said in a post.

Oman's biggest lender, Bank Muscat, announced the contribution of RO 1 million in

assistance to people affected by the devastation brought about by Shaheen. The Bank's contribution will be channelised through the Oman Charitable Organisation.

In addition, the Bank will also provide an RO 20 million portfolio as ‘interest/profit-free’ loans to those who were directly impacted by the cyclone. The loans will be for a period of 1 year, and can be availed within the next three months. Omani



customers whose properties in North and South Batinah have been damaged are eligible to apply for these interest/profit free loans ranging from RO 500 up to RO 4,000.

Bank Nizwa, Oman's leading Islamic bank, pledged to donate RO 250,000 to support families affected by Cyclone Shaheen. This support is accompanied by the participation of Bank Nizwa volunteer team “Masoliyati” in

distributing food supplies and aid to the affected families in the North Al Batinah Governorate.

Sohar International announced an allocation of RO 5 million “to support our customers and build back our communities in areas severely affected by Cyclone Shaheen through interest-free financing”. In addition, the bank announced a three-month deferment on personal and housing loans.

Prizes of more than
OMR 2,000,000

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Bank Muscat announces RO 1m donation, RO 20m interest/profit-free loans for flood-affected

MUSCAT: In solidarity with national relief efforts, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has announced the contribution of RO 1 million to relief efforts being undertaken to bring urgent assistance and support to people affected by the devastation brought about by the recent tropical storm Shaheen. The Bank's contribution will be channelised through the Oman Charitable Organisation.

In addition, the Bank will also provide an RO 20 million portfolio as 'interest/profit-free' Shaheen loans to those who were directly impacted by the cyclone. The loans will be for a period of 1 year, and can be availed within the next three months. Omani customers whose properties in

North and South Batinah region have been damaged are eligible to apply for these interest/profit free loans ranging from RO 500 up to RO 4,000. The bank will accept loan applications till 31 December 2021, while loan repayments are scheduled to commence from January 2022.

Cyclone-impacted customers in North and South Batinah, who are not beneficiaries of the current COVID-19 deferment scheme, have also been given an option to request for a three-month deferment in repayments. Deferments for existing loans/financing will be accepted until 30 October 2021. Those who wish to defer their existing loan/financing payments or apply for the special Shaheen loan may do



so at branches from 10 October 2021 onwards.

On this occasion, Shaikh Khalid bin Mustahail al Mashani (pictured), Chairman of the Bank's Board of Directors, said: "The past few days have seen many challenges

because of exceptionally adverse weather conditions. We take this opportunity to sincerely appreciate the extensive and valiant efforts made by Government institutions and individuals in our society to support those affected during this difficult period. Extending our utmost support at this time is a national duty and social responsibility, and Bank Muscat will always participate in efforts that serve and support our beloved nation. We would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of those affected by this storm and pray that the Almighty bless them with peace and strength to overcome their losses. We pray that the Almighty Allah helps us overcome these circumstances and protects our beloved nation and its

people from all harm."

In line with its leading role in corporate social responsibility and keenness to foster a spirit of cooperation, partnership and brotherhood in society, Bank Muscat has been regularly participating in many national and community-oriented initiatives. Previously, the Bank donated RO 2 million towards combating the impact of COVID-19. Recently, Bank Muscat also strengthened its partnership with several NGOs to support social welfare families. The Bank continues to launch new programmes and initiatives in partnership with governmental institutions and civil society organisations to help achieve national developmental goals as part of its long-term strategy.

ahlibank signs agreement with Muriya

MUSCAT: ahlibank has announced the signing of a cooperation agreement with Muriya. The MoU aims at providing financial solutions to customers wishing to own a property in the company's Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs), — Jebel Sifah or Hawana Salalah.

The agreement comes as a strategic step in the bank's long-term roadmap to continue providing evolved and innovative banking solutions for Oman's progressive customer base.

The agreement was signed by Muneer al Balushi, AGM — Head of Retail Distribution at ahlibank and Mohamed Abdulaziz, Chief Financial Officer at Muriya. The event was held at ahlibank's main office, in the presence of select officials from both sides. On the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Muneer said, "The



signing of this memorandum is part of our strategy focused on serving our customers as top priority. We are constantly seeking to create banking solutions that keep pace with our customers' evolving lifestyle and help achieve their ambitions, by granting them financial support in record time and at competitive prices. Strategic and futuristic collaborations like the one with Muriya enhance the ability of our customers to own personal property and secure a better future but also supports national

growth by giving impetus to the real estate sector."

Under the agreement, ahlibank will provide a mortgage loan before issuing the property, at attractive interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent annum. Additionally, the Bank's premium Al Nukhba account holders will enjoy quick services in availing the loan facility, by having direct access to the bank's sales team as well as Muriya representatives over the phone, which helps in reducing effort and time, ensuring speedy transactions.

Bank Nizwa pledges RO 250,000 to support families affected by Cyclone Shaheen

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors at Bank Nizwa, Oman's leading and most trusted Islamic bank, have pledged to donate RO 250,000 to support families affected by Cyclone Shaheen in the various states and governorates of the Sultanate.

This support is accompanied by the participation of Bank Nizwa volunteer team 'Masoliyati' in distributing food supplies and aid to the affected families in the North Al Batinah Governorate.

Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bank Nizwa, said: "Social responsibility is an integral part

of our integrated operations in the Bank, as we recognise it as an important means of giving back to the community we operate in, which is in line with the government direction of involving the private sector in the economic and social development of the country.

As a part of the society, the Board of Directors' decision to contribute and help the communities effected by Cyclone Shaheen, and we stand with the people in these challenging times. This is an embodiment of the principles of our religion, which affirms that the society, with its individuals and institutions, is like one body."

Cash prizes for ladies with BankDhofar's savings scheme



MUSCAT: BankDhofar has dedicated Omani Woman's Day prize draws worth a total of RO 10,000 for 10 winners (RO 1,000 for each winner).

Iman bint Musallam al Amriyah (pictured), Executive Manager — Retail Products & Segments at BankDhofar said: "With this year's Saving Account Scheme, we have dedicated special prizes for our ladies customers, along with providing them the chance to win in the other draws. Additionally, we are providing our ladies customer's special services, offers and financial solutions through our Ladies Banking segment."

In addition to the Omani Woman's Day draw, Ladies customers may enter other draws, including, Guaranteed Monthly draws, National Day draw, in addition to the year-end grand prizes. As part of the Ladies Banking segment, BankDhofar provides customers with various features including; debit card with a host of benefits, Visa Classic credit card with exclusive offers and benefits, children's Long Term Deposit Education Plan which is linked to their account, and attractive car insurance rates. Ladies customers will have the privilege of priority to serve feature in select branches.

With a total of RO 2.304 million, the scheme is valid till December 2021. As per the prize draw scheme, BankDhofar customers who save a minimum of RO 100 in their accounts are eligible to enter the draws and get the chance to win in the Monthly Guaranteed Prizes for branches, worth total of RO 708,000 (59 winners per month/ RO 1,000 for each winner), Monthly Prizes for Children, worth total of RO 177,000 (59 winners per month/ RO 250 for each winner), Monthly Prizes for Youth, worth total of RO 30,000 (5 winners per month/ RO 500 for each winner), Monthly Prizes for Amaan Retirees Banking Services' customers, worth total of RO 300,000 (5 winners per month/ RO 5,000 for each winner).

Pioneering Lexus RX with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Customers looking forward to owning an RX can make the most of the best time now and benefit with free service 4 years / 40,000 kms and free registration.

The Lexus RX is powered by a choice of two powertrains. The RX 350 model is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine, which produces 296 HP and 37.7 Kg.M of torque and is paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Meanwhile, the RX 450h hybrid variant is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine and two electric motors and produces a combined system output of 308 hp. The RX Hybrid is available with a hybrid battery warranty of 8 years or 1,60,000 kms, whichever is earlier.

The Lexus RX 450h can be

driven in EV drive mode to reduce noise while driving in residential areas and to reduce exhaust gas in indoor parking lots and garages or through a combination of its petrol engine and two electric motors, depending on the vehicle's speed and customer's driving behaviour.

The batteries in the hybrid electric drivetrain are automatically charged by either the petrol engine or when braking and decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord. A host of advanced technologies ensure the RX 450h drives like any other conventional vehicle, while not requiring special fuel.

The Lexus RX is available in 5 & 7-seater configurations. The Lexus RX embraces



Lexus' reputation for engaging performance. The engineering team has scrutinised every part of the vehicle and has made significant enhancements to the rigidity of the body and suspension system, as well as shock absorber and brake-control system. The result is a vehicle with outstanding

handling, which enables drivers to trace their desired driving line with incredible precision.

The Lexus RX represents a subtle evolution of previous generations' dynamic exterior aesthetic, which begins with an L-patterned grille mesh and a smoother surround that blends more seamlessly into the front

bumper.

The 12.3-inch high-resolution, split-screen Lexus Multimedia System touchscreen positioned closer to the driver, offers control of both audio and climate systems. The touchscreen also includes a rear-view camera to assist the driver in reversing.

Furthermore, the Lexus RX's advanced smartphone integration offers access to in-car connected technology applications from Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, together with a designated phone storage area and USB ports to ensure occupants always remain connected on the go.

Conditions apply. Please visit nearest Lexus showroom for details as the offer ends on October 21.

Agreements signed for food, plastics projects in Khazaen

STRONG APPEAL: Major pacts inked with Salalah Mills and Al Hilal Industrial Group

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5



Khazaen Economic City has announced the signing of new investment agreements with two of Oman's leading companies.

Under the first agreement, Salalah Mills Company will lease a 20,000 m2 of industrial land to set up an integrated food production facility. The second agreement with Al Hilal Industrial Group LLC will see the company establish an industrial project to manufacture plastic and fiberglass materials, apart from a logistical project to set up the Group's warehouses on a total area of 30,000 m2.

The pacts were signed by Eng Salim bin Suleiman al Thuhli, CEO, Khazaen and CEOs of both companies.

Commenting on the signings, Eng Al Thuhli said, "We are pleased to welcome both Salalah Mills Company and Al Hilal Industrial Group to Khazaen Economic City, which is witnessing rapid growth and seeing increasing demand among various companies and investors. These projects are of great importance to the local market and to Khazaen. We are delighted with our success in attracting such projects. This reflects the investors' confidence in Khazaen and the services it provides. Khazaen will continue

its efforts to attract more investors and quality projects."

For his part, Ahmed bin Alawi al Dhahab, CEO of Salalah Mills Company, expressed his happiness on signing the agreement for setting up the food processing unit which is estimated to cost about RO 12 million.

He said that the first phase of the project will include an industrial laboratory and production lines for frozen and semi-cooked pastries. In the second phase, new production lines for frozen cakes, snacks, noodles and biscuits will be added. Production at the facility is expected to start by mid-2023.

Shaikh Khalil bin Ibrahim al Hinai, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Al Hilal Industrial Group, which was established in the mid-seventies, said, "Al Hilal Group has witnessed tremendous progress and great expansion during the last period,

thanks to strategic planning and professional business management. The growth of the Group has been in line with that of the Sultanate."

"We are pleased to sign this agreement, through which we aim to establish an industrial project specialising in production of plastic and fiberglass materials, in addition to another logistical project to set up warehouses for the Group on a total area of 30,000 m2. These projects are part of the Group's local expansion plans," he added.

The signing of these agreements reflects the continuous successes achieved by Khazaen Economic City in attracting Omani and foreign investors, especially after completion of the first phase of the infrastructure works. Many have moved in since the inauguration of the Khazaen Dry Port.

Asian investors look to Ireland as gateway to EU market

Asian investors are increasingly looking to Ireland as gateway to sell into Europe, according to global law and advisory company The Maples Group. Despite an EU-China investment deal being put on ice over human rights concerns and Brussels' bid to tighten up its rules on 'green' funds, investors are flocking to the continent and using Ireland as a home base.

The head of funds and investment management for The Maples Group in Dublin, Peter Stapleton, says fintech — especially artificial intelligence (AI) and data technology — is where Ireland can offer Asian investors a unique opportunity.

He said: "There's a very nice potential for the IFSC and what we colloquially call Silicon Docks to merge. That kind of meeting of the fintech space might be a key advantage for Ireland in attracting Chinese investment."

He added: "I do believe we're at the very nascent start of that kind of collaboration between those two sectors."

Chinese investment into the EU has grown more than tenfold in the last decade, with a significant ramp-up in Ireland, although it is still dwarfed by US and UK investment in Ireland.

However, four out of China's top five commercial banks have operations in Ireland as do major tech firms such as media giants Tencent and social network TikTok.

Meanwhile, Ireland-based investment funds account for over 16 per cent of all EU investment in China, although it's still a very small percentage



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

THE FUNDS INDUSTRY IN IRELAND HAS HAD A BUMPER FEW YEARS, WITH ALMOST 15,000 FUNDS UNDER ADMINISTRATION IN IRELAND AT THE END OF 2020

of Ireland's total outward foreign direct investment (FDI).

Michelle Lloyd, a partner at Maples Group's Hong Kong office, says healthcare is a major growth area for China with investors looking to raise money in Europe to fund new drugs.

She said: "China is really innovating domestically to cater for the growing middle-class population, to the extent that they want to raise money in Europe for that. Ireland's new partnership structure is perfect for that initiative."

Last year, the government introduced a new Investment Limited Partnership, a vehicle for private equity and sustainable investments. With new EU standards on green bonds being phased in over the next number of years, Stapleton said it is a good time for investing in environmental, social and governance (ESG)-linked funds.

He said: "I think an awful

lot of people are looking at the opportunities in this area and I think the managers are increasingly seeing their investors demand that they have solutions for moving towards net-zero carbon emissions."

He added: "We're seeing a trend emerge where, in the absence of a global harmonised standard, the EU seem to be the furthest progressed and there's a chance that the EU rules become a gold standard. The European market is of a sufficient size where people will want to design financial products that they can sell in Europe."

The funds industry in Ireland has had a bumper few years, with almost 15,000 funds under administration in Ireland at the end of 2020, worth a total €5.4 trillion — an increase in value of more than a quarter since 2018. The Maples Group expects continued growth in the industry despite the EU rule changes and a potential global corporation tax coming down the line.

"Ireland has moved well beyond that kind of very narrow way to attract companies", Stapleton said about Ireland's 12.5 per cent corporate tax rate.

"As long as Ireland can remain competitive and we're not undercut with this," Ireland's "highly developed" ecosystem for multinationals — especially in tech — will continue to attract investment into the country, Stapleton said, despite any changes to corporate tax rules.

"That will probably continue to provide a key attraction for Asian and global investors into Ireland," he said.

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

In brief

■ NEW YORK



GM, FORD TO SETTLE TRADEMARK SUIT ON CRUISE NAME

General Motors and Ford plan to settle a trademark lawsuit over the similarity of Ford's 'BlueCruise' system to the "Cruise" business owned by GM, according to a court filing. US District Judge Susan Illston ordered the case "dismissed without prejudice" after the two parties told the court they were agreeing to a settlement.

GM had filed the suit in July after Ford launched BlueCruise, which allows motorists to drive hands-free, in April. GM said the Ford moniker too closely resembled "Cruise," its autonomous driving subsidiary, as well as "Super Cruise," a system for hands-free driving on some GM autos. Ford had argued that the term "cruise" is frequently employed in car systems and that the suit should be dismissed.

— AFP

Oil strikes new peaks

LONDON: World oil prices surged on Tuesday to new multi-year peaks, extending a bullish run one day after Opec+ refrained from boosting output any further.

The news handed a boost to European stock markets and energy majors, but stoked inflationary fears in Asia, dealers said.

European benchmark London Brent North Sea oil jumped to a new three-year peak at \$82.36 per barrel.

New York crude zoomed to a fresh seven-year pinnacle at \$78.56. Opec and other major producers opted on Monday against increasing output by more than previously agreed — despite tightening supplies and rising demand.

The Opec+ grouping decided to stick with their planned increase next month in oil production of 400,000 barrels.

"Opec+ gave oil bulls a red rag to bid up futures contracts as it stuck to the planned increase," said Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson.

"It's not that demand is suddenly forecast to improve — it's more that Opec+ is keeping such a tight grip on supply."

Runaway oil prices fuel higher inflation but boost the profits and revenues of energy giants. Wall Street was also set for a rebound with futures on the tech-heavy Nasdaq up 0.3 per cent and S&P 500 futures 0.2 per cent higher.



An electronic quotation board displaying the closing share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange and the New York Dow in Tokyo. — AFP

Asian shares fell for a third straight day, catching up with heavy losses in the United States, where investors dumped Big Tech as Facebook was hit by a nearly six-hour outage. Facebook's Frankfurt-listed stock rose 2.6 per cent as its services came back online.

But investors remained cautious, worrying that the rally in energy prices and supply chain disruptions could derail the economic recovery just as the US Federal Reserve gets closer to reducing its massive stimulus.

"More than anything else, we are concerned about the impact of stagflation on the general indices, which are very high," said Giuseppe Sersale, fund manager at Anthilia.

"We prefer energy and materials, of course, and we're worried about stocks with high multiples that price who-knows-what increase in

earnings (see Nasdaq)," he added.

Oil prices hit their highest levels in at least three years, extending gains from the previous session that came after the world's major oil producers announced they had decided to keep a cap on crude supplies.

Opec+ confirmed on Monday it would stick to its current output policy as demand for petroleum products rebounds, despite pressure from some countries for a bigger boost to production.

"Opec+ may inadvertently cause oil prices to surge even higher, adding to an energy crisis that primarily reflects very tight gas and coal markets," said Commonwealth Bank of Australia's commodities analyst Vivek Dhar.

"That potentially threatens the global economic recovery, just as global oil demand growth is picking up as economies reopen on the back of rising vaccination rates," Dhar said.

Market focus in Asia was on whether embattled property developer China Evergrande would offer any respite to investors looking for signs of asset disposals.

Trading in shares in the world's largest indebted developer was halted on Monday but other Chinese property developers grappled with ratings downgrades on worries about their ability to repay debt.

— Reuters

UK not heading into 1970s-style inflation spiral, says PM Johnson

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied on Tuesday that the world's fifth largest economy was heading towards a 1970s-style inflationary spiral but demanded that business kick a decades-long addiction to cheap imported labour.

A post-Brexit shortage of workers exacerbated by the global strains of the Covid crisis has sown chaos through supply chains for everything from fuel and pork to poultry and bottled water, raising concerns growth could be crimped.

Asked by BBC radio if the United Kingdom was in crisis, Johnson said: "No."

"I think that on the contrary, what you are seeing with the UK economy and indeed the global economy is very largely in the supply chains the stresses and strains you would expect from a giant waking up and that is what is happening," he said.

Johnson said businesses had to kick their addiction to cheap imported labour.

"What you saw in the last 20



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson rides an e-Bike on the third day of the annual Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, northwest England. — AFP

years or more, almost 25 years, has been an approach whereby business of many kinds, was able to mainline low wage, low cost, immigration for a very long time," Johnson said.

An air of chaos has gripped Britain in recent days as a deficit of truckers left fuel pumps dry across the land, and a spike in European wholesale natural gas prices whipped energy companies into bankruptcy.

Reuters reporters said many gas stations remained closed on Tuesday in London and across southern England. — Reuters

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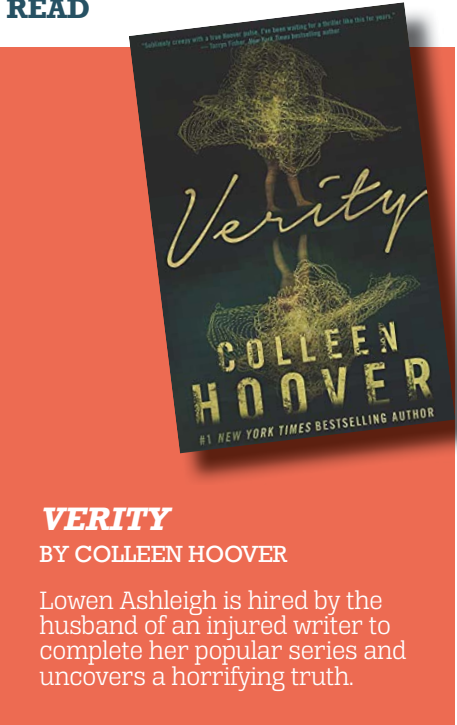


His creativity brings nail and thread to life

Alla Ganga Prasad is a Muscat-based Indian artist who fell in love with the intricacies of nail and thread art. Check out the details of how he got started into this art form and what you can do to accomplish at least half of what he can creatively execute... **P20**

FASHION

READ



VERITY
BY COLLEEN HOOVER

Lowen Ashleigh is hired by the husband of an injured writer to complete her popular series and uncovers a horrifying truth.

Chanel strikes playful note for spring

CHANEL STRUCK a playful note on Tuesday sending bare-legged models sashaying down the runway in bodysuits and tweed jackets layered with accessories. Photographers lined the catwalk, snapping the models as they twirled and posed, swinging their purses and smiling for cameras. Lending an air of intimacy

to the event, the show was held in a fully-packed, darkened tent – a smaller, temporary structure while the French luxury label's preferred venue, the soaring glass-and-steel Grand Palais, undergoes renovations in preparation for the 2024 Olympics. Paris Fashion Week, which ends on Tuesday, is the last

leg of a month of fashion industry events that has seen the return of celebrity-packed parties and runway shows in New York, London and Milan, following months of pandemic disruptions. Chanel creative director Virginie Viard gave the house's signature tweed jacket and skirt combo a youthful spin, loosening the skirts with side slits, adding colourful stripes, baring midriffs and toying with hemlines. At the end of the label's spring-summer 2022 ready-to-wear presentation, Viard exchanged high-fives with the grinning models before exiting at a side door. Guests streamed outside, greeted by driving rain and umbrella-choked crowds of onlookers. — Reuters





Post-pandemic experimentation at Paris Fashion Week

PARIS FASHION WEEK wraps up on Tuesday after nine days of innovative experiments that showed how the industry is embracing technology and new approaches for a post-pandemic future.

While many fashion houses stuck to online presentations, the biggest names such as Dior, Balenciaga and Stella McCartney — even Yves Saint Laurent, which had been first to quit live shows when the pandemic hit — got back to the catwalk. But new twists often reflected the lessons learned during lockdowns, and increasing environmental concerns.

- WHAT IS REAL? -

Among the most inventive runway shows in years came from Balenciaga, who fooled their own guests into becoming part of the spectacle. Arriving via a red carpet, they were unaware that the official models were walking among them until a big screen relayed their entrance and highlighted which outfits were part of the show. The line between guest and model disappeared as it emerged that some of the celebrities had been on secret modelling duty, including racing driver Lewis Hamilton and actress Isabelle Huppert. The New York Times called it a “knife-sharp belly laugh of an experiment on... our digital lives, where posing has become the norm (and) voyeurism is a constant.”

- IMMERSIVE SHOWS -

One advantage of pandemic-era online presentations is that



they have given viewers time to really appreciate the clothes. Dior embraced that idea, using an elaborate gameshow-style rotating stage which allowed the models and their outfits to be seen from multiple angles. Christian Louboutin, creator of the famous red-soled pumps, offered a fully immersive experience, plunging the audience into digital landscapes before presenting the shoes on podiums, jazzed up with digital effects, while dancers put them through their paces.

FACE-TO-FACE

Young French star Marine Serre, who has put on spectacular shows in the past, opted to stick with an online presentation this time. But she also screened the film for several hundred guests at a special evening in Paris “to give it some warmth and appreciation,” she said. The clothes were on display to see and touch, while Serre herself was on hand to discuss directly with guests. British veteran Paul Smith also took an intimate approach, inviting guests to his headquarters. He offered commentary on each outfit, saying: “I think the way we’ve done it today is correct for the house. It’s nice to have a one-to-one.”

ETHICAL CONCERNS

Though the fashion industry is often accused of empty posturing on the environment, some designers insist they are determined to really make a difference. Stella McCartney displayed the first-ever bag made from “Mylo” mushroom leather. It was part of a collection that went heavy on natural vibes, with even the music being inspired by fungi. Gabriella Hearst also highlighted her green credentials, saying 58 per cent of her designs for Chloe were from low-impact materials. And Dutch label Botter used recovered plastic waste from the sea for its aquatic-inspired collection. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Nora Brown, the banjo prodigy singing tales of Appalachia



AT AN AGE when most teenagers are busy learning the latest TikTok dance craze, banjo virtuoso Nora Brown has just released her second album of old-time twang. When her parents gifted her a ukulele for Christmas at age six they never envisioned she would emerge as one of the bluegrass world’s rising stars. The 16-year-old raised in Brooklyn first encountered the banjo while taking lessons with the late Shlomo Pestcoe, a local expert in traditional music. And now Brown is among the musicians carrying on traditions from the mountains of Appalachia, passed down from the genre’s old masters. As a child “I wasn’t aware of how unique and how special it was to be learning that, especially in Brooklyn,” Brown said. Speaking to AFP at the tip of Brooklyn Bridge Park where she recently headlined the borough’s Americana Music Festival, Brown said part of her drive to perform is “to spread awareness of more of the complexity of old-time traditional music that I feel is not valued, or like, recognised within popular culture.”

People often treat the banjo as “a bit of a joke,” she said. “I think that’s due just to lack of understanding of the complexities of this music.” As a steward of the genre, Brown is acutely aware of the banjo’s complicated history; the string instrument commonly associated with white men from the American south is of West African origin. Today’s banjo is built in the image of its ancestors, West African folk lute instruments, concepts of which enslaved Africans brought to the United States in the 1600s and 1700s. White people in Appalachia appropriated the instrument and it became a key component of the American folk vernacular. It was notably central to the racist minstrel shows of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The banjo later found roles in ragtime and jazz movements, and was also strongly associated with folk troubadours like Pete Seeger. Brown said in considering songs she is careful to understand their back stories, “because much of the recorded music that we are able to reference today was recorded in a very vicious and gross time in history.” “Even in songs that aren’t outwardly racist or outwardly offensive, there can be underlying references or just a history that is not perceived on the first listen,” she explained. “That’s why I try to look into the history of the songs that I do.” Brown voiced interest in the “interconnection of cultures that created the traditional music that we hear and play today,” and credited contemporary musicians like Rhiannon Giddens, a celebrated bluegrass artist, with “bringing attention to the African history of the banjo.” “There are so many sides to what makes traditional music today in America.”

SCHOOL-BANJO BALANCE

In late September, Brown released her second album, “Sidetrack My Engine,” which features arrangements of songs she learned during visits in places like eastern Kentucky. She’s worked with a number of prominent elder musicians, including the late Lee Sexton, an award-winning master banjo player and former coal miner. She recorded the album — which followed her debut “Cinnamon Tree,” released when she was just 13 — in 2020 during the pandemic, in the cave of her parents’ cheese-aging facility in Brooklyn’s Crown Heights neighbourhood. Brown attends a performing arts-focused high school in Queens, a balancing act that sometimes requires “tricky decisions” between perfect attendance and concert appearances. The core consideration for Brown is whether such appearances are for “something that you are ready to enjoy, rather than something that’s just about promotion.” Despite being a banjo prodigy, Brown is, like most teens, unsure of her career path: “I definitely always want to still play music, but I’m not sure if I’m going to be a full-time musician.” Her father, Benton Brown, said his daughter’s one-time hobby is turning into “something much bigger” than he and his wife ever anticipated. They’re entirely supportive of her career as a musician, he said, but also are sure to introduce her to mentors who are “touring and struggling,” so she understands the uncertainty professional artists often face. There weren’t any signs of struggle for Brown as she closed out the Americana festival in her hometown, strumming to a standing ovation as the sun set over the Statue of Liberty behind her. She prefaced the ballad “Frankie and Albert,” which has been widely recorded, including by Bob Dylan and Mississippi John Hurt, by explaining that she doesn’t “normally condone murder” but that this story features a woman who shoots her husband for cheating. It’s a rare old-time tune that features a woman in power rather than victimised, Brown said. “Let’s hear a round of applause for that!” she joked with the audience, before launching into the classic, finger and thumb dancing across the strings in perfect accord. — AFP

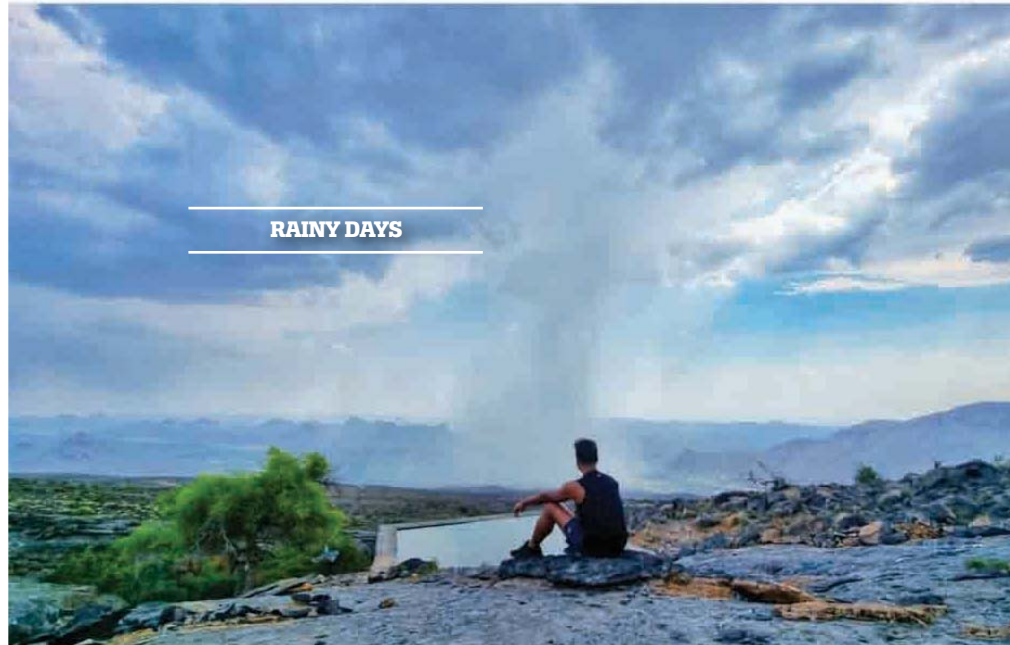


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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALE

Paris landmark sheds its wrapper as art installation ends



AFTER A MONTH wrapped in silvery-blue plastic as part of an art installation, Paris landmark the Arc de Triomphe was working to dismantle the wrapping got under way.

The plan to encase the 19th century arch was originally conceived by the late Bulgarian-born artist Christo and carried out posthumously by a team that included his nephew at a cost of about 14 million euros (\$16.3 million).

The installation was scheduled to run until Sunday, and on Monday morning, workers began the operation to take it down, rappelling from the top of the 50-metre (164-foot) tall monument.

By the end of the day, much of the plastic wrapping was gone, revealing the ornate stonework underneath.



Construction cranes were standing by, ready to continue the dismantling work on Tuesday. Visitors gathered at the foot of the arch to take pictures.

"It's a bit sad", said Paris resident Sarah Palleul, as she watched workers peel away the recyclable wrapping. "I think the installation was gone too soon."

But she added: "We will be happy to see the Arc de Triomphe the way it was before."

The installation was generally well-received, although some tourists expressed frustration that they had come all the way to Paris to see the monument in its classic form, only to find it was obscured behind a plastic shroud. — **Reuters**

ENTERTAINMENT

African cinema could create 20m jobs: Unesco



AFRICA'S FILM industry is thriving and could create many millions of extra jobs if its potential was fully exploited, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

In a report, the UN cultural organization Unesco said that an estimated five million people currently work in Africa's film industry, which contributes \$5 billion to the continent's GDP.

Nigeria's film industry is the continent's biggest, churning out 2,500 movies per year.

Despite the numbers, Unesco said the industry has much potential that remains largely untapped.

Affordable digital film equipment and new online distribution platforms have given new opportunities to content creators, but the report said that Africa has fewer screens per capita than any other continent.

Piracy is another big issue, with the report estimating "that piracy waylays 50 per cent to over 75 per cent of the film and audiovisual industries' revenue".



Only 19 African countries out of 54 offer any financial support to filmmakers, the report also found.

If all these challenges were fully addressed, the sector could create over 20 million jobs and contribute \$20 billion to the continent's combined GDP, Unesco said.

The report also identified a lack of freedom of expression as hindering the film industry's progress, with professionals in 47 countries reporting limitations on the

issues that they are able to handle in their creative work.

In a statement, Unesco Director General Audrey Azoulay called for a strengthening of international cooperation "to enable all countries, in particular developing countries, to develop cultural and creative industries that are viable and competitive both nationally and internationally".

Films are public goods "that require public support and investment", Azoulay said. — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD

With scenes from space, TV series shines light on team fixing spectrometer



FILM-MAKER BEN TURNER has turned his lifelong passionateness for abstraction exploration into a Disney+ archetypal mini bid centred astir American astronaut Chris Cassidy.

"Among the Stars", a six-episode docuseries, takes viewers down the scenes with Cassidy and an planetary squad of experts arsenic they embark connected a ngo to repair the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, a \$2 cardinal subject experimentation designed to observe the origins of the universe.

Starting disconnected with erstwhile Navy Seal Captain Cassidy arsenic helium prepares for what whitethorn beryllium his past abstraction ngo successful 2019, the bid soon focuses connected the highly skilled specialists successful 16 countries moving towards a communal goal.

"You talk to an astronaut, they archer you they're conscionable the extremity of the iceberg. And to archer the communicative properly, you request to archer the communicative of the full iceberg", Turner told Reuters.

"There's 1 way to occurrence and a cardinal paths to nonaccomplishment connected a mission. And watching them flooded each the stages on the mode is truly wherever the play lies."

The bid marries intimate video diaries filmed by the abstraction crews with explainers and interviews with scientists, engineers and formation controllers, offering unprecedented entree to the nervus centres of the operations.

Nasa archives instrumentality audiences backmost successful clip to relive Cassidy's earlier expeditions, including a 2013 spacewalk with Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano which was aborted aft h2o leaked into Parmitano's helmet, astir causing him to drown.

To Turner's astonishment the scenes changeable successful abstraction turned retired to beryllium the easiest portion of the project. Despite "begging and pleading", his petition to beryllium sent to the International Space Station was turned down and helium relied connected his subjects to bash the filming.

"When Chris said helium was going to assistance maine movie the amusement... that was a ngo for him", Turner said. "And helium was going to bash it amazingly."

But adjacent Cassidy's can-do cognition astir met its lucifer successful a bid of hurdles that enactment astatine hazard his eventual departure, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Something I've learnt done my beingness is to recognise what portion of the jigsaw you are and what portion you tin play successful a bigger machine", Turner said.

"And I anticipation that that's connected show successful our bid due to the fact that it's arsenic overmuch the technicians, the designers, conscionable specified a large squad of skills who travel unneurotic to marque what is fundamentally intolerable possible."

"Among the Stars" launches connected the Disney+ streaming work connected on Wednesday. — **Reuters**

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His creativity brings nail and thread to life

BY JADE TAMPEPE

He's very familiar with the texture of the thread. He has spun them many times before. Combining all the threads he has used since he began venturing into the nail and thread medium, the total length he has used would have crossed the world many times over.

But it's the kind of art that he will not get tired of. Whenever he is free, he can be found huddled in a peaceful corner of his home — his dedicated space which allows him to concentrate on what he does. Sometimes he would put on some subtle music to open up his mind so he can visualise what he wanted to appear on the canvas.

"The basic conception lies in the design/object you have chosen to do in the thread art. The colour combination, the geometry involved, the number of nails you decide based on the pattern", said Alla Ganga Prasad, a Muscat-based Indian artist who is a business manager by profession but is strongly pulled by his creative side.

"For example — a Mandala pattern can be very simple or a very complex design. The colour of the threads depends on how you wish to portray the artwork. Very vibrant artwork requires bright colours whereas a modest artwork will require semi-dark shades. The choice of colours lies within the spectrum of seven [7] colours — VIBGYOR. What comes out of it as a finished output is left to the imagination of the artist. That's what creativity is all about", he said.

One of the recent pieces he has been showcasing in different exhibits is a Golden Peacock — which he said best exemplifies his thought process and showcases the artistry required from somebody who wants to delve into his kind of artistry and craftsmanship.

"I visualised this magnificent peacock in a sitting posture with its fan deck semi-opened. It has to portray humbleness. This attribute can be presented by choosing the right colour combinations. For a fine arts person, all he needs to do is to mix certain colours to generate the shade. Whereas in nail and thread art, you will have to create the same effect using multiple layers of thread", he explained.

"The weaving process depends on the number of layers needed to generate a required depth of field. A complicated artwork, like the golden peacock, took a year to complete — an approximation of 900 creative hours. Most of the time was spent on trial and errors as we have a limited scope of colours in silk threads", he said.

Alla grew up in a creative environment. He is third in a sibling of five, their eldest known in school as a good fine artist.

"I wanted to do something unique and different. Art and architecture always fascinated me. I was always fascinated by geometry. In fact, a primary school assignment of drawing concentric circles gave me the idea of pinning nails on a board and using strings to generate circles within circles", he shared.

He added, "I was fortunate to have been guided by my father, a renowned photographer and teacher at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, Department of Architecture and Regional Planning. He inculcated in me the values of pursuing perfection in art."

It has been his father's photographic works and architectural designs of his students that planted the seed of geometry in Alla.

"I was often fascinated by

the intricate design work that would go into some of these architectural models. I used to spend long hours along with the students of his department in mastering the art of constructing architectural models which involved geometry. While teaching photography, my father used to insist we capture shots of nature around us. The rarest photograph was always the blooming flower, the fresh leaves of a banana plant, a butterfly", he said.

Alla said that the most common misconception for this kind of art is that it's a male-dominated art form. Women had been known to deliver stunning pieces.

He said that it's an art form that requires patience and concentration and especially, knowledge of geometry.

"For those interested to get into this art form, there is no age limit for Art or music. One just needs desire and passion. Knowledge of geometry is a must and combined with a creative mind, one will be able to do wonders even with just nail and thread", he said.

"The most amazing thing about working with these mediums is that you have innumerable chances to correct your artwork without damaging the template. This is not possible in Fine arts. You can alter the colours at your will. Choosing the right colours and creating the depth of field by superimposing layers of threads generates a dimensional effect to the artwork. Patience is the key", he said.

Alla has been sharing tips and processes of the art form with people who are willing to learn who are above 15 years of age. His most important reminder to everyone who would like to pursue what he does is "to give the liberty for the mind to open and explore the creativity in you."

He is currently busy working on the next project he called RUMI — the whirling dancers of Sufi which he said will be presented in the Dubai Art Exhibition in March 2022.

You can follow his work on Instagram @Nail.Thread.art.