

Holiday on Prophet's Birthday

With the approach of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) birthday anniversary, it has been decided that Tuesday (October 19) will be an official holiday for employees of units of the state administrative apparatus and other legal entities and establishments in the private sector. The Ministry of Labour said that the employers in the private sector establishments may agree on terms to engage employees on the said holiday – if deemed necessary the nature of their work – provided they compensate the workers for the holiday. – ONA



HIS MAJESTY REVIEWS
THE PROCESS OF DOMESTIC
DEVELOPMENT

HM UNDERSCORES
THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN
DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

GOVERNORS TOLD TO
HOLD REGULAR MEETINGS
WITH YOUTH

BUDGET TO BE ALIGNED
WITH THE GOALS OF 10TH
FIVE-YEAR PLAN

COORDINATION MUST
TO ADDRESS IMPACTS OF
FUTURE EMERGENCIES

DEPARTMENTS TOLD
TO MEET THE TARGETS
OF VISION 2040



STRATEGIC PLANS FOR MANAGEMENT OF CRISES

HIS MAJESTY PRESIDES OVER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah for the riches He bestowed on Oman and its loyal people. His Majesty prayed to the Almighty Allah to eternalise these riches in the Sultanate and grant Omani citizens and residents full

health and abundant bounties and peace.

His Majesty the Sultan reviewed the process of domestic development. He commended the earnest efforts exerted by all departments of the state at all levels.

His Majesty the Sultan listened to a briefing about action taken to address the aftermath of the recent tropical condition. He appreciated Omani society's manifestation of

values of solidarity, benevolence and collaboration in enhancing the efforts of state departments.

ROYAL DIRECTIVES

His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that he is following up, in person, the measures taken to handle the situation. He gave his Royal directives to all sectors of the state to coordinate among them to devise a system of advanced mobilisation to address the impacts

of future emergencies, if any. This, His Majesty said, requires drafting strategic plans for the management of crises, bearing in mind future developments and the availability of all resources for the protection of the population against the direct impacts of cyclones. The system also requires activating the preparedness of all sectors and relief centres, revising the distribution and designs of residential units and infrastructure projects, as

well as expanding drainage networks.

ROLE OF YOUTH

His Majesty the Sultan underscored the role of youth in the development process, noting that youth constitute the present and future of nations. In this context, His Majesty laid emphasis on the significance of mechanisms and channels of communication capable of portraying the efforts made to answer the needs of development in all sectors.

His Majesty stressed the importance of listening to youth and responding to their aspirations. For this purpose, His Majesty the Sultan instructed governors, in cooperation with the departments concerned, to hold regular meetings with youth, to take up issues of concern to them and listen to their views in a manner that enables them to perform the role expected of them in promoting the march of nation building.



HM PRESIDES OVER CABINET MEET



STRATEGIC PLANS FOR
MANAGEMENT OF CRISES

FROM PAGE 1
Within the framework of His Majesty's keenness to follow up employment initiatives endorsed by the government and the progress made in the National Employment Programme (NEP), His Majesty the Sultan underlined the need to combine the efforts of all institutions of the state to accomplish this mission.
His Majesty the Sultan stressed the need to forge sustainable solutions and programmes so that the Council of Ministers could follow-up the employment initiatives and address the issue, first things first.

STATE BUDGET
His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that the State Budget 2022 is aligned with the goals of the 10th Five-Year Plan,

the first step in Oman Vision 2040. The plan, His Majesty the Sultan said, seeks to achieve a set of developmental, economic and social goals, notably maintaining fiscal balance, boosting economic growth and encouraging investment, besides empowering the private sector to activate economic diversification sectors. To meet this objective, His Majesty exhorted all state sectors to cooperate towards maintaining fiscal stability and upholding the pace of development at all levels.
His Majesty the Sultan urged all departments concerned to join hands to develop a uniform system for the realisation of Oman Vision 2040's objectives, while at the same time cooperating with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit so that it could perform

its tasks in a proper manner.
His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to pursue the progress made in this track and to provide adequate support to government departments, to meet the targets of Oman Vision 2040 in all sectors and to address the challenges of the respective units and departments.
At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan touched on various matters of significance to the Sultanate and its citizens.
He also gave directives to all institutions of the state to establish suitable grounds to upgrade performance in all sectors.
His Majesty the Sultan wished all departments success in serving the common good of the nation and its people.
— ONA

Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
12/2021/PEIE/HQ-12	DESIGN AND BUILD OF MULTI-STOREY CAR PARKING IN KNOWLEDGE OASIS MUSCAT	26-10-2021	21-11-2021	Construction	Excellent	3000

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

madayn.om

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madayn



HM REVIEWS PROCESS OF
DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT,
COMMENDS EFFORTS BY
ALL DEPARTMENTS

1

STRESSES THE
IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING
TO YOUTH, RESPONDING
TO THEIR ASPIRATIONS

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APPRECIATES
OMANI SOCIETY'S MANIFESTATION
OF VALUES OF SOLIDARITY,
BENEVOLENCE, COLLABORATION

2

HM STRESSES THE NEED
TO FORGE SUSTAINABLE
SOLUTIONS AND
PROGRAMMES

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GAVE DIRECTIVES TO
ALL INSTITUTIONS TO
UPGRADE PERFORMANCE
IN ALL SECTORS

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Education and healthcare services restored

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 12

The governorates of North and South Al Batinah are witnessing hard work to restore normal life and repair the damage to the infrastructure and the citizens' houses and properties following the latest tropical cyclone.

The civil and military sectors are coordinating their efforts to get the mission done successfully.

The Ministry of Social Development continues to assess the damage and count those who were affected by the tropical cyclone in the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is assessing the damage at the agriculture and livestock sectors.

Restoration of basic services is progressing well and the healthcare services have been fully restored. The schools in the wilayats of Al Suwaiq and Al Khabourah are now ready to reopen on Sunday while all



the evacuation centres in Al Suwaiq were closed down with some families provided with temporary accommodation in Suhar.

In the Wilayat of Al Khabourah, only one evacuation centre has remained, accommodating 157 people of 21 families.

In comments to *Oman Arabic*, sister publication of

the *Observer*, Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shehi, Governor of North Al Batinah, said: "Life has begun to come back to normal in the wilayats of North Al Batinah that have been affected by the tropical cyclone Shaheen. All the government authorities are making great, non-stop and coordinated efforts to restore services and a big progress has been achieved in this regard so far. Education and healthcare services have been fully restored in the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq", The governor affirmed that the tropical storm has left a great damage in the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq which is why it will take time to restore the services back to the pre-cyclone level, affirming that the work is going on in full swing. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, alongside the other state departments, is contributing to the recovery efforts by repairing the damage, opening roads and removing rocks and debris.

OOC to hold campaign to support those affected by cyclone

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 12

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), will organise a voluntary campaign entitled (Sports Brings Us Together) to help those affected by the exceptional climatic conditions due to cyclone 'Shaheen' in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The OOC will contribute in removing mud and debris from neighbourhoods and streets as a result of the damage caused by the cyclone.

This campaign comes in solidarity and cooperation with the citizens and residents who have been affected by the exceptional climatic conditions that the Sultanate has been incurred to during the past days in the wilayats of North and South Al Batinah, and within the framework of the efforts undertaken by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and various institutions. In this regard, the OOC believes in the noble values on which sport is based in societies.

A number of board members, staff, sport federations, sports committees, athletes and those interested in sports will participate in the campaign. All individuals, citizens or residents wishing to participate, can register in the campaign to lend a helping hand and contribute in providing all kinds of support to those affected.

Those interested can register for the above-mentioned campaign through the link: <https://forms.gle/MscmfoVmGxFxUsxc6>

National Rescue Team plays key role in relief

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has said that the National Search and Rescue Team played a major role in reporting incidents in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Shaheen. It helped to trace many cases of missing people and removed fallen trees that blocked roads and hampered traffic.

The team participated in the distribution of essential supplies to citizens and residents in stricken areas.

The CDAA set up camp in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq to facilitate the mission of the National Search and Rescue Team in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

From its provision centre there, the team coordinated the efforts of various teams that responded to emergency reports. The centre comprised a variety of human resources, specialised teams and equipment mobilised to handle distress calls and humanitarian cases.

The CDAA pointed out that



the National Search and Rescue Team operates in accordance with a clear-cut mechanism in addressing consequences of climatic conditions, notably by categorising affected areas to facilitate the delivery of emergency services.

The National Search and Rescue Team has received international accreditation from the International Search and Rescue Group (INSARAG).

The national team is



specialised in operations covering urban, mountainous and aquatic environments. Its groups of engineers, technicians and physicians command top skills and mobile search utilities (including K9), sniffer dogs, drones and other search and rescue equipment.

As part of its international missions, the National Search and Rescue Team participated in operations in the devastating Nepal Earthquake in 2015.



■ OMAN TAKES PART IN NAM 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

BELGRADE: The Sultanate took part in celebrations held here to mark the 60th anniversary of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)'s first conference. Oman's delegation was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs. In a speech on the occasion, Al Harthy affirmed the Sultanate's support for the principles of the NAM, including respect for the sovereignty of states worldwide and the settlement of issues by peaceful means. The speech also expressed the Sultanate's appreciation for NAM's stance supporting the cause of Palestinian people and affirming their legitimate rights. In his speech, Oman underscored the need to develop the role of the NAM so that it could fit with modern-day realities.

- ONA



Measuring staff performance leads to better govt services

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

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The system to measure employees' performance was discussed at a workshop held at the Ministry of Information on Tuesday. The workshop organised under the auspices of Ali bin Khalfan al Jabri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information for Information, had participants from the ministry's directorates and departments.

The workshops touched several topics, including the concept of the performance measurement system, tasks of the directors of the application of the system (change leaders), and construction of career plans according to the system.

The individual performance measurement system is considered one of the enablers to achieve the Oman Vision 2040 and one of the initiative tools for reviewing operating expenses and controlling expenditure in the financial balance plan (Tawazin).

It aims to develop the human resources system by building a culture of proficiency in job performance, improving performance appraisal



An official explains employee performance measurement system at the workshop in Muscat on Tuesday. PHOTO BY HUDA AL BAHRI

systems, and linking productivity with incentives.

It is characterised by flexibility, transparency, objectivity, persistence, innovation, empowerment, focus, complementarity, justice, inclusiveness and governance.

To measure an individual's performance, three main indicators must be studied — annual plan of the unit, key performance indicators (KPI), objectives and key results (OKR) and the evaluation distribution ratio curve (bell curve).

As for the governance of the performance of the system, it

achieves its goals through the existence of specific roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, an electronic system for setting goals and following up on achievement, an evaluation methodology based on achievement and achieving goals, a clear mechanism for developing low performance, a specific methodology for rewarding the outstanding employees, and a committee to review the results of the performance appraisal and a grievance committee of the performance appraisal decisions.

The system will be applied

at the beginning of the year 2022. However, it started its initial trial application last June and is now in the phase of the online trial application, which will continue till the end of December 2021.

Nasser bin Ahmed al Rashidi, Head of the System Implementation Team at the Ministry, said "The system will provide multiple benefits to the employees, the institution as well as the community. The employee will see clear tasks and responsibilities, functional goals that are consistent with the unit's goals, and transparency in work. It will also provide periodic feedback, reward outstanding employees, and enabling employees to complete the work efficiently. For the institution, it will contribute to facilitating the implementation of plans, spreading a culture of competition among employees, increasing employee affiliation, maintaining competencies, efficient utilisation of human resources, and help in identifying employees for leadership positions. The community will benefit with high quality government services."

Health ministry launches virtual clinic in Muscat

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MOH) on Tuesday launched a virtual clinic project for the Primary Health Care, under the auspices of Dr Fatima Mohammed al Ajmi, MoH's Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial, and Planning affairs.

The project comes within the Partnership for Healthy Cities Initiative supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, and in partnership with the Directorate-General of Health Services in the Governorate of Muscat and World Health Organization (WHO) office in Oman.

The idea of the virtual clinic was brought since

the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 where the service of tele-health consultations was introduced on March 2020 as a mean for communicating with patients and delivering health services. In the same year in October, each health institution was acquired a telephone line for service delivery and the number was publicized for respective local community. The service thus was covered in a more extensive and comprehensive manner through the use of available modern technologies.

The project targets patients particularly those with non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The

virtual clinic is considered one of the alternatives deployed amid the spread of the pandemic; consequently, minimizing visits to the health institutions to ensure safety of patients and health workers.

It is noted that remote medical consultations have gained popularity worldwide as a way of communication with patients.

It is expected to contribute positively in improving the provided health services as well the level of communication between the clients and the health institutions settings without attending the later in personal.

— ONA

Shura financial committee reviews 2022 budget

MUSCAT: The Financial and Economic Committee of Majlis Ash'shura reviewed the draft general budget of the state for the fiscal year 2022 referred by the government, at a meeting held on Tuesday.

The committee discussed its plan and executive programme for studying the draft

budget. The committee discussed a proposal for hosting a number of government experts and specialists to explain the details of the budget so that the committee can prepare a detailed report that will include a set of recommendations to be discussed at the meetings of Majlis Ash'shura at the

beginning of the third annual session which is expected to begin in November.

The committee also reviewed the agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of Hungary for mutual encouragement and protection of investments.

Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh course for specialists

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 12

An advanced dentistry masterclass programme in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh (RCSE) will be conducted in collaboration with the Oman Medical Speciality Board (OMSB).

Known to be the first ever advanced course of this nature, 3 years accredited speakers will conduct the programme

which have been advertised on their website

"This four-day practical CPD course is precisely designed to help General Dental Practitioners (GDP) in Oman to develop the skills they need to provide high standards of care for patients needing endodontic treatment," said Dr Viresh Chopra of Oman Dental College (ODC). The course will cover a broad range

of endodontic topics and will be delivered through direct coaching / mentoring, using a series of hands-on exercises supported by lectures and case discussions, according to him. The main emphasis will be on helping GDPs develop and apply the technical endodontic outcomes.

The course will provide candidates with 20 hours of verifiable CPD along with a certificate of attendance.

■ OMAN DRAWS PRAISE FOR DIGITAL ECONOMY



MUSCAT: Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, received Deemah al Yahya, Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), in Muscat on Tuesday. The visit comes to familiarise with the digital economy system in the Sultanate. DCO Secretary-General will introduce goals of the organisation in accelerating the growth of the digital economy in the region. During the meeting, Dr Al Shaithani reviewed the Sultanate's efforts in the field of digital economy and the strategic projects of the communications and IT sector, besides the initiatives and programmes being implemented by the ministry with partners in public and private sectors. The meeting reviewed aspects of cooperation in digital economy fields between the two sides. Meanwhile, DCO Secretary-General went on tour to Sas Centre in the ministry. During the visit, she familiarised herself with the programmes and services rendered by the centre — ONA

SCRAP FOR SALE

Sealed Bids are invited for sale of scrapped equipment associated with oil drilling rig operations.

Drilling and associated equipment consisting of: **A)** one rig powerhouse trailer (location: KCAD Rig T826 Camp in Marmul, **B)** one drilling rig substructure cut in pieces (location: KCAD Adam Yard) **C)** one CAT forklift, 5 nos. generators, empty reel, BOP transport skid (location: KCAD Nizwa Yard) **D)** 5" 4" 3-1/2" DP's, 5" HWDPS, 6-1/4" 9-1/2", 9-1/2" DC's (Location: Diljan Yard, Ghala) for sale on "AS IS, WHERE IS" basis.

Tenderers will be required to transfer an amount of OMR 500 (Riyal Omani five hundred only) as security deposit to KCA Deutag Energy LLC bank account.

A detailed list of equipment and photos are available at the KCA Deutag Rumais office Reception. Please collect the tender documents from KCAD Rumais office on Sunday, 17 Oct. 21. Bidders who are qualified by submitting the required documents, would be allowed to visit the locations to view the items for sale which will be notified later. For more information, please call +968 24895200 between 10 AM to 4 PM, Sunday to Thursday.

Tenders should be submitted in sealed envelopes marked "SCRAP SALE - SINGLE PURCHASE PRICE OFFER OCTOBER 2021" and dropped off in the bid box placed at KCA Deutag's Rumais office reception on or before close of business **Sunday, 31 October 2021** marked for the attention of **Tender Board, KCA Deutag Energy LLC, PO Box:74, PC 328, Sultanate of Oman.**

KCA Deutag Energy LLC reserves the right to accept or reject any bids without any explanation.

KCA DEUTAG
Operating safely, succeeding globally.



Supporters of Moqtada al Sadr celebrate in Baghdad's Tahrir Square on Monday night. – AFP

Sadr wins Iraq vote, former PM Maliki close behind

BAGHDAD: Cleric Moqtada al Sadr's party was the biggest winner in an Iraqi election on Monday, increasing the number of seats he holds in parliament, according to initial results, officials and a spokesperson for the Sadrist Movement.

Former prime minister Nouri al Maliki looked set to have the next largest win among the parties, initial results showed.

Iraq's minority groups have dominated governments and government formation since the US-led invasion of 2003 that toppled Saddam Hussein and catapulted the majority and the Kurds to power.

Sunday's election was held several months early, in response to mass protests in 2019 that toppled a government and showed widespread anger against political leaders whom many

Iraqis say have enriched themselves at the expense of the country.

But a record low turnout suggested that a vote billed as a chance to wrest control from the ruling elite would do little to dislodge sectarian religious parties in power since 2003.

A count based on initial results from several provinces plus the capital Baghdad, verified by local government officials, suggested Sadr had won more than 70 seats, which if confirmed could give him considerable influence in forming a government.

However, Sadr's group is just one of several that will have to enter negotiations to form a coalition capable of dominating parliament and forming an administration, a period of jockeying for position that may take weeks or longer. — AFP

Beirut blast probe suspended as judge issues arrest warrant

CRITICAL DAYS AS STANDOFF BETWEEN POLITICIANS, JUDGE DEEPENS

BEIRUT: A probe into the catastrophic Beirut port explosion was frozen on Tuesday for the second time in less than three weeks after two politicians wanted for questioning filed a new complaint against the lead investigator Judge Tarek Bitar.

The investigation has been facing obstacles since Bitar sought to question some of the most powerful people in Lebanon on suspicion that they knew about the chemicals but did nothing to avert the disaster.

Bitar is under enormous pressure from groups that have accused his probe of political bias and mounting a smear campaign against him. The leader of the powerful, heavily armed political movement Hezbollah announced on Monday it wanted Bitar removed from the case.

The August 4, 2020 blast, one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions on record, killed more than 200 people and devastated swathes of Beirut. Apart from the suspension, senior politicians called for questioning have refused to show up and arrest warrants are not being served.

The probe was suspended in late September on the basis of a complaint questioning Bitar's impartiality. A court rejected the complaint on procedural grounds, allowing him to continue.

Bitar is the second judge to lead the probe since Fadi Sawan was removed from the case in February on the basis of a similar complaint filed by the politicians



A police member stands outside the Justice Palace, in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday. – Reuters

who are now challenging Bitar's neutrality.

"For the first time, the judicial system wants to function, but it is suffering under the political pressure and interventions," said Paul Morcos, lawyer and professor of international law.

Shortly before being informed of the latest complaint, Bitar had issued an arrest warrant for one of the politicians who filed it, former finance minister Ali Hassan Khalil, a senior politician close to Hezbollah. Khalil, a senior member of the Amal movement, was not immediately reachable for

comment.

The second politician was ex-public works minister Ghazi Zeiter, also a Hezbollah ally, who is due for questioning on Wednesday. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah voiced his harshest criticism yet of Bitar on Monday when he called for his replacement in a televised address, saying he was biased and politicised.

The remarks came weeks after Wafik Safa, a senior Hezbollah official, was said to have warned Bitar the group would remove him from the inquiry, according to a

journalist and a judicial source.

Khalil's arrest warrant is the second for an ex-minister arising from the investigation.

The first was issued for ex-public works minister Youssef Finianos, another Hezbollah ally, in September when he repeatedly failed to show for questioning. Bitar had issued multiple requests in July to question several top officials, including former prime minister Hassan Diab, several ex-ministers and the country's top security chief about negligence. All have denied wrongdoing.

— Reuters

Turkey braced for costly winter as record gas demand bite

ISTANBUL: Turkey's record demand for natural gas this year is forcing it to step up purchases on a surging spot market as it scrambles to renew long-term contracts expiring this winter.

One of the largest gas importers in Europe, Turkey depends on pipeline gas from Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran as well as liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from Nigeria, Algeria and spot markets.

It had four long-term import contracts expiring this year totalling 16 billion cubic metres (bcm) annually.

Turkey has renewed one of them, with Azerbaijan, agreeing a three-year contract to import

up to 6 bcm per year, following the expiry of a 15-year contract for 6.6 bcm, two industry sources said.

The new, shorter contract will be for spot imports of gas with prices indexed to Italy's PSV hub, as opposed to long-term take-or-pay contracts with oil indexed pricing that Ankara wants phased out.

Turkey's energy ministry did not respond to Reuters questions on the Azerbaijan contract.

That still leaves Ankara with three contracts to roll over — two for state and private sector imports via pipeline from Russia's Gazprom of 4 bcm each, which expire at the end of the year, and



A file photo of snowfall in Istanbul.

1.3 bcm of Nigerian LNG expiring this month.

With time running short, a meeting between the Russian and Turkish presidents ended without a gas deal two weeks ago.

President Vladimir Putin tried to reassure Ankara, saying it was shielded from Europe's gas crisis by Russian pipeline supply to Turkey. But Turkey has little gas in reserve to fall back on if the talks drag on.

"All contractually available pipeline gas from Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan has been pulled out and used as of mid-September," a Turkish industry source said.

In the past Turkey used LNG to complement more expensive

pipeline imports. Hiking the share of LNG in gas imports almost to a third in the last two years, it signalled to its import partners that expensive oil-indexed contracts for pipeline gas needed to become more competitive. Plans to cover up to a quarter of its consumption from a new Black Sea discovery from 2027 were also expected to strengthen its hand in negotiations.

However, a drought this year curtailed hydro-electric power, putting idled gas power plants back online and driving Turkey's consumption up to an expected record of 60 bcm of gas, just as prices spike in Europe.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

ANKARA

Erdogan signals new military push into Syria

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signalled that Turkey was preparing to launch a new military operation in Syria, where its forces are under attack from Kurdish militants backed by the United States.

Erdogan's comments followed a car bombing on Monday in the northern Syrian city of Afrin that killed six people, including at least one Turkey-backed rebel fighter, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.



"We have no patience left in some areas that are a source of terror attacks aimed at our country from Syria," Erdogan said after chairing a cabinet meeting attended by top ministers.

SANAA

At least 134 Yemen fighters dead in strikes

More than 130 Yemen fighters have been killed in air strikes south of Marib, a flashpoint of the civil war, the Saudi-led coalition said on Tuesday.

Dozens of strikes were carried out in the Abdiya district of Marib province. Marib city is the internationally recognised government's last outpost in northern Yemen.

"We targeted nine military vehicles of the Ansar Allah group in Abdiya, and their losses exceeded 134 members," said a



coalition statement carried by official Saudi media.

Hundreds of Ansar Allah fighters and military have died since fighting for the strategically vital city flared anew last month.

TELAVIV

Kushner, Ivanka promote Abraham Accords initiative

Israeli lawmakers flanked by former president Donald Trump's daughter and son-in-law launched an initiative in Jerusalem to advance the Abraham Accords that saw Arab states normalise ties with Israel.

Jared Kushner, a former White House adviser married to Ivanka Trump, was a major architect of the deals between Israel and others.

At the launch of the Abraham Accords Caucus in Israel's



parliament, the Knesset, Kushner said the agreements created a "new paradigm" in the region, which could have "very different outcomes" depending on the actions of current leaders.

In brief

■ BENGALURU



INDIA RECOMMENDS HOMEGROWN VACCINE FOR KIDS

India on Tuesday recommended emergency use of Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 shot in the 2 to 18 age-group, as the world's second-most populous nation expands its vaccination drive to include children.

The country has so far fully vaccinated around 29 per cent of about 944 million eligible adults, as per government data, which includes administration of more than 110 million doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

The company, however, is still in the process of securing an emergency use listing from the World Health Organization, a decision that is expected later this month.

■ MANILA



11 DEAD IN LANDSLIDES, FLOODS IN PHILIPPINES

Eleven people were killed in the Philippines in landslides and flash floods caused by heavy rains brought about by tropical storm Kompasu, the national disaster agency said on Tuesday.

Seven people were also reported missing in various accidents in the affected provinces, the agency said. Six people, including three children, were killed in four separate landslides that buried houses in the northern province of Benguet, where two were still missing, it said.

Fallen rocks, uprooted trees and loosened soil blocked a main highway going up to Baguio, the mountain resort city in Benguet.

■ SEOUL



NORTH KOREA'S KIM BLAMES US FOR TENSIONS

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has blamed the United States for tensions on the peninsula and accused the South of hypocrisy, state media reported on Tuesday, as he opened an exhibition showcasing his nuclear-armed country's weapons. The "wrong judgment and acts" of the US meant instability could not be resolved, he said in an address to the "Self-Defence 2021" display, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. Pyongyang is under multiple international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, which have made rapid progress under Kim.

EU pledges \$1.2 billion to tackle Afghan crisis

TALIBAN MEET EU-US DELEGATION AT SPECIAL SUMMIT



Taliban delegates are pictured ahead of the meeting with US and European delegates in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday. — Reuters

DOHA: The Taliban held their first face-to-face talks with a joint US-EU delegation on Tuesday in Qatar as Brussels pledged one billion euros (\$1.2 billion) in aid for Afghanistan.

The group is seeking recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster, after they returned to power in August following the withdrawal of US troops after 20 years of war.

UN chief Antonio Guterres earlier urged the world to donate to drought-hit and impoverished Afghanistan to head off economic collapse, but also slammed the Taliban's "broken" promises to Afghan women and girls.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the EU aid package, meant "to avert a major humanitarian and socio-economic collapse", at a virtual G20 summit hosted by Italy on Tuesday.

She stressed the funds are "direct support" for Afghans and would be channelled to international organisations working on the ground, not to the Taliban's interim government which Brussels does not recognise.

"We have been clear about our conditions for any engagement with the Afghan authorities, including on the respect of human

This is an informal exchange at technical level. It does not constitute recognition of the 'interim government'

NABILA MASSRALI
EU spokeswoman

rights", she said. "So far, the reports speak for themselves. But the Afghan people should not pay the price of the Taliban's actions."

The Taliban badly need assistance as Afghanistan's economy is in a parlous state with most aid cut off even as winter nears, food prices rising and unemployment spiking.

EU countries are wary at the prospect of a surge of Afghan asylum-seekers trying to enter the bloc, as happened in 2015 with Syrians fleeing their war. Brussels' calculation is that donating money to help stabilise Afghanistan and assist countries between it and Europe could stem any flow.

The direct talks held in Doha on Tuesday were facilitated by Qatar, which has long hosted a Taliban political office.

"I think engaging with them (the Taliban) is the most important now", said Mutlaq Al-Qahtani, a special envoy to Qatar's foreign minister, who brushed aside the question of whether to recognise a Taliban government.

"A priority as we speak now is the humanitarian (situation), is education, is free passage" of people wishing to leave, he told the Global Security Forum conference in Doha.

EU spokeswoman Nabila Massrali said the meeting with the Taliban would "allow the US and European side to address issues" including respect for women's rights and preventing Afghanistan becoming a haven for "terrorist" groups.

"This is an informal exchange at technical level. It does not constitute recognition of the 'interim government'", she said.

The Taliban regime, still yet to be recognised as a legitimate government by any other country, is also facing a security threat from the IS-Khorasan (IS-K) group, who have launched a series of deadly attacks.

"We want positive relationships with the whole world", the Taliban's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said at an earlier event in Qatar. — AFP

India warns states not to sell power on exchanges

BENGALURU: India has asked power producers to import up to 10 per cent of their coal needs amid fuel shortages and has warned states that federal companies will curb their power supplies if they are found selling electricity on power exchanges to cash in on surging prices.

India is the world's second largest coal producer, with the world's fourth largest reserves, but a steep surge in power demand that has outstripped pre-pandemic levels means state-run Coal India's supplies are no longer enough.

Increased economic activity after the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has driven up demand for coal leading to a supply shortage, forcing north Indian states like Bihar, Rajasthan and Jharkhand to undertake power cuts for up to 14 hours a day.

On Tuesday, the power ministry asked utilities, reliant on local coal, to import up to 10 per cent of coal needs to blend with the domestic grade to meet increased power demand, a power ministry note reviewed by Reuters said.

The move could push up already high global coal prices. These power plants usually only import small amounts of coal.

Over half of India's 135

coal-fired power plants, which supply around 70 per cent of the country's electricity, have fuel stocks that will last three days or less.

Federal government-controlled power producers such as NTPC Ltd and Damodar Valley Corp, sign long-term power purchase agreements with distribution companies for the sale of most of their power output.

But 15 per cent of their power is controlled by the federal government, which sells this so-called "unallocated" power to the states. The ministry said if any state had a surplus of power, it should inform the federal government which would allocate that electricity to states that needed it.

Some states, instead of supplying electricity to their consumers, are imposing rolling power cuts and selling power at higher prices to energy exchanges, the ministry said in a statement, without giving details.

The chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to complain about the rising prices on power exchanges. He said prices had trebled to Rs 15 for a unit of power from mid-September to October 8. — Reuters



A worker carries coal in a basket in a industrial area in Mumbai, India.

— Reuters file photo

For Philippine media, Nobel a 'shot in the arm'

MANILA: When Philippine journalist Maria Ressa shared the Nobel Peace Prize last week for representing press freedom, other media outlets under fire took heart.

One journalist described Ressa's win as like getting a "shot in the arm" as they fight to keep free speech alive.

Media organisations interviewed by Reuters said Ressa's victory could not have come at a more opportune time for a country heading to an election next year and where journalists and freedom of the press face growing threats.

Ressa shared the Nobel with Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov on Friday, for what the committee called braving the wrath of leaders to expose corruption and misrule, in an endorsement of free speech under fire worldwide.

While the Philippines has one of Asia's most liberal media

environments, a growing atmosphere of fear has set in since Ressa's libel conviction last year and the closure of its largest broadcasting firm that angered President Rodrigo Duterte.

"This gives all of us a shot in the arm so we can become more vigorous in this fight to preserve our independence", said Ging Reyes, head of news at ABS-CBN broadcast network. "The existential challenge is still there".

Philippine government regulators last year ordered ABS-CBN off the air after the lower house of Congress voted not to renew its license to operate. Since its closure, the 66-year-old broadcaster, which Duterte had publicly berated for its failure to air some of his paid election campaign commercials in 2016, has let go thousands of employees, including about 400 from the news division.



Filipino journalist and Rappler CEO Maria Ressa, one of 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winners, poses for a portrait in Taguig City, Metro Manila. — Reuters

"To me, any closure of a media organisation, of a broadcasting station, is really an affront to press freedom", Reyes said.

ABS-CBN continues to operate but on a limited scale by buying air time from other networks

and streaming programmes on YouTube and Facebook. Ressa's news site, Rappler, had its license suspended and she has faced legal action for various reasons, motivated, activists say, by her scrutiny of Duterte.

The government denies hounding media and says any problems organisations face are legal, not political. It says it believes in free speech. Duterte's spokesperson, Harry Roque, welcoming Ressa's Nobel prize, said on Monday, "press freedom is alive" The Philippines saw its ranking in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index drop two notches to 138 out of 180 countries, while the Committee to Protect Journalists ranks the Philippines seventh in the world in its impunity index, which tracks deaths of media members whose killers go free.

While the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) says it does not expect the government's combative attitude towards adversarial press to change, it is hopeful that Ressa's Nobel victory "will spur us to work past fear". — Reuters

UK govt botched initial Covid response: MPs’ probe

LONDON: A British parliamentary report published on Tuesday said that the government’s delay in locking down society when Covid-19 hit last year had cost lives and was “one of the most important public health failures” in the country’s history.

In a damning assessment, a cross-party group of MPs found that official pandemic planning was too focused on influenza and had failed to learn the lessons from prior outbreaks of SARS, MERS and Ebola.

The 151-page study, published by two parliamentary watchdog committees after months of hearings, comes ahead of an independent public inquiry into the government’s coronavirus handling due to begin next year.

Britain has been hit hard by the crisis, with nearly 138,000 Covid-19 deaths — one of the highest tolls in Europe — since March last year, raising questions about why it has fared worse than many other nations.

The MPs said the government had waited too long to push through lockdown measures in early 2020.

Leading advisers had pushed a “deliberate policy” to take a

The government’s delay in locking down society when Covid-19 hit last year had cost lives and was ‘one of the most important public health failures’ in the country’s history

“gradual and incremental approach” to interventions such as social distancing, isolation and lockdowns, said the report.

That approach had been proved “wrong” and led to a higher death toll, the lawmakers said, adding that the failure to test elderly people discharged from hospitals into care homes early on also led to deaths.

“Decisions on lockdowns and social distancing during the early weeks of the pandemic — and the advice that led to them — rank as one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced,” they wrote.

There was a “policy approach of fatalism about the prospects for Covid in the community”, which contributed to the failures.



Britain had also been too slow to introduce the isolation of infected people, and mistakenly implemented “light-touch border controls” only on countries with high Covid rates when most cases were coming from France and Spain.

Government planning for a pandemic was too “narrowly

and inflexibly based on a flu model”, while ministers and scientific advisers were accused of “groupthink” by some experts, according to the report.

Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt, a former health secretary who chairs one of the report committees, said the government had also failed to absorb the early experience of

South Korea and Taiwan, which were quick to introduce mass test and trace systems.

East Asian countries with direct experience of SARS and MERS responded best in the first half of the pandemic, Hunt told BBC radio.

“We were always running to catch up,” he said likening the

response to a football match “with two very different halves”, pointing to the rapid launch of a successful mass vaccination campaign against Covid in December.

The panel took evidence from a range of figures, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s controversial former chief adviser Dominic Cummings, who assailed his ex-boss’s handling of the crisis.

Johnson has also faced criticism over his refusal to start the public inquiry sooner.

The British leader announced in May that the probe would go ahead and examine his government’s actions “as rigorously and as candidly as possible and to learn every lesson for the future”.

But he has refused to allow it to begin before spring next year, arguing the inquiry could hamper the country’s ongoing pandemic response.

Responding to the new report, government minister Steve Barclay noted the MPs’ praise of Britain’s vaccination rollout.

“But of course if there are lessons to learn, we are keen to do so,” he told Sky News, refusing to apologise and insisting the government had followed prevailing scientific advice. — **AFP**

Macron announces €30 billion plan to re-industrialise France

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday announced a plan worth €30 billion (\$35 billion) to re-industrialise France, saying the country should reclaim its crown as a global leader in innovation.

Speaking at the Elysee Palace six months before a presidential election and one month ahead of a UN climate summit, Macron said France had taken key decisions “15-20 years later than some of our European neighbours” and now needed “to become a nation of innovation and research again”.

The spending was to address “a kind of growth deficit” for France brought on by insufficient investment in the past, he told an audience of company leaders and university students.

France, he said, needed to return to “a virtuous cycle” which consisted of “innovating, producing and exporting and in that way finance our social model” as part of a new “France 2030” plan.

Over the next decade, France would aim to become a global leader in green hydrogen, which companies and governments are increasingly putting at the



France’s President Emmanuel Macron speaks during the presentation of ‘France 2030’ investment plan at The Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris. — **AFP**

centre of efforts to de-carbonise economic sectors that rely most on fossil fuels for their energy needs.

Macron singled out steel production, cement and the chemical sector, as well as truck, bus, rail and air transport.

He said that following the Covid-19 pandemic, “which put us face to face with our vulnerabilities”, France had to work towards French and European productive autonomy.

France also needed to invest heavily in medical research, Macron said.

After the global Covid outbreak, French pharma giants were unable to come up with a vaccine, unlike biotech start-ups BioNTech and Moderna.

The aim was now for France to develop “at least 20” biotech drugs against cancers, as well as against emerging and chronic illnesses, including those associated with ageing, Macron said. — **AFP**

Austria’s new chancellor offers clear support for EU

VIENNA: New Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg emphasised his pro-European stance in a government statement to parliament on Tuesday, as his conservative ruling party tries to recover from a corruption scandal that brought down his predecessor.

On issues raging from the Covid-19 pandemic and global economic competition, to the climate crisis and migration flows, the European Union “continues to be our central frame of reference and the decisive political lever for us,” Schallenberg said.

He will travel to Brussels this week for talks with EU Council President Charles Michel and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Europe has been watching the political turmoil in Vienna since the government was plunged into crisis last week.

Prosecutors accused chancellor Sebastian Kurz of using taxpayer money in 2016 to buy positive media coverage and manipulate polls in his favour as part of a



Austria’s Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg and Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler talk during a session of the parliament in Vienna. — **Reuters**

scheme to burnish his image at a time when he was serving as foreign minister and seen as a rising conservative star.

Kurz, who frequently attracted the attention of Brussels with his criticism of the EU, stepped down as chancellor on Saturday night and picked long-time diplomat Schallenberg as his replacement.

Kurz denied any wrongdoing but said he was resigning in order to save the coalition between his

centre-right People’s Party and the leftist Green party. The Greens had demanded Kurz’s departure.

Schallenberg said nothing to parliament about the investigation against Kurz, nor did he announce any plans to fight political corruption.

The scandal has delivered a blow to voter support for the People’s Party, which is still being led by Kurz, a survey showed.

— **dpa**

SHORT TAKES

ATHENS

6.4-magnitude quake shakes Crete

An earthquake of magnitude 6.4 shook the Greek island of Crete on Tuesday, sending residents in the port city of Heraklion and many other places into the streets in panic.

There were initially no reports of casualties or deaths. Witnesses reported on social media that the ground shook for at least 29 seconds. According to the Greek Institute of Geodynamics, the epicentre was some 20 kilometres east of the island and around 8 kilometres below the



seabed. A fortnight ago, a strong earthquake with a magnitude of 5.8 killed one person near the city of Heraklion, and caused numerous houses to collapse.

MADRID

Military parade marks Spanish national day

With most coronavirus restrictions in Spain already lifted, the country marked its national day on Tuesday with a large military parade. King Felipe VI watched as more than 2,600 servicemen and women with 215 vehicles paraded past him in the centre of the capital.

In the sky, 68 fighter and transport planes as well as air force helicopters flew low over Madrid. The celebration was held under the motto “Service and Commitment.”



The ‘Dia de la Hispanidad’ marks the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America in 1492 and the common roots of the Spanish-speaking world. — **dpa**

LONDON

JK Rowling releases Christmas book

Harry Potter author JK Rowling released her first children’s Christmas book, inspired by lockdown and her son David’s beloved cuddly toy pigs.

The Christmas Pig is a story about “being lost and being found, about loving and being loved, about what stays with us and what falls away,” the author told the *Sunday Times*.

The 56-year-old author bought an identical toy in case the original got lost for good, but her son soon found it and



declared the pair to be brothers.

“The original pig is now extremely worn and battered,” she wrote in the newspaper on Sunday. — **AFP**

Not enough women Nobel laureates?

VIKEN KANTARCI

Although only one woman this year won a Nobel Prize compared to 12 men, Goran Hansson, the head of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, on Monday ruled out gender quotas.

Only 59 Nobel prizes have gone to women — 6.2 per cent of the total — since they were first awarded in 1901. Investigative journalist Maria Ressa of the Philippines shared the Nobel Peace Prize and was the only woman honoured this year.

Hansson, who heads the Academy that awards the chemistry, economics and physics prizes, defended the selection of Nobel laureates in an interview.

Is there a problem giving women the Nobel Prize? “It’s sad that there are so few women Nobel laureates and it reflects the unfair conditions in society, particularly in years past but still existing. And there’s so much more to do.

“We have decided we will not have quotas for gender or ethnicity. We want every laureate (to) be accepted... because they made the most important discovery, and not because of gender or ethnicity. And that is in line with the spirit of Alfred Nobel’s last will.”

What is done to ensure that the work of women is seen? “We want to make sure that all deserving women get a fair chance to be evaluated for the Nobel Prize. So we have made significant efforts to encourage nominations of women scientists. And we made sure that we know about the problem and also about subconscious bias, etc in the (prize-awarding) committees and academies.

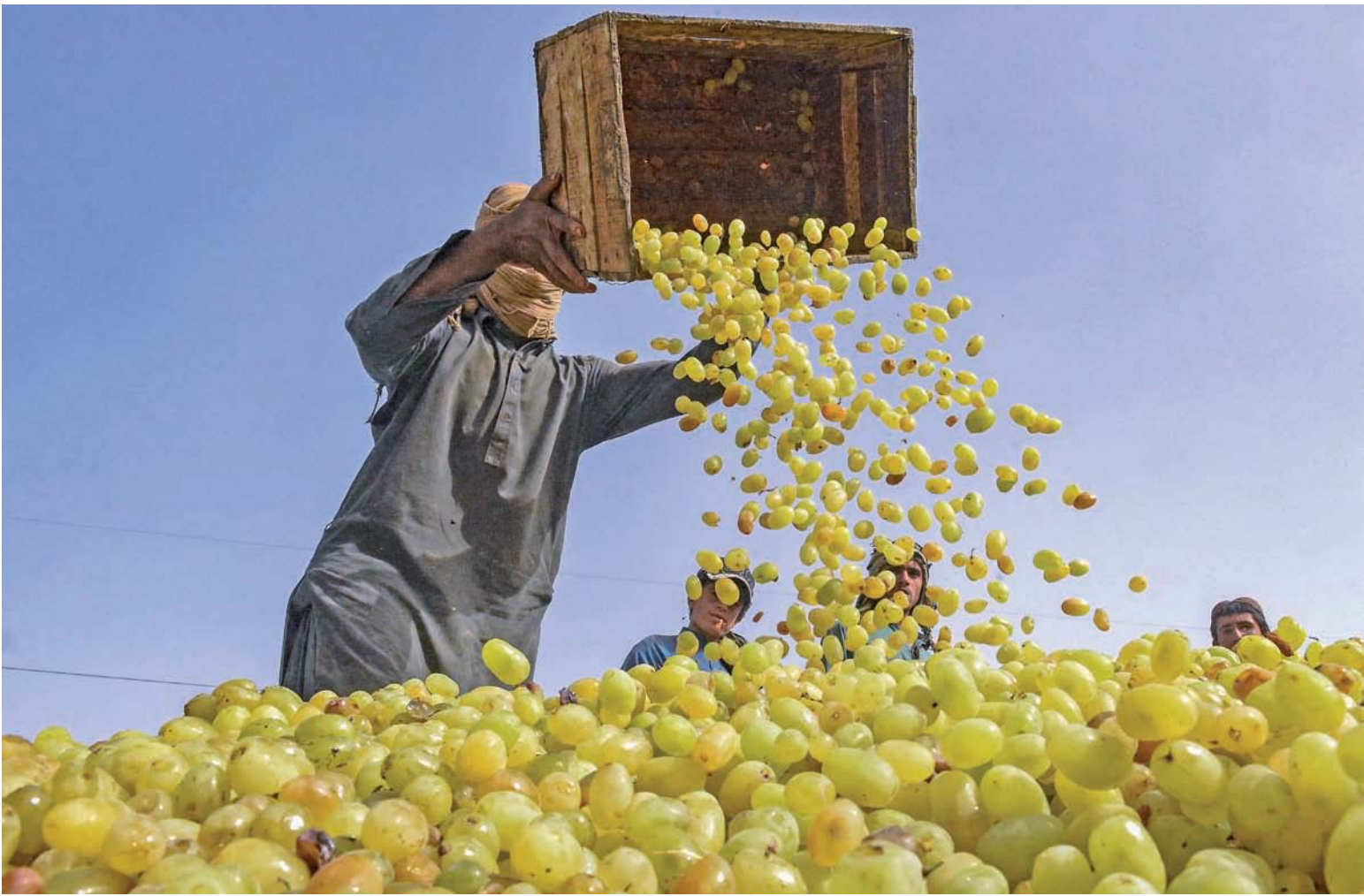
“We’ve had lectures by sociologists, we’ve had group discussions, we have put quite a lot of effort into it.

“In the end, we will give the prize to those who are found the most worthy, those who have made the most important contributions.”

No women were worthy of a (science) Nobel this year? “No women got the prizes in sciences this year. Last year, we had two women laureates receiving the Chemistry Prize, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna, and we had one woman laureate in physics, Andrea Ghez. The year before we had Esther Duflo in economic sciences. — AFP

“We have decided we will not have quotas for gender or ethnicity. We want every laureate (to) be accepted

GORAN HANSSON
Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences



FRUITS OF LABOUR

Workers at a grape farm as they dry the harvest to make raisins in Qilla Abdullah, Pakistan, on Monday. — AFP

Recognition for journalist fraternity

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has selected Maria Ressa, co-founder of the digital news site Rappler, and Dmitry Muratov, the longtime editor of Novaya Gazeta, a Russian independent newspaper for this year’s Nobel Peace Prize.

They will receive the award for being “representatives of all journalists who stand up for this ideal in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse conditions.”

Significantly, the peace prize comes at an extremely challenging time for journalists all over the world as they are increasingly becoming targets for attacks in recent years. They are victims of harassment, threats, attacks, oppression, unequal pay, accusations of fake news and a growing mistrust.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 21 scribes were killed worldwide in 2020 in retaliation for their work. The figures are more than double from the year before. The number of female journalists being killed is also on the rise. Yes, this award is recognition of the crucial role that journalists all around the globe play.

As United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his message, “no society can be free and fair without

journalists who are able to investigate wrongdoing, bring information to citizens, hold leaders accountable and speak truth to power”.

Both journalists have now attained what was termed as having “achieved celebrity” on an international level, or fame gained through professional accomplishments or successes in the duties they were assigned with. It is true both Ressa and Muratov will benefit from the enormous international exposure they have received. Their messages will be relayed by media outlets around the world. More importantly, the journalist fraternity is also benefiting, given the stature of the prize. For example, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, an Argentine artist and human rights activist who won the Peace Prize in 1980, suddenly found he had access to senior US lawmakers and European government officials.

The fact is that Ressa, even after winning the award, continues to face online trolls threats with the same ferocity that she was facing throughout her career despite the Nobel Prize Committee’s announcement that “free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda”.

No doubt, without freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as the

Committee opined, “it will be difficult to successfully promote fraternity between nations, disarmament and a better world order to succeed in our time”.

The media serves an important role in providing investigative reports, debate, discussion, background and analysis, as well as news stories. One of the biggest parts that the media plays in society is through the dissemination of information from various news sources. Today, the media have become part of everyone’s life. It plays a major role in today’s society, and it is the food to strengthen or weaken a society. It is considered as the “mirror” of modern society, in effect, it is the media which shapes our lives.

Media can be considered as the “watchdog” of political democracy. The media affects people’s perspective. At the same time, too much intervention by the media in everything is a matter of concern.

Speaking to journalists and well-wishers outside Novaya Gazeta’s office in Moscow, the 59-year-old Muratov dedicated the award to his fallen colleagues.

“For us, this prize is, first and foremost, acknowledgment of the memory of our lost colleagues,” Muratov said while praising a new generation of “young journalists who’ve come in their stead”.



SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyp

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE COMES AT AN EXTREMELY CHALLENGING TIME FOR JOURNALISTS ALL OVER THE WORLD

What developing countries need to reach net zero



V SHANKAR

The author is Co-Founder and CEO of Gateway Partners, a private equity firm that invests in emerging markets

The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that the planet will warm by 1.5° Celsius by 2040 unless urgent measures are taken to eliminate greenhouse-gas emissions. After the report’s release, UN Secretary-General António Guterres aptly called it “a code red for humanity.” Global warming is becoming an increasingly urgent problem, and all countries have a role to play in combating it. But as government officials from around the world prepare to set sustainability targets at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow next month, they cannot ignore developing countries’ economic distress.

The climate crisis is occurring at a time when governments and businesses in the developing

world are wrestling with the impact of Covid-19.

As the global economy begins to emerge from the pandemic, it is obvious that developing countries will recover at a slower rate. And the pace of vaccine delivery will complicate the economic situation further. For example, the poorest countries in Africa may not receive enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations before 2023 at the earliest.

So, while acknowledging that addressing climate change is a long-term imperative, the immediate priority for developing countries should be economic growth — revitalising their economies, reducing poverty, and creating jobs. Building a greener future will yield rewards eventually, but hungry households need food and jobs today.

In preparation for the COP26 summit, the G7 and G20 are expected to unveil ambitious plans, which most likely will include a demand for all countries to agree to a unified deadline to reach net-zero emissions by 2060.

Large investors and NGOs are demanding that financial institutions immediately cease funding fossil-fuel and forestry projects and decarbonise their operations, and regulators are tightening environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards (although there is little immediate prospect for harmonised rules). All of these initiatives are welcome, but they fail to consider the challenges facing the developing world.

Of course, developing countries must move towards a greener future and net-zero emissions. But the expected pace of change

is unrealistic. Without a viable pathway to green energy and sustainable industries, developing countries could fall even further behind. A better approach would be for wealthier countries to ease the transition by providing emerging economies three resources: time to adapt, financial support and policy assistance.

First, while the G20 should rally behind a unified set of global standards, it must provide poorer countries with the time they need to meet these standards by relying on staggered deadlines based on development and income levels. While we must not dilute or abandon these standards, we must recognise that the developing world is starting at a disadvantage and deserves time and resources to implement climate plans. These plans even may require the

continued transitional use of fossil fuels while policymakers prepare a pathway to renewable energy. Meanwhile, the United States, European countries, and China, which continue to be the largest global emitters of greenhouse gases and have the capacity to begin moving toward a green future, should start doing so now.

Second, rich countries should fulfil their pledges of financial support for poorer countries’ efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. As part of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, the developed world agreed to provide \$100 billion in annual assistance to developing countries until 2020. But an independent report issued last December estimated that only a fraction of that assistance materialised.

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sport



OMAN POWER PAST VIETNAM

Red Warriors brighten
qualification chances
after second win

Oman players celebrate a goal against Vietnam in the Asian World Cup qualifier at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat.

– Pics by Faisal al Balushi



**ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH**
MUSCAT, OCT 12

Oman came back brilliantly after conceding a goal to beat Vietnam 3-1 in the World Cup Asian qualifier at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Tuesday night.

Issam al Subhi (46th minute), Mohsin al Khaldi (49th) and Salah al Yahyai (63rd minute - penalty) were on target for Oman.

With their second win in the Group B, Oman brightened their

qualification hopes for the World Cup Qatar 2022 with six points from four matches and are placed third in the group table. Oman had opened the campaign with a stunning 1-0 win against Japan.

Much against the run of the play, Vietnam took the lead in the 39th minute when Nguyen Tien Linh slotted in after a rebound from Oman goalkeeper Fayez al Rushaidi.

Oman intensified their attacks after the unexpected blow and the Red Warriors struck the equaliser in the added time of the first-half.

Japan match hero Issam al Subhi brought the sizeable home crowd on their feet after an acrobatic strike at the Vietnam box after a free kick from the centre.

A relieved Oman went for the break with score on 1-1.

Earlier, Oman captain Mohsin al Khaldi missed a penalty in the 16th minute after his left-footed shot went high over the bar.

Later, in the 25th minute, Mohsin failed to place the ball into Vietnam net ahead of an advancing goalkeeper after a rebound from the keeper.

Vietnam defender Ho Tan Tai elbowed Ali al Busaidy in the box as the referee checked with the VAR to allow the penalty.

In the second half, Mohsin made amends to his penalty miss as his left-footed corner fell into the net as Vietnam goalkeeper Nguyen Van Toan was in the wrong position in the 49th minute.

In the 56th minute, Salah al Yahyai tried a through ball, but Khalid al Hajri was caught offside.

In the 63rd minute, Oman consolidated their lead to 3-1 as

Salah al Yahyai made no mistake from the spot kick.

In a similar foul which resulted in the first penalty, Do Duy Munh challenged Jameel al Yahmadi while jumping for a high ball and the defender's effort with the hand brought Jameel on the ground inside the penalty box.

In the 80th minute, Oman replaced Mohsin with Arshad al Alawi. A minute before, Abdulaziz al Muqbali came in for goal-scorer Issam al Subhi.

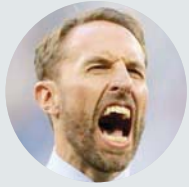
Vietnam coach Park Hang Seo made his changes with Pham

Tuan Hai replacing goal-scorer Nguyen Tien Linh and Nguyen Van Toan coming in for Do Duy Manh, who had received a yellow card for a foul which resulted in the second penalty for Oman.

Abdullah Fawaz came in for Jameel al Yahmadi for Oman in the 86th minute.

In the 89th minute, Nguyen Quand Hai's strong shot from the right side of the box was off target.

In the other matches of the group, Japan beat Australia 2-1 in Saitama to earn their second victory.



Southgate to discuss England contract in next few weeks

England manager Gareth Southgate said he will speak to the Football Association about his contract in the next few weeks as his immediate focus is helping the team reach the 2022 World Cup finals. The 51-year-old is under contract until after the World Cup but FA chief executive Mark Bullingham said they were keen to extend it.



Salah helps Egypt to crucial WC qualifier triumph in Libya

Liverpool star Mohamed Salah helped Egypt to a 3-0 World Cup qualifying triumph over closest rivals Libya on Monday that puts them on the brink of winning Group F and reaching the final elimination round. Salah was a constant threat in Benghazi as the Pharaohs completed a double over Libya having won 1-0 in Alexandria three days ago.

Narine stars as Kolkata end captain Kohli's IPL dream

DUBAI: Sunil Narine scored with bat and ball to help Kolkata Knight Riders to victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore on Monday and end Virat Kohli's hopes of an Indian Premier League title as captain.

Bangalore crashed out of the Twenty20 tournament after losing the eliminator by four wickets in Sharjah with Kohli bowling out as leader of the franchise that has never won the IPL.

The 32-year-old Kohli, who had announced at the start of the resumed IPL in the United Arab Emirates that he will step down as captain of the side this season, said he gave his "best".

"I've tried my best to create a culture where youngsters could come and play expressive cricket," said Kohli.

"All I can say is that I have given my best. I have given my 120 per cent to this franchise and will continue giving it as a player on the field."

Kohli has hit 6283 runs in 207 IPL matches since he joined Bangalore in the inaugural edition in 2008 and led them to a runners-up finish in 2016.

"It's a great time to regroup and restructure the franchise for the next three years," said Kohli.

"I will definitely (play for RCB). For me loyalty matters and my commitment is with this franchise till the last day I play IPL."

Narine returned figures of 4-21 as Kolkata kept down Bangalore to 138-7 and then hit 26 off 15 balls in the team's chase that was completed with two balls to spare.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan hit the winning run with



skipper Eoin Morgan at the other end as Kolkata booked a meeting with Delhi Capitals in the second qualifier on Wednesday.

Narine stood out with his off spin as he struck in each of his four overs to send back Srikanth Bharat (9), Kohli (39), AB de Villiers (11) and Glenn Maxwell (15).

Narine bowled Kohli with flight and spin as the star batsman walked off for one final time as captain of Bangalore since taking over the role in 2013.

He then bowled South African veteran De Villiers and had the in-form Maxwell caught at short third man.

“All I can say is that I have given my best. I have given my 120 per cent to this franchise and will continue giving it as a player on the field.”

VIRAT KOHLI
RCB skipper

In reply, openers Shubman Gill (29) and Venkatesh Iyer (26) gave Kolkata a strong start adding 41 before the first wicket fell in the sixth over.

The innings wobbled slightly before Narine, coming in at number five, hit three sixes off Dan Christian to ease the pressure.

He was bowled by Mohammed Siraj who also sent back Dinesh Karthik in the same over but Morgan and Shakib kept their cool to take the two-time IPL champions home.

Kolkata have won five of their seven league games in the UAE leg to make the playoffs. "The cricket we have played has surprised everybody," said England's white ball captain Morgan.

MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings have made the final on October 15 after they beat Delhi in the first playoff on Sunday. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Kolkata Knight Riders 139/6 (Shubman Gill 29, Sunil Narine 26; Yuzvendra Chahal 2/16) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 138/7 (Virat Kohli 39, Devdutt Padikkal 21; Sunil Narine 4/21) by 4 wickets



Maxwell, Christian slam online trolls after IPL team's exit

DUBAI: Australia's Glenn Maxwell and Dan Christian on Tuesday slammed online abusers following their side's unceremonious exit from the Indian Premier League.

Maxwell and Christian are a part of the star-studded Royal Challengers Bangalore — captained by India's captain Virat Kohli — which crashed out of the cash-rich tournament on Monday after losing to the Kolkata Knight Riders.

"Some of the garbage that has been flowing on social media is absolutely disgusting!" Maxwell tweeted, calling the online abusers "horrible people" and their behaviour "unacceptable".

"We are human beings who are giving our best each and everyday. Try being a decent person maybe instead of spreading abuse," he added as he thanked the team's "REAL fans" for their support.

Christian, 38, was clobbered three sixes in an over by KKR's Sunil Narine who also starred with the ball, bagging four wickets off four overs.

Earlier, Christian scored nine runs off eight balls. The 32-year-old Maxwell scored 15.

Fans took to social media to vent their anger soon after the game, even targeting Christian's pregnant partner on her Instagram page.

"I didn't have a great game tonight, but that's sport. However please leave her out of it," he posted on Instagram.

Superstar Kohli and his Bollywood actress wife Anushka Sharma have also been targeted by trolls in the past over the batsman's on-field performances.

The match on Monday was Kohli's last as the captain for RCB, which has yet to win the IPL despite its stellar line-up. — AFP

All or nothing to play for Delhi and Kolkata



Chennai Super Kings have already qualified for the finals and they will be sitting tight and watching the qualifier where Delhi Capitals will be clashing against the two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders. Delhi have dominated the 2021 Indian Premier League, which is indicated by points table, at the end of the league stage. On the other hand, Kolkata have had a dream run in the UAE leg. Only Chennai and Punjab Kings have been able to get past them, from the 8 games that they have played in the UAE.

The UAE pitches have been slow generally and have assisted spinners. Stroke play hasn't been that easy and Kolkata have majorly benefited from the quality and mystery of Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine. With the addition of Shakib Ul Hassan, scoring runs have got even more tougher for oppositions.

Delhi also have the quality of



Ravichandra Ashwin and Axar Patel, but they have mainly banked on their high quality pace attack of Anrich Nortje and Kagiso Rabada. Even Avesh Khan has enjoyed their company and provided match winning performance. This assures that, both teams have their own strategies, but they have massively focused on their own strengths, to obtain the desired results.

MISSING THE TRICK

Delhi Capitals fans believe that Delhi should have been the first team to reach the final. Rishabh Pant missed the trick by bowling Tom Curran the final over against Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the first qualifier. With the availability of a specialist death over bowler in Kagiso Rabada, Pant should have never gone to Curran, whose lack of



pace suited the out of form Dhoni, who has struggled to score for a very long time. Delhi have a very balanced line-up, but it needs one of their champion player to produce a big match winning knock.

ON THIN ICE

Kolkata have been on thin ice for so long, that they have got used to this situation and it's

just another game for them. At the start of the UAE leg, Kolkata needed to win 6 out of 7 games to qualify, making almost every game a must win. Eventually they qualified by winning 5 games with healthy margins. This difficult situation has brought the best out of them and now they absolutely thrive in this intense must-win situation. Although Eoin Morgan's

form might be a worrying factor, but every player has stood up in Morgan's leadership and the Kolkata's management would surely believe that Morgan is a big match player and he would surely shine in difficult situations, irrespective of it being true or not.

BETTER CHANCE FOR CHASING TEAM

The match is in Sharjah, where the wicket has been very difficult. The team that chases would have a higher chance of winning. In the last game, RCB were 102/3 in 14 overs and could manage only 36 runs in the last 6 overs, which completely changed the momentum of the game. Even Kolkata were seen struggling and if it was not for Sunil Narine's heroics with the bat, Bangalore could have still grasped the low-scoring encounter. Delhi have to be considering to bring in the experienced Amit Mishra or maybe even off-spinner Lalit Yadav, considering the number of lefty batsman in Kolkata. With the kind of cricket Kolkata has been playing, one has to be looking to support them, just hope that they haven't run out of gas too soon!

The 12th Man Army



Fans had created a raucous atmosphere during the games against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with their musical cacophony, drum-beating displays and singing prowess



HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, OCT 12

As Oman braces up for a huge moment in its cricketing history, co-hosting the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, the teeming cricket-loving fans will be a major highlight.

The Oman cricket team will be benefited immensely by the presence of a large number of local fans who are expected to turn up for the matches that are scheduled to start on October 17.

When Oman line up against Papua New Guinea in their opening match of the ICC T20

World Cup, it could pretty much be expected that the Oman fans are going to be the team's non-playing 12th man.

A hint of what is to come was on view during the warm up T20 fixtures that the Oman national team and Oman A played against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Fans had created a raucous atmosphere during the games against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with their musical cacophony, drum-beating displays and singing prowess.

With a large expatriate South Asian crowd expected to descend at the Al Amerat Stadium with

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also in action apart from the hosts, an electrifying atmosphere is an absolute certainty.

With Oman chasing history by eyeing a spot in the Super 12 stage of the World Cup, the players would be really spurred by the hordes of fans who will cheer for Oman at the prestigious biennial showpiece event. As television screens around the globe witness the unfolding of the T20 World Cup in Oman, the sights and sounds of wildly cheering Oman fans will elevate and bear witness to the cricketing experience that the Sultanate can offer.

Germany qualify for Qatar 2022 but Belgium made to wait

PARIS: A Timo Werner double on Monday helped Germany stamp their ticket for the 2022 World Cup with a 4-0 win over North Macedonia, but Belgium will have to wait until next month after Wales carved out a narrow win in Estonia.

Hansi Flick's men avenged a shock 2-1 home loss to the Macedonians earlier this year to claim their seventh win in eight qualifiers and take an unassailable eight-point lead at the top of Group J, with two matches remaining.

Germany went into their match in Skopje knowing that they could secure their passage if they won and Armenia failed to beat Romania.

After a goalless first half, Kai Havertz broke the deadlock five minutes after the interval before Chelsea's Werner struck twice in

three minutes to clinch the tie for the Germans.

His first came on 70 minutes when Thomas Mueller, who had teed up Havertz, flicked the ball into the path of Werner who crashed the ball past Stole Dimitrievski in the Macedonian goal.

Three minutes later, substitute Florian Wirtz got the touch through for Werner to curl his shot past Dimitrievski and chalk up his fifth goal in his last five qualifiers.

Jamal Musiala added a fourth, his first goal in international football, as the Germans became the first team, other than hosts Qatar, to qualify for the finals.

The second part of the bargain which secured their passage to Qatar in 2022 came in Bucharest where Alexandru Mitrita's goal on 26 minutes gave Romania a 1-0 win at home against the Armenians.

Wales make Belgians wait

Kieffer Moore's early goal in Tallinn gave Wales a slender 1-0 win over Estonia which keeps their hopes alive of catching Group E leaders Belgium, who were not in action after their involvement in the Nations League finals.

Wales are five points behind Belgium with two games to play and can still claim top spot and automatic qualification.

The Czech Republic won 2-0 in Belarus to remain in the running for second place in the group. They are level on points with the Welsh but have played one match more.

Wales are all but certain to drop into the playoffs even if they finish below the Czechs, courtesy of winning their 2020-21 Nations League group.

Russia and Croatia guaranteed themselves a top-two finish in



Macedonia's Darko Churlinov (R) and Germany's David Raum fight for the ball during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification match. — AFP

Group H but top spot remains open.

First-half goals from Igor Diveev and Georgi Dzhikiya gave the Russians a 2-0 cushion in Slovenia and, in spite of Josip Ilicic's strike just before half-time, the visitors held on to claim the three points.

Russia are two points ahead of Croatia who needed Luka Modric's 71st-minute equaliser to claim a 2-2 draw at home to Slovakia.

The Russians can secure their qualification when they travel to Croatia on November 14.

Memphis Depay scored twice for the Netherlands as they thrashed Gibraltar 6-0.

The Dutch, who missed the 2018 World Cup, top Group G but Burak Yilmaz's 99th-minute penalty which gave Turkey a 2-1 win in Latvia means they must wait until next month to secure a top-two finish. — AFP

Pact signed for new 100MW solar PV farm in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 12

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), along with Mubadrah and Solar Wadi, signed on Tuesday an agreement covering the establishment of a 100MW solar PV farm in Sohar Industrial City to be operational in 2022.

The project is part of the overall strategy of Madayn in providing a significant portion of the energy needs of its tenants from a sustainable renewable energy source, in line with Oman Vision 2040's sustainability goals, and in so doing helping to reduce the electricity costs for the tenants.

The agreement was signed by Eng Musallam bin Mohammed al Shehri, Head of Operations Sector at Madayn, Mustafa al Lawati, Chief Executive Officer of Mubadrah, and Yazan Faouri, Chief Executive Officer of Solar Wadi, and forms part of the larger overall Madayn Renewable Energy Project initiative which is being undertaken to transform the way the electricity needs of all industrial cities and free zones under Madayn umbrella are being met in order to have a significant portion being powered by renewable solar energy during the day.

Commenting on the agreement, Mustafa al Lawati, CEO of Mubadrah, stated: "This agreement comes along the lines of the efforts undertaken by Madayn in moving towards more sustainable energy sources and helping to reduce the carbon footprint of the industrial sector in Oman, as set out in Oman Vision 2040, the gateway to Oman becoming a developed nation under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq." He added that the ultimate aim is to provide all Madayn



tenants with saving on their electricity cost while attracting investors to invest into the development of the Solar Park, in so doing help to increase the competitiveness of all companies within Madayn industrial cities and free zones, which will consequently create a positive impact on their business operations and Oman's economy as a whole.

"Mubadrah as the investment arm of Madayn, and in our continued efforts to support the tenants of Madayn, we are keen to invest alongside Solar Wadi, the main developer for the initiative, into providing sustainable solutions and services that are aimed at allowing all tenants at Sohar Industrial City to take advantage of the many environmental, sustainable and economic benefits from such projects with no investment, guarantees or major involvement being required from the tenant's side," he added.

Yazan Faouri, CEO of Solar Wadi, pointed out that: "The aim of this initiative and collaboration is to enable us to work together in our combined efforts to deliver a sustainable,

GREEN ENERGY: Madayn, Mubadrah and Solar Wadi ink agreement to establish a large scale solar PV farm in Sohar Industrial City

ecological, more economical, and socially conscious power solution for all tenants at Sohar Industrial City from a renewable solar energy source, in so doing contributing to the ambitions and goals of the Omani government, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, in transforming Oman's economy into a developed, diversified and sustainable national economy as a set out by Oman Vision 2040."

Faouri added that "This project represents a strategic investment for Solar Wadi, as one of the first independent Omani power companies that invests in, builds and operates renewable energy power plants, and is only the first in a number of investments planned for the Omani market which

is targeted as a total investment of RO 300mn (\$0.75bn) in developing a combined capacity of circa 1 GW of Solar PV Energy plants across the Sultanate. With investments being made mainly in Madayn Renewable Energy Project initiative over all industrial cities and free zones under Madayn umbrella, along with a significant number of other Solar plants being developed for the wider private sector C&I companies and governmental entities across a wide range of business sectors in the Omani Economy."

Madayn and its partners plan to role out the Madayn Renewable Energy Project initiative across all industrial cities and free zones in the coming couple of years, utilising a combination of overall Holistic Solutions which involves larger centralised Solar Plant that will cater for collective needs of all tenants within the industrial city that are connected to the regular distribution networks and direct Private-Wire Solutions for those high consumption tenants within the industrial city that have individual electricity feeds.

Oman's maiden green ammonia project plans firm up



AMBITIOUS SCHEME: KBR technology selected for breakthrough project planned in Duqm SEZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 12

US-based global technology firm KBR has announced that it has been selected by India's ACME Group to provide its breakthrough technology for a green ammonia project to be built in the Sultanate at an estimated cost of \$3.5 billion.

Under the terms of the contract, Houston-based KBR will provide technology licence, engineering, proprietary equipment, catalyst and commissioning services for a plant to produce 300 metric tonnes per day of ammonia. The plant, planned in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, will be an integrated facility using solar and wind energy to produce green ammonia.

"We are honoured to be selected by ACME Group for this ambitious project," said Doug Kelly, KBR President, Technology. "Energy transition driven by green ammonia is a reality and KBR will play a pivotal role in helping innovative companies like ACME establish early-mover advantages through our industry leading technology."

"This facility, aimed towards exporting green ammonia to Europe and Asia, will be the first project of this scale," said Manoj K Upadhyay, Founder and Chairman, ACME Group. "We selected KBR technology because of its high yields and lowest energy consumption and look forward to a successful project implementation."

Cyclone damage: Flood-proofing Oman's infrastructure is key

NEW SOLUTIONS: Experts stress importance of making Sultanate's road and civil infrastructure "resilient" to climate-change impacts

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

As the Omani government sets about taking stock of the significant damage inflicted by Cyclone Shaheen across vast swathes of North and South Al Batinah governorates, there are calls by experts for current and future infrastructure projects to be made suitably "resilient" to severe flooding and climate change-related perils.

Besides causing extensive

damage to private homes, businesses, farms and utilities, floodwaters unleashed by Shaheen are also understood to have also wrecked roads in many places, damaged dams and aflaj, and water and sewer networks, while causing extensive economic disruption as well.

On Sunday, the Ministerial Committee tasked with overseeing the post-cyclone recovery of areas impacted by Shaheen announced the formation of a special team of experts drawn from the Engineering Services division of the Sultan's Armed Forces and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The team's remit is to review the design of road infrastructure and propose solutions to make all roads resilient to potential flood damage.

Yesterday, the Ministerial



Committee authorised the formulation of an "action plan" to address damage to dams and aflaj, as well as ascertain the need for new flood protection dams, aimed at mitigating the effects of future storm events.

Significantly, flood protection schemes are in various stages of design, construction and operation in several areas around

the Sultanate, including Muscat, South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates, among other locations.

But given the rising frequency and intensity of cyclones in the Sultanate — a phenomenon attributed to global warming and climate change — a number of design engineers contacted by the *Observer* have underlined the

need for future civil infrastructure to be suitably "hardened" to withstand flood-related risks. They also stress the importance of superior design engineering and construction work to ensure all future projects to be made "climate-resistant".

A veteran civil engineer, with longstanding experience in Oman, said: "The Sultanate's Highway Design Manual adheres to internationally accepted ASTHO standards, but special consideration must be made in the design of cross drainage or embankment structures, given the unprecedented volumes and ferocity of floodwater when it rains. This will require an overhaul of design standards, material specifications and construction technology."

Furthermore, the design of roads should go hand in hand with the

design of drainage infrastructure primarily to ensure that flood or drain water is channelled well away from the road. Any waterlogging on the road should be swiftly drained away as well, he said.

A former C-level executive in a leading investment firm questioned the wisdom of awarding design engineering contracts for key civil infrastructure projects to the low/lowest bidder, which is a longstanding practice in the Sultanate.

"Flood control design work is not optimal in Oman, and so is construction supervision, especially when the cheapest design consultants are chosen for an important job. There is little effort to assess the capabilities of the design consultants and the contractors because the driving motivation is to get the job done at the lowest cost."

OMINVEST meets with SMEs at Expo 2020

MUSCAT: In line with its support to Omani Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and innovators participating at Expo 2020 Dubai, a team from Oman International Development and Investment Company (OMINVEST), the leading investment holding group in Oman, met with Omani SME owners and entrepreneurs at its premises.

The visiting entrepreneurs are amongst a group selected by the General Commission of the Sultanate at Expo 2020 to showcase their products and innovations at the Omani Pavilion.

The group was accompanied by General Manager of Oman Trading Platform (Taiseer), Nada Bassam, who manages the SMEs participation at Expo 2020 Dubai.

Some members of the executive management at OMINVEST met with the SMEs group in an engaging session at OMINVEST's offices. Anwar al Jabri, Group President — Investment Banking at OMINVEST and CEO of Jabreen Capital, shared insight



on the importance of mobility, resilience, and dedication in taking one's business forward. He led an engaging discussion with the attendees on how to face market challenges and identify the right opportunities for growth, while sharing some inspiring stories.

Dr Shamsa al Shaibani, Vice-President — Economic Research at OMINVEST gave a brief about the group and its portfolio companies; she also shed light on practical

tips for entrepreneurs and SME owners to achieve growth and sustainability for their businesses.

Lina Hussein, Vice President, Corporate Communications briefed the audience on OMINVEST's purpose and values, the Group's social impact initiatives, and the ongoing collaboration between OMINVEST and the General Commission of the Sultanate at Expo 2020.

As per its Strategic Partnership

agreement with the General Commission, which was signed in April this year, OMINVEST has been extending support to Omani SMEs within the framework of Al Luban Initiative.

In addition, OMINVEST has been working closely with the organisers on a special initiative to help identify and showcase innovative Omani products through various platforms and opportunities inside and outside

the Oman Pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai.

Commenting on this visit, Anwar al Jabri said, "It's been a pleasure receiving such a promising group of Omani SME owners and innovators at our premises today. Building bridges between SMEs and large organisations is essential, especially during the difficult times SMEs have been facing since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. There were very

interesting products showcased by the group today; we would be happy to consider some of them for our corporate gifts and other collaboration opportunities".

He added, "we strongly believe in the important role of SMEs in the wellbeing of the economy; as such, our support to the Omani pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai has been linked to this important segment — SMEs and innovators. Showcasing their products at Expo is a very important opportunity for them and we hope they capitalise on it wholeheartedly as it will provide them with massive exposure and marketing opportunities".

Expo 2020 has opened its doors to the public on October 1, 2021 and will be running for 6 months till March 31, 2022; the Oman Pavilion is located at the Mobility District. The pavilion design is inspired by the Omani frankincense tree (Luban) and the internal space is divided into five zones that take visitors on a journey to discover Oman and its beauty.

OAB's Head of Innovation receives 'Oman Woman of the Year Award'

MUSCAT: Leen al Atassi, Head of Innovation at Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently won the prestigious 'Oman Woman of the Year Award 2021' in the category of Innovation and Technology. The 'Oman Woman of the Year Award' awards, founded by Apex Media in 2017, recognise and honour the outstanding achievements of women who have made a difference in fields as diverse as technology, education, medicine, law, philanthropy, and sports, to name a few.

The award recipients all represent excellence, dynamism and diversity regardless of the field. Each of these women has a remarkable story to tell, whether it is beating the odds or finding new ways to set themselves apart in a male-dominated industry.

On winning the award, Leen said: "I am honoured and humbled to receive this recognition



and to be standing alongside talented women who are highly accomplished in their respective fields. This achievement would have not been possible without the support and contributions of my team and colleagues, the management of OAB, and my family. I look forward to continue to support innovation efforts

within the banking industry and across related ecosystems in line with Oman's 2040 vision."

With a career span of over 15 years in finance and banking, Leen has supported the acceleration of OAB's Innovation agenda by introducing various platforms and initiatives that enable and promote innovation

within the bank and the community such as the annual Innovation Hub hackathons, the innovation university roadshows across Oman, the inception of the first-of-its-kind Innovation Lab in Oman and the OAB Online Learning Hub. This approach has not only encouraged the youth to think outside the box but has also stimulated great minds to come together to develop ideas and build working solutions that would support the growth of the industry..

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App.

LuLu Exchange achieves 100 pc vaccination of entire team



MUSCAT: LuLu Exchange Company, one of the leading payment providers in the Sultanate, with 37 branches across the country, has successfully vaccinated all its employees, in adherence to the supreme committee's vaccination drive.

All members of the company, including those working in the company's branches have taken two doses, thus ensuring the safety of consumers and staff alike.

"The benevolent leaders of Oman have provided full support in getting the people of

this nation vaccinated against Covid-19, and we are privileged to play our part in ensuring our services are provided in a safe and healthy environment," said Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, LuLu Financial group.

"The safety of our team and consumers is paramount to us, and by getting everyone vaccinated, we stand true to our core values of displaying a customer first approach and utmost integrity in our actions."

LuLu Exchange, which started operations in Oman in 2011, is part of the globally recognised LuLu Financial Group.

GAC Motor GS8 now with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Make the most of the turbocharged flagship GAC Motor GS8 now with exclusive benefits. The benefits include 5 years or 150,000 kms manufacturer's warranty, comprehensive 1 year insurance (Oman Coverage), Assured Service 3 years or 30,000 kms.

The GS8's design is attractive and instantly recognisable. Right from the front grille to the headlamps, all the way to the alloy wheels and the tail lamps, the GS8 draws all eyes making it one of the most admired vehicles in its category. It is equipped with 19" alloy wheels, LED high mounted brake light, shark fin antenna and roof rails.

Overall, the exterior design of the GS8 is one of its very strong points.

Giving you the lead on every journey is the powerful 2-litre turbo engine that is capable of

producing 198 HP and 320 Nm of torque. The engine is made more efficient by its pairing to a six-speed automatic transmission.

Moving to the interior, the GS8 is warm and welcoming owing to its leather seats. Also, a look around will reveal ample space which offers good comfort for all occupants.

The leather seats spell luxury all over. All of the seats provide utmost comfort and convenience. The driver's seat is 6-way Power Adjustable, while front passenger seat is 4-way, and both of them are heated and ventilated. For the second row the seats are equipped with 60:40 split and sliding configuration, while the third row has a 50:50 Split and fold flat. For additional cargo space, the GS8's supersized flat-bottom trunk offers huge amount of space—a perfect feature for families taking on adventures.



Adding to the joyous experiences on every journey, the GS8 is filled with features that provide nothing less. It's equipped with three-zone climate control

air conditioning, central control door lock system, and power sunroof with jam protection, among other features. For in-cabin entertainment, the GS8

is equipped with an advanced infotainment system, with a 10-inch colour touch screen display system with Apple CarPlay, that is also available with Bluetooth

and USB connectivity.

Besides this, the GS8 is also equipped with a metre-cluster with 7-inch trip computer, 6 speakers, speed-based volume control, front and rear parking sensors, Surround View Parking Camera, Cruise Control and more. Playing a very impressive role at providing all round safety is an array of active and passive safety features. They include dual front/front side/side curtain airbags, electronic stability programme, hill-start hold control, tyre pressure monitoring system, Hill Descent Control, impact sensing door unlock, lane change assist, and more.

The campaign is valid until October 21 and conditions apply. For more details, please visit any GAC Motor showroom. New World Autos LLC is the distributor for GAC Motor vehicles in Oman.



In brief

■ LONDON

**UK'S EASYJET GETS \$1.5 BN PANDEMIC LOSS**

EasyJet said travel was back as it increased capacity for October-December to 70 per cent of its pre-pandemic level, a turnaround from a year in which Covid-19 restrictions drove losses above £1 billion. Demand for holidays to winter sun destinations such as Egypt and Turkey was growing, said easyJet, which will fly more to the Canary Islands in October than it did in 2019. It was also seeing more bookings from business travellers.

"It is clear recovery is underway", Chief Executive Johan Lundgren said on Tuesday. Pandemic uncertainty and travel bans pushed easyJet to an expected headline loss of between £1.135 billion (\$1.54 billion) and £1.175 billion for the 12 months ended September, it said. — **Reuters**

■ BERLIN

**LUFTHANSA PAYS OFF ANOTHER \$1.7 BN IN BAILOUT CASH**

Lufthansa said it had paid back in advance €1.5 billion (\$1.7 billion) of state aid obtained last year at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, which decimated air travel. The payment comes on the back of a €2.2 billion capital increase as the German carrier, in which the German state has a 14 per cent stake, banks on a revival of demand for air travel next year.

Lufthansa added it also intends to pay off an aid tranche worth €1 billion by the end of the year. The carrier had already paid back a state loan of one billion euros in February and has bounced back following the successful €2.2 billion capital increase launched last month.

■ SEOUL

**SAMSUNG BOSS PLEADS GUILTY TO UNLAWFUL USE OF SEDATIVE**

Samsung conglomerate chief Jay Y Lee pleaded guilty in court to a charge of unlawful use of a controlled substance, as legal woes continue to haunt the executive even after his release on parole in August following a bribery conviction.

Lee's release had raised market watchers' expectations of a flurry of major decisions at crown jewel Samsung Electronics Co Ltd and its affiliates, including the location of a \$17 billion chip factory being planned in the United States. — **Reuters**

Salalah set to welcome European tourists

**BUSINESS REPORTER**

MUSCAT, OCT 12

With Oman re-opening its borders to vaccinated travellers without prior approval, Muriya's Hawana Salalah, Oman's largest integrated tourism complex, is welcoming European travellers for the winter season in the Governorate of Dhofar.

With a surge of interest among domestic, regional and international markets for the concept of resort living, Hawana Salalah is collaborating with international tour operators to promote Dhofar as the most popular vacation destination in the region.

Hawana Salalah is expected to welcome more than ten thousand tourists by end of 2021 as more international travellers flock to the

region's only tropical getaway.

"Since its inception, Muriya has been constantly working diligently to contribute to the growth of the tourism sector in Oman in line with the government's diversification strategy. We have been hard at work for years with tour operators to attract direct flights from European cities to Salalah to help increase the flow of tourists to the entire area, but the unprecedented circumstances that the world went through in the past two years has put a hold on international travel", said Ossama Aboualam, CEO of Muriya.

"With Oman easing travel restrictions to enable more seamless travel to the Sultanate, we are witnessing more demand from European markets to travel to Salalah as well as other international destinations and that

is good news for everyone in the tourism and hospitality industry."

Hawana Salalah boasts a picturesque 170-berth marina, surrounded by a variety of hospitality establishments including the 577-room Fanar Hotel & Residences, the 87-room Juweira Boutique Hotel and the beachfront 19-hut, Souly Lodge.

Another key hotel in the destination is the the 422-room Salalah Rotana Resort, which will reopen in December 2021. In addition, Hawana Salalah creates a vibrant atmosphere for guests to enjoy a wide range of restaurants, shops and leisure facilities.

The Hawana Aquapark, open on weekends, is a major aquatic attraction for local and international visitors featuring 65,600 sqm of pure adventure and fun as well as a food court.

Real estate deals rise 14.2pc at end of Aug

MUSCAT: The total value of property transactions in the Sultanate at the end of August 2021 increased by 14.2 per cent to reach RO 1,744,100,000 compared to the same period of 2020, as indicated by the preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The Sultanate collected RO 50.3 million as real estate transaction fees at the end of August 2021, which is a rise of 21 per cent compared to the same period of 2020.

The traded value of sales contracts also increased by 51.1 per cent to RO 770,700,000, and the number of sales contracts increased by 74.4 per cent to 56,611 contracts, compared to 32,460 contracts during the same period in 2020.

The traded value of mortgage contracts fell by 0.6 per cent at the end of August 2021, to reach RO 959,600,000, compared to RO 965,100,000

during the same period in 2020.

The number of mortgage contracts till the end of August 2021 reached 12,402, an increase of 55.2 per cent over the same period in 2020, which recorded 7,989 contracts.

NCSI data revealed a significant drop in traded value of exchange (barter) contracts by 73.7 per cent at the end of August 2021 to RO 13.8 million, as against RO 52.5 million posted in the comparable period of 2020.

The number of title deeds issued at the end of August 2021 reached 165,417, an increase by 54.3 per cent over the same period of 2020, in which 107,192 title deeds were issued.

Meanwhile, the number of title deeds issued in favour of the GCC citizens increased by 94.3 per cent to reach 443, compared to 228 during the same period in 2020, the data showed.

— ONA



Georgieva keeps IMF helm despite data scandal

WASHINGTON: Kristalina Georgieva was secured in her job at the helm of the International Monetary Fund on Monday, after the Washington-based crisis lender's board reaffirmed its confidence in the scandal-hit Bulgarian economist.

Georgieva's role at the institution was called into question after the September 16 publication of the findings of an investigation carried out at the request of the ethics committee of the World Bank, where Georgieva had previously held a senior role.

The investigation by law firm WilmerHale concluded that Georgieva had manipulated data in favour of China while at the global body, which she has denied.

Drawn out uncertainty over whether Georgieva would keep her job ended on Monday when the IMF board said it "reaffirms its full confidence in the Managing Director's leadership and ability to continue to effectively carry out her duties."

"The Executive Board considered that the information presented in the course of its review did not conclusively demonstrate that the Managing Director played an improper role regarding the Doing Business 2018 Report when she was CEO of the World Bank", its statement read.

The board added it would "meet to consider possible additional steps to ensure



IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva

the strength of institutional safeguards."

WilmerHale's controversial findings centre on the drafting of the 2018 and 2020 editions of the World Bank report that ranks countries according to their ease of doing business.

The push came while bank leadership was engaged in sensitive negotiations with Beijing over increasing the bank's lending capital.

Uncertainty over Georgieva's future threatened to overshadow the IMF and World Bank fall meetings that kicked off Monday, with Georgieva due to speak during a roundtable and give a press conference on Wednesday.

The storm at the top of the fund could pull focus from topics nominally at the top of the agenda, such as threats to global economic growth and helping countries bounce back from the Covid-19 pandemic. — **AFP**

ESO renews appeal for funding support

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 12

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) organised its second virtual fundraising event recently. Hosted by ESO's Board Member, Rumaitha al Busaidy, ESO's Environmental Big Night In drew local and international friends and supporters for an evening of fun events to raise awareness and funding to support the work of Oman's only environmental NGO.

The event hosted several guest speakers including Kristian Teleki, Director of Friends of Ocean Action, Talal Hassan, an Omani environmental entrepreneur, and Omani media personality, Ibtihal al Zadjali, all of whom shared their collective belief in the importance of preserving Oman's unique biodiversity as well as the community's shared responsibility to protect the environment for the next generation.

Sponsored by Oman Arab Bank, the event featured videos of ESO's past and ongoing work, an exciting raffle as well as musical performances from local artists like Maestro al Kindi, Amal Waqar and Pulse and Soul.

Most importantly, the fundraiser offered the public the opportunity to contribute to ESO's tireless efforts to protect and preserve Oman's precious



The fundraiser offered the public the opportunity to contribute to ESO's tireless efforts to protect and preserve Oman's precious environment

environment.

"I would like to thank everyone who supported our event on Monday; our sponsor, Oman Arab Bank, the many organisations who donated auction and raffle prizes, the companies who donated funds and to everyone who turned out to support our event", said Her Highness Sayyidah Tania al Said, President of ESO. "The economic impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has put significant strain on ESO."

"The economic impact of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic has

put significant strain on ESO. We are doing everything in our power to try to sustain our operations into 2022 but it is not easy. We are Oman's only environmental NGO.

We are dedicated to promoting environmental awareness in the community and delivering programs to help preserve Oman's rich biodiversity, but we cannot do this alone. We had an ambitious target for the fundraising event of RO 80,000. Sadly this target was not met and so our viability is still at threat.

We will continue to advocate for our environment and Oman's extraordinary wildlife and are so grateful to everyone who donated so generously to support our work. RO 40,000 is a huge achievement and gives us hope for the future, but we are not out of the woods yet and I hope that we can encourage the community to continue to donate — big or small, every donation counts!"

Japan confronts rising inequality after Abenomics

Japan's stock market has surged and luxury cars are selling fast in Tokyo after eight years of economic stimulus under Abenomics, but that new wealth is concentrated in a small slice of society rather than broadly distributed, data show.

Addressing that divide has become a high priority for new prime minister Fumio Kishida, who promised to tackle income disparity made worse by the pandemic. But he has offered few clues as to how he will do so.

"It's like everyone has become poor," said Masanori Aoki, 62, who owns a small coffee shop in a working class district of northeast Tokyo.

"With Abenomics, the finance minister talked about wealth trickling down. But there was no such thing, was there? Almost nothing," said Aoki, who took a job as a part-time kindergarten

bus driver when the Covid-19 pandemic forced him to temporarily shut down his shop.

Kimie Kobayashi, 55, who works at a childcare facility in Tokyo, says her wages haven't risen for four years. She said many who work in the industry are resigned to the fact that salaries rarely increase.

"I can't say that my livelihood is getting any better," said Kobayashi. "The government collects tax but that money isn't used to help people who are really in need."

Abenomics — a dose of huge monetary, fiscal support and a growth strategy that boosted stocks and corporate profits — failed to create wealth to households via higher wages, data show.

Japan's poverty rate is the second-highest among G7 nations and the ninth-highest among OECD countries, according to the organisation's survey, based on data available up to 2020.

Nominal wages rose just 1.2 per cent from 2012 through 2020, government data showed. Japanese households' average wealth fell by 3.5 per cent from 2014 to 2019 — although the top 10 per cent wealthiest saw an increase, according to another government survey.

To be sure, inequality is far more pronounced in countries such as the United States and Britain. Japan stood around the middle of 39 countries surveyed by OECD in 2020 based on the Gini coefficient, which gauges inequality.

The situation did improve for some in Japan. Manabu Fujisaki recently splurged on a 7 million yen (\$61,800) Mercedes-Benz after reaping a huge sum from investing in cryptocurrencies.

— Reuters

'Abenomics brought us investors huge profits as money-pumping pushed up prices of financial securities

FUJISAKI
who plans to build a 200m yen house in Tokyo



LAS VEGAS HOSTS AVIATION SHOW

Workers set up the Dassault Aviation booth in preparation for the NBAA Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition at the Las Vegas Convention Centre, in Las Vegas, Nevada, US. — Reuters

The Covid inflation scare



DANIEL GROS
The writer is a member of the board and a distinguished fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies

CENTRAL BANKS BECOME CONCERNED, AND USUALLY START TIGHTENING POLICY, WHEN HIGHER INFLATION FUELS HIGHER INFLATION EXPECTATIONS AMONG CONSUMERS

Consumer price inflation in the euro zone accelerated further in September to a 13-year high of 3.4 per cent year on year, prompting a wave of alarmed headlines. Annual inflation in the United States stood at 5.3 per cent in August. So, how concerned should European and US policymakers be about a possible prolonged inflationary surge?

In the euro zone at least, the current inflation headlines are to be expected. Experience suggests that an economic crisis leads first to a deflationary scare and then to an inflationary one. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, deflationary worries at the bottom of the subsequent recession were followed by an uptick in inflation during the ensuing recovery.

A similar pattern has been evident in the Covid-19 crisis. For part of last year, prices in the euro zone were falling, and the talk was of the pandemic's lingering deflationary effects.

Some perspective is thus in order. For starters, reported inflation is usually the increase in the consumer price index compared to 12 months ago. Unusually low prices in the preceding year thus distort the figure. Today, this base effect is not merely one factor among many behind the rising inflation numbers; it

is key to understanding them, given the low point in the year-earlier period.

The easiest way to look past the temporary price spike created by the 2020 Covid-driven base effect is to calculate inflation over the last 24 months instead of 12.

On this basis, the latest euro zone numbers do not suggest strong inflation dynamics: The headline inflation rate (as measured by the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices) was 3.4 per cent in September, but the index has risen only by 1.5 per cent per year over the last two years. Likewise, German consumer price inflation was 4.1 per cent in September 2021, a 29-year high, but the index was up only just above 2 per cent per year when measured over a two-year period that bridges the Covid-19 effect.

Headline inflation is also influenced by volatile energy prices. It should therefore not be a surprise that the euro zone's annual core inflation rate (which strips out energy prices) has been flat in recent years, remaining in a narrow range of around 1-1.5 per cent when measured over two-year intervals.

But there is a clear transatlantic difference, with two-year-based inflation drifting up in the US. American consumer prices have increased by over

3.3 per cent per year on average for the last 24 months. Even the core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index is now running at over 2.5 per cent during the last two years, clearly above the 1.5-2 per cent range that was common in the previous decade.

Another reason why some fear that inflation may accelerate from these relatively modest levels is the rapid increase in many raw material prices. But this, too, was to be expected in the context of a global recovery.

While crude oil futures prices briefly turned negative at the height of the pandemic-induced financial market turbulence in early 2020, oil is now trading at \$70-80 per barrel.

A similar roller-coaster pattern occurred after the global financial crisis. Prices of gas futures have soared recently in Europe, but this peak can only be temporary. With prices in European hubs five times the US level, arbitrage with cheaper US shale gas will bring European prices back down over time. Prices of other raw materials, like metals, also tend to jump when industry recovers.

Higher commodity prices increase headline inflation in the short run, but need not start an inflationary spiral.

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Fintech fund for female start-up founders in Europe



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

VENTURE FUNDING FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS FELL TO A THREE-YEAR LOW IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2020

In partnership with venture capital firm Anthemis, banking group Barclays is expanding its female-focused start-up fund to Europe with a London-headquartered mentorship programme.

The British bank will be the anchor limited partner of a \$30 million early-stage start-up fund managed by Anthemis, with the cash solely invested in the UK and European-based female fintech founders.

All portfolio companies will automatically be enrolled into Barclays' Female Innovators Lab, which will provide entrepreneurs with access to office space, mentorship and advisory services.

The partnership will be led by Katie Palencsar, investor and global head of venture studio at Anthemis, who also ran the fund's New York iteration that made its first investment in 2020.

She will be supported by Sonal Lakhani, global head

of programmes and strategic initiatives Barclays' group innovation office.

"This is a programme that's needed. Unfortunately, the conscious and unconscious biases that female founders face are not restricted to US borders. It's global, it's pervasive and it definitely exists within the UK and Europe, too," Lakhani said.

Venture funding for female entrepreneurs fell to a three-year low in the third quarter of 2020, according to data from PitchBook, as the effects of the pandemic hit marginalised groups harder than others.

In Europe, just 2.1 per cent of the total capital invested in venture-backed start-ups last year went to companies funded solely by women.

Cheques cut from the Barclays' European fund will typically be between \$400,000 and \$1 million, with an option reserved for one

round of follow-on investment.

After that, companies will exit the Lab, Lakhani said, though Barclays may make additional strategic investments via its principal investing team in companies that are of use to the bank.

Palencsar said the partnership had invested in five companies via its US arm, including influencer-focused e-commerce start-up SwayPay and First Boulevard, a digital bank for Black Americans. Anthemis, which has backed eToro, Monese and Tide, partnered with UBS last year in a strategic deal for its \$200 million UBS Next fund.

"I don't look at it as if we need to tap into just that one area of just writing cheques or just speaking up," said Palencsar. "I think it is ultimately multiple constituents participating in the ecosystem from hiring talent to investing."

Despite the lack of funding for female fintech entrepreneurs,

the need for greater diversity in the sector has been largely overlooked in recent major UK policy initiatives, as mentioned in the Fintech Files.

The landmark Kalifa Review, published in March, did not include the terms 'Black', 'ethnicity', 'BAME' or 'female', while 'women' was used only once, in reference to the name of an existing industry accreditation.

Lakhani said Barclays' decision to focus on women with this fund was "a no-brainer", viewing their businesses as under-invested assets in technology circles that can provide new perspectives on current financial problems.

"Fintech is one of the most dire sectors for female funding, and so when there was an economic crash or global pandemic, everybody kind of batted down the hatches and focused on what they can invest in or who they know," said Lakhani.

She added: "We do see women as key to our economic recovery and we think you can't ignore 50 per cent of the population if we are looking at how we can come out of this."

She said the bank has been "inundated" with applications for its New York cohort and anticipated a similar reaction in Europe. She highlighted embedded finance, where non-banks provide banking services to customers, as a particularly attractive area for investment.

"Why is it specifically important for us to support female founders? I think it's better to turn that question on its head — why would you not support an upcoming business proposition, which is coming at something from a completely different angle and where there's a great investment opportunity for us?," she said.

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

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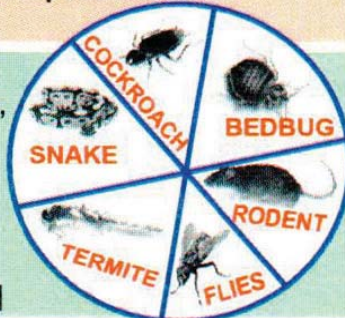
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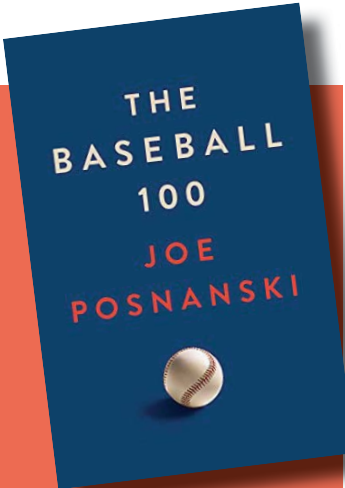


While Shaheen may have caused so much damage to the country, stories of hope are also popping up everywhere. For Filipino artist Emerson Sumaoang who is based in Muscat, there is a story to be told — positive stories of courage, heroism and everyday individuals doing something good not only for the community but the human race in general. And he does it with pebbles and sand... **P20**

Stories of hope set in stone

ENTERTAINMENT

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THE BASEBALL 100
BY JOE POSNANSKI

The accomplishments of some of the sport's greatest players past and present are put into context with one another.

Amy Winehouse belongings expected to reach \$2m at auction

Hundreds of items that belonged to late Grammy-winning artist Amy Winehouse, including the dress she wore during her final concert, are going up for auction in the United States.

Auction house Julien's will put the more than 800 personal effects — which include shoes, shorts, bras, books and records — under the hammer

in Beverly Hills, California on November 6 and 7.

They went on display in New York on Monday and are expected to fetch up to \$2 million total.

The British soul diva died of alcohol poisoning on July 23, 2011, when she was just 27.

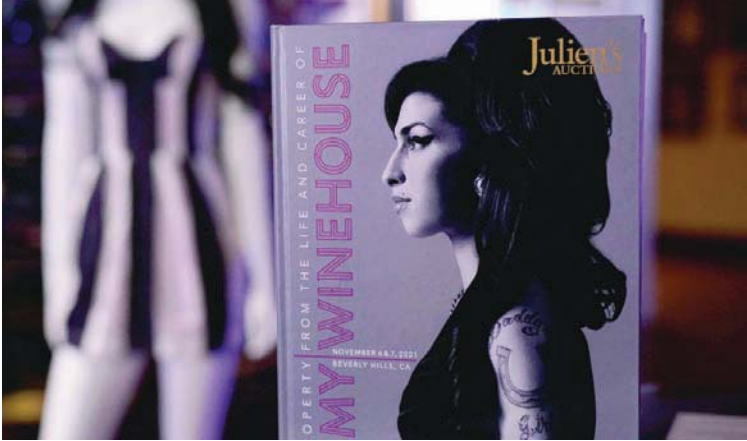
"It's very difficult when you have to do an auction when you're working with the par-

ents of their deceased child," said Julien's Executive Director Martin Nolan.

"It took them a long time to actually come to terms and decide to let go, with the realisation that, of course, there are fans and museums and collectors all over the world that will want to own some of these items, care for them, show them at museums, keep her legacy and her memory alive and at the same time raise some money for the foundation," he added.

The proceeds will go to the Amy Winehouse Foundation, which supports vulnerable young adults facing addiction.

Winehouse, who won several awards for her 2006 album "Back to Black," often spoke of her personal experiences battling alcohol and drug addic-



tion.

The star, clearly struggling, was booed at her last concert in June 2011 in Belgrade.

Her tour was cancelled and she died a month later.

The short, green and black dress she was wearing, designed by Naomi Parry, is expected to sell for between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

"That's very iconic. But all of these dresses represent Amy — fantastic musician, songwriter, but also a fashion icon," said Nolan. — **AFP**



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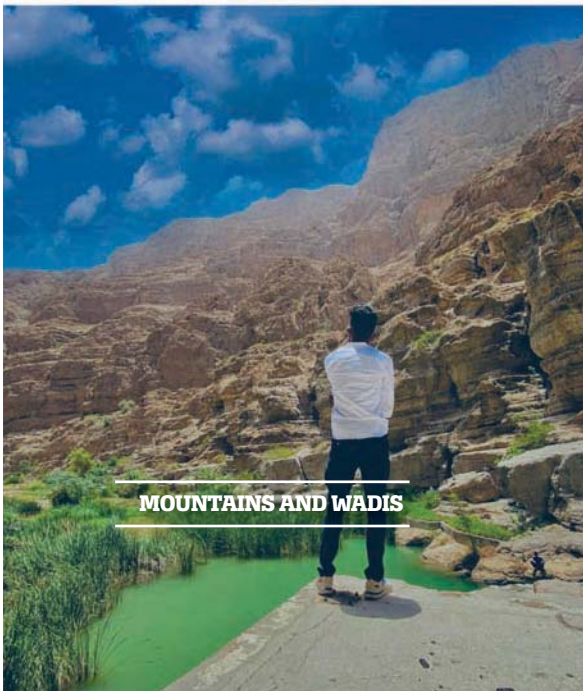
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENVIRONMENT

When global warming stops, seas will still rise



Scuba divers dive in the Red Sea waters by a coral reef near Egypt's resort city of Sharm el Sheikh. The Red Sea is home to some 209 different types of coral reefs, according to Egypt's environment ministry. — **AFP**

Even if humanity beats the odds and caps global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, seas will rise for centuries to come and swamp cities currently home to half-a-billion people, researchers warned on Tuesday.

In a world that heats up another half-degree above that benchmark, an additional 200 million of today's urban dwellers would regularly find themselves knee-deep in sea water and more vulnerable to devastating storm surges, they reported in Environmental Research Letters. Worst hit in any scenario will be Asia, which accounts for nine of the ten mega-cities at highest risk. Land home to more than half the populations of Bangladesh and Vietnam fall below the long-term high tide line, even in a 2C world. Built-up areas in China, India and Indonesia would also face devastation.

Most projections for sea level rise and the threat it poses to shoreline cities run to the end of the century and range from half-a-metre to less than twice that, depending how quickly carbon pollution is reduced.

But oceans will continue to swell for hundreds of years beyond 2100 — fed by melting ice sheets, heat trapped in the ocean and the dynamics of warming water — no matter how aggressively greenhouse gas emissions are drawn down, the findings show.

"Roughly five percent of the world's population today live on land below where the high tide level is expected to rise based on carbon dioxide that human activity has already added to the atmosphere," lead author Ben Strauss, CEO and chief scientist of Climate Central, said.

Today's concentration of CO2 — which lingers for hundreds of years — is 50 per cent higher than in 1800, and Earth's average surface temperature has already risen 1.1C. That's enough to eventually push up sea levels nearly two metres (more than six feet), whether it takes two centuries or 10, Strauss said.

The 1.5C warming limit enshrined in the Paris Agreement that nations will try to keep in play at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow next month translates into nearly three metres over the long haul.

Unless engineers figure out how to quickly remove massive amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere, that amount of sea level rise is not a matter of "if" but "when", according to the study.

These are the optimistic scenarios. "The headline finding for me is the stark difference between a 1.5C world after sharp pollution cuts versus a world after 3C or 4C of warming," Strauss said.

"At Glasgow and for the rest of this decade, we have the chance to help or to betray a hundred generations to come."

National carbon-cutting pledges under the 2015 Paris treaty would, if honoured, still see Earth warm 2.7C by 2100. If efforts to reign in greenhouse gases falter, temperatures could rise 4C or more above mid-19th century levels.

This much warming would add six to nine metres to global oceans over the long haul, and force cities currently home to nearly a billion people to either mount massive defences against future sea level rise or rebuild on higher ground.

In China alone, land occupied today by 200 million people would fall below high tide in a 3C scenario. And the threat is not only long-term: absent massive sea walls, Chinese cityscapes home to tens of millions could become unliveable within 80 years.

"1.5C of warming will still lead to devastating sea level rise, but the hotter alternatives are far worse," said Strauss. — **AFP**

COMMUNITY AFFAIR

Oman has been my home, says outgoing diplomat



"OMAN HAS never been a home away from home but a home itself for I've lots of fond memories of my life here," says the outgoing Nepal Ambassador Dr Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal.

Out of all the beauties of the Sultanate, the one which pulls her back is, undoubtedly, the people who have showered her with their distinguished hospitality.

"Indeed, the hospitality of my Omani friends is unmatched. Time and again, I've been falling in love with the way they treated me through my tenure here," Sarmila who is known as the 'People's Ambassador' among the local community, said.

Dr Sarmila has been paying farewell calls to various high-ranking officials of the Sultanate as she is returning to Nepal on October 12, 2021, after completing her tour of duty.

Sayyid Badr al Busaidy, Foreign Minister hosted Dr Sarmila and her husband Bimal Dhakal, on October 7, 2021, where the Minister expressed his happiness over the successful completion of the tenure of her as the first Ambassador of Nepal

to the Sultanate of Oman.

"We hope that Dr Sarmila's endeavour over the past few years would help further to strengthen government to government and people to people relation between the two countries," Sayyid Badr al Busaidy said.

The Minister and the Ambassador had a cordial conversation pertinent to bilateral relations existing since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Minister praised her efforts in introducing Nepal by organising various activities among Omanis and making them understand what Nepal is all about. The Minister expressed his hope that the Ambassador's legacy would be carried forward by her successor.

Shaikh Khalifa al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs of the Foreign Ministry and Dr Khalid bin Saeed al Jaradi, Head of the Protocol Department at the Foreign Ministry of Foreign Affairs too praised her efforts in enhancing the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Dr Sarmila was hosted by the Foreign Ministry which

was also attended by Resident Ambassadors from various countries to the Sultanate and officials from the Ministry who joined the luncheon.

Members of the Nepalese Social Club hosted the ambassador a farewell ceremony at the Intercontinental Hotel in October 30, followed by an emotional farewell hosted by the Nepal Embassy in Oman.

Haitham Mohammed Rafi, renowned Omani singer attended the gathering which saw several representatives of various Nepali communities appreciating her efforts as a diplomat and above all, her initiatives as a true humanist.

Members of various communities, social workers, media and local personalities hosted the Ambassador of Nepal who has been instrumental in a gamut of MoU's (Memorandum of Understanding) between the two countries.

"I may be away from the Sultanate but this country will forever be remembered not only for its geographical charm but for the simplest of human beings," Dr Sarmila concluded.



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

I didn't know that one of my parents was dying...and then he/she was gone!

LIFE IS USUALLY fully of happy events and on other times, sad ones. With the passage of time, you notice something strange especially on events when you lose one of your parents.

May God protect our fathers and mothers and God have mercy on those who passed away — that you may forget the details you learned about his/her death and when?

You may also be wondering whether what you remember is the truth or is it a distortion, especially since you were a child when they passed away.

Here, I may wonder, what should you say to a child when a parent is dying? Perhaps the answers to this impossible question generally fall into two groups: telling them the truth or protecting them from the truth. The fact that the most compelling arguments in either direction may give you priority will be what is best for the child.

In fact, this leads us to the realisation that in the dark month of a parent's health condition, for instance which was not normal, it was really possible for a child surrounded by so much evidence of suffering — and denied the whole truth about that suffering — to come out of that experience unscathed!

However, contrary to what many adults believe, children are not too young to grieve over death. Children can love when they are young, they can grieve and they will cry when a cat dies in the house!

In a way, when it comes to a parent's illness, kids are smart, dealing with what's going on in their environment

even if they aren't told the truth. I might say here that we must be honest about the illness or death of a member of that child's family in a manner appropriate to his/her age. Because when children feel they have been lied to, they can begin to fear for their safety and become distrustful.

Of course the more we talk, the more we realise that the focus is on a binary question — to tell the kids or not to tell them? It may mask many other factors that shape how a child handles a loss. For example, we see how having a memory of helping a dying family member — bringing them medicine, making them laugh — can make children feel useful, not to mention it creates tremendous psychological comfort for them.

On the other hand, adults should be careful in dealing with the details of death, such as telling young children that a dying person will simply (sleep). Children may take these words literally and become afraid to sleep, for instance!

At end, adults want to keep children away from funerals, but that child has never been afraid to seek answers and feelings of loss. And here and at the funeral of one of the child's parents, that child may hold his brother's hand and shake it and his eyes shed tears because he is living for the first time for the moments he lost dear to him and says: Would things have been better if I had known the truth from the beginning?

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



Stories of hope set in stone

BY YERU EBUEN



We met artist Emerson Sumaoang, or 'Mhearts' as he'd like to be called, in one of the art soirees we attended several months back. At that time, he said he was just cheering other artists on but he did mention that what he does is not your typical kind of art with brushes and paints.

We didn't understand what he meant then and even let his description of him being a "heartist" pass us by. In an event with dozens of talented artists showcasing the best of their works, he was more of an observer, an onlooker appreciating others' work.

It would take a few checks on his Instagram to understand what he is all about. For instance, we knew he loves hanging out on the beach, collecting pebbles and driftwoods and converting them into something that tells a story. He is passionate about the ocean and just as he is passionate as an artist, he also advocates for sea turtles. One thing does make him stand out, his evocative use of things found on the beach will capture your interest — from a driftwood he collected and painted on with a popular view of Thailand (which made him win one of the top awards at a Thailand Embassy art competition), to pebbles he put together to create different sea turtles, not only does he aim for entertainment but also showcases creativity when others are literally just seeing garbage when they go on a walk by the beach.

While Emerson is just a budding artist in a community already filled with creative people, he found a niche for himself that makes him stand out. Young and imaginative, he recently created a series of art that tells varying inspiring stories rising from the tragedy that was Shaheen.

One that captures this writer's interest is of a rescue mission, a helicopter hanging in the middle of a raging rain and on a rope hangs what appears to be an officer and a person in distress. I saw that photo somewhere and only when he posted the real-life inspiration did it hit me — it was bravery and heroism at its finest and it was a story that is best told in Emmerson's chosen medium — pebbles and sand.

That one photo of his artwork would be followed by another becoming a series in itself. From a family walking together under the rain with an umbrella made out of a shell and the rain made from tiny specks of broken glass to the family built out of pebbles and stones, it was powerful storytelling that I thought deserved a wider audience.

The series would end up with more than half a dozen of equally beautifully done work — from people working together to help out a car from being stuck to the spirit of people cleaning a community together, it was Emerson's artistic way of telling a story, one that he can only do with the medium that he chose.

"The inspiration behind my art is to show the damages caused by typhoon Shaheen and many other such incidents around the world. I want people to see what I have seen. People are risking their lives to save their fellow citizens, people are gathering to become one to support and to provide their fellow citizens with anything they have lost during the typhoon. I want my art to reach the hearts of the viewers to see how these tragic incidents affect different parts of the world, Emerson shared in an email interview.

It was only when he explained this that this writer came to understand what he meant by a heartist — it's telling very human stories and connecting art to reality in the hope that it will inspire someone.

"Each art piece can take me 3 to 4 hours to make, I need to select the right shape and shade of stone and stick them together to create a piece of art", he shared about his creative process.

"The stones are us, the people, and the waves are the situations in our lives that define and mould each one of us. For me, the stone speaks. They come in different shapes, shades and textures each one is shaped by time and the waves. They have differences, but all are the same stone — the same as us. That's why I have a deep connection to it and I can easily connect it with others too", he said.

He added, "I am happy collecting stones and make

them as a medium for my art to tell a story."

Emerson came to Oman as an artist and designer. Being in Oman for seven years, he already considers the country as his second home.

"It's a wonderful place. I love the people here. They are kind and happy and I love nature. It's amazing. I can also say that I found my heart here and it's one of the places that I explored more", he said.

This is why when a tragedy like Shaheen happens, he feels for the country just like when it happens to his typhoon-frequented Philippines.

"I consider myself as a 'heartist' because I always create art as an expression of my heart. I'm usually inspired by random objects I find and I love to transform them into a special piece of art", Emerson said.

"I like simplicity and that is reflected in my art as I find inspiration and create on whatever I have in my surroundings, whether it may be a stone, disposables or just a simple shell. The objects I find speak to me and fuel up my imagination to paint a story for it", he added.

If you want to see more of his work, you can follow him on Instagram: @mhearts_143.

