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PAINTING NATURE ON CAR SUN SHADE



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences and sympathy to Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the death of Shaikh Saud Abdullah Saud Al Malik al Sabah. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to Kuwait Emir, praying to the Almighty to rest the departed's soul in peace and grant his family patience and solace. — ONA

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CRUSH AT HOUSTON MUSIC FESTIVAL KILLS EIGHT

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'SHABAB OMAN II' SET FOR VOYAGE



The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel 'Shabab Oman II' will on Sunday leave the Sultanate of Oman heading to GCC countries marking her fifth international voyage themed 'Oman A renewed Approach'. HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the farewell ceremony for the vessel. **DETAILS ON P2**

‘Finally, infrastructure week!’ Biden says, cheering \$1 tn bill

WASHINGTON: A giddy President Joe Biden on Saturday hailed congressional passage of a long-delayed \$1 trillion infrastructure bill as a “once in a generation” investment and predicted a broader social safety net plan will be approved despite tense negotiations.

Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris appeared in the White House State Dining Room about 12 hours after moderate and progressive Democrats in the House of Representative overcame internal bickering and delivered the president his biggest legislative win thus far.

“Finally, infrastructure week”, Biden said with a chuckle. “I’m so happy to say that — infrastructure week!”

The president’s comment referred to a running joke in recent years after Biden’s



Republican predecessor Donald Trump declared “Infrastructure week” in 2018 but was unable to pass a bill after multiple tries during his presidency. The bipartisan bill’s passage gives Biden a jolt of good news after sobering election losses for his Democratic party last week and a drop in his approval ratings. Referring to the losses, Biden said they showed American people “want us to deliver.” — **Reuters**

More students return to schools as cases ease

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttvyp](#)

Following the decision to allow 100 per cent physical attendance, more students from classes 5 to 11 will be returning to schools for in-person education from Sunday.

A joint inspection team from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education has already conducted field visits to schools, to ensure that all precautionary measures against coronavirus infection are in place in accordance with the Supreme Committee’s directives.

The decision to allow direct education for the academic year 2021-2022 was announced by the Supreme Committee tackling the Covid-19 situation in the Sultanate of Oman at its October 28 meeting.

Based on this, the Ministry of Education issued a decision



All students of classes 5 to 11 in public and private schools in the Sultanate of Oman will start attending classes in person starting from November 7

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

No 230/2021 which stated, “all students of classes 5 to 11 in public and private schools in the Sultanate of Oman will start attending classes in person starting November 7, 2021”.

According to the decision, the schools should put in place all the precautionary measures in accordance with the health protocol announced by the

Supreme Committee.

The Supreme Committee also approved vaccination for children aged between 5 and 12 with effect from this month.

Responding to the decision, Mubarak al Wahaibi, a parent said, “With let-up in the Covid-19 situation, it is a welcome step that children can attend classes for face to face education. Blended education was a blessing during the recent months”.

Syed al Balushi, father of three school going children said that two of them have already been vaccinated.

“The younger one is only seven and as soon as vaccination starts for children of her age I will get her jabbed”, he said, welcoming the decision to allow in person education. He called on all parents to consider vaccination for their pupils as it the best way to beat the virus.

Are we ready to face new viruses in the future?

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The emergence of a new pandemic in the future is one of the things taken for granted by scientists, wondering “will we be ready to face it? This is the important question.”

This was stated by Dr Zaid al Hinai, a consultant on Paediatric Infectious Diseases at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

He said that a new coronavirus mutant, discovered in 2017, was found in Malaysia and Haiti, and is transmitted from dogs to humans. “The infection appears to be mild though. It is not known if it is transmitted directly between humans”, he said, pointing that this discovery shows that viruses mutate in nature and their transmission to humans is natural, and it is considered self-evident that new pandemics will



occur in future.

According to Bloomberg Agency quoting scientists and specialists, whoever believes that the emerging coronavirus pandemic will end within the next six months, should not be overly optimistic because more estimates and data indicate the opposite.

It said that most experts agree that the pandemic will not end until everyone is vaccinated or

infected, or both, plus there are “unlucky few” who will catch Covid-19 more than once.

On the same context, some researchers say that the virus is poised to become completely resistant to the first generation of vaccines. In this regard, Lon Simonsen, an epidemiologist and professor of population health sciences at Roskilde University in Denmark, hopes: “This scenario will not happen”,



Theyazin to see off *Shabab Oman II* on GCC voyage today

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel *Shabab Oman II* will on Sunday leave the Sultanate of Oman heading to GCC countries marking her fifth international voyage themed 'Oman A renewed Approach'.

His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, to preside over the farewell ceremony for the RNOV.

The ship seeks to deliver a message of brotherhood, friendship ties and peace to the world, and prominently introduce the Omani civilisation to different world

communities.

The vessel will first dock in Al Suwaikh Port in the State of Kuwait and then visit the rest of GCC countries with the participation of 30 university students representing a number of world countries.

As part of representing the Sultanate of Oman in Dubai Expo 2020, the *Shabab Oman II* will dock in the Marina Dubai Port from November 21 to December.

A number of military units will take part in the farewell ceremony including Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), Royal Cavalry of Oman (RCO) and other government and private entities.

Oman gearing up for National Day of the Renaissance fete

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkuttvyp

As countdown begins for Oman's 51st National Day of the Renaissance, preparations too are in full swing to welcome one of the most awaited days in the Sultanate of Oman.

Every year, the nation celebrates November 18 as its National Day with preparations to mark this significant occasion beginning weeks before. It is a time to reflect on the progress that the country has seen during the past years.

Although celebrations are expected to be conducted in a simple way, as indicated by the Supreme Committee, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no lack of enthusiasm and patriotic favour. Citizens and residents have already started sharing "I love Oman" posts on social media to mark the occasion.

To add to the festive fervour, streets in many parts of Muscat and the rest of other governorates are being festooned with decorations and lighting in red, white and green colours on the Sultanate of Oman's flag.

The company that won the tender for decorations has already started illuminations and other works in many parts of the capital city including all major roads and Grand Mosque areas.

Lighting installations are also being made on the side streets of Sultan Qaboos Street, major malls in Muscat and along Al



Every year, the nation celebrates November 18 as its National Day with preparations to mark this significant occasion beginning weeks before. It is a time to reflect on the progress that the country has seen during the past years

Mawaleh Street. National flags will be placed from the Al Bustan roundabout to Barka roundabout.

Lights are expected to be switched on soon and the festivities will last until the end of this month. There will be 30-minute fireworks displays in Al Amerat and Al Khoudh in Muscat and Salalah on November 18.

Shops selling National Day merchandise have started displaying miniature flags and other items like throbs and

badges.

"We expect the sales to pick up in the coming week. Now only children are the main customers for National Day items," said Nassir Kamaruddin, a shop owner in Ruwi.

The Oman Pavilion in the ongoing Expo 2020 Dubai will celebrate the National Day on November 21 bringing international glory to the festivities.

According to Alya al Hosni,

director of Oman Vision 2040 in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the National Day Celebration Programme at Expo 2020 Dubai, the programme will consist of many events.

"It will start with the official delegation of the government receiving *Shabab Oman II*, followed by an event hosted by Expo 2020's organising committee to celebrate our National Day. There will be a formal evening reception to showcase Omani culture to the world," he informed.

There will also be a fashion event showcasing creations of Omani designers with an objective to reach out to international audiences.

National vaccination drive at OCEC successfully ends

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Five months ago, when the Sultanate of Oman launched the highly successful national vaccination campaign, the sprawling Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC) was picked as the venue for the massive exercise.

The vaccination campaign against Covid-19 will be transferred from the OCEC to new venues listed by the Ministry of Health from Sunday.

The campaign will cover both Omanis and expatriates and appointments can be made on Tarassud Plus or <https://covid19.moh.gov.om>.

"The Directorate-General of Health Services of the Governorate of Muscat has moved its Covid-19 Vaccination services out of the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre to its other locations from Sunday 7," Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) said in a statement.

The venues include Al Khuwair North Health Centre, Ruwi Health Centre, Muscat Health Centre, Al Amerat Health Centre, Al Sahel Health Centre (Qurayat) and Hai Al-Jami Health Centre (Seeb) for Omanis and Muttrah Sabla (8 am to 2 pm), Medical Fitness Centre (Al Sharadi - Seeb) 8 am to 2 pm for expats.

With all kinds of business and cultural events suspended in



The new venues include Al Khuwair North Health Centre, Ruwi Health Centre, Muscat Health Centre, Al Amerat Health Centre, Al Sahel Health Centre (Qurayat) and Hai Al-Jami Health Centre (Seeb) for Omanis; and Muttrah Sabla (8 am to 2 pm) and Medical Fitness Centre (Al Sharadi - Seeb, 8 am to 2 pm) for expats

the country as part of the efforts to curb, hosting of the national immunisation drive came in June as a short in the arm of the OCEC.

"With multiple entry-exit points and unlimited parking slots, OCEC played a key role in the successful completion of the campaign in a short period, which also helped the country to fight the Covid pandemic that took 4,112 lives and fully locked down the country for months as part of precautionary measures," a volunteer associated with the campaign at the OCEC told the *Observer*.

Over 75 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated in the country to date. "The Directorate General of Health Services for Muscat Governorate extended its thanks and gratitude to the management of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre for their contribution to the success of the vaccination campaign against Covid-19. We also take the opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to all volunteer teams and volunteer individuals," the statement from the Ministry of Health said.

Hai al Naseem project in Barka to be completed in 2027

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has said the work on 22 housing units at the Hai al Naseem neighbourhood in Barka, which is part of the 'Sorouh' initiative is in its advanced stages.

The residential units will be offered up for sale to Omani citizens who are on the ministry's waiting list for government plots. Those who have applied for a plot in Batinah South and Muscat Governorates will get guaranteed options to buy these homes.

If the demand is less than anticipated, the project could be opened up for citizens from other locations. In a statement, the officials said that the project is



expected to be fully completed in 2027.

Coming up on a 350,000 sqm plot of government land at Barka, Hai al Naseem is a mixed-use development offering a wide array of residential units surrounded by integrated facilities like shops,

recreational services, public parks, and community amenities.

Residential options on offer include 132 semi-independent villas (3-5 BHK), 320 apartments (3-4 BHK), 120 stand alone villas (3-5 BHK), and 479 townhouses (3-4 BHK).

Ready to face new viruses in the future?

FROM PAGE 1

with other possibilities that talk about the emergence of a new influenza virus or another coronavirus that is transmitted from animals to humans.

"As long as there are animal reservoirs of the coronavirus, there is still the possibility of another animal coronavirus emerging in the future."

Experts also say that pandemic will not end within six months from now, noting that the current outbreak will be tamed once 90-95 per cent of the

world's population is vaccinated or has acquired immunity from a previous infection.

As for the Sultanate of Oman, the number of the vaccinated as of November 4 reached 2,734,588 people, representing 75 per cent of the total population, as the health directorates in the governorates intensified vaccination campaigns to reach the largest possible number of citizens and residents within the wide immunisaion campaign against Covid-19 in the country. Ibrahim al Maimani, a

specialist analyst, said that the month of November began with positive indicators, as the number of new cases recorded fell below 10 per day, and for the first time the total cases in hospitals stood at six, while the recovery rate was more than double the new cases. Besides, zero deaths are reported in some days.

Al Maimani said: "During this month, if we reach 100 per cent immunisation, we will control Covid-19, and it will become like any normal disease".

SQUEAKS BECKON

The best time to go dolphin watching is between October and May. They're less likely to be spotted or leap out of the water on cloudy days, so it's recommended to go dolphin watching on bright, sunny days

YAHYA AL SALMANI

Dolphins attract tourists to the pristine waters of the Sultanate of Oman. It is just fun to watch these playful creatures arch their backs, leap, dive and float very close to the boat.

The best time to go dolphin watching is between October and May. They're less likely to be spotted or leap out of the water on cloudy days, so it's recommended to go dolphin watching on bright, sunny days.

The dolphin pods are most commonly seen in Muscat and Musandam governorates, although they can also be seen in Al Sharqiyah South, Dhofar and Al Wusta. Marina Bandar Al Rawdha in Muscat hosts plenty of tour operators offering sighting tours.

There are many types of dolphins that visit the Sultanate of Oman. The most common is the Indian Ocean dolphin, the Rissos dolphin, the common bottlenose dolphin, the striped dolphin, the long-beaked common dolphin, and the Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin.

The studies mention that whales and dolphins are among the important marine creatures in the waters of the Sultanate of Oman, as they are "very sensitive to environmental disturbances and negative human activities, which make them important



indicators of the quality and health of the ecosystems of the marine environment."

One can see the pods of common dolphin off the capital's coast closely.

The Environment Society of Oman recently issued an online Atlas to document dolphin activities. This new version is the culmination of more than 20 years of scientific research efforts to provide those interested in the marine environment a comprehensive geographical representation of the habitat of whales and dolphins that inhabit the northern Indian Ocean.

This 'Atlas' contributes to enhancing knowledge of the unique life of the Sultanate of Oman's sea and coasts. This publication includes the scientific classification of Omani whales and dolphins, their geographical distribution, preferred habitats, nutritional and reproductive conditions, seasons of existence, date of observations, numbers, and conservation and protection measures for each species.

The 'Atlas' also provides an overview of the natural risks and gives some tips on how to protect them.

Historically, a number of studies indicate that dolphins have been famous since ancient times for saving humans, while some species are on the verge of extinction.

Environmental studies confirm the American scientist Roy Chapman Andrews' views: "Lived on the surface of the earth, and their bodies were covered with hair, and walked on four legs, and had ears on both sides of the head, and for some reason the ancestors of whales left the land and lived in the water."

A specialist in marine environment specifies that "from these readings, we can conclude that the history of the evolution of the life of whales and dolphins is shrouded in mystery, and on the other hand they are on the verge of extinction due to their exposure to poisoning, and others being subjected to hunting operations".



Breastfeeding good for newborns

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, NOV 6

An exhibition which highlighted the importance of breastfeeding concluded at Nizwa Hospital last week. It was held as part of the World Breastfeeding Week under the theme 'Protecting Breastfeeding is a Shared Responsibility'.

The expo, which was organised by the nursing department, was inaugurated by Dr Khalifa bin Hamad al Shaqsi, director of the hospital, in the presence of staff.

It included several posters and exhibits, which focused on motherhood, child care and benefits of breastfeeding. It illustrated tips and lessons for new mothers on breastfeeding.

The exhibition also highlighted the harmful effects of breastmilk substitutes on the mother and the child as well as appropriate nutrition for the nursing mother and food for the infant.

It introduced visitors about post cesarean section recovery, aftercare and as well as diseases affecting the newborn.

The Intensive Care Unit for Premature Babies featured care for premature babies. It contained information about how to take care of them and the best way to breastfeed a premature baby.



The Department of Health Education and Psychological Counselling's stall talked about the importance of birth spacing and its effect on child and mother.

The breastfeeding team of the nursing department at Nizwa Hospital explained the correct methods for preserving breast milk and methods of sterilisation.

The team also gave a lecture that talked about the achievements of Nizwa Hospital in the field of breastfeeding.

They also introduced the National Breastfeeding Campaign, the National Breastfeeding Policy and the Omani code for breastmilk substitutes issued by the Ministry of Health.

Solar panels to power Mazoon Dairy trucks' cooling units; saves fuel by 30%

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

Mazoon Dairy Company signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Naftah Renewable Energy Company to develop solar panels to power cooling units for Mazoon distribution trucks. This will reduce the amount of fuel consumption during sales and distribution operations.

The memorandum, which is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, was signed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Ghafri, Chief Support Officer, on behalf of Mazoon Dairy Company, and by Abdullah bin Nasser al Saidi, CEO of Naftah Renewable Energy.

Al Ghafri stated "This initiative is one of the success stories to be told with pride. Such initiatives allow small- and medium-sized companies to expand and develop, in addition to building a strong technical reputation in the market," stressing that Mazoon Dairy is the leading dairy company in the Sultanate of Oman.

"Such initiatives that are



Ahmed bin Mohammed al Ghafri of Mazoon Dairy Company and Abdullah bin Nasser al Saidi, CEO of Naftah Renewable Energy, sign the MoU.

concerned with research and development with local small and medium companies will be always at the forefront of the company's priorities and commitments," he asserted.

Abdulaziz bin Abdul Ghani al Zadjali, Logistics Director at Mazoon Dairy Company, explained that this system will improve fuel efficiency in Mazoon's fleet and increase lifespan and efficiency of the cooling units as well as the vehicle's engine. The cooperation with Naftah Renewable Energy Company will enable Mazoon to study and constantly improve the system's efficiency and reliability. He added that 170 trucks will

benefit from this technology.

Mazin bin Hilal al Saadi, HSSE Manager at Mazoon Dairy Company, explained that this project is part of the company's campaign to reduce environmental impact by developing renewable, innovative, reliable and sustainable technologies. He explained that this technology will reduce carbon dioxide emissions. "We expect fuel consumption to be reduced by 20-30 per cent," he said, adding that this project is one of the results of circular economy initiatives as Mazoon Dairy is the first company to adopt this approach and has formed a specialised team to achieve these goals.

Artists selected for International Biennale in Tashkent

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Two artists from the Sultanate of Oman have been selected for the Third International Biennale in Tashkent. They have been chosen to exhibit their work and do presentations on techniques of art. Dr Nasser Palangi and Farideh Zariv will take part in the Biennale from November 8 to 13.

Dr Palangi is an associate professor in the Scientific College of Design (SCD) fine arts department, Muscat. He feels that every family and country has its own history, objects, patterns



and culture. He is happy over his participation in the Biennale and feels he will learn from it and contribute to the art fraternity in the world.

Zariv is an Australian/Iranian artist. She came to the Sultanate of Oman in 2017 and has participated in solo and group exhibitions around the world. She has been a practising artist for thirty years, and she has twenty years of experience as a gallery director and art curator in Iran (Middle East Art Gallery) and Amin Art gallery, as well as in Australia (Palangi Art Gallery).

She is very happy about the

growing art scene in the Sultanate of Oman. "The country holds me and motivates me as an artist," she said.

In 1998, she received a special prize for her painting related to the 'Women during the war' from Khoramshahr Museum in Iran in 2000. She was involved with the world's longest painting organised by MEDECINS Sans Frontiers in Dubai, Emirates. Her works have been exhibited in different countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, America, Malaysia, China, Mexico, Canada, Emirate, the Sultanate of Oman and many other places.

ONE TIME PASSWORD FRAUDS RISE AS
MORE TRANSACTION GO ONLINE

NEVER EVER SHARE



ONE

TIME

PASSWORD

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Can you share your OTP? The answer is, no, you should never share OTP.

There have been incidents that the General Department of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations of Royal Oman Police has taken the step to warn the public of a fraudulent method using the OTP verification number that reaches users via text message from unknown numbers.

The One Time Password is a key element in the digital world as

more and more business transactions are being performed online.

“First of all OTP should not be shared and sent only to verify authenticity. In case it is shared or connected to a device or leaked, then potential fraudsters can use it to steal money, create fake accounts or even trade bitcoins. The options are many”, said Mohammed Iqbal al Balushi, IT enthusiast.

With so much happening online, the security issue has been growing too and one of them is encouraging people to share their OTP.

One Time Password is a security mechanism that is used by third

Now one has to realise that even when genuine organisations ask for OTP they ask you to type it on their website in response to your requested service

DR HAITHAM
AL HAJRI
Cyber security expert

party vendors especially when using applications in purchasing or transferring money.

“Everyone is using OTP to authenticate who you are. It is very important that we do not share OTP because scammers use techniques to ask the victim that they want something and need the victim to share OTP”, said Dr Haitham al Hajri, cyber security expert.

According to him the crimes that have been committed in the Sultanate of Oman are done through social media. “The cyber criminal targets a person and ac-

quires his bank account details and then they try to transfer some money and they ask the account holder to send the OTP. The other method is cyber criminals using OTP to steal social media accounts including WhatsApp accounts. They will set up the WhatsApp account on another device. They send a message saying we need the OTP to ensure you are the right person to receive the gift, a voucher or something that is attractive”, he pointed out.

However, genuine Organisations also request for OTP. So how does one distinguish the real re-

quest against the fake one?

Dr Haitham replied, “OTP is a very personal message that is sent to you. It is not meant to be shared with anyone. Especially the people who request you to share the OTP. They pretend to be an organisation and say we want to confirm that you have received the OTP. Now one has to realize that even when genuine organisations ask for OTP they ask you to type it on their website in response to your requested service. So out of the blue, if an OTP comes into your message and someone else asks for it, you should never share it.”



Oman Air, Qatar Airways sign reciprocal loyalty partnership

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 6

Oman Air, the national airline of the Sultanate of Oman, and Qatar Airways, the national airline of the State of Qatar, have signed a reciprocal loyalty partnership where members of both airlines Privilege Club can earn loyalty miles for travel on both airlines between Muscat and Doha exclusively, in either direction.

With this partnership Sindbad members can earn Sindbad miles on Qatar Airways flights and Privilege Club members can earn Qmiles on Oman Air flights. Members of both loyalty programmes will be able to redeem their miles for flights on either airline between the two cities.

“The strong relationship between Oman Air and Qatar Airways offers a world of exciting travel possibilities and we’re delighted that our Sindbad members can now earn and redeem Sindbad miles for travel on Qatar Airways between Muscat and Doha,” said Oman Air CEO Eng. Abdulaziz al Raisi. “We’re equally delighted to welcome Qatar Airways Privilege Club members onboard Oman Air flights on the popular sector, where they can earn and spend Qmiles.”

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar al Baker said, “Qatar Airways is delighted to launch this new partnership with Oman Air, offering valued members flying between Qatar and the Sultanate of Oman significant opportunities to earn and spend miles across both airlines. This new loyalty partnership cements our dedication to the Sultanate of Oman, and we will remain committed to creating more



Sindbad members can earn Sindbad miles on Qatar Airways flights and Privilege Club members can earn Qmiles on Oman Air flights

unique opportunities to reward our members, in addition to offering various avenues to use Qmiles with our airline partners.”

The reciprocal loyalty programme partnership follows the strengthening of the relationship between both airlines and builds on the benefits of expanded code-sharing.

In December last year, Oman Air and Qatar Airways announced greater cooperation that would allow both airlines to expand commercial operations, boost connectivity and enhance travel options.

The code-share expansion will significantly increase the number of destinations available to Oman Air passengers from three to 65* on Qatar Airways’ network across Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, India, and the Middle East. Qatar Airways passengers will also benefit from additional connectivity, with the ability to book travel on an additional six destinations across Africa and Asia in Oman Air’s network.

Rustaq Fort restoration gains pace

MUSCAT: Around 40 per cent of the Rustaq Fort restoration project has been completed. The completion rate of the Rustaq Fort restoration project in the South Al Batinah Governorate, which is implemented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has reached 40 per cent, and it comes as part of the efforts made by the ministry to preserve the archaeological and historical monuments in the governorates and wilayats such as castles, forts and old houses.

Amjad bin Ahmed al Makhldi, Director of the Department of Restoration and Maintenance at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the restoration project of the fort will extend further for two and a half years due to the size of the building.

The restoration includes maintenance of the structural parts damaged by natural factors.

Al Makhldi added that after the restoration of the fort is completed, it will be put up for investment so that the castles, forts and historical monuments will be the focus of attention of local and foreign investors and make them a vital sector that attracts various events and activities. The ministry is currently also implementing



a comprehensive restoration project in the Governorate of South Al Batinah at Nakhl Fort, which includes the complete

maintenance of the external facades, in addition to fixing cracks in the interior walls and floors and replace damaged ceilings.

Al Rustaq Castle is a cultural landmark and an architectural masterpiece that dates back to the sixth century AD. — ONA

Sohar Airport welcomes first Fly Dubai flight

SUHAR: Sohar Airport on Thursday received the first flight of Fly Dubai. There will be two flights on Thursdays and Saturdays between Sohar and Dubai International Airport.

The inauguration of direct flights comes as a result of the continuous efforts to promote air traffic in Sultanate’s airports managed by Oman Airports, and to cope with challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The return of international flights from and to Sohar Airport in less than two months, since the lift of the quarantine requirement decision and the requirement of the PCR test upon arrival in the Sultanate of Oman for those who had received the two



Covid-19 vaccine doses, reflects the magnitude of efforts made by Oman Airports in the aspects of uplifting the operational scale of Sohar Airport, as well as the importance of the airport’s strategic status.

The launch of this new flights will greatly serve both countries as it will revive the economic and tourist activity in the Governorates of North and South Al Batinah. With the resumption of passenger flights at Sohar Airport, Oman Airports look forward to strengthening contribution to informing passengers and visitors of all the outstanding tourist and attractions offered by the city of Sohar. — ONA

In-person interaction offers big relief for students

DR PRITI SWARUP

The increasing vaccination rate in the country is a silver lining in the cloud, and it seems that after a long hiatus of 18 months, things are finally returning on track.

Following the decision to allow 100 per cent physical attendance, more students in classes from 5 to 11 will be returning to schools for in-person education from Sunday.

“Being away from schools is a missed opportunity for students to engage in social learning processes. The opening of schools should explicitly be used to nurture responsibility, caring and social commitment. Schools must start operating in a staggered manner ensuring that the on-campus experience contributes to the overall mental well-being of all stakeholders” says Dr Kiran G R, Dean Middle East College.

For most of us adults, our lives have returned to normal in many ways. We have been able to socialise and at least some amount of interactions in different forms

has been there, be it going out to purchase groceries and being able to meet a ‘human being’ in the form of hypermarket personnel at the cash counter, fuelling station, or workplace.

For children, this has not been the case. Amidst the strict restrictions at malls and public places, the younger ones particularly have been glued to their screens and gadgets for most of the time, be it academic or extracurricular. They have not had the opportunity to interact, feel, or see their teachers, peers or friends in ‘flesh’. This realisation had struck me when at my son’s recent birthday celebration, ‘real’ and not virtual kids were invited, of course within the prescribed norms. When the birthday boy was asked how he felt, he had only a simple straight answer “I am happy just to see my friends in person today”.

As educators and parents, the reopening of the schools brings in mixed feelings to many. “The joy of face-to-face, proper guidance from teachers, children getting opportunity to breathe in open space, sharing things, laughter



Following the decision to allow 100 per cent physical attendance, more students in classes from 5 to 11 will be returning to schools for in-person education from Sunday.

with their friends, peer learning etc has been missing since long. On the other hand, there is a fear of exposure to the outer environment and concern for the safety of children in the absence of ‘vaccination’, feels Vandana, a Salalah based educator.

Across the country, the school management and staff have been exhilarated on receiving the go-ahead from the MoE regarding the reopening of schools.

“We as a school are excited to have the premises come alive once again with the chatter, laughter

In addition to following all the Covid-19 safety protocols, we have noticed that the learners are more excited and enthusiastic to be in the physical classroom, interact with the teachers and have fun with their friends during the breaks

RESHMA SHEIKH

Teacher

and pitter-patter of the shoes of the students, and with their eyes twinkling with excitement and joy. The parents have been appropriately briefed about the expectations and support from them by the school as well as rules to be followed on the premises

to safeguard our students”, says Amita Sharma, Director, Al Injaz Private School.

Reshma Sheikh, a teacher at an international school in Muscat mentions that “In addition to following all the Covid-19 safety protocols, we have noticed that the learners are more excited and enthusiastic to be in the physical classroom, interact with the teachers and have fun with their friends during the breaks. As a parent, I feel each child should be vaccinated and physical school be made mandatory as it is affecting their eyesight adversely and causing other health issues, apart from the concern that they are not watching or indulging in inappropriate websites or gaming”.

With so much going on at a much faster pace these days, for now, it is better to go step-by-step, the feelings of apprehension regarding re-entry are valid and shall take some time to neutralise. Till then, keeping fingers crossed!

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Mourners carry coffins of supporters of armed groups who were killed in clashes with Iraqi security forces on Friday night, during a funeral in Najaf, on Saturday. — Reuters

Baghdad deaths to be probed amid election dispute

BAGHDAD: An investigation has begun into the deaths and injuries of demonstrators and security forces after clashes in Baghdad on Friday, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported, citing Iraq's Joint Operations Command.

Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimy ordered the formation of a committee to investigate following clashes between Iraqi security forces and supporters of parties that are disputing the results of a general election in October.

A Joint Operations Command statement did not mention the number of deaths and injuries.

The statement added that "the negligent will be brought to legal accountability for their negligence and violation of the explicit orders of the commander in chief, which stressed that live bullets should not be fired under any circumstances," INA reported.

Al Kadhimy also ordered compensation for victims of the clashes and decided to personally

supervise the progress of the investigation, INA said.

It was the first significant violent clash between government forces and supporters of the political parties, most of which have armed wings, since those groups lost dozens of parliament seats after the October 10 vote.

Police fired tear gas and live ammunition into the air as scores of the protesters threw stones and tried to advance towards Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, which houses government buildings and foreign embassies, the security sources said.

Hospital sources said that more than 21 protesters were hurt mostly from smoke inhalation and nine policeman injured from being pelted by stones.

The parties that made the biggest gains in Iraq's October election include that of populist cleric Moqtada al Sadr, who has called for all remaining Western troops to withdraw from the country. — **Reuters**

SUDAN TALKS OVER COUP HIT 'SEMI-DEADLOCK'

CAIRO: Talks to resolve Sudan's political crisis after last month's coup have hit "semi-deadlock" because the military has refused to return to a path of democratic transition, two sources from the ousted government said on Saturday.

The sources said the military had tightened restrictions on ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who was placed under house arrest during the October 25 takeover when his government was dissolved.

The new restrictions further limited his ability to hold meetings or make political contacts, they added.

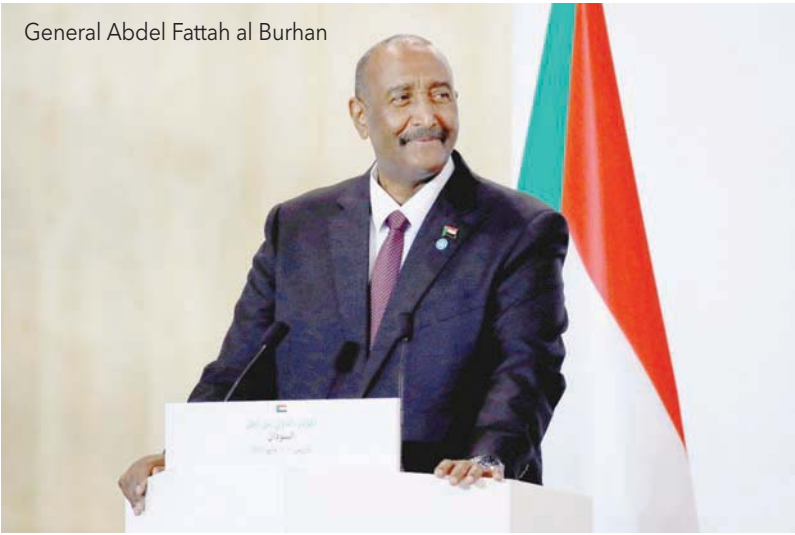
Sudan's military chief, Abdel Fattah al Burhan, has said the army intervened because of political turmoil and the risk of civil war. He says the military remains committed to the transition and to elections to be held in 2023.

Mediation efforts involving the United Nations have been seeking to find a way for Hamdok to be brought back as prime minister of a purely technocratic government.

Hamdok has demanded preconditions that include the release of top civilians detained during the coup and a return to a transition towards democracy that began after the overthrow of long-term autocrat Omar al Bashir in 2019.

Pro-democracy groups are trying to reverse the coup with a series of mass rallies and neighbourhood demonstrations. Many reject any role for the military and call for full civilian rule.

Critics of Burhan accuse



the army of fomenting unrest before the military takeover, which they say made the risk of civil conflict more likely and derailed a transition that offered an opportunity of Sudan to exit from decades of isolation and internal wars.

DEBT RELIEF

Meanwhile, the French foreign ministry has said that the military coup in Sudan has called into question the so-called Paris Club process allowing rich nations to cancel the African country's debt.

A deal was reached by the club of around 20 wealthy nations on July 15, cancelling much of the debt owed by Sudan to help it back into the international fold.

"It is evident that the military coup of October 25 calls this process into question," the ministry said in a statement, five months after Paris decided to wipe nearly five billion dollars off the debt owed by Sudan.

Sudan is wheezing under nearly \$60 billion of debt, 40 per cent of which — or \$23.5 billion — is held by the Paris Club.

Mediation efforts involving the United Nations have been seeking to find a way for Hamdok to be brought back as prime minister of a purely technocratic government

Under the July agreement, the Paris Club decided to cancel \$14.1 billion of that debt and reschedule the rest.

And at some point in the future, most of the rescheduled debt was likely to be cancelled as well.

Sudan piled up heavy foreign debts under Al Bashir, who was ousted in an April 2019 palace coup following mass protests.

But in order for the debt to be cancelled, Khartoum had to fulfil two conditions — clear its arrears with multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the African Development Bank, and implement "economic reforms showing the seriousness and rigour of the authorities," the French ministry said on Friday.

"France has supported the democratic transition process in Sudan since the beginning in 2019. In this context, it has been an unwavering partner of this country, in all areas of cooperation," the statement said.

"The Sudanese debt cancellation process was part of it." — **Reuters/AFP**

Fuel tanker blast claims nearly 100 in Sierra Leone capital

FREETOWN: At least 99 people were killed and more than 100 injured in the capital of Sierra Leone late on Friday when a fuel tanker exploded following a collision, local authorities said.

Fuel still appeared to be leaking from the wrecked tanker on Saturday morning as police and soldiers tried to clear large crowds of onlookers from the street, according to a Reuters reporter.

A burnt human body and the blackened shells of several cars and motorbikes dotted the road in the eastern Freetown suburb

of Wellington, where hundreds had gathered.

The death toll currently stands at 99 with more than 100 casualties being treated in hospitals and clinics across the capital, deputy health minister Amara Jambai said.

Victims included people who had flocked to collect fuel leaking from the ruptured vehicle, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, mayor of the port city, said initially in a post on Facebook that was later edited to remove the reference.

"We've got so many casualties, burnt corpses," said Brima Bureh



People look on at burnt cars in the aftermath of a fuel tanker explosion in Freetown on Saturday. — **AFP**

Sesay, head of the National Disaster Management Agency, in a video from the scene shared online. "It's a terrible, terrible accident."

Videos shared online shortly after the explosion showed people running through clouds of thick smoke as large fires lit up the night sky. Reuters was not able immediately to verify the images.

Accidents with tanker trucks in Sub-Saharan Africa have previously killed scores of people who gathered at the site to collect spilled fuel and were hit by

secondary blasts.

In 2019, a tanker explosion in Tanzania killed 85 people, while around 50 people were killed in a similar disaster in Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018.

The mayor said the extent of the damage in Freetown was not yet clear.

"My profound sympathies with families who have lost loved ones and those who have been maimed as a result," President Julius Maada Bio tweeted.

"My Government will do everything to support affected families." — **Reuters**

BERLIN

Algeria says will not offer to make up with France

Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said on Saturday he would not make the "first move" towards easing tensions with former colonial power France after critical comments from Paris about his country.

The diplomatic spat has been fuelled by a visa row and media reports that President Emmanuel Macron told descendants of fighters in Algeria's 1954-1962 war of independence that the North African country was ruled by a "political-military system"



that had "totally re-written" its history.

"Macron completely pointlessly revived an old conflict," Tebboune told German magazine *Der Spiegel*.

TRIPOLI

2 Tunisians killed in oil field accident off Libya

At least two Tunisian oil workers were killed and two went missing when cables holding a floating reservoir snapped plunging them into the sea off western Libya, officials said on Saturday.

The Tunisian consulate in Libya, on its Facebook page, said two bodies were recovered after Friday's accident at a platform in the Al Bouri oil field, off the city of Zawiyah.

Two other workers were still missing but a fifth Tunisian was rescued from the water and taken



to hospital by air ambulance.

The consulate said the five worked for a Tunisian contractor in Al Bouri. The field, 120 kilometres off Libya, is operated by Mellitah Oil and Gas.

TELAVIV

Palestinian boy killed by Israeli forces

Israeli troops shot and killed a 13-year-old Palestinian boy during clashes in the occupied West Bank on Friday, the Palestinian health ministry said.

The Israeli military said Palestinians had hurled rocks towards its troops at the scene of the incident, east of the city of Nablus in the central West Bank.

"The troops responded with riot dispersal means and live fire. We are aware of reports of a killed Palestinian. The incident is under review," the military said.



The boy was shot in the abdomen and died soon after being rushed to hospital, the health ministry and medics said.

Six other Palestinians were treated after inhaling tear gas.

In brief

MUMBAI



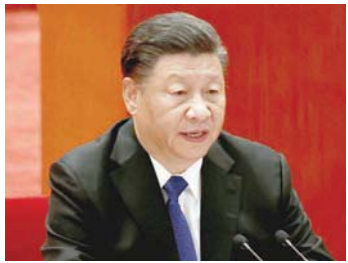
INDIA COVID HOSPITAL FIRE KILLS 11 PATIENTS

Fire tore through a hospital in western India on Saturday killing at least 11 coronavirus patients, officials said. The blaze was the latest to hit pandemic wards across India.

There were about two dozen patients at the intensive care unit in the hospital in Ahmadnagar district, Maharashtra state, when the fire broke out, officials said. Most of the dead were aged over 60. The hospital ward, which was left a charred wreck, had been newly built for coronavirus patients.

Maharashtra chief minister Udhav Thackeray ordered a probe into the blaze and safety conditions at the hospital 250 km from Mumbai.

SHANGHAI



XINHUA LAUDS XI AHEAD OF KEY COMMUNIST PARTY MEETING

China's state news agency Xinhua lauded President Xi Jinping on Saturday as a tireless, selfless and scholarly servant of the people, ahead of a key meeting of the ruling Communist Party that is expected to further cement his authority. Xi is "a man of determination and action, a man of profound thoughts and feelings, a man who inherited a legacy and dares to innovate, and a man who has forward-looking vision and is committed to working tirelessly," Xinhua said.

The party's 300-plus member Central Committee is meeting on Monday through Thursday.

MANILA



PHILIPPINES ALLOWS CHILDREN IN MALLS AS COVID CASES RECEDE

The Philippine government has further eased back on coronavirus restrictions in the capital, meaning children can once again go to malls and other commercial establishments after nearly two years of staying at home.

Presidential spokesperson said the government's inter-agency task force against Covid-19 had placed Metro Manila under a lower alert level, starting on Friday and through November 21. Under the new alert level, children younger than 18 are now allowed to go out of their homes even for non-essential trips, as long as they are with their parents.

Four women, including activist, killed in northern Afghanistan

KABUL: Four women have been killed in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban government said on Saturday, as local sources identified at least one of the victims as a rights activist.

Two suspects have been arrested after the four bodies were found at a house in the city, interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti said.

"The arrested people have admitted in initial interrogation that the women were invited to the house by them. Further investigations are under way and the case has been referred to court," he said.

Khosti did not identify the victims, but sources in Mazar-i-Sharif said that one of the dead was a women's rights activist and university lecturer, Frozan Safi.

Three sources in Mazar-i-Sharif said that they had heard the women received a call that they thought was an invitation to join an evacuation flight and were picked up by a car, only to be found dead later.

"I knew one of those women, Frozan Safi," a female employee of an international organisation said, on condition of anonymity. "She was also a women's activist, really well known in the city."

The source said that three weeks ago she had herself received a call from someone pretending to offer assistance in her efforts to



A Taliban fighter walks next to women waiting in line during a World Food Programme food distribution on the outskirts of Kabul on Saturday. — AFP

get to safety abroad.

"He knew all information about me, asked me to send my documents, wanted me to fill a questionnaire, pretending to be an official of my office in charge of giving info to the US for my evacuation," she said.

After becoming suspicious she blocked the caller, and is now living in fear. She was shocked when she heard about the killings.

"I was already scared," she said. "My mental health is not good nowadays. I am always afraid that someone might come to my door, take me somewhere and shoot me."

The Taliban, who seized power in Afghanistan in August after a

20-year war against the former US-backed government, are a deeply conservative movement.

Under their last period of rule, women were banned from public life and since the group's return to government many rights activists have fled the country.

Some women who remained have held street protests in Kabul demanding that their rights be respected and that girls be allowed to attend public high schools.

PAKISTAN TALIBAN SET CONDITION FOR TALKS

Meanwhile, the Pakistani Taliban have demanded that the government of Pakistan

release a number of prisoners as a condition for talks aimed at laying the ground for full ceasefire negotiations, multiple sources in the group said.

The Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan or TTP and separate from the Afghan Taliban, have had two rounds of preliminary talks, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, a commander based in the Afghan province of Kunar said.

Sources close to the matter said Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of the Haqqani Network and the current Afghan Taliban interior minister, was helping the talks.

— AFP/Reuters

Australia hits 'magnificent milestone' with 80 per cent rate of jabs

MELBOURNE: Australia reached on Saturday a full inoculation rate of 80 per cent of those aged 16 and older, which Prime Minister Scott Morrison called a "magnificent milestone" on the path to becoming one of the world's most vaccinated countries against Covid-19.

Once a champion of a Covid-zero strategy to manage the pandemic, the country of 25 million has moved towards living with the virus through extensive vaccinations, as the Delta variant has proven too infectious to suppress.

"Another, magnificent milestone, Australia," Morrison said in a video post on Facebook. "That's four out of five, how good is that? This has been a true Australian national effort."

While vaccinations remain voluntary on the federal level, Australia's states and territories introduced mandatory measures for many occupations and workers. The unvaccinated are barred from many activities, such as dining out or concerts.

On Monday, Australia eased international border curbs for the first time during the pandemic, but only for vaccinated people from highly inoculated states. — Reuters

Fukushima farmers fear N-tainted water's impact

IWAKI, Japan: Fukushima farmers fear the Japanese government's planned release of water from the crippled power plant could revive concerns about contamination and again hit the price of their produce, undoing a decade of slow recovery from nuclear disaster.

Japan plans to release more than 1 million tonnes of contaminated water from the plant in the country's northeast into the sea after treating it, as the site reaches storage limits for the water. Although international authorities support the plan, it has sparked concern from neighbours China and South Korea and worried local fisherman and farmers.

"We're just about seeing our prices go back to normal after a big drop following the disaster, but now we will have to deal with the potential reputational damage all over again because of the release of the water," said Hiroaki Kusano, a pear farmer and vice-leader of the local agricultural co-operative.

The water is to be processed to remove radioactive contamination other than from tritium, which cannot be removed. Water with the radioactive isotope diluted to one-seventh of the World Health Organization's guidelines for drinking water will be released into the Pacific a kilometre out from the plant around spring 2023, under a government plan.



A laboratory technician prepares tests for cesium levels in beef from cattle bred in Fukushima, at Fukushima Agricultural Technology Centre in Koriyama, Fukushima prefecture, recently. — Reuters

Nuclear plants worldwide routinely release water containing tritium, considered the least-toxic byproduct of atomic power.

Last year, for the first time since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami devastated the northeast coast and triggered the nuclear disaster, the average price of Fukushima pears sold in Tokyo overtook those from some other prefectures, fetching 506 yen per kg (\$2.00 per pound), data from the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Wholesale Market showed.

A year after the crisis, prices were at 184 yen per kg, 20 per cent below the average of more than 230 yen for other prefectures.

Fukushima's produce goes through multiple checks for radioactivity, with farmers screening before shipment, while the prefecture also tests regularly.

Over the last decade, local produce has gone through a "thorough testing process, consistently" said Kazuhiro Okazaki of Fukushima's Agricultural Technology Centre, which has screened produce for radioactive cesium since June 2011.

Fukushima produced 13,000 tonnes of pears in 2020, making it Japan's fourth-largest source of the popular fruit, official data showed. — Reuters



Farmers burn straw stubble after harvesting a paddy crop in a field on the outskirts of Amritsar on Saturday. — AFP

Toxic air blankets Delhi

NEW DELHI: India's capital was blanketed by toxic air on Saturday as pollution levels remained dangerously high for a second day after revellers defied a fireworks ban during a major festival and farmers in nearby states burnt stubble.

New Delhi's overall Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 456 on a scale of 500, indicating "severe" pollution conditions that can affect healthy people and seriously impact those with existing diseases.

The AQI measures the concentration of poisonous particulate matter PM2.5, which can cause cardiovascular and respiratory diseases such as lung cancer, in a cubic metre of air.

On social media, some residents complained about the hazardous conditions in Delhi, which has the worst air quality of all world capitals, with an annual spike often early in the winter.

"The pollution in Delhi

makes it very difficult to live in this city. Or at least live here for too long," resident Pratyush Singh said on Twitter. "We're breathing smoke everyday. Media will talk about it. Leaders will say they are fixing it. It'll go away and come back next year."

Toxic air kills more than a million people annually in India and takes an economic toll on the country's populous northern states and the capital city of 20 million people.

The current pollution levels in Delhi were the result of fireworks on the night of the festival of Diwali on Thursday and from stubble burning in the surrounding farm belt, according to the federal Ministry of Earth Sciences' SAFAR monitoring system.

Farmers in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana set alight the stubble left after harvesting at this time of the year to prepare their fields for the next crop. — Reuters



An ambulance is seen in the crowd during the Astroworld music festival in Houston, Texas, US, on Friday in this still image obtained from a social media video on Saturday. – Reuters

Crush at Houston music festival kills at least eight, injures many

HOUSTON: At least eight people were killed and many others injured in a crush at the opening night of Houston’s Astroworld music festival triggered by a surge of fans pushing towards the stage, officials said on Saturday.

Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña confirmed the casualty figures from Friday’s night’s disaster at a news conference early on Saturday outside NRG Park. A sold-out audience of about 50,000 people attended the first day of the festival featuring rapper Travis Scott.

At around 9 pm the crowd that had gathered for Scott’s performance began to push towards the front of the stage, causing panic and injuries.

People began to fall

unconscious, and the mayhem escalated until 9:38 pm when a “mass casualty incident” was triggered, Peña said.

“It happened all at once. It seemed like it just happened... over the course of just a few minutes”, said Houston Police Executive Assistant Chief Larry Satterwhite.

“Suddenly we had several people down on the ground, experiencing some type of cardiac arrest or some type of medical episode”, he added.

The fire department transported 17 people to hospitals, and 11 of those were in cardiac arrest. “It felt like we was in a concert in hell, you couldn’t breathe, you couldn’t see”, a concert-goer with the Twitter

handle @officialshaane said in a video posted on Twitter.

It was not yet clear what caused the disaster. An investigation was under way.

“I think it’s very important that none of us speculate. Nobody has all the answers tonight”, Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said. “If you don’t have facts, if you don’t have evidence, I’m not going to speak against that. We have hurting families out here.”

Finner added that the organisers and Scott were both cooperating with police.

“We are focused on supporting local officials however we can...”, Astroworld Fest said in a Twitter message, adding it was cancelling Saturday’s second day of the festival. — Reuters

Thousands rally in rainy Glasgow for COP26 climate action

GLASGOW: Thousands of protesters set off from a Glasgow park on Saturday to march through the city hosting the UN climate conference and demand bolder global action.

Students, activists and climate-concerned citizens bundled up against the damp cold, linking arms as they moved west from the city’s Kelvingrove Park towards the central George Square.

Carrying red flags and banners reading “Capitalism is killing the planet”, an energetic crowd of youths — some with bullhorns — blamed companies for the climate crisis and chanted calls in favour of socialism while punching their fists in the air.

Elsewhere in the crowd, dozens of Scottish national flags, waved in the wind. Still others called attention to climate justice and vulnerable farmers.

A few blocks away at the COP26 meeting, which has been under way since Monday and runs for another week, speakers sounded the alarm on how global warming is ravaging farmlands and threatening food security.

A week of government speeches and pledges so far has included promises to phase out coal, slash emissions of the potent greenhouse gas methane and reduce deforestation. But activists have said the meeting so far is showing too little evidence of progress.

On one stage at the conference, actor Idris Elba acknowledged that he had few credentials to speak on climate change, but said he was at COP26 to amplify the climate threat to global food security.

Sitting on the same panel, climate justice campaigner Vanessa Nakate of Uganda implored the world to stop burning fossil fuels, the main cause of rising global temperatures.

“We are watching farms



People participate in a protest rally in Glasgow on Saturday. – AFP



Red Rebel Brigade members, an international performance artist troupe, demonstrate in central Paris on Saturday. – AFP

Students, activists and climate-concerned citizens bundled up against the damp cold, linking arms as they moved west from the city’s Kelvingrove Park towards the central George Square

“The climate crisis means hunger and death for many people in my country and across Africa.”

Asked about her influence in the climate talks, Nakate noted the protest outdoors.

“Change is what is happening outside, what young people are doing, organising... climate strikes. That is where the change is”, she said.

Civil society leaders and representatives from companies like Unilever and PepsiCo spoke at the conference about corporate responsibility in making trade and commerce less of a burden on nature. — Reuters

collapse and livelihoods lost due to floods, droughts and swarms of locusts”, she said — all of which scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change.

Slave room discovered at Pompeii in ‘rare’ find

ROME: Pompeii archaeologists said on Saturday they have unearthed the remains of a “slave room” in an exceptionally rare find at a Roman villa destroyed by Mount Vesuvius’ eruption nearly 2,000 years ago.

The little room with three beds, a ceramic pot and a wooden chest was discovered during a dig at the Villa of Civita Giuliana, a suburban villa just a few hundred metres from the rest of the ancient city.

An almost intact ornate Roman chariot was discovered here at the start of this year, and archaeologists

said on Saturday that the room likely housed slaves charged with maintaining and prepping the chariot.

“This is a window into the precarious reality of people who rarely appear in historical sources, written almost exclusively by men belonging to the elite”, said Pompeii’s Director General Gabriel Zuchtriegel.

The “unique testimony” into how “the weakest in the ancient society lived... is certainly one of the most exciting discoveries in my life as an archaeologist”, he said in a



A “slaves room” at a Roman villa, containing beds, amphorae, ceramic pitchers and a chamber pot is discovered in a dig near the ancient Roman city of Pompeii, destroyed in 79 AD in volcanic eruption.

press release.

Pompeii was buried in ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, killing those who hadn’t managed to leave the city in time. They were either crushed by collapsing buildings or killed by thermal shock.

The 16-square metre room was a cross between a bedroom and a storeroom: As well as three beds — one of which was child sized — there were eight amphorae, stashed in a corner.

The wooden chest held metal and fabric objects that seem to be

part of the harnesses of the chariot horses, and a chariot shaft was found resting on one of the beds.

The remains of three horses were found in a stable in a dig earlier this year.

“The room grants us a rare insight into the daily reality of slaves, thanks to the exceptional state of preservation of the room”, the Pompeii archaeological park said.

The excavation is part of a programme launched in 2017 aimed at fighting illegal activity in the area. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

WASHINGTON

Astronauts to return next week: Nasa

Four astronauts are scheduled to return to Earth from the International Space Station early on Monday after spending more than six months in space, Nasa announced.

The four members of the Crew-2 mission, including a French and a Japanese astronaut, will therefore return to Earth before the arrival of a replacement crew, whose take-off was delayed several times due to unfavourable weather conditions.



Nasa said in a statement late on Friday that Crew-2 members are due to return to Earth “no earlier than 7:14 am EST (1214 GMT) Monday, November 8, with a splashdown off the coast of Florida.”

AWKA

Nigeria southeast state goes to the polls

Nigeria’s restive southeastern state of Anambra voted for a new governor on Saturday in a ballot seen as a test of the electoral system less than 18 months before presidential polls.

More than 30,000 police have been dispatched to secure Anambra after a string of attacks in the southeast blamed on separatists.

Elections in Africa’s most populous state are often marred by fraud claims and violence, and analysts see Anambra’s ballot and



voter turnout as one barometer of confidence in the independent national electoral commission’s readiness for the national ballot to replace President Muhammadu Buhari in 2023.

MOSCOW

Russia hit by record coronavirus cases

Russia on Saturday reported a record number of daily coronavirus cases as the country reaches the end of a nationwide paid holiday introduced to curb the spread of infections.

Saturday’s official tally registered 41,335 new cases in the past 24 hours, the highest number for new infections since the beginning of the pandemic. The country also reported 1,188 coronavirus deaths during the same period.

President Vladimir Putin



last month ordered a paid holiday from October 30 to November 7 in a bid to stem soaring infections and deaths exacerbated by a slow vaccination drive.

Congress gives Biden jolt of good news

JAMES OLIPHANT AND
TREVOR HUNNICUTT

With last week's election results in New Jersey and Virginia suggesting that voters are souring on Democrats, President Joe Biden badly needed a jolt of good news. And on Friday, he finally got a little.

The US House of Representatives, controlled by his Democrats, passed a \$1-trillion infrastructure bill to repair the nation's airports, roads and bridges — three months after the Senate — sending the bill to Biden's desk for signature into law.

On top of that, a sweeping \$1.75 trillion social-spending and climate bill that is a centrepiece of Biden's presidential campaign, passed a procedural hurdle in the House, though it remains unclear when it will get a final vote.

That came the same day the government reported a better-than-expected more than 500,000 jobs were added last month, suggesting the economic rebound is gathering pace.

Pfizer Inc also said its experimental antiviral pill for Covid-19 had shown dramatic results. The stock market soared in response.

Biden became president in January and got off to a strong start, passing a \$2-trillion economic stimulus package and rushing out vaccines to tackle the spread of Covid-19. His administration has successfully delivered at least one dose of vaccine to about 80 per cent of the population, and has overseen strong economic growth. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq all hit a string of record high closes this week. But the White House has watched with concern as Biden's approval ratings have dropped steadily amid the ongoing pandemic, higher inflation, a chaotic pullout from Afghanistan and months of bickering among Democrats in Congress over the infrastructure and social spending bills.

The alarm truly sounded this week when Republican Glenn Youngkin edged Democrat Terry McAuliffe in the race for governor of Virginia, a state that Biden won by 10 percentage points a year ago. In New Jersey, Democratic Governor Phil Murphy narrowly won reelection over Republican Jack Ciattarelli in an unexpectedly tight contest. — Reuters

If voters are frustrated with inaction, the obvious response is to be more decisive and pass bills. There's a strong consensus about that across the party

SOURCE



AN ARTISAN AT WORK

An artisan makes a stool with bamboo at a workshop in Karachi on Saturday. – AFP

Just a disappointment in disguise



Ray Petersen
rj.petersen52@gmail.com

EVEN SHAKESPEARE HIMSELF WROTE OF EXPECTATION BEING THE ROOT OF ALL HEARTACHE

I pondered recently, in some faux Robbie Burns like, or even spurious Shakespearean manner, “Tis but a short step from anticipation to expectation. Yet, tis a leviathan traipse, aye, a gigantic stride, in artifice and chicanery”

Now... apart from it being an absolute joy to write, more lurks behind that imitation than a bit of fun, as the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, of which some of the preliminary matches were played in the Sultanate of Oman, continues in the UAE, and the Super 12 Round saw traditional rivals Pakistan and tournament favourites India, clash, with Pakistan humbling their opponents in a 10-wicket thrashing, leading to considerable angst and gnashing of teeth on the sub-continent.

Indian National Congress MP Shashi Tharoor expressed his feelings telling reporters, “Never have I witnessed India being routed more comprehensively,” while police in Uttar Pradesh arrested three for celebrating rival's win. And on social media, one player in the Indian team, was mercilessly trolled, and accused of deliberately giving up runs.

I can understand the disappointment, but dwelled upon the words of the respected commentator known as India's ‘voice of cricket,’ Harsha Bogle, that, “Indian supporters are shocked by this result, and that is made worse by their

level of anticipation and expectation leading into this game.” “After all, said Mazher Ashad, on Twitter, Pakistan had never beaten India in 7 previous World Cup matches, so most Indian expectations were shaped by that.”

Yes, the anticipation, the looking forward to an event, is a thing of joy, a positive emotion, but expectation has the potential for a rude awakening, something that lifts you, but can also deepen the impact of an adverse results, like having the rug pulled out from under your feet. Even Shakespeare himself wrote of, “expectation being the root of all heartache,” while Dr Steve Maraboli, renowned for his examination of ‘the human experience,’ says, “Expectation feeds frustration, an unhealthy attachment to outcomes we wish we could control, but cannot.”

The Pareto Principle, or the 80/20 rule, which basically says that 20 per cent of your activities will account for 80 per cent of your results. That variation applies to so many things in life, in that, for example, we have legitimate expectations that all politicians are motivated by social responsibility, that all doctors care, that all lawyers are trustworthy, that all accountants are accurate, that all teachers are effective, that all those with driver's licences are safe drivers, and so the list goes on. The reality, as we know, is otherwise, and it's a

harsh lesson we must learn for ourselves, as, in our naivety, we know better.

So, just a few days later New Zealand faced a chastened India in a ‘must win’ second match in front of 21,000 ebullient, rampant, jubilant, expectant Indian supporters. But by the end of the game the stadium lay half empty as their heroes again, in the words of Harsha Bhogle, “succumbed to the weight of expectation.” Captain Virat Kohli told the media, “Just because there is expectation doesn't mean we should play differently,” and added later, “When you play for the Indian cricket team you have expectations, not only from the fans, but from the players themselves.” This time, that expectation was simply too much.

And where is this going? Many parents want good things for their children, most want better than they themselves have had, or have, and so, in their enthusiasm, they often place expectations upon those children. Certainly, in some eyes, anything but an ‘A’ is a failure. Don't let that parent be you... let your children embrace their educational opportunity with anticipation and enthusiasm.

Don't chastise them for disappointing you, blame yourself for loading them with your expectations. Remember, they have expectations of themselves, let them understand and on their own terms, meet those... first.

Virtual health services became a matter of life and death



ANN AERTS
The author is Head of the Novartis Foundation

The Covid-19 pandemic has sharply accelerated the use of digital technologies in the health sector. For many who could no longer obtain in-person care, access to virtual health services became a matter of life and death.

This revolution will not end when the pandemic does. But without thoughtful stewardship, a digital divide could exacerbate health inequities. Above all, guiding the future of virtual health so that no one is left behind requires us to learn from the past 18 months and ask the right questions. From its earliest months, the pandemic triggered a massive shift to virtual health services. In France, the number of telehealth consultations increased from 40,000 to 4.5 million between February and April 2020. In India, online health

consultations among people over 50 increased by 502 per cent last year. Global investment in digital health doubled year on year in 2020, to \$21.6 billion. And non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations — from the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development to the World Health Organization — deepened their focus on the issue.

The surge in virtual health services during the pandemic has entailed many policy changes and new ways of doing business. Some of these were beneficial and will serve as a foundation for further progress. But the rapidity of the changes has often meant haphazard execution and uneven results.

It is still too early to settle on a definitive post-pandemic vision

for virtual health services, and how each country approaches it must of course be tailored to local contexts. But we can begin to identify the right questions to ask in shaping this fast-growing global sector's future.

First, what is the true value that these services can provide? If we regard virtual health as merely a sector-specific example of emerging technology, it may generate efficiencies and even improve outcomes, but it will not realise its full potential.

In many settings, technologies that are already part of people's everyday lives can empower patients. Virtual services can help people re-centre their health in personalised, familiar and convenient ways. Whereas going to a health facility can sometimes be a cold, intimidating experience

or even logistically impossible, virtual services allow people to engage on their own terms, on comfortable ground. Especially in low- and middle-income countries, expanding telemedicine can help to compensate for lack of physical infrastructure while providing an additional way to connect remote populations with national health systems.

Second, how can virtual care promote equity? The WHO recently identified health equity as one of the four guiding principles of its Global Strategy on Digital Health, calling for investment in infrastructure, education, and resources to help low- and middle-income countries adopt new digital health technologies. And in June 2021, G7 health ministers stressed that virtual healthcare services must be

“inclusive, comprehensive and equitable.”

Even within high-income countries, marginalised communities have often borne the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic, compounding historical and inherited inequities. Fully realising the promise of virtual healthcare means leveraging digital connectivity to reach those previously excluded.

Third, which approaches to virtual health services have shown the most promise? Countries with flexible regulatory regimes have had the best results during the pandemic. One key policy change that some countries quickly adopted was to remove the requirement that new patients have an in-person consultation before receiving virtual care.

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Emad clinches gold medal at IFBB World Bodybuilding & Fitness Meet

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

Oman's bodybuilder Emad bin Abdulhameed al Balushi impressed at the IFBB World Bodybuilding & Fitness Championships which is ongoing in Santa Susanna city in Spain.

Al Balushi managed to clinch gold medal in his debut at the Beginner Men's Physique, as he registered six points, while Andrea Stellari from Italy was placed as runner up (11 points) and Simao Ribeiro IFBB Flag (B) was positioned in third place (16 points). In Men's Physique up to 173 cm, Emad al Balushi finished in the fifth place.

The top bodybuilding and fitness global event witnessed the participation of 1,200 bodybuilders representing 72 countries. Asaad al Mabsali finished in the fifth position at Men's Physique up to 170 cm. In the same category which featured participation of 22 participants, Khalid al Ghafri finished in the seventh position. Yahya al Kiyumi ended his show in the fourth place at Men's Physique up

The top bodybuilding and fitness global event witnessed the participation of 1,200 bodybuilders representing 72 countries. Asaad al Mabsali finished in the fifth position at Men's Physique up to 170 cm

to 176 cm. Muhannad al Mawali was placed in fourth place at Men's Physique over 182 cm. Mazin al Lamki took part in the Men's Physique from 16-20 years and he ended in fifth place.

The championship in Spain featured all the events including Men's & Women's Categories (Junior, Senior and Master). Oman Bodybuilding Committee (OBC) Secretary-General, Said al Rahbi, was head of the delegation. Nasser al Maskari was the administrative and Mohammed al Siyabi was the head coach of the national team. As many as 16 bodybuilders from Oman took part in the event.



OCC to host Asian Amateur Chess Championship virtually in 2021 and physically in 2022

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Chess Committee (OCC), will host Muscat Asian Amateur Chess Championship twice as it will be this year virtually and in the following year the Asian will be held physically in Muscat. On Saturday, the technical meeting of Muscat Asian Amateur Chess Championship took place remotely through Zoom platform.

OCC managed to organise series of domestic and aboard chess events during the past two years and that eased the committee to have the permit from the Asian chess governing body to host the top Asian Amateur Chess virtually this year.

The Asian Championship will feature participation of 22 countries in Asia including: Afghanistan, Australia, Brunei, China, Guam, Indonesia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia,

Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Syria, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Macau, Mongolia, Yemen and the hosts the Sultanate

of Oman. The competition will be for both genders with a total of 159 players including 59 from female gender.

The technical meeting featured

participation of all the players and then there was a trial tournament through Tornelo (Web based Platform that makes easy and fast to run a chess event online from

The Asian event is a great opportunity not only for the players, but also for the umpires, coaches and the organisers to learn from this top event

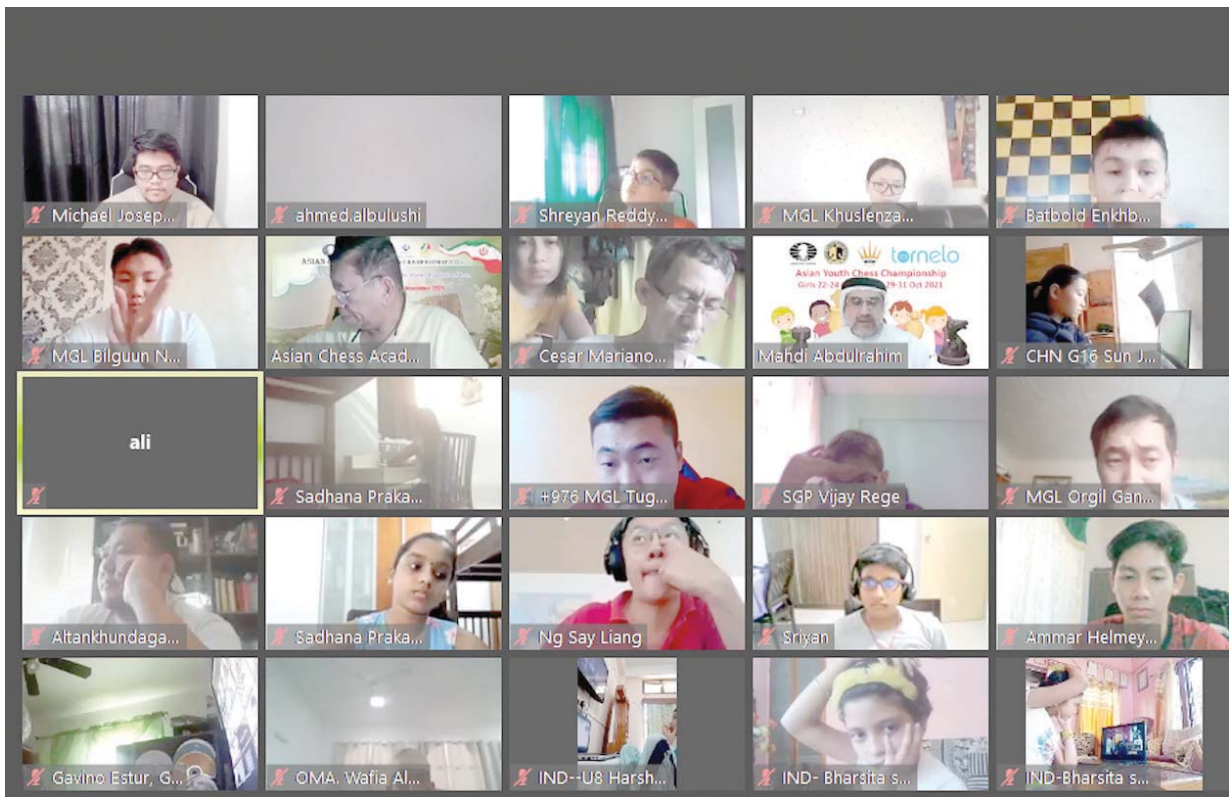
AHMED BIN DARWISH AL BALUSHI
OCC Chairman

your web).

The same web will be used for the championship this year. During the technical meet, several things have been discussed including the games ways, schedules, breaking the draws and how to avoid online cheating. OCC Chairman Ahmed bin Darwish al Balushi

attended the meeting beside the technical expert from Asian Chess Federation.

GREAT OPPORTUNITY
"Obtaining the approval from the Asian Chess Federation to host the Asian Amateur Chess Championship in the Sultanate of Oman virtually this year and physical in the following next year will act as strong point for the Sultanate of Oman. The Asian event is a great opportunity not only for the players, but also for the umpires, coaches and the organisers to learn from this top event. The Asian championship is one of the top annual chess events and will mark OCC as significant destination for hosting different chess events and tournaments. The event will be published for thousands around the world in different media channels. All this will highlight positively in the Sultanate of Oman's growth in different fields including sporting activities," OCC chief ended.





Australia's Josh Hazlewood delivers a ball. — AFP

Warner and Hazlewood heroics put Australia on verge of semis

ABU DHABI: David Warner struck a 56-ball 89 after paceman Josh Hazlewood's four-wicket blitz to help Australia beat the West Indies by eight wickets in Abu Dhabi on Saturday and put themselves in a commanding position to make the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals.

Australia have eight points from five matches, level on points with an in-form England who play South Africa later in Sharjah. The Proteas, who have six points in Group I, face a daunting task to remain alive in the tournament.

Chasing 158 for victory, Australia rode home on Warner's unbeaten knock, which included nine boundaries and four sixes, and Mitchell Marsh's 53 to cruise home with 22 balls to spare.

Earlier, Australia paceman Pat Cummins struck a vital early blow by forcing Chris Gayle (15) to chop one on to his stumps in the third over after the 42-year-old Jamaican had issued an early warning of his prowess with two massive sixes.

Gayle walked off the pitch with his bat raised and a smile on his face prompting fans to speculate online over whether this may have been his final innings. But the West Indies were not in a celebratory mood as Hazlewood took two wickets in three balls.

Nicholas Pooran departed offering a simple catch to Mitchell Marsh before Roston Chase had his stumps shattered to leave the outgoing champions in trouble at 35-3 inside four overs.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa then picked up his 11th wicket of the Super 12 stage by removing

SCOREBOARD

WEST INDIES	
C Gayle b Cummins	15
E Lewis c Smith b Zampa	29
N Pooran c Marsh b Hazlewood	4
R Chase b Hazlewood	0
S Hetmyer c Wade b Hazlewood	27
K Pollard c Maxwell b Starc	44
D Bravo c Warner b Hazlewood	10
A Russell (not out)	18
J Holder (not out)	1
Extras: (LB-6, W-3)	9
Total: (for 7 wks, 20 overs)	157
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-35, 3-35, 4-70, 5-91, 6-126, 7-143	
Bowling: Starc 4-0-33-1, Hazlewood 4-0-39-4, Cummins 4-0-37-1, Maxwell 1-0-6-0, Marsh 3-0-16-0, Zampa 4-0-20-1	

AUSTRALIA	
D Warner (not out)	89
A Finch b Hosein	9
M Marsh c Holder b Gayle	53
G Maxwell (not out)	0
Extras: (LB-3, W-6, NB-1)	10
Total: (for 2 wks, 16.2 overs)	161
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-157	
Bowling: Hosein 4-0-29-1, Chase 1-2-0-17-0, Holder 2-0-26-0, Bravo 4-0-36-0, Walsh 2-0-18-0, Russell 2-0-25-0, Gayle 1-0-7-1	

Australia have eight points from five matches, level on points with an in-form England who play South Africa later in Sharjah. The Proteas, who have six points in Group I, face a daunting task to remain alive in the tournament

Evin Lewis for 29 as the West Indies' slide continued, but a steady effort by skipper Kieron Pollard (44) took them to a respectable 157-7.

Hazlewood also dismissed Shimron Hetmyer and the retiring Dwayne Bravo to finish with figures of 4-39. — Reuters

England, Australia enter semis, SA knocked out

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 6

South Africa failed to restrict England to less than 131 as the Proteas were knocked out of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 at the expense of Australia, in Sharjah on Saturday. Batting first, South Africa piled on a big total of 189/2 in 20 overs and had high hopes of restricting England to under 131 to progress to the semis but that was not to be.

England batsmen went after the South African bowlers to overhaul their own qualifying score of 86 quickly before overhauling 131 in the 16th over to send Australia through.

ENGLAND CRUISE
England were off to a rollicking

start as they reached 50/0 in the powerplay overs with Jos Buttler scoring 24 runs of 13 balls.

However, Jason Roy who was going strong at 20 after having struck four boundaries retired hurt with a leg injury.

Buttler was later out for 26 to Anrich Nortje through a catch taken by Tenda Bavuma at mid-off as England reached 56/1.

In the seventh over, Jonny Bairstow was out lbw to Tabrez Shamsi as England were in a bit of a bother at 61/2.

Moeen Ali and Dawid Malan then put on a partnership of 51 runs with both of them taking the South African attack to the cleaners.

Ali smashed two sixes and

three boundaries in his 37-run innings while Malan

SA BAT BIG
Earlier, South Africa put up a massive score after some thunderous batting from Rassie van der Dussen and Aiden Markram. Rassie slammed six sixes and five boundaries for his 94 while Markram's 52 off 25 balls was the perfect complementary innings. He scored two boundaries and four sixes.

The 103-run partnership between the duo took the Proteas to the big score of 189/2 in 20 overs. It gave South Africa a good opportunity to get England bowled out for under 131 or fewer and get a victory for over 60 runs.



England's Dawid Malan plays a shot. — AFP

Yalla Shabab beat ARTT in Premier Division match

ORIENT TRAVELS MARK VICTORY AGAINST ERNST & YOUNG LLC IN A DIVISION MATCH

MUSCAT: Yalla Shabab win over ARTT in the Premier Division League match played at Oman Cricket ground in Al Amerat on Friday.

Yalla Shabab won the Toss and elected to Bowl. With a slow start by opening batsman Pranav Mehta 1(6) and Ghanzar Iqbal 0(13) from ARTT a total of 211 with the loss of 9 wickets was put on board after 50 overs by the team. Muhammed Nadeem & Sanuth Mohamed claimed 3 wickets each in 10 overs of bowling in the innings.

Yalla Shabab maintains their pace after the dismissal of opening batsman Sanuth Mohamed 8(10) with great partnership between Gustav Burger 59(80) and Khalid Kail 80 (85). The winning chase of 216 was achieved by Yalla Shabab in 42 Overs with loss of 6 wickets

BRIEF SCORES – Yalla Shabab 216/06 in 42 Overs (Khalid Kail 80(85) – 11x4, Gustav Burger 59(80) – 6x4, 1x6, Muhammed Nadeem - 30/3, Sanuth Mohamed Ismail – 42/3) Won against ARTT 211/9 in 50 overs (Inzamam Ul Haq 89(128) – 7x4, 2x6, Ghanzar Iqbal - 58/2, Mohd. Imran Latif - 18/2) by 4 wickets

In Division A match, Orient Travels recorded a massive victory by 142 runs against Ernst & Young LLC.



Ernst & Young LLC won the toss and elected to bowl. Positively restricting the opening line up of Orient Travels by dismissal of Gurvir Singh 2(5) and Javed Mohammed 1(6), Ibrar Hussain scored 44 in 65 balls with 4 boundaries. Masud Parvez gave 50 runs in 10 overs in the innings. Orient travel lost 10 wickets in 46.5 Overs scoring a total 266 Runs, Darwish Ellickal 57(49) played crucial with 6 boundaries and 1 maximum.

Opening Batsman Issa al Balushi 20 (24) started well before his early wicker on the last ball of 5th over. Tanveer Rana & Ibrar Hussain drove 3 wickets for the team. Rana Zeeshan was the highest scorer of the team 26 (35) from 124 run at the loss of all wickets in 24.4 Overs

Darwish Ellickal was announced the Player of the Match.

BRIEF SCORES – Orient Travels 266/10 in 46.5 overs (Darwish Ellickal 57(49) 6x4, 1x6, Ibrar Hussain – 42/3, Tanveer Rana – 43/3) won against Ernst & Young LLC 124/10 in 24.4 Overs (Rana Zeeshan 26(35) 4x4, Masud Parvez – 50/3) by 142 runs



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his semifinal match against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz. – Reuters



Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns the ball to France's Hugo Gaston. – AFP

Djokovic, Medvedev reach Paris Masters semifinals

PARIS: Novak Djokovic stayed on course for a sixth Paris Masters title with 6-4 6-3 win over American Taylor Fritz while world number two Medvedev tamed home crowd favourite Hugo Gaston to reach the semi-finals on Friday.

Medvedev outclassed Gaston 7-6(7) 6-4 after he clinched a knife-edged opening set.

On Saturday Djokovic will meet Polish seventh seed Hubert Hurkacz, while Medvedev clashes with either German Alexander Zverev or Norway's Casper Ruud, who meet in the last quarterfinal later on Friday.

Djokovic and Fritz traded fierce ground strokes in the first set before the 20-times major winner broke serve at 3-4. Fritz broke back immediately but Djokovic's supremacy from the back of the court finally told as he clinched the opener in 38 minutes.

"I was absent from the Tour for two months, coming into this tournament, and the last competitive match I played was in the US Open final, compared to the other guys playing one or

two events prior to Paris," said Djokovic, who lost to Medvedev in the final at Flushing Meadows.

"I knew that I needed to start well, with good intensity and put in a lot of hours on the practice court. But it's different when you play points in a competitive match."

The pair again exchanged service breaks at the start of the second before Fritz blew a chance at 1-1 with Djokovic down 15-40. The Serb seized control after overcoming that minor blip, winning 12 of 14 points from 2-2 to register his fifth straight win over the 24-year-old American.

"I did have ups and downs. I am not really pleased with the way I closed out the sets. I lost my serve to love (at 1-1), then (at) 5-3, again, I served for it with new balls and lost to love again. Those things shouldn't happen," added Djokovic.

Medvedev double-faulted to hand Gaston a 5-4 lead in the opening set and then saved three successive set points on the Frenchman's serve to force a tiebreak as the next two games went with serve. — Reuters

Oman Sail's Musannah Race Week wraps up excellent week



MUSCAT: The 11th edition of Musannah Race Week came to a close at the Barcelo Musannah Resort with a battle for medals between 50 sailors from four countries in different sailing classes. The award ceremony was attended by Sayyid Ibrahim al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Musandam. After eleven rounds in the Optimist class, Elyass al Fahdli took the gold from fellow Omanis Abdulhatif al Qasmi in second and Tameem al Balushi in third.

In the ICLA 4 Class, Othman Abdulkareem from the UAE finished first, ahead of Omani sailors Mohammed al Qasmi in second and Nebras al Owaisi in third. Al Muta'asem al Farsi from Oman finished strongly in the ICLA 6 Class to claim gold, overcoming Abdulmalik al Hanai and Ali al Sadi in a close battle for second and third.

The first para sailing competition ever to take place at Musannah Race Week ended with the crew of Adil al Siyabi and Ahmed al Shukaili coming back from an early disqualification to win the gold. The crew of Ali al Ghasaini and Ahmed al Harrasi came second overall while Hassan al Lawati and Zahar al Atabi got the third position.

Shaima al Asmi, Musannah Race Week Project Manager, said, "This was a fantastic return for Musannah Race Week. With 50 top young sailors from around the world here to compete at such a high level, we are sure that the future of sailing is going to be very bright. We hope to see everyone here again in the future."

She added, "The introduction of para sailing and the SailFree team has been overwhelmingly successful. We are so proud of our para sailors and look forward to



seeing them develop. One of the main components of Musannah Race Week is the social and educational aspect, where sailors from different backgrounds are able to interact and learn from each other on and off the water. This is such a valuable experience for everybody and we are delighted that the event was able to return this year." The event is supported by a line-up including the national carrier Oman Air, OQ and the Barcelo Musannah Resort as official partners, and Be'ah as

environmental supporter. The National Mineral Water Company Salsabeel Water provided all essential water supplies for the event while the Royal Navy of Oman provided medical support throughout.

Oman Sail is a strong supporter of World Sailing's 'Back the Bid' campaign to reinstate para sailing to the 2028 Paralympics in Los Angeles, USA. The success of the inaugural para sailing event in Al Musannah shows the potential of the sport to grow and for sailing

“This was a fantastic return for Musannah Race Week. With 50 top young sailors from around the world here to compete at such a high level, we are sure that the future of sailing is going to be very bright. We hope to see everyone here again in the future

SHAIMA AL ASMI
Musannah Race Week Project Manager

to become inclusive across Oman and the Middle East.

A busy winter season of sailing continues in Al Musannah Sports City straight away with the 2021 Asian 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 Championships.

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7th Phase of Sohar Industrial City to launch in 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

A business delegation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Branch of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, visited Sohar Industrial City, which falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates — Madayn, to get acquainted with the available investment opportunities.

Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, Director General of Sohar Industrial City, received the Omani business owners and briefed them on Madayn's mission in attracting industrial investments and providing continued support through regionally and globally competitive strategies, good infrastructure, value adding services, and easy governmental processes.

During the visit, Madayn officials informed the delegation that Sohar Industrial City is divided into seven phases where the occupancy rate in the first four phases has touched 100 per cent, while the occupancy rate of phases 5 and 6 is almost 70 per cent, and the occupancy rate in phase 7 is about 40 per cent.

They added that work is under way in the development of phase 7 of Sohar Industrial City, which will be completed during the first half of next year.

Being implemented on an area of 8.5 million sqm, Phase 7 of Sohar Industrial City includes road works, water and sewage networks, sewage treatment plant, rain drainage channels, water tanks in addition to security requirements.

The Omani business owners were then introduced to the incentives offered by Madayn to attract local and foreign investments into its industrial cities across the Sultanate.

They were also briefed on the objectives of Masar Service Centre in Sohar Industrial City, which was established by Madayn to offer an integrated platform that eases investment procedures for the investors to obtain related approvals, permits and licenses under one roof and within specific timeframe.

The Omani business delegation then toured Sohar Industrial City and visited Asian Paints Company, Al Ahlia Converting Industries Company, and Modern Sohar Mills (Attaya International Investment).

Oman's first zip-line project under construction in Khasab

NEW HOTSPOT: Move to position Musandam Governorate as destination for adventure tourism

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Construction work has commenced on the Sultanate of Oman's first zip-line project at Khasab in Musandam Governorate — a joint initiative of Omran Group and the Office of the Minister of State and Governor of Musandam, aimed at positioning this rugged mountainous region as a destination for adventure tourism.

Dubai-based HPS Play Company, a specialist in the design, manufacture and installation of adventure and playground equipment, has been contracted to design and build the facility in the proximity of Atana Khasab, a leading hotel property that forms part of Omran's hospitality portfolio.

Spanning a distance of 1,500 metres, the zip-line starts from a nearby mountain elevation at a height of about 250-metres above sea level and ends close to the hotel. A number of contractors have also been appointed to provide related engineering and aerial survey services, as well as construct an access road to the mountaintop site of the zip-line.

Omran had earlier announced that the zip-line initiative would be part of an array of activities designed to attract adventure-minded visitors to Khasab and other parts of the governorate.

The list includes via ferrata, hiking trails, cross isthmus and mountain biking trails, aimed at offering unique experiences to all kinds of tourists.



(Picture for illustration only)

Zip-lines typically form an integral part of the infrastructure offered by any resort or destination being promoted as a hotspot for adventure tourism.

Zip-lines are also planned in Al Jabal al Akhdhar, (Misfat al Abriyeen) Jabal Shams, and Dhofar Governorate, among other locations. They are key to jumpstarting the growth of domestic tourism around scenic natural locales characterised by mountains and wadis.

Significantly, the zip-line project will complement Musandam's tourist offerings, which is currently focused predominantly on its stunning marine attractions characterised by its enchanting fjords, underwater wealth and dolphin and whale watching opportunities.

Onshore, the governorate's soaring mountains and plunging

ravines afford opportunities for trekking and hiking activities.

Adding a new component to its diverse tourism offering is a new amphibious aircraft service being introduced for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman.

Last month, the Civil Aviation Authority green-lighted applications from two companies to provide seaplane services, which are expected to cover Musandam as well.

Well-known developer Muscat National Development and Investment Company (ASAAS) is also developing the Bassah Beach site in Wilayat Khasab into a four-star resort combined with a public park.

The Sultanate of Oman's strategically important, northernmost enclave overlooking the Strait of Hormuz is also the focus of wider development encompassing

manufacturing, higher education, ports and maritime transportation and food security.

In June, in response to the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Council of Ministers issued guidelines for, among other things, the establishment of a branch of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the governorate, in addition to the creation of a strategic stockpile of essential food commodities and medicines.

Additionally, Khasab Port will be upgraded into a logistics hub to stimulate imports and exports, as well as attract direct shipping lines. Furthermore, a new industrial city for light and medium industries will be established at Mahas in Khasab Wilayat, while economic and tourism zones will be delineated across the region to catalyse investment inflows.



Food Security Lab unlocks RO1.3 bn worth investments

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Food Security Laboratory held in September spawned as many as 102 projects and investment opportunities totalling around RO 1.3 billion, said Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Agriculture Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

He told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the projects would augment the agro sector's output

by one million tonnes annually.

The current yield of agricultural crops is now more 4 million tonnes — an increase that will meet self-sufficiency with regard to some key staples.

The Lab has highlighted the need for the cultivation of certain strategic crops, such as onions, potatoes and garlic aimed at reducing Oman's dependence on imports, he said.

The date palm crop, which is the biggest in terms of area under cultivation, continues to provide

improved yields, he stated.

A success story of the agro sector is wheat cultivation, with as many as 2,445 acres currently under cultivation across the country, he said. The recent decision by Oman Flour Mills to procure locally harvested wheat will also drive the growth of this crop, he noted.

The yield currently ranges from 1.7 tonnes per acre, rising to 2.5 tonnes if the crop is based on Nejd, Jabrin, Bahla and Nizwa species.

Bank Muscat wins corporate and consumer digital banking awards

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has won two prestigious awards for digital banking from Global Finance. The awards for Best Consumer Digital Bank and Best Corporate/Institutional Digital Bank were received by Mohammed bin Sultan al Habsi, Chief Representative, UAE Representative Office, Bank Muscat, at the Middle East Digital Bank and Innovators Awards 2021 held recently in Dubai.

The winners were selected based on a number of criteria, including their strategy for attracting and servicing digital customers, success in getting clients to use digital offerings, growth of digital customers, breadth of product offerings, evidence of tangible benefits gained from digital initiatives, and web/mobile site design and functionality.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, Chief Corporate Banking Officer, Bank Muscat, said: “Bank Muscat is delighted to win these prestigious awards from Global Finance, recognising the innovative digital banking services provided by the bank for its customers. With emphasis on multiple channels and new products that cater to different sectors, the bank is focused on maintaining its leadership in offering cutting-edge products and services, including electronic payment and online services. We would like to thank all our corporate and retail banking customers for their continued patronage and strong confidence in



Bank Muscat's brand.”

Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi added: “Bank Muscat is in the process of implementing its digital strategy to offer the latest of the digital financial services and solutions for its individual, corporate, as well as government and public sector customers.

“The international awards won by the bank recognise its success in providing the best digital banking services to all its customers, in line with latest global and technology trends. We are delighted to keep offering new services, which are especially designed to meet the ever-growing needs of our customers.”

Digitalisation is in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and will further enhance financial inclusion in Oman.

The bank's customers are

benefiting immensely from the latest devices, solutions and technological advances made available to them through the implementation of cutting-edge technology. As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 174 branches and over 800 ATMs, CDMs and other devices. The number of retail customers using digital banking services have increased manifold in recent years to over 1.2 million retail banking customers today.

Similarly, digitalisation is helping corporates too speed up transactions, optimise the efficiency of their employees, minimise data-entry related risks in payment processes and improve security.

Digitalisation addresses the

entire value chain of corporates by providing sophisticated analysis of data sets, real-time insights to ensure transparency and greater control for corporate customers to make better-informed decisions. With state-of-the-art solutions and services like the Business-to-Business (B2B) Connect platform, Corporate Online Banking platform, Direct Debit solutions and Remote Deposit Capture, Bank Muscat's Corporate Banking offer secure 'best-in-class' digital solutions and services are based on customer feedback and needs as well as global trends.

It must be noted that Bank Muscat recently launched its new and improved Corporate Banking website (<https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/Business/Pages/Business-Home-page.aspx>), which provides direct links to services and solutions including Corporate Online Banking, business loans and solutions, trade finance, agency and custody services, sectoral insights and eApplications for various trade solutions and other banking services. The bank plans to keep introducing new digital services and features that further enhance banking convenience and security in the future too.

Bank Muscat's customer-centric vision and the adoption of global best practices have resulted in numerous accolades in the past.

Earlier in June 2021, Bank Muscat was recognised as one of the “Top 100 Companies in the Middle East” and as one of the “Top 50 Banks in the Region” by Forbes Middle East.

ahlibank sustains growth in Q3; reports 10.1pc net profit

MUSCAT: Corroborating its current market standing and competitiveness, ahlibank has reported a 10.1-per cent growth in net profit in its preliminary unaudited financial results for the nine-month period ending on September 30, 2021. This growth demonstrates its financial and operational resilience and notable overall performance, despite the global economic recession.

The bank was able to achieve an impressive 18.2 per cent growth in total assets, amounting to RO 3,065.2 million. While its operating income increased by 11.9 per cent, reaching RO 60.14 million as of end of September 2021; its operating expenses increased by 9.4 per cent.

Customer deposits increased by 15 per cent, reaching RO 2,041.2 million, compared with the same period in 2020.

Said bin Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO, ahlibank, remarked, “Being resilient, despite the ever-changing financial and economic landscape, has allowed us to strengthen our core banking services and products, while continuously serving our customers and clients by responding to their needs more swiftly and effectively. It has also been a key factor in facilitating the sustainability of our operational activities for further growth.”

“To maintain this exemplary performance — amidst the gradual economic recovery — we will continue to develop our competitive strength by enhancing and expanding our product and service portfolio; boosting our digital capabilities and infrastructure, with particular focus on upgrading our e-banking service; and widening our branch network, alongside the expansion of our headquarters.”

Adding further, he said, “As a testament to our commitment to the ‘customer-first’ approach we uphold, we recently won two awards at the prestigious OER Oman Banking and Finance Awards 2021: ‘Excellence in Private Banking’ for ahlibank



and ‘Excellence in Islamic Retail Banking’ for ahli Islamic.”

Complementing its business operations and activities is the bank's heightened commitment to corporate social responsibility, which demonstrates its support to the government's economic development agenda. The bank has contributed to the national Covid-19 vaccination campaign, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, whereby it was able to provide vaccines to more than 3,000 people, including its staff and their families.

It has also supported the ‘Back to School’ venture, which aims to provide school supplies to children from low-income families.

Further, the bank has sponsored the ‘Not Discovered Yet’ filming project, the first exploratory mission that aimed at highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's environmental and tourism features for global audiences.

During the third quarter of this year, the bank launched the seventh edition of its ‘Graduate Development Programme’ to train, consequently employ, new graduates for national competency and prepare them for competitive career opportunities in the banking sector. This initiative demonstrates its support and commitment to the Oman Vision 2040 of empowering Omani youth.

“We are currently witnessing the results of positive market indicators, and I am confident this will drive the bank to continue upgrading its services to provide a unique banking experience in accordance with its ambitious vision for a sustainable growth,” Al Hatmi concluded.

BP holds workshop to support SMEs, entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: BP with Youth Sada held a workshop to support economic growth in the Al Dhahirah Governorate. Targeting over 15 SMEs, the Habbah workshops are part of BP Oman's social investment programme which commits to developing Omani entrepreneurs through the sharing of knowledge.

Yousuf al Ojaili, BP Oman President, commented: “Building in-country value is a core part of our role in the Sultanate of Oman and a commitment that runs through everything we do. We're proud to have a strong track record of supporting our country's SMEs and entrepreneurs.

“The Habbah programme is another example of how we're



doing this — by sharing knowledge and helping build the skills and expertise required for the future.”

“Our ultimate goal is to sustainably grow national talent and create jobs or markets that

increase economic value in the Sultanate of Oman.”

bp has had an upstream presence in the Sultanate of Oman since 2007 and its Block 61 ownership consists of BP 40 per



cent; Makarim Gas Development Limited (OQ) 30 per cent; PTTEP 20 per cent; PC Oman Ventures Limited (PETRONAS) 10 per cent.

Block 61 is one of the Middle East's largest tight gas accumulations, in which gas lies at depths of up to five kilometres in narrow bands of hard, dense rock. BP is a pioneer in tight gas and has applied its technology and expertise to develop this resource.

Oman Post, Asyad Express explore automation in e-commerce

MUSCAT: Oman Post & Asyad Express, member of Asyad Group, participated at Scalex Dubai (Supply Chain and Logistics Excellence) conference as part of Hypermotion Dubai, taking place on the sidelines of the Expo 2020 Dubai.

Sayyid Nasr al Busaidy, General Manager Customer Experience at Oman Post & Asyad Express, joined policy makers, strategists and industry experts in a panel session titled ‘Automation Strategies to Manage Growth in eCommerce Fulfilment’, in order to outline the challenges and opportunities within the Middle

East's eCommerce, as well as logistics and supply chain sectors.

Panelists discussed the latest digitally enhanced technologies that will be driving future automation and sustainability initiatives and efforts. They also focused on how to improve eCommerce performance through automation and robotics.

In addition, Sayyid Nasr also shared the Oman Post & Asyad Express model and latest milestones related to the company's recently opened state-of-the-art fulfilment centre in Muscat.

Commenting during the event,



Sayyid Nasr said, “We discussed how the eCommerce and logistics industries are transforming when it comes to introducing,

implementing and accelerating automation in the marketplace. At the end of the day, the ultimate goal is to guarantee customer

satisfaction and meeting the evolving customer expectations and requirements.”

He added, “Hence, Oman Post & Asyad Express opened its state-of-the-art fulfilment centre earlier this year. The integrated-logistical solutions' facility offers customers storage services, as well as pick, pack and dispatch of online orders for last-mile domestic and international delivery, while integrating the latest technologies and facilities that provide local and international eRetailers of all sizes, with innovative, fast, and reliable fulfilment and logistics services.”

The Scalex conference is part of Hypermotion Dubai, the Middle East edition of the German-initiated industry convex that reimagines the transportation and logistics industries.

The conference drawn together global disruptors who are re-envisioning travel, moving of goods and services in the near future.

The conference aimed to tear down boundaries between logistics, mobility, infrastructure and transport, while looking to replace them with networked, integrated and inter-modal systems.

South Korea pledges support for Oman's green hydrogen ambitions

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

South Korea is ready to partner with the Sultanate of Oman in the realisation of the latter's vision to create a new energy economy powered by hydrogen, the Korean Ambassador said here last week.

Speaking at a reception to mark the Korean Foundation & Armed Forces Day, Ambassador Kim Chang-Kyu said Korea is well-positioned to support Oman's decarbonisation goals given Seoul's prioritisation of hydrogen as the driver of its future economy.

Commending the Sultanate of Oman on its green ambitions, the Ambassador said: "the Sultanate of Oman has a world reputation as a reliable energy producer and exporter. The Sultanate of Oman is well placed due to its climate, location and know-how to drive the shift towards renewables and hydrogen. Policies including the Hy-Fly initiative to drive the development and deployment of hydrogen are in line with Oman Vision 2040."

In this regard, Ambassador Kim described Korea as a "suitable partner for the Sultanate of Oman" in the development of the latter's next growth engine. Seoul, he further noted, has prioritised hydrogen as a key factor in its



Dr Mohammed al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals, with Ambassador Kim Chang-Kyu at a reception marking Korean Foundation & Armed Forces Day.

future economic development.

"Green hydrogen has emerged as a key enabler in committing to carbon neutrality and coping with the climate crisis", said Ambassador Kim, adding: "I am very confident that this emerging marketplace will provide new opportunities for our businesses to further strengthen the bilateral strategic partnership."

Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals, was the Guest of Honour at the event, which was also attended by dignitaries from the State Council, Majlis Ash'shura,

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defence.

In his address, Ambassador Kim also praised the "close economic partnership" enjoyed by the two countries.

"Korea is the Sultanate of Oman's fifth largest trading partner (after) China, India, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Both countries are in close talks to take this cooperation further by exploring new avenues in the future, such as Smart Technology and Green Energy."

He also lauded the Sultanate of Oman Government for its efforts to position the country as a logistics destination.

"The Sultanate of Oman, leveraging on its geostrategic location, is becoming a global hub for logistics. I cannot overstate the importance of logistics in the global value chain, health and food security.

According to the World Bank, the Port of Salalah is ranked 6th among the 351 ports globally in its operational efficiency.

Within a decade, every business and investor will pursue location, location and location", he remarked.

By harnessing its full potential at the midpoint between Africa and the South Asia, the Sultanate of Oman can emerge as the "master of connectivity and marketability", he further noted.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, there were high level exchange visits by the two countries, said Ambassador Kim.

Notable was the visit of the Korean Defence Minister and Vice Foreign Minister to Muscat this year, as well as the visit of the Omani Defence Secretary General to Seoul — visits that demonstrated "strong political support towards our shared goal of peace and security", he added.

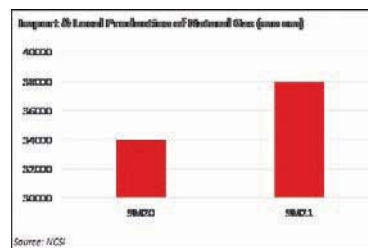
MSX closes lower, weighed down by most indices

MUSCAT: The MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.31 per cent. All sub-indices ended lower except industrial index. Services & financial Index closed higher by 1.19 per cent and 0.32 per cent, respectively. Industrial index closed up by 0.10 per cent. while MSX Shariah Index closed lower by 0.16 per cent.

Ats its EGM last week, Om-invest announced the following: To consider and approve the proposed issuance of RO 52m subordinated perpetual Mudaraba trust certificates (the Proposed Issuance) to Jabreen International Development Company SAOC (Jabreen), a fully owned subsidiary of the Company and a related-party, through Private Placement, as per the terms set; and to consider and approve the reduction of the issued share capital of the Company from RO 80.77m to RO 66.83 million by fully cancelling the treasury shares that the Company shall receive as part of the exchange transaction with Jabreen after completing the Proposed Issuance to Jabreen.

In its latest Financial Stability Report, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) said that Conventional and Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman are adequately-provisioned to tackle risks stemming from non-performing loans (NPLs) — a concern exacerbated by the economic downturn and the pandemic.

At the end of 2020, the stock



of gross NPLs (Stage 3 loans since the implementation of IFRS 9 in 2018) amounted to RO 1.111 billion (2019: RO 890 million) or 4.2 per cent (2019: 3.5 per cent) of the banks' gross loans. The asset quality of the Islamic banking financing portfolio also remained strong with a non-performance financing (NPF) ratio of 1.9 per cent at the end of December 2020, which is among the lowest in the region, it pointed out.

Net NPLs of the banking sector amounted to RO 406 million or 1.6 per cent of the net loans at the end of 2020.

"This reflects that the existing loan portfolio of banks is well covered against expected credit losses through adequate provisions with the coverage ratio (Stage 3 provisions to NPLs) of 63.4 per cent (102 per cent including Stage 1 & 2 provisions)", it stated.

The total restructured loans in 2020 rose to RO 1.144 billion (2019: RO 970 million; 2018 RO 564 million). Moreover, the restructured loans classified as performing loans were RO 919 million or 3.5 per cent of gross loans.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

Trendy flagship Huawei nova 9 debuts in MENA

MUSCAT: Huawei Consumer Business Group announced the new Huawei nova 9, the Trendy Flagship & Camera King to consumers in Middle East and Africa during a regional launch event that took place in Dubai.

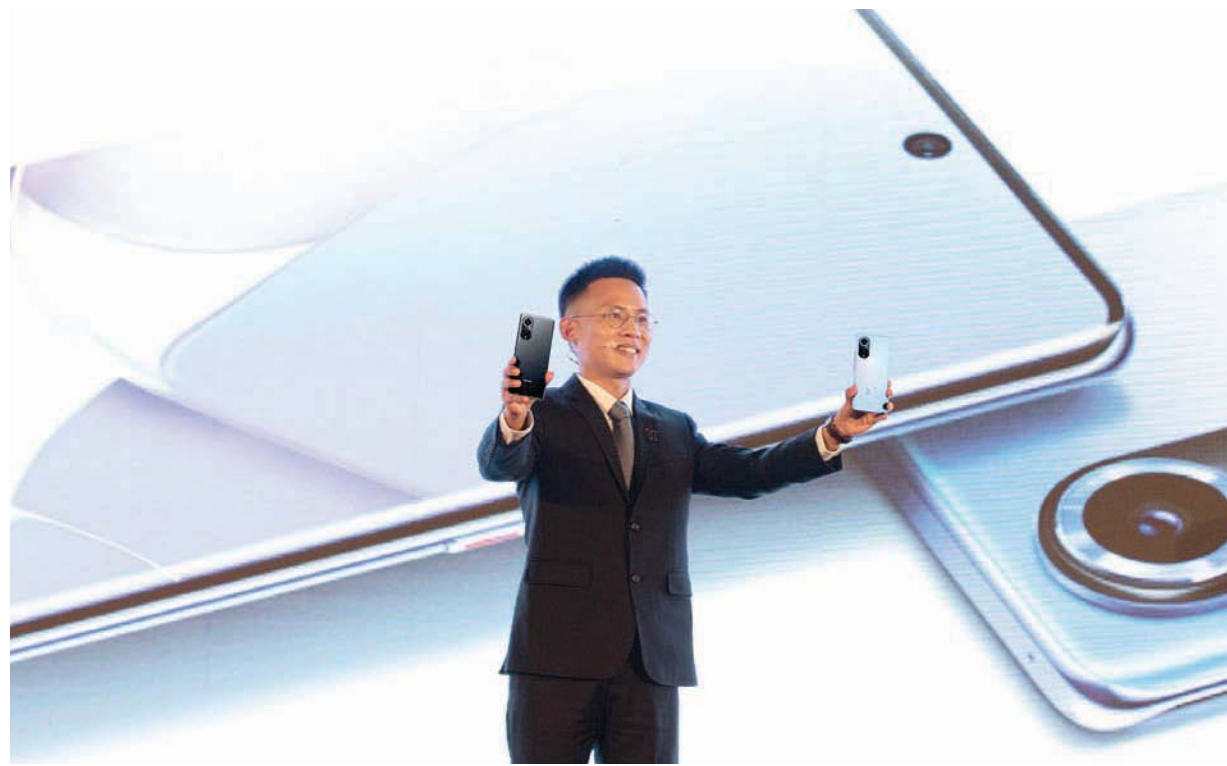
Defined by innovative features and fashion forward design elements, Huawei's latest nova device will spark new inspirations thanks to its powerful camera system and all new videography features, which create new possibilities for users as they record moments in their lives.

Huawei nova 9 debuts with a new colourway — Colour No 9.

It boasts a range of flagship-grade camera technology including a 50MP Ultra Vision Camera system, along with the RYYB colour filter array (CFA) and XD Fusion Engine. The camera enables users to capture impressive images and videos, even in low-light situations.

The responsive 120Hz Original-Colour Curved Display, powerful processor, excellent battery life and support for blazing fast charging speeds with 66W Huawei SuperCharge ensure a fluid experience for avid mobile gamers, while the Super Device capabilities seamlessly facilitate synergy between the handset and other Huawei products.

Pablo Ning, President of Huawei Consumer Business Group — Middle East and Africa said: "Connecting Huawei with a younger generation of consumers, the nova Series is designed to be the most outstanding of products. Through powerful hardware updates and operating system integration, the Huawei nova 9 introduces an exciting array of features including a remarkable design with an all-new colourway



Pablo Ning, President of Huawei Consumer Business Group, MENA.

— Colour No 9, a staggering 50MP Ultra Vision Camera system, 66W Huawei SuperCharge and futuristic Super Device capabilities. Moreover the 4K selfie video and Continuous Front/Rear Recording offer more ways for users to create engaging videos and respond to the rising demand of vlogging."

Breathtaking new design: The Huawei nova 9 is an elegant smartphone. It introduces a new Colour No 9 colourway, which is created with an all-new Starry Flash AG Glass process that adds a unique texture to the chassis and highlights the iconic camera module, giving it greater visual emphasis.

Under a spotlight, the whole device shines and sparkles. It also has a stunning 6.57-inch 120Hz Original-Colour Curved Display with a tapered surface that flows like a waterfall, minimising the

left and right bezels for more immersive viewing. It can display 1.07 billion colours, features a refresh rate of up to 120Hz and 300Hz touch sampling rate for improved responsiveness.

The design of the Huawei nova 9 itself also stands to impress, measuring only 7.77mm thick with a weight of 175g. It also features a Nebula-inspired Star Orbit Ring that was first debuted with the Huawei nova 8. It comes with a "nova" ring emblem that highlights the Star Orbit Ring, which makes it even more recognisable and eye-catching. Combined, these design features represent not only a continuation of a legacy, but also the rebirth of it.

The rear camera system features a 50MP ultra vision camera, an 8MP ultra wide angle camera, a macro camera and a depth camera. It includes a large 1/1.56-inch

sensor and a RYYB CFA with high light sensitivity, collecting 40 per cent more light compared to a standard RRGB sensor. This allows users to capture exquisite photos and videos even in low light conditions, ensuring that the bright parts of the image are not overexposed while the dark areas are clear and packed with detail.

Once the camera hardware captures an image, the XD Fusion Engine gets to work, using sophisticated computational photography techniques to greatly enhance image detail and quality.

VLOG INNOVATION:

Huawei nova 9 features a 32MP High-Res front camera that supports 4K video capture and AIS (AI Image Stabilisation) Video Stabilisation, allowing users to capture high definition footage of themselves as they talk to the camera or when they vlog.

THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED SMARTPHONE BOASTS A REMARKABLE DESIGN, A 50MP ULTRA VISION CAMERA, FRONT CAMERA VLOG FEATURES, 66W HUAWEI SUPERCHARGE AND SUPER DEVICE FEATURES

Thanks to Continuous Front/Rear Recording, users can also switch between the front and rear cameras, allowing them to fluidly capture their story within a single video file.

Dual-View Video recording allows users to showcase their live reaction to events, simultaneously using the front and rear cameras with no editing required or, for when you want to show the big picture and the detail, you can simultaneously capture a close up shot and wide angle shot at the same time.

The device supports new Touch Turbo technology, taking mobile gaming to a new level as it allows for more accurate and responsive controls. Whether for gaming or simply browsing the Internet, the Huawei nova 9 delivers excellent battery life with the high capacity 4300mAh battery.

In addition, down time is kept to a minimum, with the new nova smartphone supporting 66W Huawei SuperCharge for high speed charging.

NEW INSPIRATIONS:

With the Huawei nova 9, controlling multiple devices at once is as easy as controlling just one single device, thanks to the Super Device features. The Device+ tab in Control Panel enables users to easily control or set up multi-device collaboration with other devices, such as the Huawei Vision, FreeBuds, MatePad and MateBook.

For example, users can tap on the Huawei MatePad icon to activate Smartphone-Tablet Multi-screen Collaboration; tap the Huawei MateBook icon for

Smartphone-PC Multi-screen Collaboration or tap the Huawei FreeBuds icon to seamlessly switch their audio output to their Huawei earbuds.

Running on EMUI 12, the Huawei nova 9 offers a smart and seamless experience to users. The trusted, innovative and secure AppGallery is available on the Huawei nova 9, where users can download a wide range of high-quality apps.

HUAWEI CARE OFFERS:

Customers buying the new Huawei nova 9 can also purchase Huawei Care available in Oman now through authorised sales channels and are eligible for a warranty on their devices. Huawei Care provides worry-free quality assurance and helps Huawei users extend the product service life, allowing them to keep their devices for a longer period of time.

Huawei FreeBuds 3 + Huawei music for 3 months free + Huawei video for 1 month free + Starzplay 1 year premium + Additional RO 15 off only for registered users on <https://eshopabt.com/> (start from 7 pm) from November 3-10, 2021. STARZPLAY VIP 1 year free is valid if you claim it by March 31, 2022. Huawei Music and Huawei Video free VIP subscriptions are valid for first-time users only.

The Huawei nova 9 will be available in the all-new Colour No 9 and Black in the Sultanate of Oman on 11 with pre-orders which began on November 3, 2021 at a price of RO 194.900 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers.

Supermarkets commit to halve environmental impact by 2030

The bosses of five of Britain's biggest supermarkets have promised to halve the environmental impact of a weekly food shop by the end of this decade, as leaders meet in Glasgow at a key climate change summit. Chief executives from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Co-op and M&S said they would work with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to reduce natural destruction. Under a pledge they will halve the amount of global warming that shopping baskets cause, the forests that are cut down to fill the baskets, the impact of the agriculture and seafood in baskets, and the food waste and packaging they produce. Every year, the supermarkets, who together reach more than half of UK food shoppers, will submit data to WWF on each of these areas and publish their actions.

The shops also promised that before the end of next year they would set science-based targets to help keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. The targets will cover all categories of emissions — known as scopes.

“As CEOs of leading UK food retailers, we recognise that a future without nature is a future without food. By 2030, we need to halt the loss of nature,” the supermarkets agreed in a joint statement.

WWF Chief Executive Tanya Steele said that it will not be possible to tackle climate change and keep global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius without dealing with global food supplies.

“Food production is one of the biggest threats to our planet and we will only tackle the climate and nature emergency if food retailers play their part,” she added.

“The promises these CEOs have made are game changing and we hope other food retailers will follow in their footsteps so that every shopper can be confident that the products they buy aren't fuelling the climate crisis and pushing precious wildlife closer to the brink.”

The food sector is responsible for more than 30 per cent of total climate emissions, and 60 per cent of the lost nature around the world, so reducing its impact can be a major step towards fighting climate change. — dpa

This deal plants the seeds for food and farming to be considered serious parts of the route to net zero emissions

MATT WILLIAMS
Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit



LAMBORGHINI ON SALE

A Lamborghini Aventador coupe 6,5 V12 is seen in the courtyard of the Economy Ministry, as part of an auction sale of exceptional goods for the 10th anniversary of the Agency for the Management and Recovery of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AGRASC) in Paris. All the goods offered for sale come from seizures and judicial confiscations in the context of criminal proceedings. — AFP

Is ESG just the latest buzzword?



STEFANO VIRGILLI
The writer is a member of the International Press Association

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO E AND S, A MULTITUDE OF ASPECTS ARE NEW AND NEEDS TIME TO ADJUST

Last week we introduced the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework as an evaluation – not valuation – criteria to potentially predict sudden drops in price shares due to scandals or media crisis.

In this second and last part we will see how ESG is likely to evolve and to become more intertwined with the everyday business life.

Undeniably the US are at the forefront of the ESG movement.

Last week we have seen how the E is the most trending topic on the media. Environmental impact can be assessed and measured relatively easily. CO2 in the air is an obvious indicator. Registered temperature is another. But when it comes to the S, all become more subjective. According to Judy Samuelson, Executive Director of the Business and Society Programme at the Aspen Institute, 85 per cent of a company's valuation can be attributed to intangibles such as trust and reputation.

A measure that many corporations are implementing — and often must implement to maintain the status of certain certifications — is to offer a whistleblowing route to employees who want to anonymously report unfair practices and discrimination at work.

Apple has tied their bonus system to the

E and S by adapting performance incentives to include ESG elements.

Apple's Compensation Committee will assess executives on alignment with “Apple Values and other key community initiatives during 2021” to modify its bonus payouts by up to 10 per cent.

Currently, 20 per cent of companies on the Russell 1,000 link cash incentives to ESG performance. While the Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) was the buzzword 10 years ago, ESG seems to be stealing the show moving forward. While CSR was focused on the S alone, ESG seems to be more holistically integrated.

Many companies have announced this year that besides the usual Financial Reports they will publish ESG and CSR reports to demonstrate transparency and best practices beyond business.

ESG Accreditations and Awards are also a reality. Acer Inc received a Silver Class distinction in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2021, which featured only the top ESG (environmental, social and governance) scoring companies.

A pioneer on E has been Home Depot. Since 1999 they implemented the Wood Purchasing Policy, becoming an ethical leader in the sourcing guidelines.

Home Depot's strict procedures are aimed at protecting developing American

forests. An annual Responsible Sourcing Report is published to detail the standards, audit process, supplier partnerships and more.

The governance part of the equation is indeed the most robust, with part of it often being mandated by law or requested by regulating agencies. For example, bribery and corruption is something that has been frowned upon for decades. So are elusive tax strategies.

Banks and financial institutions have been investing more and more on compliance, especially with regards to anti money laundry measures. So, nothing much new in the G. But when it comes to E and S, a multitude of aspects are new and needs time to adjust.

With many observers requesting for more EGS accountability, perhaps being mandated by government, the conversation in the US ended up on the agenda of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Yet, despite the obvious excitement about ESG, SEC Commissioner Elad Roisman clarified that “SEC rule-writing is slow by design” and does not believe there is enough certainty around standardisations for new ESG disclosures in the immediate future. **(Concluded)**

(The writer is a member of the International Press Association)

Towards European green cohesion



LILYANA PAVLOVA

The author is Vice-President of the European Investment Bank

AS A NEW STRATEGY OUTLINED BY THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK NOTES, THE EU'S REGIONAL FUNDING POLICIES MUST EVOLVE TO ADDRESS MULTIPLE GOALS AT ONCE

Many of the European Union's poorer members are in a double bind. Though these countries are among those most exposed to the destructive effects of climate change, they also face greater risks from the shift to a green, zero-emission, digital economy.

To achieve a smooth and just transition, these countries will need investments geared towards their specific needs.

Historically, much of the public investment in the EU's poorer countries has been in trade-related infrastructure such as highways and railways. But these growth-enhancing investment strategies now need to evolve to help everyone manage the costs of the green transition, which will require new forms of infrastructure and measures to support workers in carbon-intensive industries.

For Europe to carry out its ambitious climate agenda, it must address the relative paucity of investment in sustainability in economically weaker regions. That

is why the European Investment Bank is rethinking its own “cohesion orientation,” as outlined in a new paper examining our investments in less-developed parts of the EU. Our ambition is to raise the amount we lend in these regions to 45 per cent of our total investments, and to expand our support to include all regions where GDP per capita is below the EU average.

Using public finance to draw the EU closer together is one of the EIB's founding missions. Over the course of the EU's last seven-year budget period (2014-20), projects in cohesion regions accounted for 30 per cent of EIB lending — a total of €120.8 billion (\$139.6 billion), and those investments paid off handsomely.

Our internal models show that our lending in cohesion regions over this period will boost growth by at least half a percentage point and employment by at least two-tenths of a percentage point each year for the next 30 years.

I have seen the positive effects of EU cohesion policies firsthand through my previous experience as Bulgaria's minister of regional development and head of the managing authority for regional development. Financial instruments like EIB loans, guarantees, equity investments, advisory services, and partnerships have materially accelerated investment, including by crowding in private capital. Now, these instruments will complement the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility and Just Transition Mechanism.

Although the EU's less-developed regions are mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, parts of Portugal, Greece, and the southern regions of Italy and Spain have long histories of low growth and are also still catching up.

Moreover, many formerly wealthy industrial regions are struggling to cope with globalisation and technological change. In the EIB's new approach,

cohesion regions (with GDP per capita below 75 per cent of the EU average) will receive up to 23 per cent of our total EU lending by 2025.

But the European Commission has also identified “transition regions” with incomes around 75-100 per cent of the EU average as a new vulnerable group. These regions — which can be found in countries ranging from France and Spain to Finland and the Netherlands — will need targeted support to deal with challenges such as dependence on low-tech manufacturing, rising unit labour costs, relatively low educational attainment, and declining industrial employment.

Fortunately, there need not be any contradiction between cohesion and ambitious climate goals. In fact, the two go hand in hand, because a failure to ensure that no one is left behind will almost certainly derail the climate agenda.

But to make this case to the

public, we must emphasise a longer-term perspective, reminding people that the costs associated with the green transition will be but a fraction of the catastrophic costs we will face if we fail to address climate change.

The power of this economic logic is why we at the EIB are confident that we can increase our lending to cohesion regions and expand the green share of our loan portfolio to 50 per cent by 2025.

The key is to target support carefully, identifying projects that serve both objectives. There is no shortage of investment opportunities in clean mobility, energy efficiency, renewable energy, water and wastewater management, and the industries at the centre of any circular economy, not least food and agriculture.

In Europe, at least, the potential disruption to jobs and industries from the digital transition is often overshadowed by the decarbonisation debate.

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SIT. WANTED

HND (UK) Cum Eng.
Sri Lankan, young dynamic boy with 3 years experience with autoCAD, full experience on building construction, take off measurement, estimation etc, looking for a suitable placement in Oman,
Email: tmsafnas@gmail.com, +96878149384

SRILANKAN, male Quantity Surveyor (BSc QS (Hons) reading) with 4 years of civil & ID experience in Oman. Looking for a job.
Contact: 92187572 Email: sifathasan1995@gmail.com

MECHANICAL
Engineer graduate, Indian male, 2 years experience, currently in Muscat on visit visa, knowledge in Primavera, PDMS, AutoCad, Solidworks, Microsoft Excel etc, seeks suitable placement.
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features



Painting nature on car sun shade

Omani artist Maysam bint Saleh al Ismaili has been customising car sun shades and making them as an alternative canvas for her work. Currently, in the last semester of her Environmental Science course, she managed to combine her passion for the art and her love for the environment through her current specialty... **P20**

CONSERVATION

READ



DUNE
BY FRANK HERBERT

The 1965 science fiction novel that is the basis of several adaptations, including the recent film directed by Denis Villeneuve.

For baleen whales, meals are tons of fun — and lots of tons

The first study to methodically calculate how much food blue whales and some of their close relatives eat has yielded a simple answer: a whole lot.

The blue whale, the largest animal in Earth's history, eats about 16 tonnes of krill daily in the North Pacific, gobbling up these tiny shrimp-like crustaceans with a filter-feeding system in the mouth using baleen plates made of keratin, the substance found in people's fingernails, scientists said on Wednesday.

"That is roughly the weight of one fully loaded school bus," said study co-author Nick Pyenson,

curator of fossil marine mammals at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington.

The researchers calculated daily food intake for seven baleen whale species, tracking 321 individual whales in the Atlantic, Pacific and Southern Oceans from 2010 to 2019. These gigantic marine mammals were found to eat up to three times more food than previous estimates that were based on stomach contents of hunted whales or extrapolations from smaller marine mammals.

The other species studied — humpback, fin, bowhead, right,

Antarctic minke and Bryde's whales — also devoured impressive amounts. North Pacific Humpback whales can eat 9 tonnes of krill daily, while fin whales consume 8 tonnes.

"It is an unimaginable amount of food. But large whales are themselves unimaginable. A blue whale is the size and weight of a Boeing 737," said Stanford University marine biologist Matthew Savoca, lead author of the study published in the journal *Nature*.

Blue whales, larger than even the biggest dinosaurs, can reach 110 feet (33 metres) long and 200 tonnes.

The researchers determined how often each whale engaged in feeding behaviour using electronic tag devices suction-cupped to the animal's back, with a camera, microphone, GPS locator and an instrument that tracks movement. Drones were used to estimate the size of a whale's mouth area and how much prey it could engulf. An acoustic method measured nearby



prey biomass.

Baleen whales eat zooplankton: small prey including krill, fish or crustaceans called copepods. The largest species prefer krill. Smaller species such as humpback, Bryde's or minke whales can eat schooling fish or krill.

Most baleen whales do not eat year-round, having a feast-or-famine annual cycle. They eat about 100 days annually, typically during a summer breeding season, while

eating little the rest of the year. Based on eating 16 tonnes in a day, the blue whale would consume perhaps 1,600 tonnes annually.

Food intake varied based on species, location and prey type. Among three humpback populations studied, North Pacific krill specialists consumed 9 tonnes daily, North Pacific fish eaters 3.5 tonnes and Southern Ocean krill specialists 3 tonnes daily.

— Reuters



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First 'Women's Only' Duathlon in Oman, a Roaring Success

BY RAY PETERSEN

The Sultanate of Oman's first ever Waterfront Oman Women's Duathlon has been run and won, and according to a spokeswoman for the organisers, prominent sports administrator, Baida al Zadjali, "It's only going to get bigger and better." The twenty participants ran 1.5 km, cycled 5 km, and then finished with another 1.5 km run on a course that was perfect as an introduction to the event. "Starting at the main sponsor's Waterfront Shopping Centre in Shatti Al Qurum, with the initial run along Qurum beach back to the transition area adjacent to the Sarooj beach. The cyclists raced out of the transition area to the grueling last 1.5 km back to the Waterfront Centre, with Caroline Bolle first, Reem al Harthy second, and Purva Narang third. The competitors were in awe of the experience, praising the organisers, sponsors and supporters of the event, one

commenting, "The inspirational volunteers, the Course Marshalls and spectators, all made it a very real race experience, and gave us a good boost." Al Zadjali explained that "This initial event, given its success, will be the first of three such events as part of a championship with events to follow on November 19, and December 3, and the 2021 Champion will be crowned based on accumulated points, at its conclusion." She also commented that the initial entries were sourced by word-of-mouth, on-site registration and social media, and is confident that "the word" will spread further and wider, of the event, especially for novices. Such events don't just 'happen,' and "the efforts in organising the event by the members of the committee with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth was outstanding," said Al Zadjali, "and such events could not have happened without the assistance of the Royal Oman Police in securing the course, logistical support and expertise from Triathlon Middle East, the sponsors such as Meezah

Design, Dhofar Water, Pocari Sweat, and myevents.om for the online registrations." The Oman Triathlon Committee, and the Sultanate of Oman's ministries appear committed to creating opportunities, and events for women's participation, this one being entirely organised by women, for women, as part of ongoing 'healthy lifestyles' objectives. Breaking down conservative barriers through engaging with modest distances speaks to making the events more attractive to novice participants, and gradually building awareness and competitor numbers. A fierce competitor herself in multisport events, Al Zadjali has achieved prominence by trekking the Empty Quarter, by representing the Sultanate of Oman on the World Triathlon Women's Committee, and in the once male dominated profession of Construction Project Management, so she walks the walk, an inspiration to other young Omani women who are yet to challenge themselves... maybe in the next duathlon?



COLUMN



Rasha Al Raisi
rashabooks@yahoo.com

'Interrogation' is a Tamil movie not to be missed

If you'd never watched a Tamil movie before, then I'd suggest that you start with the movie Interrogation (Visaranai) that's available on Netflix. The movie follows four migrant workers from Tamil Nadu working in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh. The first scene opens with them spending the night in a public park and how they start their day by dodging the guard who wants them to pay for their stay. Pandi (the main character played by Dinesh Ravi) works in a kiosk owned by a Tamil like him who's been living in the state for thirty years. Within the first fifteen minutes of the movie, the friends are captured and taken into custody for an unknown reason. But this is not a Hollywood movie where people are put in clean cells or have access to lawyers. The police station scenes are the most nerve-wracking not only because of the brutality practised on victims, but also for the confusion it creates: what have the four men done to deserve such treatment? And why can't they say something to stop it? The answer is simple yet tragic: none of them speaks or understands Telugu (the local language of the state) except for one who understands it but can't express himself in it. Even worst: they're being framed for a burglary they didn't commit. Luckily, fate has other plans. The four suspects path crosses with another Tamil police officer called Muthuvel (played by Samuthirakani) who vouches for Pandi, which makes the judge release the friends at once. Within minutes of their release, they're asked to return Muthuvel's favour before returning to Tamil Nadu with him. On arrival, they're told to tidy up the police station as the cleaners weren't coming that day. And while carrying out their chores they realise that both police stations they've been to share a common trait: both are tainted by corruption. Unwillingly, Pandi and his friends get entangled in the web of deceit that not only involves Muthuvel that they trusted blindly but the whole district. Would they be able to get away or will the corruption machine crush them like everyone else? The movie could be divided into two parts: the first part when the main characters are in Andhra Pradesh and the second part when they go back to Tamil Nadu. The first part is based on the autobiographical novel called Lockup written by N Chandrakumar, who was arrested in Guntur in 1983 and was subjected to two weeks of torture to confess to a crime he didn't commit. The second part was a bit confusing as it kept orbiting around local politics and police force corruption, which wasn't really clear to a foreign viewer like me. Nevertheless, the emotional intensity of the movie wasn't lost from the first scene till the final one. Viewers are kept at the edge of their seats by a combination of a looming sense of doom mixed with a flicker of hope that things can't be that bad. The movie won Amnesty International Italia Award at the 72nd Venice International Film Festival in 2015. It was also India's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards but sadly wasn't selected. It won many local film awards including Best Supporting Actor (Samuthirakani) and Best Feature Film in Tamil in the 63rd National Film Awards. Interrogation filled with paradoxes that makes you laugh incredulously at times questioning the absurdity of the whole situation and leaving you stunned at others; a rollercoaster ride that is thought-provoking yet emotionally draining. Not to be missed. **Rasha al Raisi** is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja.



Painting nature on car sun shade

BY JADE TAMPEPE

Car sun shades usually come in very bland colours. As protective shields to keep the sun out and keep car interiors relatively at a lower temperature, only banks or big companies usually dare to use it as a marketing tool making it giveaways for their clients and guests with their logos printed on it.

Omani artist Maysam bint Saleh al Ismaili found these materials an amazing alternative to her canvas. Currently, in the last semester of her Environmental Science course at the Higher College of Technology, she found a gap in the market which allows her to combine several of her passions – from creating vibrant and beautiful nature art and also earning at the same time by customising car sun shades thereby helping create awareness about the environment.

"So far, I already customised 50 sun shades. I only accept them based on my ability as a student. Those 50 custom designs were all sold out", Maysam shared.

"The time it takes to finish a piece depends on the painting itself. There are numerous factors to consider from the size of the piece, the amount of detail that goes into the work and sometimes, the time frame that the customer will give", she said.

"As an artist, I'm really attached to these pieces. Artist loves their artworks like a moth-

er loves their kids. It's really hard to have a favourite piece but there was a landscape painting which I hope I didn't have to sell. By the time I finished the detail of the artwork, it came out so beautifully that I wished I owned it. I still get to see it every now and then", she shared.

Maysam's car sun shade art usually combines text with nature as a backdrop. The landscape also changes depending on her mood. It can be the beautiful glowing light of the afternoon sun hitting the beach, the vibrant ebb and flow of the blue water in a paradise island or a close up of some plants.

"I am very passionate about my speciality although I care a lot about the environment. I started my journey as an artist from a very young age where I was bullied a lot and gratefully art was my escape from life and still is", she shared.

"I prefer working in a peaceful environment while watching a movie at the same time or listening to a podcast. However, I managed to find a way to work while I'm surrounded by people. Also, I mostly get inspired by the environment, nature photography and other peoples artworks and then come up with my own idea", she added.

For her art, Maysam usually uses acrylic feeling a deep connection with her brushes as she plays with the colours.

"What I usually want people to see through my artworks is the real beauty of art and how it can bring colours to life. How art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable",

she said.

She added, "Why I chose nature and environment is because of the love and the passion that I have towards it. It's really amazing how I turned that love into art and made people see that beauty not only that but also the importance of protecting nature plus creating a suitable environment. I believe in the power of art to inspire people to do good not just for themselves but for the environment."

In the Sultanate of Oman, Maysam shared that she hopes there will be a societal change about the role of women.

"I honestly think that the biggest misconception about Omani artists is that many people believe that a woman's place is at home and shouldn't be participating in exhibitions due to cultures and traditions. I always feel blessed for having a supporting family. I also believe that society can help women by providing them with private places where they can participate in art comfortably. When it comes to talents and supporting people men and women should be equal", she said.

Her advice to other artists is to continue doing it as it is one of the best journeys in life.

"Your life and your story don't have to be like everyone else. It is within your hands how you make your story unforgettable and above all, be the hero of your own story", she advocated.

To see more of her work and get the latest news about future exhibitions, you can follow her on Instagram: **@maysam_alismailli**

