

HM greetings to Emir of Kuwait

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the anniversary of his Accession to the Throne. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to Shaikh Nawaf, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this and similar occasions on him at a time his country has achieved further progress and prosperity for the brotherly Kuwaiti people. – ONA



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MESSI OPENS PSG ACCOUNT



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THIRD TELECOM OPERATOR GEARS UP FOR LAUNCH



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ARTISTS TURNED CURATORS FOR ART EXHIBIT



MUSCAT

5 WINNING PROJECTS OF IDEATHON NAMED

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Environment Authority announced the 5 winning projects in the 2021 Biodiversity Ideathon. The projects varied between the fields of smart farming and production systems, artificial intelligence applications, modern irrigation systems, organic fertiliser products, pesticides and organic control, as well as organic cleaning and natural waste recycling products. Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said that this partnership between the ministry and the authority stems from their belief in innovation and scientific research to achieve environmental goals. **DETAILS ON P2**

DUQM COLLEGE TO COME UP IN SEZ

A ministerial decision was issued by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, to establish Duqm College in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in Al Wusta Governorate. The college will be subject to the laws and decisions governing universities and private colleges in the Sultanate. **DETAILS ON P2**

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OCICI continues to represent private sector
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RUSSIA THREATENS YOUTUBE BAN AFTER OUTLET BLOCKED

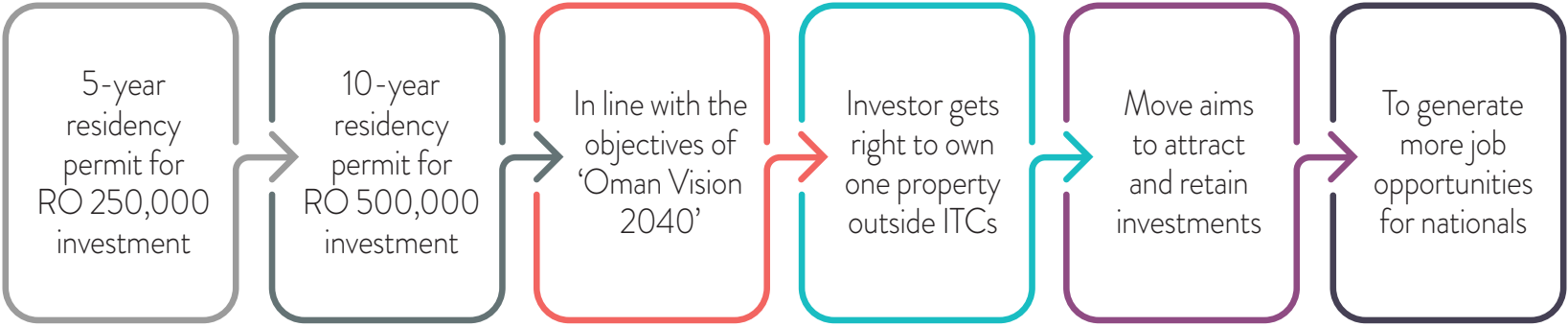
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Royal Decree appoints 2 Non-Resident Ambassadors

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued a Royal Decree No 61/2021 appointing two non-resident ambassadors. Article (1) appoints Abdullah bin Nasser bin Musallam al Rahbi, Oman's Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt as the Sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti.

Article (2) Appoints Moosa bin Hamdan bin Moosa al Taei, Oman's Ambassador to the United States of America as the Sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Cuba, Canada and the United Mexican States. Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

LONG-STAY INVESTOR RESIDENCY



Sultanate launches long-term Investor Residency Programme

KABEER YOUSUF
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The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion launched long-term residency visa for expatriate investors in the Sultanate on Wednesday.

The move aims to attract and retain investments and business entities and generate more job opportunities in the Sultanate.

Accordingly, any investor who is willing to or has already invested a minimum sum of RO 250,000 in the country can avail a residency permit for five years. An investor with RO 500,000 can hold a residency permit of 10 years. Long-term residency permits have many other benefits associated with them.

“The long residency status is a boost to attract investment in the country and to retain quality



Dignitaries at the launch ceremony. PHOTO BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI

workforce as well as generate more employment opportunities for the local workforce”, said Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidy, Adviser to the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The new ‘Investor Residence’ programme offers foreign investors and retirees the right to long-term stay in the Sultanate.

22 INVESTORS of different nationalities given Investor Residency Cards

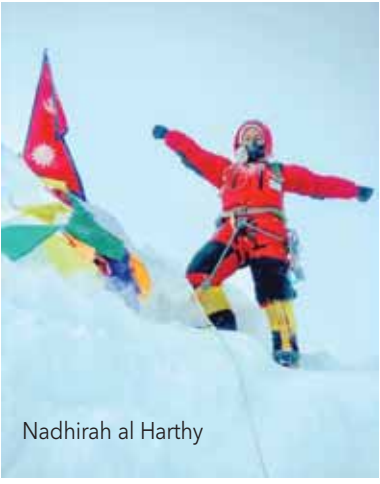
An investor is entitled to a residency status for up to 10 years if he has an investment of at least RO 500,000 in a limited liability company, closed joint-stock company or government bonds, or has established, or will be establishing a company which employs at least 50 Omanis without specifying the capital. **TURN TO P2**

Renowned Omani hiker Nadhirah conquers world’s 8th peak

MUSCAT: Nadhirah al Harthy, renowned Omani hiker, waved Oman's national flag from the top of the world's 8th peak (8,163 metres ASL), Manaslu, in Nepal, after conquering the peak at 6.30 am on Wednesday.

She left Oman on September 7 for a 25-day climbing mission, along with 35 members from different countries, including Europe, the US and Asia and reached the top on Wednesday.

“This is the moment I want to



Nadhirah al Harthy

country of Nepal, in May 2019.

The all-female Arab team named the ‘Dream of Everest’ also had Joyce Azzam and Nelly Attar of Lebanon and Mona Shahab of Saudi Arabia, who climbed to the top of the world's tallest mountain besides her, who were part of the team which climbed the world's tallest mountain.

Mount Manaslu, nicknamed ‘killer mountain’ by locals, is located in Mansiri Himal, part of the Nepalese Himalayas, and

stands above the pine forests of Nepal's Budhi Gandaki river valley, the mighty Manaslu is.

“Nadhirah is a great dreamer and the perfect connector between Oman and Nepal and between the peoples of both countries. We will always praise her bravery and ambition that can be emulated by the coming generations. I congratulate her”, said Dr Sarmila Parajuli, Ambassador of Nepal to the Sultanate. **TURN TO P3**

In brief

MUSCAT



33 NEW CASES OF CORONAVIRUS, 1 DEATH REPORTED IN OMAN

As many as 33 new cases of coronavirus (Covid-19) were registered in Oman during the past 24 hours, in addition to one new Covid-19-related death. This brings the total number of positive Covid-19 cases to 303,738 in the Sultanate. The total number of Covid-19-related death cases reached 4,096, the Ministry of Health said. The ministry added that 294 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 297,546 recoveries. The Ministry also pointed out that 2 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, as the total number of currently hospitalised Covid-19-infected patients stands at 33 of them 20 are in intensive care units (ICUs).



COMMANDER OF GCC-UMC TOURS MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

Lt. Gen Eid Awad Al Shalawi, Commander of the GCC Unified Military Command (UMC) and his accompanying delegation, visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday. The guest was accompanied by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raeesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). The guest was received by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and Commodore Mohammed bin Hamoud al Zadjali, Head of the MSC. The guest viewed the modern devices and equipment used in supporting maritime security operations at the centre. He was also briefed on the tasks and roles of the centre.



SQU STUDENT CENTRE ACCREDITATION RENEWED

The International Association of Counselling Services (IACS), an International Non-Governmental Association (NGO) with United Nations consultative status (ECOSOC, WHO, Unesco, Unicef and ILO, has renewed the international institutional accreditation for the Student Counselling Centre at SQU. Considered the second center in the Arab world to receive this achievement, the centre works constantly to elevate the level of its advisory services and programmes and operates in accordance with international professional standards in practicing psychological counselling.

THEYAZIN RECEIVES MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received Tariq Al Hussaisan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Sultanate, in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting reviewed the relations binding the two brotherly countries and touched on several topics of common interest. The meeting also discussed aspects of the existing cooperation in the cultural, sports and youth fields.

College to be set up in Duqm special economic zone

MUSCAT: A ministerial decision was issued by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), to establish Duqm College in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in Al Wusta Governorate.

The college will be subject to the laws and decisions governing universities and private colleges in the Sultanate. It will also introduce its academic programmes in the fields of humanities, engineering, science and technology. Duqm College will include a department for vocational studies, which will focus on training, employment and entrepreneurship covering areas of logistics, marine sciences, sustainability, emerging technologies, urban



development and construction. The college is currently working on completing all the material, human, academic and other requirements to open its doors, in addition to other requirements, such as obtaining approvals related to the academic regulations and licensing its academic programmes. — ONA

Investor Residency Programme launched

FROM PAGE 1

The condition includes the investors' intent to buy or already bought a housing unit with a value of not less than RO 500,000 outside the ITC (Integrated Tourism Complex) premises, with an option to extend it further.

On the other hand, an investor is granted a residency permit for five years provided he has an investment with a total value of not less than RO 250,000 in business or government bonds. The condition includes his intent to buy or has bought a housing unit of the same value or retired after working in the Sultanate for a specified period, with a fixed income of not less than RO 4,000, and with a permanent place of residence, with an option to extend it further.

RESIDENCY PERMITS

The first Investor Residency Cards were given to 22 expatriates of various nationalities who have investments in the country and have applied for the same through the ministry's online portal. More applications will be received from eligible candidates from October 3 through the online system of the ministry.

The ceremony to activate the 'Investor Residence' programme was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al



Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority and officials from various departments and ministries, representatives of the authorities, officials from the Royal Oman Police (ROP), and some eminent investors, at the Diplomatic Club.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Khalid bin Saeed al Shuaibi, Adviser to the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the launch of the 'Longer Residency Programme' comes in order to enhance quality investments which contribute in the growth of the domestic product, generate job opportunities and support the national economy in line with the capabilities, pillars and objectives of the 'Oman 2040 Vision.'

"The programme aims to attract and promote qualitative investments that contribute to the growth of domestic product and generate job opportunities, while strengthening the sectors

of economic diversification according to a well-studied plan that enhances the investment environment and takes into account the security, legal, social and economic aspects," he added.

The programme is an addition to the incentives and advantages that the Sultanate offers to the investors.

The Sultanate provides incentives and advantages to investors within the foreign capital investment law, including allowing the foreign investors to own 100 per cent, without a minimum capital, and also launched the automatic licensing service through Invest Easy portal for more than 1,500 economic activities to facilitate the start of doing business in the Sultanate.

The investor should establish a public or closed joint-stock company. To avail the benefits, he must submit a certificate from one of the licensed brokerage companies operating in the



country proving his ownership of shares with a market value of not less than RO 500,000.

VALUE PROJECTS

The investor can also establish other companies where he must have a bank certificate issued by one of the banks or commercial entities registered in the Sultanate confirming the existence of the amount as a share of the residence applicant in the company's account, or submit a report on the value of the project (proof of the investor's share) from one of the auditing companies approved in the Sultanate proving his/her share of the capital.

"The residence applicant for obtaining the investor card of the second category must own a housing unit or several fully constructed housing units under a title deed with a market value of not less than RO 250,000, and to attach with the application the title deed and the sales contract

registered with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, or an evaluation of the housing unit by one of the specialised appraisal companies approved by the ministry, or proof of value by the real estate developer," he further added.

To avail resident card for a retiree, he must provide proof of his work in the Sultanate (work contract) for at least 2 years, and submit a personal bank statement from one of the banks or commercial entities in the Sultanate of at least 6 months to prove that his monthly income is not less than RO 4,000, and to submit a house title deed, or a residential lease contract in the name of the applicant, and to attach with the application an integrated biodata.

The ministry sources further said that all the details, applicable terms and conditions and other criteria are there on the ministry website.

Winners of 48-hour Biodiversity Ideathon announced

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Environment Authority announced today the 5 winning projects in the 2021 Biodiversity Ideathon.

The projects varied between smart farming and production systems, artificial intelligence applications, modern irrigation systems, organic fertiliser products, pesticides and organic control, as well as organic cleaning and natural waste recycling products.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said that this partnership between the ministry and the EA stem from their belief in innovation and scientific research to achieve environmental goals. The Chairman of the Environment Authority honoured the winning projects. The five teams were Cordiamotive, Furat, Qatrah, Fateel Oman and Talaa.

Cordiamotive by Bashar bin Said al Amri's is an antioxidant that saves fruits from damage for a longer period. Furat by Nebras bint Hamdan al Shukailiyah is



a device with built-in units that filter grey water with local wealth and raw materials. Qatrah by Ahmed bin Amer bin Saud al Jabri is a smart crop irrigation product that automatically wilds

crops according to their actual water needs on the soil moisture scale without the intervention of the human element. Fateel Oman by Aysha bint Juma bin Mohammed al Balushiyah, makes

a nutritious agricultural medium for plants and soil characterised by its ability to retain water and its ability to keep insects and pests away from the plant, increase the efficiency of water and nutrients, improve the physical properties of the soil, increase the ability of water retention in the soil.

Talaa by Nusseibeh bint Khalifa al Amraniyah is organic pesticide from a plant formula, which is one of the most widespread plant species in the Omani environment to eliminate the pest of the insect that causes the fall of the fruits newly formed from palm trees.



SQU co-founder passes away

KABEER YOUSUF

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Dr Bazdawi bin Mohammed al Riyami who served the Sultanate's healthcare sector for nearly four decades, passed away after a brief illness on Wednesday morning. He was one of the founding members of Sultan Qaboos University.

Dr Bazdawi was a prominent name in the healthcare sector.

Born in 1948, Dr Bazdawi had a rich scientific academic background through which he contributed to the establishment of SQU and then to the establishment of the College of Nursing there.

He studied medicine in Iraq and started working in 1972 in a hospital in Dhofar. He then flew to the UK to specialise in



Pulmonology (chest diseases) and upon his return went back to work in Dhofar again, after which he moved to Al Rahma Hospital and became its Director.

In 1984, Prof Dr Bazdawi was chosen to participate in the establishment of Sultan Qaboos University, where he worked as an Assistant Professor, and rose to become the Dean of the College of Medicine & Health Sciences until he retired.

IN 1984, PROF. DR. BAZDAWI WAS CHOSEN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE WORKED AS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, AND ROSE TO BECOME THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES UNTIL HE RETIRED

"Oman's medical history is incomplete without the mention of Dr Bazdawi who has been a formidable figure in reaching out to the medical students and made his name etched in the history of medical sciences of the country," Abdullah al Rubaei, a senior broadcaster with Oman TV told the *Observer*.

NUMANI RECEIVES GCC-UMC COMMANDER



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Lt Gen Eid Awad Al Shalawi, Commander of the GCC Unified Military Command (UMC) and his accompanying delegation, in Muscat on Wednesday. They reviewed fields of cooperation and exchanged talks on matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). — ONA

Pomegranate farmers say prices are fair, buyers say no



TEXT BY AMAL AL RIYAMI
PHOTOS BY SAMI AL HINAI

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is blessed with a salubrious climate, which allows the cultivation of nutritious and delicious fruits like pomegranates, olives, peaches, walnuts, grapes and pears and others.

But some of the produce often commands high prices which prompts people to buy imported fruits. RO 1 gets you just one pomegranate while the same money can get you nine imported ones. The price of 250 ml of domestic olive oil is RO 7 compared to 400 baisa for the imported one. But not all fruits and vegetables are costly.

Some buyers seek the intervention of the Consumer Protection Authority to bring down the prices.

Responding to charges of high prices, a farmer in Al Jabal

Al Akhdhar said: "The price depends on demand and supply. Alternatives are available. And the quality and taste of our fruit is very delicious compared to others."

Another farmer said: "Try planting a pomegranate in the mountain and I am sure that you will change your opinion. Imagine six months of care, and in the end 40 per cent is not suitable for sale. Water, electricity, fertilisers, pesticides, cost more. This is a market of supply and demand. I plant pomegranates and I have about twenty trees and I water them from my pipeline at my home. If you consider these costs, believe me it's nothing."

But buyers disagree. Nasser bin Hamad said: "Dear farmers of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, be reasonable. Your counterparts across the world also face water scarcity and hard labour.

Imagine six months of care, and in the end 40 per cent is not suitable for sale. Water, electricity, fertilisers, pesticides, cost more. If you consider these costs, believe me it's nothing

FARMER

Remember, buyers also have to work hard to get this money to pay for the produce."

Namer al Maamari said: "People are not rich to buy fruits at high prices. Coffee is sold for RO 3 while imported one costs half a riyal. One



One piece of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar pomegranate commands RO 1. We can buy nine pieces of imported pomegranates for the same price. Prices are not fair

BUYER

piece of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar pomegranate commands RO 1. We can buy nine pieces of foreign pomegranates for the same price. Prices are not fair."

Pomegranates and olive oil are priced higher because supply is limited and demand

is more. Output remains more or less the same as the farmers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar cultivate the same area of orchards that they inherited from their ancestors thousands of years ago. Farmers also face some scarcity of water and the lack of alternatives for irrigation. Some have set up check dams to store water, which cost them huge sums of money. Not all farmers can afford to set it up.

Another major problem facing the farmers is pests that reduce the production. Most of the agriculturalists use traditional methods of cultivation which give them low yields. Farmers should embrace modern methods to boost output by following the guidelines of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to use the right amount of pesticides and better irrigation methods.

Nadhirah conquers world's 8th highest mountain peak

FROM PAGE 1

Nadhirah started mountaineering in 2017 and never before had she dreamt of conquering a peak. But, after meeting Khalid al Siyabi, the first Omani to climb Everest, during her tenure with the Ministry of Education, she was inspired.

Al Siyabi became her coach. She took arduous lessons in climbing the peaks from him to become the first Omani woman to reach a mountain summit.

As a piece of advice to the younger generation, she said, "Follow your dreams at whatever age you are, as nothing but your own inhibitions can stop you from becoming successful."

— Kabeer Yousuf

CBO board reviews stability of economy

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) today held its third meeting of 2021. The Board commended the concluding statement of IMF on Article IV consultations, and welcomed its appreciation of the Sultanate's efforts in containing the adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic by initiating timely efforts and announcing proactive measures such as the Economic Stimulus Package and Social Protection Initiatives. In addition, the Board took appreciative note of the IMF statement with regard to its observations on how various economic indicators in Oman were suggesting a gradual economic recovery in the country, mostly in view of Sultanate's swift and effective implementation of the Oman Vision 2040 initiatives.

The Board also reviewed reports on the prospects and challenges facing the financial stability of the economy. It also examined the financial safety reports of banks, reviewed the business activities of CBO departments and took stock of the latest developments with regard to CBO Strategy Balance Scorecard. — ONA



EARLY DETECTION OF ALZHEIMER'S HELPFUL FOR PATIENTS, CAREGIVERS

THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT ALZHEIMER'S IS TO EXERCISE, HAVE A
HEALTHY DIET, AVOID FAST FOOD OR CHOLESTEROL INDUCING FOOD,
HAVE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, TALK TO PEOPLE AND AT THE SAME TIME
AVOID AIR POLLUTION, HYPERTENSION, DIABETES AND DEPRESSION

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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September the month of Alzheimer's comes to a conclusion after a month long awareness campaign but this year has also seen the youth participate eagerly.

"This year we have had participation from young doctors and volunteers who came to work together in targeting younger people. We have been also using social media, and producing e-leaflets, short videos and webinars, we conducted programmes in collaboration with professionals from Qatar as well as had caregivers come and share their experiences", said Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Chairman of Alzheimer's Society.

"From Qatar we had a young

patient who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and he shared his emotions and the reaction of his family when he informed the family about his health. Early detection can help the patient and the caregivers", he pointed out.

There have been cases of Alzheimer's in the late 20s as well as 40s and 50s.

"This is a type of Alzheimer's disease known as 'early onset'. Usually the risk of Alzheimer's is after 65 and at 70 the risk is higher. But the younger patients usually have strong family history of the disease — either the parents have it, but the tricky part is the symptoms might differ", he said.

Generally a patient with Alzheimer's might be forgetful, repeat themselves, might misplace their keys or glasses, but the younger ones might have difficulty

in using language.

"Often they might forget words, have uncoordinated movements and at times have unexplained falls, have difficulty in organising their planning, or get lost in familiar places. Driving can become a challenge. Sometimes such people might be still at work and people around might take note that they are making a series of mistakes and if he is working in critical jobs he might be putting himself in danger. This would all mean that he might have to leave job and stay at home. This can be very challenging for the family", pointed out Dr Hamed.

"We had a case in Oman where the son was in the 11th grade but he had to play the role of the father to his father who was suffering from Alzheimer's.

He had to take special care when they went for their morning walks because the father could smash car windows if he happened to see his own shadow on the glass. That is one thing about Alzheimer's, at certain stages the patients might not recognise their own image. They might think it is someone else staring at them. This is what we refer to as role reversal", he noted.

Genetic therapy is too early in Alzheimer's treatment. The best way to prevent this, according to Dr Hamed, is to exercise, have a healthy diet, avoid fast food or cholesterol inducing food, have social connections, talk to people and at the same time avoid air pollution, hypertension, diabetes and depression.

"One must avoid head injuries so if

you are cycling wear helmets. As they say, 'if you don't use it, you will lose it — use the brain', reading is a good exercise and having discussions with people. What is important is that you must start the good habits early as there is no point in trying to read at 50. It has to be something incorporated into your lifestyle, making an effort to exercise for at least half an hour and avoiding junk food can make a difference", he said.

What would be the case for introverts?

"Introverts also have ways to stimulate their brain such as reading instead of passively watching the television screen or media platforms. Instead, having a discussion with people can be highly effective for the brain and mind.

Al Roya Film Festival begins on Nov 28

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The first Al Roya Film Festival will take place on November 28, the Oman Film and Theatre Society (OSFT) announced on Wednesday.

All film-makers aged between 10 and 21, of any nationality, can participate in the three-day film festival which will be held at the OSFT premises.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Mohammed al Kindi, avid film-maker and trainer, said that all are welcome to submit their films to the OSFT and participate in the fest. Any short film, documentary or animation above 10 minutes duration is eligible for a preview for the fest.

The festival's opening ceremony will be held in the presence of a group of film-makers, interested people, intellectuals and participants on November 28. The event will have a lecture on the



Mohammed al Kindi

importance of the film industry in the Sultanate and felicitation of the pioneers of cinematic work in Oman will follow.

Movies will be shown on November 29 followed by a session with a group of intellectuals, film-makers and interested people on the same day.

A workshop for participants and those interested in film-making will be held on November 30 followed by previewing the other participating movie. The closing ceremony will be on November 30, where the makers of the winning films will be honoured.

A central committee chaired by Hatem al Tai (President), Qassem al Sulaimi, Technical Director, and Mohammed al Kindi (Technical Adviser) has been formed.

Mohammed al Kindi (Oman), Dr Salma Youssef Mohamed Kamel (Egypt), Dr Muhammad Bilal, Dr Malak Dahmouni (Morocco), and Dr Leila Barhouma (Tunisia) are the members of the Jury.

Members of the Film Selection Committee comprise Mohammed bin Reda al Lawati, Abdulaziz bin Saif al Habsi, Fahad bin Ramadan al Maimani, and Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi.

Low pressure may advance to northern parts of Sultanate

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The Meteorological Office of Oman is silently observing the development and direction of the low pressure currently under the tropical weather outlook for the North Indian Ocean, specifically over the Arabian Sea.

"The next 24 to 48 hours will tell us how the system is going to shape up. The model shows that there could be some fluctuations in the forecasting of the system," said the weather forecaster at Oman Met Office.

"We are not sure what the development will be. Some models indicate that it will go to the coastal line of Pakistan and diminish once inland. Some other models indicate that it will head to Pakistan and then come towards northern parts of Oman. Right now it is only classified as area of low pressure," he said.

The remnant of the cyclonic storm 'Gulab' laid as well marked low pressure area over South Gujarat region and adjoin Gulf of Khambhat on Wednesday. The next 24 hours the weather experts

The next 24 to 48 hours will tell us how the system is going to shape up. The model shows that there could be some fluctuations in the forecasting of the system

OMAN MET OFFICE

in Oman will be monitoring closely to see if there is any increase in the wind speed. Currently the system is over the Arabian Sea.

The weather expert also pointed out that while the weather experience in Al Hajar areas are local cloud formations, parts of Muscat has been experiencing high clouds due to advection.

"The system is too far yet," pointed out the weather expert who said they will compare all the models to understand the system better. The probability has been indicated but it is best to wait and

watch, said the expert.

According to the India Meteorological Department, it is very likely to move west to northwestwards, emerge into northeast Arabian Sea and intensify into a depression by September 30th morning. "Then it is very likely to move further west-northwestwards and intensify into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 24 hours. Thereafter it is likely to continue move west-northwestwards close to Pakistan - Makran coasts," it stated.

Meanwhile, clear to partly cloudy skies are expected along the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains. Mainly clear skies over the rest of the Sultanate are expected with chance of medium and high clouds. Chance of convective clouds formation and rain occasionally thundershowers and fresh wind will continue over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon and evening. Chance of late night to early morning low level clouds or fog patches are expected along the coastal areas of Arabian and Oman Sea.

Your mouth a mirror of your body

Some people feel that they have good oral hygiene since they do not feel any pain and there is no need to visit the dentist.

Regular dental check-ups are very important because some of the dental problems may exist without the knowledge of the patient.

Visiting the dental clinic regularly twice a year is not only to maintain good dental and oral health but it is also to maintain good overall health because oral health is one of the key indicators of overall health.

During check-up, the dentist will look for dental decay, lesions or defective fillings inside the mouth or any dental procedures in the mouth which were done previously. He or she will also check any abnormalities or swelling on the mouth.

He or she will also make sure to prepare a treatment plan in case you require any dental procedures which need to be done.

In the early stages, dental decay often spreads without pain or symptoms, and if detected early, the treatment is simple. As for the advanced stages, it may be accompanied by severe pain, and the treatment is more complicated. The patient may have to undergo root canal treatment and in some cases they might need to remove their teeth.

Assessing old fillings is also important. They can be leaking, not causing any pain in the early stages and they will need to be replaced.

Early detection of gum diseases during the regular check-ups can be treated easily. If it is not treated, it can progress to advanced stages which may lead to



Take care of our teeth and gums by brushing them twice a day, flossing to remove food particles between the teeth, cleaning the tongue to eliminate bad breath and going for regular dental check-ups even if we do not feel pain

DR HAITHAM BIN KAHLAL AL BARWANI

damage of the tissues and surrounding bone of the teeth. The teeth may become loose ending in tooth loss.

There are many consequences of tooth loss. Patients may develop chewing problems leading to digestive problems. Speech may be affected

specifically when the front teeth are missing. One may also feel low confidence because of the appearance and jaw pain. Furthermore, neighbouring teeth start to drift to close the space of the missing one.

In addition to the above, some studies indicate that

gum diseases or the bacteria that cause gum infections are linked to several diseases that may affect the body such as heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease.

During the regular dental check-ups, the doctor will also assess any lesions that appear in the oral cavity. Some lesions can be cancerous. The earlier they are detected the better prognosis. That is why it is important to book an appointment as soon as possible if you see any lesion in the mouth, for it to be ruled out and in some cases they might require further investigations.

In conclusion, for a beautiful smile and a good healthy life, we must take care of our teeth and gums by brushing them twice a day, flossing to remove food particles between the teeth, cleaning the tongue to eliminate bad breath and going for regular dental check-ups even if we do not feel pain.

The author is a senior dental surgeon (endodontist).

شركة النماء للدواجن ش م ع م
A' Namaa Poultry Co. S.A.O.C

Job Opportunities

A'Namaa Poultry, is an integrated poultry project, using state of the art technologies in the market for all the project components, to produce a high- quality poultry meat. A'Namaa Poultry currently seek to recruit for the following position by national candidates to joint A'Namaa Poultry team.

No.	Job Title	Number of Position
1	FINANCE MANAGER	1

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites contractors/ consultants specialized in the below-mentioned works and registered with the Ministry of Defence and Tender Board to take part in the following tenders:

Tender No	Tender Name	Contractor's / Consultant's Grade	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Bid Submission	Tender Price (RO)
010/2021	Construction Work- Al Buraimi	1st & Above	07 Oct 2021	09 Nov 2021	RO 200/-
013/2021	Construction Work- Aidam	1st & Above	07 Oct 2021	09 Nov 2021	RO 360/-
015/2021	Construction Work- Khasab	Excellent	07 Oct 2021	16 Nov 2021	RO 1200/-

*** For further clarification about the tenders' details, please visit Gate No. (14)**

- Tender's electronic documents can be obtained from the Office of the Secretariat of the Tender Committee, Gate No. (14), Muskar Al Murtafa'a (Sunday to Thursday) between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm against payment of the price mentioned above.
- The tender's payment should be made electronically by using Smart Card, Credit Card (Visa) or Visa Electron Card (Sunday to Thursday) between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm.
- The bid should be enclosed with a temporary bond (1%) of the bid's value in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by a bank operating in the country and addressed to the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids should be submitted as hard copy and soft copy in red-wax sealed envelopes, addressed to the Chairman of the Tender Committee and marked with tender name and number without making reference or mention to the bidder's name.
- Bids should be deposited in the Tender Box at Gate No. (14), Muskar Al Murtafa'a no later than 1:00 pm on the assigned date for submission of bids.
- We would like to draw the attention of contractors/ consultants to the significance of adhering to the submission date. Queries submitted to the Engineering Services will not be heard by the Ministry of Defence fourteen days prior to the submission of offers.
- It's worth mentioning that tender submission which does not meet the following items shall not be considered:
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the organization supported by an expat worker list certified by the Ministry of Labour (Updated copy).
 - Detailed breakdown of works related to the project as per drawings and scope.
 - Full set of stamped offers should be submitted, tender form and the bidder's tender bond should be submitted as hard copy whereas other documentations should be submitted as soft copy in two separate files:
 - Financial offer (Bill 1 & 2 are separated from Bill 3).
 - Technical offer.
 - Written confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of executed projects in the past 5 years and ongoing projects.
 - List of suppliers and sub-contractors certified and registered with the Ministry of Defence and their project acceptance letter.
 - Valid registration certificate from the Tender Board.
 - Financial statement of the company for the last 3 years.

Tunisia names Najla as country’s first female PM

President says it is an honour for Tunisia and a homage to Tunisian women

TUNIS: Tunisia’s president on Wednesday named geologist Najla Bouden as the country’s first ever female prime minister-designate, to form a government with limited executive clout after the president seized wide-ranging powers two months ago.

The university lecturer from the city of Kairouan, a political unknown, will take office after Kais Saied on July 25 sacked the government of Hichem Mechichi, suspended parliament, lifted MPs’ immunity and took over the judiciary. His moves followed months of political deadlock in the face of a pressing economic crisis and mounting coronavirus deaths. While some Tunisians have supported his decisions against a reviled political class, he has faced repeated calls to name a government. Last week, he extended the suspension of parliament and moved to rule

by decree, suspending parts of the country’s post-revolution constitution.

Saied’s office on Wednesday published a video of him meeting Bouden in his office and charging her with presenting a cabinet “in the coming hours or days”.

He repeatedly emphasised the “historic” nature of the nomination of a woman, calling it “an honour for Tunisia and a homage to Tunisian women”.

Saied, who was the only person to speak in the video, said Bouden’s main mission would be to “put an end to the corruption and chaos that have spread throughout many state institutions”.

Political scientist Slaheddine Jourchi welcomed the nomination of a female premier but warned that Tunisia faces daunting economic and political challenges.

“When we look at the CV of this lady, who is a geologist



Newly appointed Prime Minister Najla Bouden Romdhane poses for a picture during her meeting with President Kais Saied, in Tunis, on Wednesday. – Reuters

without other specialisations or experience in sensitive roles, I don’t know how well she will be able to tackle these enormous, complex issues,” he said.

Saied “has avoided nominating a politician or anyone with a minimum of political experience.

the Arab Spring revolts. The country has won international plaudits for its democratic transition but many Tunisians have seen little improvement in their lives and have become disillusioned with a political process they say is dysfunctional and corrupt.

Saied’s moves placed vast executive powers in the hands of the president, who will himself head the cabinet.

His rulings on September 22 also extended the suspension of parliament.

Bouden, the same age as Saied at 63, is a former director at PromESSE, a higher education reform project, and has held senior positions at Tunisia’s higher education ministry.

The French-educated geologist with a doctorate in geological engineering is a lecturer at Tunisia’s national engineering

school.

Tunisia has for decades been seen as a regional pioneer in women’s rights, banning polygamy in 1956.

Saied however is seen as socially conservative. During his 2019 presidential run, he was criticised for his opposition to an inheritance law enshrining equality between men and women. Also an academic and political outsider, Saied swept to power on a wave of anger against the political class who have governed Tunisia since 2011 but failed to resolve pressing economic and social issues.

While many Tunisians praised his initial power grab, on Sunday more than 2,000 people demonstrated in Tunis to demand a return to the constitution and Saied’s resignation, accusing him of “stealing” the 2011 revolution.

— AFP



Activists and relatives of victims of the Beirut port explosion demonstrate outside the capital's Justice Palace on Wednesday. – AFP

Angry relatives of Beirut blast victims protest probe delays

BEIRUT: Hundreds of relatives of victims of last year’s Beirut port explosion, some chanting and some silent, took to the streets on Wednesday angry that an investigation into the disaster had been delayed for the second time this year.

Some carried miniature figures of people on death row with signs below reading “the end for anyone corrupt”, while others stood in silence, carrying photos of their loved ones. Powerful parties including the Hezbollah and others in the ruling elite have alleged bias in the investigation.

The demonstrators gathered

in front of Beirut’s Palace of Justice angry that more than a year on, no top officials have been held accountable for an explosion that killed more than 200 people, wounded thousands and destroyed large swathes of the capital.

“We are trying the impossible to reach a result in this probe,” Joumana Khalifa, whose cousin and friends were killed in the blast, said. The blast, one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded, was caused by a huge quantity of ammonium nitrate that was unsafely stored at the port from 2013.

The probe was frozen on Monday on the basis of a legal complaint by Nohad Machnouk, a lawmaker and former interior minister, whom the lead investigating judge, Tarek Bitar, wants to question on suspicion of negligence. Machnouk’s claim calls Bitar’s impartiality into question. Should the court of cassation accept the claim, Bitar will be removed.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati has said he hoped Bitar would continue in his role. The French foreign ministry also said it regretted the suspension of the investigation. — Reuters

Putin hails ‘compromises’ with Turkey in Erdogan talks

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday hailed Moscow and Ankara’s ability to find “compromises” as he hosted Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks.

Russia and Turkey have historically had complex relations, balancing regional rivalries with finding common ground on economic and strategic interests. In recent years, the two powers have clashed in particular in Syria, where Moscow and Ankara support opposing camps in the civil war.

They also found themselves on different sides in last year’s conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Negotiations are sometimes difficult — but with a final positive result,” Putin said at his residence in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi. He added that the two countries “have learned to find compromises favourable to both parties.”

Erdogan, who regularly meets with his Russian counterpart, said he believes there are great benefits in “Turkey and Russia keeping stronger relations each passing day.”

In Syria, the two countries last year sponsored a ceasefire deal in the northwestern Idlib



Russian President Vladimir Putin with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Sochi on Wednesday. – AFP

region, home to the last major militant and rebel stronghold in northwest Syria.

“The steps we have taken with Russia related to Syria are of utmost importance,” Erdogan told Putin.

“The peace there depends on Turkey-Russia relations.”

Despite their clashes, the two countries have grown closer in recent years thanks to tensions between Moscow and the West and Ankara’s increasingly delicate relations with its Nato allies.

In 2019, Turkey agreed a multi-billion-dollar purchase

of the Russian-made S-400 air defence system that led to US sanctions last year. Ankara and Moscow also have important common economic interests, particularly in tourism and food exports.

Putin said that total Turkish investments in Russia had reached \$1.5 billion, while Russian investments in Turkey had grown to \$6.5 billion. He also pointed to last year’s inauguration of the Turkish Stream pipeline, which transports Russian gas via Turkey across the Black Sea to Europe. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

AMMAN

Jordan fully reopens main crossing with Syria

Jordan fully reopened its main border crossing with Syria on Wednesday in a boost for their struggling economies following a push by Arab states to reintegrate a country they have shunned during its decade-long civil war.

A convoy of Syrian trailers waited to enter the Jordanian side of the border at the Jaber crossing. Police officers with dogs searched cars as they crossed through the gate. A stream of taxis with passengers also lined up to pass through customs and



immigration control.

“The security situation is now stable on the Syrian side and we hope it remains stable,” Colonel Moayad Al Zubi, the head of Jaber crossing, said.

RIYADH

Saudi launches \$13bn tourism hub plan

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched a 50 billion riyal (\$13 billion) strategy to develop the Aseer region on the Red Sea coast into a tourism hub that would attract 10 million visitors by 2030.

The aim is to develop tourist attractions in the mountainous area and improve services and infrastructure including healthcare and transport, state news agency SPA said.

The Gulf Arab state, which opened its doors in September



2019 to foreign tourists through a new visa regime, wants to diversify its oil-dependent economy, with tourism contributing 10 per cent of gross domestic product by 2030.

SANAA

100 killed in clashes for Yemen’s Marib

At least 100 Yemeni fighters and pro-government troops have been killed in the past 48 hours as fighting intensifies for the key city of Marib, military and medical sources said on Wednesday.

A string of air strikes from the coalition targeted the Ansar Allah fighters, who have stepped up their assault on Marib, the government’s last northern stronghold. Sixty-eight fighters and 32 loyalists were killed in the latest clashes, military sources said.

The fighters rarely announce



casualties among their own ranks, but their Al Masirah channel reported around 60 coalition air strikes in Marib governorate in the past two days.

— Agencies

In brief

■ COLOMBO



LANKA TO END 40-DAY-LONG COVID-19 CURFEW

Sri Lanka will reopen the country starting on Friday, after lifting a 40-day-long curfew imposed to prevent the spread of Covid-19, according to army commander General Shavendra Silva. The directive to open the country came on Wednesday as Covid-19-related deaths dropped to an average of 50 per day, compared to 200 deaths daily two weeks ago. Additionally, the average number of infected persons dropped to less than 1,000 per day for the first time in 83 days.

The government also has decided to allow tourists who have received both vaccines for Covid-19 and those who possess a negative PCR Test result.

■ MANILA



PACQUIAO QUILTS 'GREATEST SPORT IN THE WORLD'

World boxing icon Manny Pacquiao announced his retirement from what he called the "greatest sport in the world" on Wednesday to focus on a run for the Philippines presidency, the biggest fight of his career.

In a 14-minute video posted on Facebook and Twitter, "Pacman", as he is known in the sport, thanked fans worldwide before closing the curtain on a 26-year boxing career that earned him world titles in eight different divisions, which to this day remains unmatched. "I just heard the final bell. Boxing is over", said the 42-year-old Pacquiao, now a Philippines senator, drawing a flood of reactions from fans.

■ BANGKOK



3M IN MYANMAR NEED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: UN

Myanmar is facing a grave humanitarian crisis due to the combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and the military coup staged earlier this year, according to a new report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"Continued challenges in accessing people in need remains a fundamental challenge due to ongoing insecurity, bureaucratic impediments and disruptions to the banking systems/cash liquidity issues", OCHA said.

It said Myanmar's 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan requires \$276.5 million.

EXPERTS SAY SPEEDS SUGGEST THE TEST MAY HAVE BEEN A FAILURE

North Korea joins race for new hypersonic missile with latest test

SEOUL: North Korea test-fired a newly developed hypersonic missile this week, state news media KCNA reported on Wednesday, joining a race headed by major military powers to deploy the advanced weapons system.

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

North Korea has been steadily developing its weapons systems amid an impasse over talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear and ballistic missile arsenals in return for US sanctions relief.

Sung Kim, the US special envoy for North Korea, said the latest launch was "destabilising" and posed a regional threat, but Washington would continue diplomatic efforts to denuclearise the Korean peninsula.

"We are waiting to hear back from Pyongyang. We have made a number of approaches... and proposed dialogues on a wide range of topics", he told a virtual forum from Jakarta where he serves as US ambassador to Indonesia.

Unlike ballistic missiles that fly into outer space before returning on steep trajectories, hypersonic weapons fly towards targets at lower altitudes and can achieve



The newly developed hypersonic missile Hwasong-8 is test-fired by the Academy of Defence Science of the DPRK in this undated photo released on Wednesday. — Reuters

more than five times the speed of sound — or about 6,200 km per hour. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North's hypersonic missile was at an early stage of development, judging by detected velocity and other data, and would take a "considerable period of time" until it could be deployed.

The development of the weapons system increased North

Korea's defence capabilities, KCNA said, describing the hypersonic missile as a "strategic weapon". North Korean leader Kim Jong Un did not inspect the launch, according to the report.

"In the first test-launch, national defence scientists confirmed the navigational control and stability of the missile", the report said. It said the missile,

called the Hwasong-8, performed to its technical targets "including the guiding manoeuvrability and the gliding flight characteristics of the detached hypersonic gliding warhead."

Hypersonic weapons are considered the next generation of arms that aim to rob adversaries of reaction time and traditional defeat mechanisms. The test could

mean the North is entering an accelerating race to deploy the weapon now involving the United States, Russia and China.

The United States on Monday said it had tested an air-breathing hypersonic weapon, marking the first successful test of the class of weapon since 2013. In July, Russia successfully tested a Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missile, a weapon President Vladimir Putin touted as part of a new generation of missile systems without equal in the world.

Chang Young-Keun, a missile specialist at the Korea Aerospace University, said the North's test of the hypersonic gliding vehicle (HGV) was likely a failure, given the flight was clocked at Mach 2.5, citing reported assessment by South Korean military intelligence.

"The North's HGV technology is not comparable to those of the US, Russia or China and for now seems to aim for short-range that can target South Korea or Japan", Chang said.

The denuclearisation negotiations, initiated between former US president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim in 2018, have stalled since 2019. The two Koreas both test-fired ballistic missiles on September 15, part of an arms race in which both nations have developed increasingly sophisticated weapons. — AFP

Japan ruling party elects Fumio Kishida leader, next premier

TOKYO: Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) anointed former foreign minister Fumio Kishida as its new leader on Wednesday, a victory for the party elite that virtually ensures the soft-spoken consensus-builder will become prime minister within days.

Although he enjoys only moderate popular support and is saddled with a bland image, Kishida drew critical backing from some party heavyweights, allowing him to stop the momentum of outspoken rising star Taro Kono, the minister in charge of the coronavirus vaccine roll-out. The Hiroshima lawmaker succeeds unpopular Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who did not seek re-election as party leader after just one year in office. Kishida is almost certain to become premier at a parliamentary session on Monday because of the LDP's majority in the Lower House. It was not clear if Kishida's tepid profile might spell problems for the LDP in a general election due by November 28. He focused on populist issues — such as the need to forge a new kind of capitalism and ease divisions of wealth — in his first news conference.

"We can't achieve strong growth if wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people", he said, citing a need to create a "virtuous cycle" of growth and wealth distribution.

"We will strive to achieve



Fumio Kishida

We can't achieve strong growth if wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people. There is a need to create growth and distribution

FUMIO KISHIDA

Former foreign minister

economic growth and distribution", of wealth, Kishida added, promising housing and education aid to address income disparity.

He has proposed a spending package of more than 30 trillion yen (\$270 billion), and on Wednesday he said that stimulus must be compiled by the year-end. Kishida is expected to form a new cabinet and reshuffle the LDP executive in early October.

Parliament's lower chamber

will probably be dissolved in mid-October with an election on either November 7 or November 14, Japanese media said, quoting LDP executives.

"A win for the establishment. Kishida stands for stability, for not rocking the boat and most importantly, doing what elite technocrats tell him to do", said Jesper Koll, Expert Director at Monex Group.

Kishida's rival Kono, a fluent English speaker with a large following on Twitter and reputation for being forthright and headstrong, has been seen as something of a maverick and therefore not seen as the top choice of some LDP powerbrokers.

Kono set himself apart from the mainstream of the party establishment on social issues by supporting legislation that would recognise gay marriage, something Kishida has not backed. Two female contenders, Sanae Takaichi, 60, and Seiko Noda, 61, dropped out of the leadership race after the first round. Kishida is unlikely to go out on a limb with major policy shifts as Japan seeks to cope with an economy hit by the pandemic.

He shares a broad consensus on the need to boost Japan's defences and strengthen security ties with the United States and other partners including the QUAD grouping of Japan, the United States, Australia and India, while preserving trade ties with China. — Reuters



A rescuer uses a rope to carry a victim across flood waters in the Chaiphaphum province, Thailand, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Thai rescuers battle flood waters to reach stranded in homes

BANGKOK: Rescuers in northeastern Thailand waded through fast-flowing floods to rescue dozens of people stranded in their homes on Wednesday, as authorities tried to drain away waters and get more help to victims.

At least seven people have died and another is missing in floods over the last week that have affected almost 200,000 households in 30 provinces in the lower north and northeastern Thailand.

Rescuers wearing orange helmets and lifejackets travelled by boats through submerged streets in the northeastern province of Chaiphaphum to reach people stuck on the roofs of their homes.

Video posted on social

media by the Hook 31 private rescue team showed them wading carefully against a current of brown water as high as the windows of abandoned cars, some carrying children on their backs and escorting the elderly along a series of guide ropes. Authorities have issued warnings over the rising water level of the Chaophraya river that could bring flooding to the capital Bangkok and surrounding areas.

The government has reassured the public that the situation is manageable and there will be no repeat of the devastating months-long flooding of 2011, which killed hundreds of people, damaged vast swathes of farmland and paralysed Bangkok and its industrial belt. — Reuters

Russia threatens YouTube after suspension of German channels

MOSCOW: Russia threatened on Wednesday to block Alphabet Inc.'s YouTube after Russian state-backed broadcaster RT's German-language channels were deleted, and said it was considering retaliating against German media.

YouTube said on Tuesday that RT's channels had breached its Covid-19 misinformation policy, a move Russia's foreign ministry described as "unprecedented information aggression".

Russian state communications regulator Roskomnadzor said it had written to Google and demanded that the restrictions be lifted. It said Russia could seek to partially or fully restrict access to YouTube if it failed to comply.

Google declined to comment on Wednesday.

The Kremlin said it may have to force YouTube to comply with Russian law, saying there could be zero tolerance for breaches.

"Of course there are signs that the laws of the Russian Federation have been broken, broken quite blatantly, because of course this involves censorship and obstructing the spread of information by the media," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The foreign ministry said



A webcam is positioned in front of YouTube's logo in Paris. — AFP File

Russian authorities had been approached with "a proposal to develop and take retaliatory measures against the YouTube hosting service and the German media."

Christian Mihr, Executive Director at Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Germany, said the threat of action against German journalists was "completely inappropriate".

Moscow has increased pressure on foreign tech firms in the past year, fining social media companies for failing to delete content Russia deems illegal and punitively slowing down the speed of Twitter.

That pressure led Google and Apple to remove an anti-government tactical voting app from their stores on the first day of a parliamentary election earlier this month, Kremlin critics said.

Berlin denied an allegation by the Russian foreign ministry that YouTube's decision had been made with clear and tacit support from the German authorities and local media.

"It is a decision by YouTube, based on rules created by YouTube. It is not a measure (taken by) the German government or other official organisations," German government spokesperson Steffen

Kremlin says it may have to force YouTube to comply with Russian law, saying there could be zero tolerance for breaches

Seibert told reporters.

Dinara Toktosunova, head of RT in Germany, on Wednesday denied any wrongdoing, saying they are depicted as "malicious violators, promoting conspiracy theories".

"This of course is not the case," she said in a video on RT's Russian Telegram channel. The Kremlin has repeatedly accused foreign-owned social media of interfering in Russian politics, including by hosting content supportive of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Ahead of parliamentary elections this month, Roskomnadzor blocked dozens of websites linked to Navalny, whose organisations were banned in Russia under "extremism" legislation.

Courts have slapped non-compliant platforms, including Twitter, Google and Facebook, with a series of fines and in March started reducing the speed of Twitter's services. — Reuters

Clock ticking for US Congress as govt shutdown looms



WASHINGTON: The US Congress on Wednesday had just two days left before the federal government begins shutting many of its operations unless Democrats manage to pass a bill providing new funding for the fiscal year that begins on Friday.

Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives and Senate were expected to put a temporary funding bill, possibly extending through December 3, up for a vote as soon as Wednesday in the hope that Republicans will support it. Passing that would head off one crisis for President Joe Biden's Democrats — who campaigned on a platform of responsible government after

Republican Donald Trump's turbulent four years in office.

But more risks are ahead as progressive House Democrats are vowing to vote against a \$1-trillion infrastructure bill set to come to the floor on Thursday, due to intraparty fights over a much larger social spending bill.

Behind it all looms the threat of the federal government hitting its \$28.4 trillion debt ceiling around October 18, an event that could cause a historic default. With such a daunting agenda hanging in the balance, Biden cancelled a Wednesday trip to Chicago so that he could lead negotiations with Congress, the White House said. — Reuters

Germany's biggest parties await outcome of 'citrus' talks

BERLIN: Germany's search for a new coalition government has taken an extraordinary turn in the days after this weekend's close-fought election, as the parties that came top of the polls have, for the moment, been shut out of coalition talks.

Instead, two smaller parties, the Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP), have begun talks amongst themselves about their prospects of working together and, eventually, working with one of the top two to form a government.

"The powerful citrus coalition is meeting," reported the mass circulation *Bild* newspaper on Wednesday, accompanied by a picture of a lime and a lemon, referring to the trademark colours of the two parties: green and yellow.

The different coalitions in Germany are popularly referred to by the colours of the parties involved. The Social Democrats (SPD), who won Sunday's elections, have red as their colour. They are seeking to build a so-

called "traffic light" coalition with the Greens and FDP, in other words with red, green and yellow parties.

Talks between the "traffic light" parties could begin as early as this week, a senior SPD official said.

Conservative leader Armin Laschet has, however, not given up hope of forming his own coalition with the Greens and FDP, despite scepticism in his party and among the wider public about his conviction he had a mandate to pursue such an alliance and become chancellor.

Germany's next government will be the first in 16 years without Chancellor Angela Merkel at its head. Merkel led her conservatives to four successive election victories.

The conservative Christian Democrats and their sister party, the Christian Social Union, saw their voter share crash by more than 8 per cent compared to the last elections in 2017. The SPD won the elections with 25.7 per cent, gaining over 5 percentage points.



Olaf Scholz, Finance Minister and SPD Chancellor candidate, poses with SPD members following an SPD parliamentary group meeting in Berlin. — Reuters

A survey by YouGov released on Wednesday indicated that 68 per cent of Germans want Laschet to step down from all his political posts. Thirteen per

cent opposed this. Meanwhile, SPD, who narrowly won Sunday's national election, will not start talks with the Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP) about forming a

three-way government until next week, a senior SPD politician said on Wednesday. The Greens and the liberal FDP, who are far apart on many issues, held preliminary

talks overnight to find some common ground for a possible coalition government with either the SPD or the conservatives.

— dpa/Reuters

SHORT TAKES

MOSCOW

Russia reports record virus deaths for second day

Russia on Wednesday recorded its highest coronavirus death toll for a second day running, as infections are on the rise driven by the Delta variant and slow vaccination rates. A government tally reported 857 fatalities over the past 24 hours and 22,430 new cases.

The new figure brings the country's total deaths from Covid-19 to 206,388 — the highest in Europe. Authorities have been accused of downplaying the severity of the out-



break. Under a broader definition for deaths linked to the coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat reported in late August that Russia had seen more than 350,000 fatalities.

LONDON

Princess Diana honoured with historical plaque

The former London flat of Princess Diana was honoured with a blue plaque — a marker to highlight a key historical figure in Britain. The princess lived at 60 Coleherne Court, a property in a mansion block close to the fashionable King's Road in Chelsea, when she settled in the capital as a young woman before marrying the Prince Charles in 1981. She shared the flat with a number of girlfriends from 1979 to 1981, including Virginia Clarke (nee Pitman), who helped unveil the English Heritage plaque



during a ceremony on Wednesday. Diana described her years at the property as "the happiest time of her life," according to Andrew Morton's book *Diana, In Her Own Words*.

BRUSSELS

EU to tighten visa restrictions on Belarus

The EU announced it plans to tighten visa requirements for Belarus officials in retaliation for Minsk "instrumentalising" irregular migration flows and putting pressure on the bloc's external borders.

"We're addressing a new worrisome form of smuggling, which is the increasing role of state actors in artificially creating and facilitating irregular migration using people as tools for political purposes," European Commission Vice-President



Margaritis Schinas told a media conference.

"The latest tactics by the Belarus regime against the EU and our member states require a united response," he said.

OCCI continues to represent private sector



Ali Al Matani
ali.matani2@gmail.com

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is one of the institutions working in public interest. It works for the commercial and industrial interests of those who are associated with it. It functions for their development and represent them wherever required. It strives to defend their interests. Royal Decree No 45/2017 defines its ambit and nature of work and responsibilities as representative of the private sector. Therefore, there is no ambiguity in its responsibilities.

Under a defined framework, OCCI is working to address the aspirations of those who are associated with it and leaving no stone unturned to serve their interests at all levels. We are all part of the society of which it is also a part. There are experiments done everywhere in dealing with certain types of issues. Sometimes such institutions are also given opportunity to play their role in policy formulations. Somewhere such experiments are fruitful and somewhere they bring adverse results.

The OCCI, its board of directors, branches, committees, projects and services are doing everything to serve the private sector. It is not easy to mention all its services in just one column. Just to mention, it is enough to know that there are 210 active companies and commercial entities associated with it. These companies are of different nature. Their requirements and challenges are different. The chamber as their umbrella is dealing with issues of all types faced by these commercial and industrial bodies which are diverse in nature.

The work of the OCCI is divided in various governorates of Oman to look into the requirements of the private sector. There are 17 committees which keep studying and discussing the challenges and issues faced by the industrial and commercial sector in the country. It adopts recommendations and takes them to the highest level to be discussed by the government.

The OCCI keeps expressing its views on various rules, regulations and laws including labour, foreign investment, public-private partnership and privatisation. It prepares its proposals and suggestions with regard to any law and convey the demands of the private sector to the authorities concerned. During the pandemic, the decisions and guidelines which were issued by the Supreme Committee were in the light of the studies, recommendations and demands of the chamber.

The OCCI has worked hard to strengthen small and medium enterprises. They have always been one of the priorities of the OCCI. It has been serving and helping them, including facilitating their cadre to increase their capabilities and capacities.

Its branches are very active in governorates to help them grow the industrial and commercial capabilities and help them find solutions for their issues.

Instead of being thankless, we should be grateful for the OCCI and appreciate its efforts. What the members of its various boards and committees are doing are voluntary in nature. They are doing this without any personal and material gains. They feel proud that they are voluntarily helping people and entities.

There are lot of misunderstandings in the society about the functioning of the OCCI, its nature of work and contributions. Therefore, before saying anything one should get the information from the right source and understand the subject. The OCCI will remain a representative of the private sector.



SEA OF SMOKE!

Lava flows into the sea as smoke is seen from a volcano following an eruption, as seen from Tijarafe on the Canary Island of La Palma, Spain, on Tuesday. – AFP

Optimism is returning, kind of...



Sonia Ambrosio
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Traffic jam, cues, questionable driving attitudes, overcrowded car parking, and big smiles. Life is back on campus. One can feel the vibe. With the return to ‘almost normal life’, it is also time to re-evaluate the achievements of the three semesters of remote studies. Not talking about academic research on how well or not the online courses were managed, but about a mindset of transformations.

Following the 360 degrees changes from in-presence to remote studies — when institutions, students and parents were not prepared for the challenges of technology and a disciplined routine of home studies — it was as if the world turned upside down.

Now, it is time to reverse the clock and back to in-presence attendance. Undeniably, administration, management, teaching and studies cannot be the same as the pre-pandemic. It is not because students are back in classrooms that ‘the way it used to be’ should be the same. Even though, there are students, and perhaps instructors, who are attached to the previous way of processing education and information.

However, there is a need for a forward-thinking approach. Preparing the youth for a more challenging and competitive way of life is not easy. In tomorrow’s world,

the future is now. We cannot just tick boxes. From business to education, health, privacy, security and travel, the world has changed. If for the better or the worse, it is difficult to say.

When evaluating the past year and a half, it comes to mind that the youth need a positive therapy treatment and a clear guidance. They are disillusioned, yet, hopeful. The future is uncertain either because of education, or the environment, or whatever. It would be questionable and regrettable, if students are provided with irrelevant educations, and not given the chance to develop their potentials.

The mindset needs to change. For example, in the middle of the complete lockdown, there were students who used social media to write that they would be “ready to do assignments every day but wanted their lives back to normal”. Now, that they are back to classrooms, some are asking for “not many assignments”, or voicing that they ‘don’t want a C grade; it has to be higher’. The ‘I want’ mentality seems to be tough to eradicate. When asked why the grade is more important than knowledge, the answers skirt around the understanding that it will help them land a job in the public sector.

Well, when employers complain that graduates are not prepared for the job market, then, educational institutions need to evaluate their role

in society. In fact, institutions should scrutinise the what and the how they are ‘preparing’ the youth. Providing skills? Developing knowledge? Preparing them for the real world?

Students, at all levels, have experienced intense anxieties, and perhaps, a variety of difficulties that they were not prepared to face. Still, in back to ‘almost’ normal life, they should not be patronised. They deserve to be treated as smart and respected goal-oriented individuals. The return to campus is greeted with big smiles, plenty of social life, building new relationships, and working collaboratively. The optimism in the air is almost palpable. However, it is time to consider a new format for academic and technical professionalisation studies.

For those leaving the university and entering adulthood, there is a new world out there to conquest, and to grow. They are slipping the ‘back to classroom’. So, the graduation ceremony would be the most anticipated moment. On this occasion, everyone flows with emotions over the years of dedication and everything they have lived through; the best years of their lives. It is a rite of passage. The pandemic has robbed them of this wonderful experience. That jolly moment will be forever missed!

Money laundering in the midst of a pandemic



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MONEY LAUNDERING HAS RESULTED IN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN GLOBAL ELECTRONIC COMMERCE DURING THE LAST PERIOD

Some countries in the region have begun to disclose the increasing risks of illegal financial flows which took place through some banking and financial institutions during the last period as a result of outbreaking the pandemic in the world. These conditions led to an increase in money laundering and terrorist financing operations as a result of the facilities provided by local banks to customers to conduct banking operations from homes.

The purpose was not to hinder the business of companies and individuals, many of whom depend on the transfer of money directly without going to banking institutions.

Some of these illegal financial operations have resulted in the

entry of unauthorised persons to carry out such transfers through direct transactions or through electronic commerce requests that these transferred amounts are for import and export operations.

Consequently, this has resulted in an increase in the total commissions received by some of those with limited incomes in some Asian and African countries in return for the services they provided regarding money laundering without they being fully aware of the risks of these operations and their violation of local and international laws. This does not mean that small people are involved in violating laws, but there are big names which the relevant institutions follow,

whether for people or companies as a result of large increase that occurred in their material funds, and the rise in their balances in banking institutions, real estate and fictitious commercial institutions.

Today, there is a continuous follow-up by all countries and relevant institutions in the central banks towards what is happening of some dirty money transfers in banking institutions in the region or abroad.

This will lead to further improvement in laws and legislations to avoid the names of their institutions and banks in international forums.

Central banks in the region have been able to detect some operations and punish those

involved over the past years, but these operations have witnessed great momentum since the beginning of 2020 as a result of the pandemic continuing for a long time, while those involved are trying to hide the illegal sources of funds transferred to them from external sources.

Money laundering operations have resulted in a significant increase in global electronic commerce during the last period, according French News Agency, so that this trade has become a major tool in money laundering. This is due to the limited ability to transfer funds and goods directly during the pandemic period, at a time when those illegal funds went to the accounts of some people in return for paying

financial commissions to them.

The increase in these operations is also due to the exploitation of the capabilities of some in the world of technologies, the Internet and digitisation to commit fraud against some banking institutions to quickly transfer the funds to the accounts of the persons and companies concerned without discovering them.

The decisions to ban travel, home quarantine, and conduct business outside institutions have given criminals and money launderers an opportunity to make illegal gains and finance terrorist operations, which has led to a high rate of financial crimes in societies, and more oversight is needed in this regard.



(From left) Paris Saint-Germain's Ander Herrera, Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe celebrate at the end of the Uefa Champions League first round Group A match against Manchester City at The Parc des Princes, in Paris. – AFP

MESSI OPENS PSG ACCOUNT

'CRAZY' SHERIFF TIRASPOL SHOCK REAL MADRID

PARIS: Lionel Messi opened his Paris Saint-Germain account as the French side beat Manchester City while new boys Sheriff Tiraspol shocked Real Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Messi's top-corner finish added to Idrissa Gueye's first half goal as PSG moved top of Group A with the 2-0 win over last year's runners up. Pep Guardiola's side hit the bar twice in the first half with Portugal playmaker Bernardo Silva failing to score two metres out with PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma helplessly on the ground. "The important thing was to win, against an immense opponent, one of the contenders for the trophy", Messi told broadcaster Canal+.

"I had only played here (Parc des Princes) once, but little by little I'm adapting and integrating to the team", he added.

In Group D, Sheriff, playing in just their second ever game in the group stage of the competition, upset record 13-time winners Real Madrid 2-1 in the Spanish capital.

Uzbekistan winger Jasur Jakhshibaev put the Moldovans in the lead before the half hour mark as Karim Benzema equalised after 65 minutes to score for a 17th different season in the competition, a feat only also achieved by 34-year-old Messi.

But the hero for Sheriff, who are based in the region of Transnistria on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, was Luxembourg attacking midfielder Sebastien Thill.

The 27-year-old Thill fired



PSG's Lionel Messi (C) controls the ball against Manchester City. – AFP



Sheriff Tiraspol's Sebastien Thill vies with Real Madrid's Eduardo Camavinga (R) at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid. – AFP

Earlier in the group, Serie A champions Inter Milan remain winless in Europe this season following the 0-0 draw at Shakhtar.

Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk was a spectator in Kiev days after beating Anthony Joshua on points to become just the third boxer to win both the cruiserweight and heavyweight world titles.

SALAH, FIRMINO DOUBLES

In Group B, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino scored twice as Liverpool hammered Porto 5-1 and Luis Suarez claimed a 97th-minute winner as Atletico Madrid edged AC Milan 2-1 in Italy.

Jürgen Klopp's side wore black armbands after former Liverpool striker Roger Hunt died earlier in the day aged 83. Milan played an hour with 10-man after Franck Kessie's red card and the seven-time European champions were unable to claim a first win in the competition since 2013.

Earlier, Ivory Coast striker Sebastien Haller took his tally to 10 goals in as many games this season as Ajax beat Besiktas 2-0 to stay top of Group C in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Netherlands winger Donyell Malen also scored for his new club as Borussia Dortmund overcame Sporting Lisbon 1-0 and trail the Dutch champions on goal difference. American Jesse Marsch lost his fifth game in nine matches in charge of RB Leipzig in the 2-1 home defeat to Club Brugge. Leipzig face a tough ask to reach the last 16 in a group alongside PSG and City. — AFP



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2021-2022

2ND MATCHDAY

GROUP STAGE

TEUSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

A		Paris Saint-Germain	2	0	Manchester City	
		RB Leipzig	1	2	Club Bruges	
B		Porto	1	5	Liverpool	
		AC Milan	1	2	Atletico Madrid	
C		Ajax Amsterdam	2	0	Besiktas	
		Borussia Dortmund	1	0	Sporting Lisbon	
D		Shakhtar Donetsk	0	0	Inter Milan	
		Real Madrid	1	2	Sheriff	

Pollard claims 300 T20 scalps

MUMBAI INDIANS BEAT PUNJAB KINGS BY SIX WICKETS



DUBAI: West Indies giant Kieron Pollard says getting to 300 wickets in Twenty20 cricket will remain special after he got Indian Premier League champions back to winning ways.

Pollard took two key wickets and hit an unbeaten 15 off seven balls as Mumbai beat Punjab Kings by six wickets on Tuesday to revive their title defence.

The 1.96 metre (6ft 5ins) all-rounder became the first player in history to achieve 300 wickets and 10,000 runs in T20 and said it should be an “important” boost for bowlers.

“Bowlers are a bit underrated,” Pollard said on hitting the landmark with his medium-pace bowling. “For me you are just supposed to do what the team requires. As an individual, I know what I can do in all the facets of the game, and whenever I get the opportunity just try to do my best.”

The West Indies limited overs captain sent back big-hitting T20 teammate Chris Gayle and then made Punjab captain K L Rahul 300th victim. “For me to get these wickets, I’ll take it each and every time.”

“For me you are just supposed to do what the team requires. As an individual, I know what I can do in all the facets of the game, and whenever I get the opportunity just try to do my best”

KIERON POLLARD
Mumbai all-rounder

He added, “I honestly admit don’t have pace, I don’t have spin, I don’t have swing, but I have a little bit of brain and I just try to use it to the best.”

The 34-year-old has won five titles with Mumbai since he joined them in 2010.

He is determined to keep playing and show his worth.

“Age is catching up with me because (there are) young guys in the dressing room, so I have to continue to show them that, ‘listen, I still got it,’” he said. “So most of the time, it’s just to show these young guys what I can do.”

Mumbai skipper Rohit

Sharma praised his middle order rock.

“Give him the ball, give him the bat, he’s ready to do the job,” said Sharma.

“Those two wickets were crucial. He’ll be happy getting the Man of the Match for his bowling performance.”

Mumbai are fifth in the eight-team table and next play Delhi Capitals on Saturday.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai Indians 137/4 (Saurabh Tiwary 45, Hardik Pandya 40; Ravi Bishnoi 2/25) beat Punjab Kings 135/6 (Aiden Markram 42, Deepak Hooda 28; Kieron Pollard 2/8) by 6 wickets.

PCB chief executive quits weeks after tour chaos



Wasim Khan

KARACHI: The chief executive of the Pakistan Cricket Board resigned on Wednesday, two weeks after New Zealand and England abandoned tours of the South Asian nation over security concerns.

Wasim Khan — who has been credited for reviving Pakistan’s international cricket after a 2009 terror attack on the Sri Lankan team sent the country into isolation for years — gave no reason for quitting.

“When I arrived in 2019, there was a real need to build relationships and restore and enhance the global image and reputation of the PCB and Pakistan cricket,” he said at an emergency meeting according to a statement released by the PCB on Wednesday.

Khan added it was “hugely satisfying” to see the resumption of Test cricket, which has included recent tours by South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

But Pakistan is again facing cricketing isolation after New Zealand called off their first tour of the country in 18 years earlier this month over security concerns. Their decision was swiftly followed by England’s cancellation of a planned tour in October. “(The) Pakistan Cricket Board today confirmed Wasim Khan has tendered his resignation as chief executive,” the PCB said. — AFP

SRH look to maintain momentum



It’s a game between the best and the worst of the IPL-2021 and yet it’s still going to have a lot of eyes on it for various reasons. To start with, Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have won 2 games from 10 matches, is still not knocked out from the tournament and has an extremely tough outside chance. Though a lot of other teams’ matches have to work exactly as needed by SRH. On the other side, Chennai Super Kings have won 8 out of their 10 matches and are going to play the remaining of the four league matches to lock their position in the top two slots.

CHENNAI ON TOP

Chennai have won all their 3 games of the UAE leg and are on top of the league table as of now, thanks to their superior net run-rate to Delhi Capitals. Chennai have won their first game at Dubai, second at Sharjah and third at Abu Dhabi. The experienced side of Mahendra Singh Dhoni, currently has the answer to all the questions asked by all the well prepared and highly experienced think tanks of various teams. Dhoni has always believed and invested in the experienced players over the



Kane Williamson, captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad with Abhishek Sharma. — BCCI

years, and it has even yielded with consistent finishes, year after year. On the contrary, Sunrisers Hyderabad won just one of their three games in the UAE leg, thanks to a fantastic knock from Jason Roy and Kane Williamson. Victories can swipe a lot of trash under the carpet, while losses are always ugly. It looks like David Warner, Hyderabad’s best player and highest run scorer over the years, has played his last match for the franchise and is going to rest for the remainder of the season.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

In the sixteen matches played between them, Chennai super

kings have dominated by winning 12, in comparison to the 4 games. At Sharjah, both teams have played a solo game, which was won by Chennai. Although, when we come to the recent records and talk about the last 5 games, there Chennai lead Hyderabad by 3:2 only and their previous match of IPL 2021 was also won by Chennai. So overall, it’s all tilting in favour of Chennai.

Sharjah in 2021 is very different from Sharjah in 2020. The pitch is slow, spin-friendly, and makes very difficult for the batsmen. Scores of around 130 have been tough to chase down and we think 150-160 could be a winning total in this match as well. The spinners are going to

dominate in this match and we are going to bet on this being a low-scoring thriller once more.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

The last game that Sunrisers played against Rajasthan Royals, showcased a very different attitude and game from the Hyderabad boys. They are definitely going to be playing the remainder of the games for fun and pride. Pressure was something, which surely didn’t showcase on their face, which allowed them to chase a competitive score of 164 with a lot of ease and 9 balls to spare as well.

Dhoni doesn’t like to change a lot, but considering the pitch conditions, Imran Tahir or Mitchell Santner could come in place of Josh Hazlewood. Considering the poor run of form of Suresh Raina, Dhoni might also have an eye on Robin Uthappa or Cheteshwar Pujara or Krishnappa Gowtham as well.

Hyderabad, who have won a game after 6 consecutive defeats, are definitely going to stick to the winning combinations, unless an injury or unavailability forces them. The captain will have an eye on Mujeeb Ur Rahman, but currently he cannot replace any of the foreign players. Shahbaz Nadeem is another important player, considering the pitch conditions.

Former Oman captain Vaibhav bids adieu



Vaibhav Wategaonkar receives a gift from Anil Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas.

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

In the razzmatazz of WCL 2 drama and ICC T20 World Cup anticipation, former Oman captain Vaibhav Wategaonkar bid the country a quiet adieu after his tenure with his employer Khimji Ramdas ended recently.

An elegant left-handed batter, Vaibhav represented Muscat CT in the Premier League, country’s topmost domestic competition, for 18 years, leading them to many memorable title triumphs. Representing Oman, he played a number of high quality knocks and led the country to many memorable victories.

Anil Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas, presented Vaibhav with a gift as a token of appreciation at a farewell dinner held in his honour. “Thank you Vaibhav for being an integral part of not just the Muscat team but also a

part of the journey of the Oman team in its formative years to the current phenomena that we have become on the global stage as a leading high performing Associate nation. We wish you and your family much success and happiness in your future endeavours,” said Pankaj Khimji, Chairman, Oman Cricket Board.

“Vaibhav was not just the pillar of Muscat CT but also a big player for Oman. He was a quality batsman and led both the teams to victories single-handedly on a number of occasions. While we are going to miss his services, we wish him the very best and good luck for his future,” commented Madhu Jesrani, OC Secretary and a long-time mentor of Muscat CT.

“It was always a delight to watch him bat. He was one of the key batters for Muscat CT,” said his former team mate and coach Wilson Burboz.

In brief

SAN DIEGO



MURRAY ROLLS OVER KUDLA IN SAN DIEGO TO REACH SECOND ROUND

Former world No 1 Andy Murray got off to a positive start on Tuesday at the ATP San Diego tournament, cruising past American Denis Kudla in straight sets 6-3, 6-2. The Scotsman needed just 70 minutes to dispose of Kudla and advance to the second round, where he will face Norwegian Casper Ruud, who is seeded second and recently cracked the top 10 world rankings for the first time. Ruud received a bye through the first round. The 34-year-old Murray, who is currently ranked 109th, blasted nine aces, using a strong first serve to keep the American off balance throughout the match.

LOS ANGELES



RADUCANU GETS INDIAN WELLS WILD CARD ENTRY

Newly crowned US Open champion Emma Raducanu has been granted a wild card into the ATP/WTa Indian Wells tournament starting in California next week, organisers said. The 18-year-old British star, who stunned the tennis world after winning the US Open as an unseeded qualifier, will be making her debut at the rescheduled October 4-17 event. It is the latest stop on a remarkable season for Raducanu, who only made her WTA Tour debut in June. Raducanu's Grand Slam triumph has catapulted her up the world rankings, rising more than 100 places to world number 22.

SYDNEY



KYRGIOS TO UNDERGO TREATMENT TO FIX KNEE ISSUE

Nick Kyrgios said on Tuesday he will undergo treatment to fix a painful knee that has been bothering him for two months and hopes to be fully fit for his home major at the Australian Open in January. The Australian, 26, headed home after playing the Laver Cup in Boston, his last event in the 2021 season. "Hey guys, over the last couple months, I haven't been near 100 per cent healthy," Kyrgios wrote on Instagram. "I've been dealing with left knee patella tendinopathy and continuing to play without fully treating it can lead to further pain and greater set backs." Kyrgios, who reached a career-high ranking of 13 in 2016, has slipped down the ladder and is now ranked 96th in the world.

Saudi 'racing against time' to complete F1 track



JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia is working overtime to prepare for its Formula One debut, an official said, with the track still under construction ahead of the race in early December.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said organisers were "racing against time" and working "round the clock" in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

A visit to the track this week showed there was still much work to be done, with buildings under construction and cranes and diggers on site.

The floodlit circuit will run over 6.175km (3.8 miles), the second longest on the calendar, and will feature 27 corners. The race weekend is from December 3-5.

Prince Khalid bin Sultan al Faisal, president of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, said there was a "huge demand" for tickets, even at a time when travel remains difficult because of the pandemic.

Tickets are also not cheap,

ranging between 2,000 Saudi riyals (\$533) and 35,000 Saudi riyals (\$9,333).

"We're expecting a huge turnout, especially from Europe and the United States," he told reporters.

"The Formula One project has cost a lot, and it is standard that cost is compensated by the sale of tickets as well as other sources, including advertisements and local sponsors."

The conservative kingdom

has frequently been accused of 'sportswashing' after it began hosting a series of high-profile competitions.

Saudi Arabia already hosts the Dakar Rally, the all-electric Formula E series, in addition to

We're expecting a huge turnout, especially from Europe and the United States

PRINCE KHALID AL FAISAL

Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation chief

top boxing, golf and tennis events.

Formula One has come under close scrutiny over the staging of a race in Bahrain, and the addition of Saudi Arabia is sure to escalate criticism from human rights watchers.

The Saudi Arabian Grand Prix will be the penultimate event of the 22-race calendar for 2021 which concludes in Abu Dhabi, in Gulf neighbour the United Arab Emirates. — AFP

HOLDERS PALMEIRAS INTO COPA LIBERTADORES FINAL

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil:

Defending champions Palmeiras booked their place in the final of the Copa Libertadores on Tuesday, securing a battling 1-1 against Brazilian rivals Atletico Mineiro to advance on away goals.

A second-half equaliser from winger Dudu cancelled out Atletico Mineiro's opener from Chilean international Eduardo Silva to send Palmeiras through to the November 27 final of South American club football's showpiece tournament.

After the first leg in Sao Paulo ended 0-0 last week, Atletico Mineiro appeared poised to make home advantage count in Tuesday's return leg at Belo Horizonte's Mineirao Stadium.

But it was Palmeiras who came closest to scoring in a dour first half, the striker springing the offside trap in the second minute to test Atletico goalkeeper Everson with a fierce strike.

Atletico's best chance came on 25 minutes when Joaquin Piquerez latched on to a long ball forward and sent a shot whistling past the post.

The encounter exploded into life in the second half however with Atletico's former Brazil international striker Hulk forcing a fine save from Weverton.

At the other end, a swift Palmeiras counter-attack saw Everson rescue Atletico once again from Rony's well-struck effort.

The opening goal came on 52 minutes, when Jair found space down the right flank and crossed into the six-yard area for Vargas to head home for 1-0.

The goal heralded a period of dominance for Atletico, and Vargas missed a golden opportunity to make it 2-0 on 56 minutes, playing a deft 1-2 to split the Palmeiras defence only to shoot wide.

Three minutes later Palmeiras almost grabbed an equaliser,



Players jump for a header during the all-Brazilian Copa Libertadores semifinal second-leg match between Atletico Mineiro and Palmeiras, at the Mineirao Stadium in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. — AFP



Palmeiras players celebrate after qualifying for the final of Copa Libertadores, at the Mineirao stadium in Belo Horizonte.— AFP

with Rony capitalising on a defensive lapse by Nathan Da Silva only to drag his shot past the upright.

That was Rony's final contribution of the game, with the striker departing for 19-year-old Gabriel Veron.

The teenage substitute made an instant impact, using his pace and athleticism to reach the byline and squaring for Dudu to make it 1-1 on 68 minutes.

That goal proved decisive and Atletico were unable to find the winner against a resolute Palmeiras. Palmeiras — bidding to become the first back-to-back winners of the Copa Libertadores since Boca Juniors in 2000-2001 — will play either Brazilian club Flamengo or Ecuador's Barcelona SC in the final. Flamengo lead that semifinal tie 3-1 heading into Wednesday's second leg. — AFP



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Oman’s third telecom operator gears up for launch

NEW PLAYER: Vodafone pledges market-leading services to enhance telecommunications and drive digitalisation

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Vodafone Oman, the Sultanate’s third telecom operator, is set to commence operations in the very near future — a development that promises to further intensify competition in the retail and business segments of the telecom market, as well as accelerate the country’s digital transformation.

A top official affirmed that Oman’s newest telecom player is gearing up to go live shortly, after nearly a year’s delay, attributable primarily to the global economic slowdown and compounded by the pandemic.

“The launch is soon!” Stelios Savvides, Technology Director, said. “We are preparing for it; the teams are working hard, and with

this signing ceremony today you can expect things very soon.”

The ceremony Savvides referenced pertained to an agreement signed by Vodafone Oman with leading international telecom technology giant Ericsson for the deployment, operation and maintenance of a new 4G and 5G core, as well as greenfield radio access network (RAN) that will be at the heart of the third operator’s new telecom infrastructure in the Sultanate. The agreement was signed at Kempinski Hotel on Wednesday in the presence of top executives representing the two sides.

Pressed by journalists for a timeline for the planned launch, Savvides said: “I can’t give you exact dates, but soon”, further adding, “Probably yes!” when queried if the event would happen before the end of this year.

The agreement with Ericsson, the Technology Director said, calls for the rollout of equipment and systems over a period of five years, as well as managed services for the operation of the network



along with Vodafone Oman for the next five years. “So it’s an all-encompassing deal where both Vodafone and Ericsson will work together to deploy the latest capabilities and look to provide a great customer experience to all our customers in Oman.”

Asked how the new network

would compare — speed and quality-wise — with those of incumbents Omantel and Ooredoo, Savvides stated: “We will look to give the best performance in the market. We are providing 4G, 5G services, voice over LTE (VOLTE), voice and 5G data from Day 1. The network will evolve.

We look to provide great 5G indoors as well, but we definitely will look at the very best and be super-competitive with the other providers.”

Vodafone Oman is the product of a strategic partnership agreement reached between Oman Future Telecommunications Company, the third telecom licensee, and British multinational telecom giant Vodafone, in September 2019. Under the non-equity agreement, the two sides agreed to work together to roll out a new mobile network and develop a number of new services using the Vodafone brand in Oman.

Savvides declined to be drawn on any likelihood of a pricing competition with Omantel and Ooredoo upon the launch of Vodafone Oman. “I can’t comment on pricing, but we are looking to come into the market and deliver something fresh, new and exciting to customers. So let’s wait and see! Today, we are marking the agreement from the technology point of view,

but Vodafone is looking to bring benefit to customers across all aspects in terms of what we can offer to the customers”, he commented.

Through partnerships with Oman Tower Company and Oman Broadband, much of the network has already been set in place, according to the executive. However, the roll-out of telecom services is planned in “phased progression”, with coverage set to be national from the outset, he noted.

A Royal Decree issued earlier this year granted Oman Future Communications Company (Vodafone Oman) a Class-1 licence to provide basic mobile telecommunications services in the Sultanate. Muscat-based Oman 70 Holding is a primary shareholder in Oman Future Telecommunications (OFT). Private investors, including Oman 70 Holding, account for around 45 per cent of OFT’s equity, while the balance 55 per cent is made up of Omani pension funds. *See also Page 15*

Oman’s recovery to gradually pick up as economy opens up again

PROMISING FORECASTS: With non-oil GDP growth projected at 2.4 per cent in 2021 and 3.1 per cent in 2022, Oman’s non-oil sector is expected to return to its pre-pandemic levels in 2023

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

The latest Economic Insights: Middle East report for the third quarter of 2021, from Oxford Economics, forecasts a gradual recovery for Oman’s economy, following a period of on-and-off Covid-19 restrictions. Non-oil sector activity and rising oil output should result in GDP growth of 2.1 per cent for the Sultanate, following an estimated contraction of 5.8 per cent in 2020.

The report, commissioned by ICAEW, states that the restrictions aimed at limiting the spread of Covid-19 have weighed heavily on Oman’s domestic recovery and tourism sector since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. This was reinforced by weak credit growth and concerns about job security and income, reflected in recent protests, as well as higher inflation following the introduction of VAT in April.



An increase in vaccination rates and the expansion of Oman’s vaccination drive — albeit lagging behind its GCC peers, with around a third of the population fully vaccinated so far, compared to 80 per cent in the UAE — have facilitated the lifting of restrictions, leading to the economy opening up. Vaccination is now mandatory in many settings across the country such as supermarkets, commercial establishments, coffee shops and restaurants, to help contain the spread of the virus.

Strict restrictions on inbound travel have stifled Oman’s tourism sector, which plays an essential role in the country’s non-oil economy. However, in September Oman re-opened its borders to

fully vaccinated tourists, giving an encouraging outlook for tourism, even as mandatory quarantine remains in place. Entertainment and hosting venues nationwide have also stepped up efforts to capture domestic audiences, driving occupancy above 2020 levels.

Overall, ICAEW’s report forecasts non-oil GDP growth of 2.4 per cent in 2021 and 3.1 per cent in 2022 for Oman’s non-oil sector, which is expected to return to its pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

Michael Armstrong, ICAEW Regional Director for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, said: “While the non-oil sector gradually picks up and Oman’s economy reopens to foreigners,

weak internal demand conditions continue to affect employment opportunities for nationals. Efforts are under way to create more public sector positions and replace foreign workers with Omani citizens, but a full recovery in the labour market will take time. New wage subsidies, announced in response to recent protests and offered to private companies for new local hires, should offer some support in the near term and encourage stronger domestic spending.”

Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Adviser and Chief Economist at Oxford Economics, added: “Oman’s inward policy turn means locals will take priority over foreign workers when companies are hiring,

but Omani nationals still fear economic uncertainty will continue to affect job recovery. Oman authorities must continue to prioritise creating more jobs and training opportunities, as well as tackle domestic challenges, including fiscal weaknesses, and focusing policy on increased investment.”

According to the report, Oman’s oil sector is gradually recovering as Opec+ cuts are tapered, with output rising by up to 1.2 per cent this year and next. Gas production is also on the rise as daily production at the key fields of Ghazeer and Khazzan see an increase to 1.5 bn cubic feet from 1 bn, further aiding overall GDP recovery.

Higher oil output combined with the improved outlook for oil prices is boosting fiscal revenues, as hydrocarbons account for around 70 per cent of total government revenue. Meanwhile, VAT proceeds are expected to boost non-oil receipts by approximately RO 300m (\$0.8 bn) in 2021. Oman authorities also continue to cut spending to reduce funding needs. However, most of these improvements stem from removal of outlays related to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), which are now borne by the recently-established energy company, Energy Development Oman (EDO).

Investments in Al Buraimi Industrial City rise to RO 227m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

Investments in manufacturing units in various stages of development and operation at Al Buraimi Industrial City have climbed to RO 227.5 million as of June-end 2021, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), said.

As many as 456 projects have so far been ‘localised’ at the cluster, according to Eng Abdullah bin Ahmed al Mayasi, Director General of Al Buraimi Industrial City. In the first six months of 2021, six new manufacturing projects, involving a combined investment of RO 1.2 million, have been registered to commence operations at the new hub.

Factories in operation at Al Buraimi Industrial City are engaged in the production of materials, electronic materials, lubricants and food products, vegetable oils, fodder and plastics. Warehouses are also part of the mix.

Madayn is also investing in improvements to Al Buraimi Industrial City’s infrastructure. It includes the construction of a new sewerage network and treatment plant, rehabilitation of some streets and drainage channels, and the development of a 300,000 square metre area exclusively earmarked for SME ventures.

(With inputs from ONA)

Tanweer
successfully
implements
1st phase of
Smart Meters



MUSCAT: As part of Nama Group and its companies' efforts to raise the efficiency of billing processes and provide a better experience to its customers, the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), member of Nama Group, announced the successful completion of the first phase of the Smart Meters project (AMR & Prepaid meters) installation project.

The national project aims to replace conventional analogue meters with Smart Meters by 2025 to allow a better customer experience by offering an accurate and instant overview of the actual consumption of electricity for each customer, which in turn will eliminate the human error factor associated with some cases of physical meter readings.

The project's first phase included installing about 4,000 meters by the end of September of this year.

Tanweer has also taken intensive steps to spread awareness and highlight the advantages and importance of Smart Meters and ways to achieve maximum benefits. And how Smart Meters can help customers optimally manage their electricity use and participate in reducing carbon emissions.

Through the Smart Meters project, Tanweer adopts the latest world-class technologies to obtain accurate meter readings and automatically calculate the consumption of each customer, which improves the quality of meter reading and billing accuracy to achieve higher customers satisfaction.

The new meters will not only allow customers to get detailed and accurate consumption reports but will also help them use electrical resources more efficiently by enabling them to monitor and control the use of electricity.

Sohar Port and Freezone partners with Oman Cricket to sponsor ICC T-20 World Cup tour

SUHAS: SOHAR Port and Freezone has joined hands with Oman Cricket to sponsor the forthcoming ICC Men's T-20 World Cup, taking place in Oman and the UAE between October 17 and November 14.

Abdulsalam Al Murshidi, Head of Oman Investment Authority, Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth attended the signing ceremony in preparation to kick-off the first global event to be held in Oman.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone and Deputy CEO of SOHAR Port, said, "This is a lifetime opportunity for Oman to host such a prestigious event and a milestone in our nation's sporting history. SOHAR Port and Freezone always prioritises sports, health and cultural activities and we are proud to contribute to a thriving local community through sport. SOHAR's name will be seen around the world as we reach new



audiences and further position the port and freezone as one of the fastest-growing complexes of its kind."

In his comments, Pankaj Khimji, Chairman, Oman Cricket Board, said: "The ICC T20 World Cup 2021 is a landmark event to be hosted in the Sultanate of Oman. To have leading corporates such as SOHAR Port and Freezone as one of our partners for the World Cup event is a huge endorsement

of their commitment to help gain recognition for Cricket in the country. Oman Cricket Board and SOHAR Port and Freezone share a common vision to take Oman cricket to new heights, and this partnership is the first step in achieving that."

The Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat will host all Group B games, which includes the Omani national team, Bangladesh, Scotland and Papua New Guinea.

The top two teams in the group will advance to the second round, known as the 'Super 12' where they would meet one of eight already-qualified cricketing superpowers including India, Australia, England, New Zealand, Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Africa and The West Indies.

The bi-annual competition, featuring 16 of the world's best cricket teams, is expected to be watched by a global television

audience of 3.5 billion people. Muscat was named as one of the host cities alongside Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah after the International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed the tournament would be rescheduled, presenting the perfect opportunity to showcase Oman to nearly half of the world's population.

SOHAR Port and Freezone sits at the crossroads of East-West trade and has become the gateway for consumer goods, food imports and industrial supplies into Oman and the gulf region.

Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it offers a myriad of incentives for businesses and investors, including easy set-up facilities and a One-Stop-Shop for regulatory procedures. Plans are underway to expand the Port and Freezone in order to attract new investors industries to the complex while introducing energy-efficiency measures to make operations more environmentally friendly.

Over RO 300,000 cash prizes on offer in ahlibank's prize scheme

MUSCAT: ahlibank will celebrate the winners of its third quarterly draws in the beginning of October 2021. The bank is all geared up to reward prizes totalling more than RO 300,000, wherein one winner will walk away with the grand 'Salary for Life' prize of RO 250,000 (RO 1,000 monthly for 250 months). The event will be streamed live on the bank's official social media pages.

Expressing his joy on the success of the Wafra scheme and its role in changing the winners' lives, Muneer Al Balushi, AGM- Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank said, "The Wafra prize scheme has witnessed huge popularity since its launch and this has encouraged the bank to continue its efforts to create new products that encompass a wider customer base. The draws help the winning customers in ensuring financial stability and secure their future and that of their families. ahlibank will continue to look for new opportunities that add value to customers and stakeholders through prize schemes, innovative banking products and superior customer service."

"We always encourage a savings culture among our customers, and



this has been reflected in the increased winning opportunities and prizes offered under Wafra 2021 scheme.

The prize programme is part of our long-term strategy that aims to promote financial inclusion among citizens, and an opportunity to further contribute to the Sultanate's economic and social development objectives," he further explained.

In addition to the 'Salary for Life' prize draw, the Bank will also announce the winner of the quarterly prize for Al Nukhba and exclusive accounts worth RO 25,000, and the winner of the quarterly draw of Imtiyaz accounts, where the bank will present a prize of RO 5,000.

Bank Muscat supports its Najahi customers on MarkeetEx.com

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, is continuing its successful partnership with MarkeetEx.com, an e-commerce platform dedicated to promoting the products and services from local MSMEs.

The bank's efforts, which are coordinated through its Retail Enterprises (Najahi) unit, boosts the e-commerce sector in the Sultanate and support many Najahi customers by covering their subscription and commission fees, especially during a crucial period.

Many Najahi customers have already signed up with MarkeetEx to showcase their products, promote their businesses and widen their customer base.

MarkeetEx.com currently has over 1,000 merchants from different parts of the country registered on its online platform, including 27 Najahi customers who are active on it. It must be noted that more MSMEs are using the marketplace to sell and deliver products and services including groceries, household goods, mobiles and computers, fashion, beauty, and health products at highly-competitive prices.

Bank Muscat has been continuously supporting the MSME sector through its different initiatives and programmes that



view these businesses as a primary pillar of Oman's plans for economic diversification in alignment with the landmark Oman 2040 Vision. The bank's initiatives are part of its strategy to promote Omani entrepreneurs, especially Najahi customers, to increase sales and improve their financial performance.

Bank Muscat also announced that it has managed to cross several important milestones since the beginning this partnership with MarkeetEx, earlier in 2020.

The initiative continues to build on the success of the bank's exhibitions, which were an annual affair in previous years. However, with the continuation of social distancing norms at present, businesses can reach out easily to their customers through <https://markeetex.com>.

Powerful and tough Toyota Hilux with summer surprises

MUSCAT: Toyota Hilux, the most popular pick-up is available with exclusive benefits including 1 Year Comprehensive Insurance and Service 2 Years/20,000 kms, whichever is earlier. The campaign is valid up to October 21. Visit the showroom for exact details.

Born strong, the Hilux is engineered to go the distance, be it at work or on adventure and surpass expectations. The modern Hilux really is two vehicles in one: a work truck through the week and a family vehicle on weekends, thanks to added comforts and safety features. Indeed the current generation Hilux models are stunning in design and features. Their performance & safety parameters are amongst the best and the strong frame and

suspension impart toughness for any demanding task.

Apart from this, high-quality materials are used to ensure a high durability. The distinctive Toyota grille renders the Hilux instantly recognisable. Tough deck protects cargo and increase carrying capabilities, while wheels are fitted with wide tyres for a better grip.

In Oman, the Hilux is available in two versions - The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that's been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing. Check out the Hilux TRD and Unleash the Power!

The Toyota Hilux Adventure packs the legendary Hilux



ruggedness! Every Toyota Hilux TRD comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0

Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect

Differential to keep the tempo going. Equal importance has been provided to the technical

superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP. The Hilux is not only a tough vehicle but also an advanced pick-up with stylish cues hitherto found only on SUVs.

The front of the Hilux gives a sense that the vehicle is wider than it is. This is achieved by the horizontal Bars that make up the Grille and Sleek Headlamps that wrap around the front of the Fenders. The Hilux sports a thick, chunky Front Steel Bumper sculpted like an SUV, Front Fog lamps, Alloy Wheels, Rear Lamp Garnish apart from Side Stripes that adorn the vehicle.



In brief

■ BERLIN

**DEMAND FOR LUFTHANSA FLIGHTS TO US SOARS ON RE-OPENING**

Demand for transatlantic flights has jumped since the United States announced plans last week to reopen to fully vaccinated travellers from countries including most of Europe, German airline Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) said.

On some days last week, bookings for transatlantic flights were up threefold from the week before, with demand on some routes nearing pre-crisis levels, it said.

The United States said last week it would reopen in November to air travellers from 33 countries including China, India, Brazil and most of Europe who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

■ LONDON

**BRITAIN WARNS SOCIAL MEDIA FIRMS OVER 'DODGY' FINANCIAL ADS**

Social media firms face action if they do not do more to prevent ads for "dodgy financial promotions" that are fuelling a surge in fraud, Britain's Financial Conduct Authority said.

Financial scams have rocketed in recent years, especially during the coronavirus pandemic, as more consumers shop online and try digital banking and investing. UK Finance, a lobby group representing banks, has described fraud as a "national security threat", with the FCA saying that consumers lost nearly £570 million to investment scams in the 12 months to April.

■ SAN FRANCISCO

**NETFLIX ACQUIRES FIRST VIDEO GAME STUDIO**

Netflix has announced the acquisition of its first video game studio, as the streaming giant bids to expand its entertainment empire with a push into the lucrative gaming sector. The company announced that it has bought the California-based Night School Studio, best known as the creators of paranormal thriller game Oxenfree.

Netflix had indicated its intention to venture into video games in July, eyeing potential hits based on the storylines of popular TV series.

The company said Night School's "artistic excellence and proven track record make them invaluable partners as we build out the creative capabilities and library of Netflix games together".

Vodafone Oman's new 5G network to be powered by Ericsson

GREENFIELD NETWORK:
Ericsson to deploy end-to-end products and solutions spanning core, radio and transport

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

Vodafone Oman has signed an agreement with global telecom giant Ericsson to deploy, operate and maintain a new 4G and 5G core and radio access (RAN) greenfield network in the Sultanate.

Ericsson will supply a complete core network solution based on Ericsson Cloud Core, NFVI and Cloud VoLTE as well as an end-to-end transport network solution.

The greenfield network includes other Ericsson Radio System products and solutions such as the antenna-integrated radio and Ericsson Spectrum Sharing.

The end-to-end solution range will deliver a cost-efficient, energy-efficient and flexible



layered architecture design to support 5G from network launch. Vodafone customers will also benefit from Ericsson Voice over LTE (VoLTE) services.

A five-year management services agreement has also been signed. This will result in an AI-powered data-driven network and IT operations and optimisation, enabling Vodafone to enrich its customer experience, drive efficiency and facilitate innovation.

Vodafone will benefit from Ericsson's AI tools and data-

driven model to drive efficiencies and a shift from reactive to proactive IT and network operations.

In turn, Vodafone customers will get an enhanced user experience with improved network quality and performance.

Ericsson will take responsibility for the design, rollout, operations, management, optimisation and maintenance of Vodafone's network. The move will support the service provider's goal to offer a wide range of new and differentiating services to its

customers in Oman.

Bader al Zidi, Chief Executive Officer of Vodafone, said: "Our focus is to ensure that we offer our customers a wide range of differentiating services that will add value to their lives, as well as redefining customer service in the country. We expect high performing Core and RAN technologies and AI, automation and analytics to further accelerate operational transformation through our partnership. Ericsson has the knowledge and understanding

of our requirements. As part of this partnership, we are also joining hands to develop and build the capacity of Omani youth in the areas of technology and information. Our goal is to offer customers an exceptional customer experience as well as upscale the Omani youth, to ensure that Vodafone is able to meet its commitment of bringing superior quality network and mobile communications to the people of Oman through Omani local talent in the long term."

Fadi Pharaon, President of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, added: "We are proud to be chosen by Vodafone to deploy and run their entire greenfield network in Oman. This collaboration will lead to Vodafone launching its new mobile broadband service and providing Oman with an additional nationwide mobile network. We are pleased to implement the latest in radio access and core technologies, as well as utilising the latest in automation, and artificial intelligence software to run the network and secure great user experience."

China vaunts air power, civil growth at Zhuhai show

ZHUHAI: China touted its expanding military air power and hopes of capturing a growing share of its civil aviation market for domestic producers at a national air show inaugurated amid regional tensions over Taiwan and disruption from the pandemic.

Typically held every other year in the southern resort of Zhuhai, Airshow China opened on Tuesday after a year of delays caused by Covid-19, with a scaled-back foreign presence and a sharp focus on China's domestic and regional priorities.

Flying demonstrations on a hot and hazy day that had crowds scrambling for shade included a smoke-trailing display by J-10 fighters from the Bayi aerobatic team. China's newer J-20 stealth fighter, which made its debut at Zhuhai in 2016, roared above dignitaries with domestic rather than Russian-made engines for the first time, state media said.

On the ground, China showcased a prototype of the CH-6 long-endurance drone, capable of reconnaissance and strike operations, and the WZ-7 high-altitude surveillance drone.

Also capturing attention for the first time was the J-16D, an electronic attack version of China's J-16 fighter.

"The scope and scale of high-end warfighting capability on display is definitely a step-up from previous shows," said Kelvin Wong, a Singapore-based defence editor at Janes. "The J-16D is a very important new addition to (China's) air force order of battle. It provides critical new electronic warfare elements designed to degrade an adversary's ability to attack and engage other People's Liberation Army air assets."

Analysts said its show debut



China debuts for J-16D electronic attack jet, new drone systems as regulator yet to certify batch of foreign civil jets

appeared to signal a push to counter Western and Taiwanese defences.

"The J-16D is a special threat to Taiwan since it can attack anti-aircraft defences that Taiwan must rely on heavily in any Chinese attempt to forcibly take control of the island," said Bradley Perrett, a specialist on Asian aerospace and defence.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has stepped up military and political pressure to try and force the democratically ruled island to accept Chinese sovereignty. Speaking at an opening ceremony in Zhuhai,

Chang Dingqiu, commander of China's air force, said its officers would "resolutely defend the reunification of the motherland".

Taiwan this month proposed extra defence spending of almost \$9 billion over the next five years, including on new missiles, in the face of what it called a "severe threat".

Commercial planemakers, meanwhile, see strong post-pandemic prospects for the Chinese aviation market, with an increasing share of the spoils expected to go to domestic manufacturers.

China is a key hunting ground for foreign aviation firms, thanks to the quick recovery in domestic travel, but the outlook is complicated by Beijing's desire to grow its own champions.

— Reuters

Oman Insurance receives 'in principle' approval for first Lloyd's SIAB in GCC

WIDER REACH: OIC will be the first syndicate to operate from the Lloyd's Dubai Platform

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 29

UAE-headquartered Oman Insurance Company (OIC) and Asta, the leading third-party managing agent at Lloyd's, announce that "in principle" approval has been received from Lloyd's to launch Syndicate 2880 under the Syndicate-in-a-Box initiative (SIAB).

The syndicate is subject to the usual regulatory approvals and due to commence underwriting for the 2022 year of account. The syndicate will operate on the Lloyd's platform under the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).

OIC, one of the leading insurers in the GCC, based in Dubai, provides lead and follow capacity on regional and international facultative business. OIC will be the first syndicate to operate from the Lloyd's Dubai Platform and it will further strengthen OIC's position and support Lloyd's plan to develop regional distribution of capacity.

The Active Underwriter will be Christopher Wildee who has 23 years of experience and was previously International Head of Marine and Upstream Energy at Aspen Insurance Group and was responsible for the establishment of Chaucer's Singapore operation.

Jean-Louis Laurent Josi, OIC CEO, said: "Oman Insurance's ambition is to further its reputation in the region for underwriting and operational excellence in order to deliver the best customer experience.



Partnering with Lloyd's represents the highest standards that will deliver security and expertise to our policyholders. It is not only a great news for OIC, that reflects the quality and the expertise of its teams, but also for the UAE to have the first Lloyd's syndicate ever in the region."

"Our vision for Syndicate 2880 is to build a profitable business that will facilitate further growth of our international account and raise the profile of Lloyd's platform in the region. We are grateful to our partners in this venture, notably Asta as managing agent, Argenta Private Capital Limited as members agent, Lloyd's in London and Dubai and the DIFC for their help and guidance."

Asta Chief Executive Officer Julian Tighe added: "We are delighted to launch our latest 'in-principle' approved SIAB, a pioneer in the Gulf region, where we see the potential for numerous opportunities. The syndicate, which advances Lloyd's plan to develop provincial capacity distribution, is testament to the adaptability of the SIAB platform, and Asta's delivery of a range of solutions across geographies that can be tailor-made to best meet the needs of our clients. We look forward to working with the established team at OIC."

OIC has operations in the UAE as well as in Oman and Turkey.

It provides a wide range of insurance solutions for individuals and enterprises in Life, Medical and General insurance. Gross written premium amounted to AED 3.59 billion in 2020.

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BREAKING

features



ALSO, ON THIS ISSUE

Artists turned curators for a virtual art exhibit

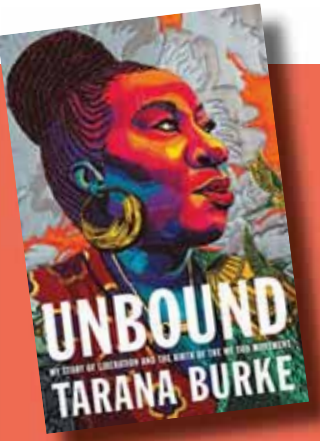
A canvas is a diary on which an artist expresses thoughts with her tools namely paints, brushes, pencils, charcoals, papers or scissors. 'Simply 100,' was the name of the recent exhibition where each painting was given a 100x100 cm canvas. The Indian artistes displayed their works of art virtually through Rangrez, the artist wing of Indian Social Club Oman... **P20**

Across the Arabian Sea

This week, the book Oman-India Ties across Sea and Space was launched through the collaborative effort of Oman Daily Observer and the Indian Embassy in Muscat bringing into the spotlight the thousands of years of the shared history of the two countries and proving why Oman and India's tie is considered to be one of the world's oldest continuous relationships facilitated by trade, diplomatic and familial connections... **P18**

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

READ



UNBOUND BY TARANA BURKE

A memoir by the founder of the Me Too movement, which details her work supporting and empowering Black and brown girls.

Rabat's only woman taxi driver busts stereotypes

SOUAD HDIDOU is challenging social norms and busting stereotypes from behind the wheel as the only female taxi driver in the Moroccan capital Rabat and one of a few in the country. Hdidou, 33, started work as a truck driver after dropping out of school and worked for a fish distribution company, but switched to taxis for the better pay and greater freedom, she

said. "I'm the kind who likes challenges," Hdidou said. She now earns enough to pay the mortgage on her flat near Rabat as well as supporting her family in the countryside and has built up a solid customer base. "Mothers often trust me to pick up their kids from school when they're busy," she said. "I also receive calls to pick up women at night

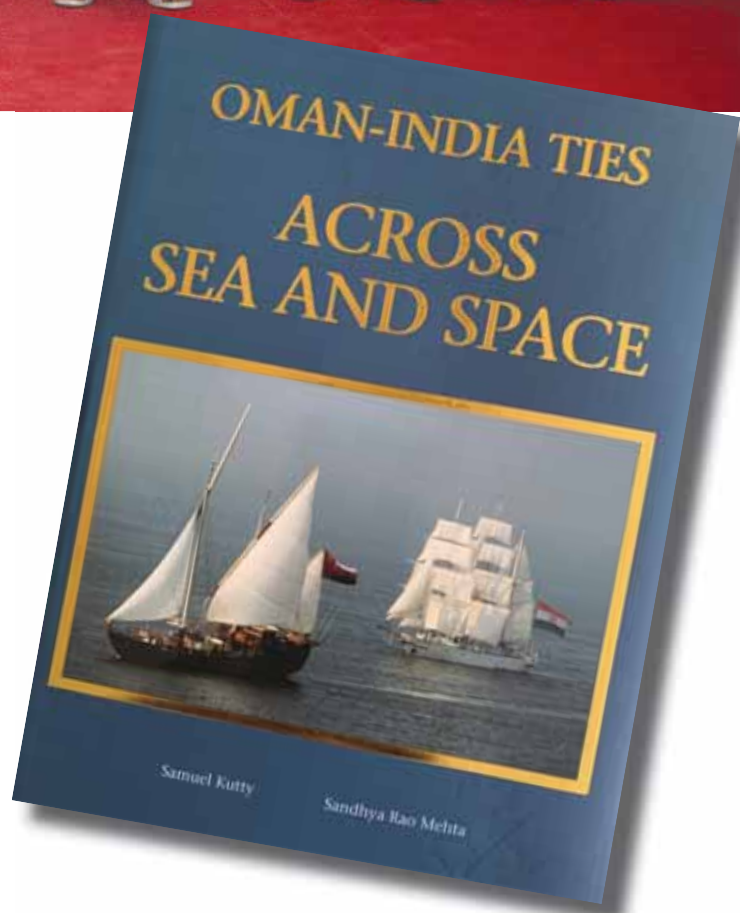
because they feel more comfortable with me." At the wheel of her blue sedan, sparkling clean and fragrant inside, and a heart-shaped talisman with religious verses dangling from the rear-view mirror, Hdidou is a rare sight on Rabat's roads. "We need more women taxi drivers," said Nouhila Asah a female client, adding that with Hdidou she can have a conversation and talk freely over the phone unlike when the driver is a man. There used to be seven women licensed as taxi drivers in the capital, but they all stopped working except Hdidou. Female taxi drivers sometimes face sexual harassment in the form of unwanted advances, she said. Even for men, the taxi business is tough in Morocco

— most drivers have no access to state health and pension coverage, and want the government to reform the sector. The taxi operating licence is so costly that many "rent" it from well-off people who have the right connections. Hdidou said the cost of renting the license as well as car operating expenses account for up to 70 per cent of her monthly revenue. The head of the taxi drivers' union, Mohamed Touiti, said he hoped the government would give drivers access to state social security. For Hdidou, she's taken a step towards fulfilling her childhood dream: "My wish is to work in international transport. I am now in the process of getting different types of driving licences. This is Souad's life," she said, laughing. — Reuters





Across the Arabian Sea



BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

There are houses in Muttrah that still stand proudly, ushering the past with pride. Read through the pages of the book *Oman-India Ties across Sea and Space* and one can visualise how life would have been.

The book spans glimpses of 5000 years of two civilisations from the archaeological discoveries proving trade links with the Indus Valley Civilisation, to the Indian currency that was used in Oman, the early traders of India based in Muttrah, the date packaging factory, the official diplomatic relations to the community lifestyle.

The book brings into the spotlight the thousands of years of shared history; it also proves why Oman and India are considered to have one of the world's oldest continuous relationships facilitated by trade, diplomatic and familial connections. Interestingly the book refers to how this deep root connection has resulted in rich literary, linguistic, sartorial and culinary influences, in addition to material trade which can be traced back to the prehistoric period.

The book is published by *Oman Daily Observer* in association with the Indian Embassy coinciding with the 50th National Day of Oman and 75 years of Indian independence.

Reflecting on the conception of the book, Senior Editor at the *Oman Daily Observer* and co-author of the book, Samuel Kutty, said, "The Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Munu Mahawar, has been a pillar of strength in supporting and fulfilling the concept of the book. There are rare archival pictures that are a real treat. Our Editor-in-Chief, Abdullah Shueili, has been a guiding force and so has the team. The Secretary-General of the National Museum gave us an insight into the history of the two nations through the exhibits of



the museum, which is a great national treasure."

The intriguing aspect is that all of this occurred across the two sides of the Arabian Sea throwing light on the maritime past. The mercantile presence is not just recent, the book states, "This presence only reinforces the continuity of ancient links between these two regions across the Arabian Sea. Historical studies of trade trace the early spice route through India to Egypt and conclude that 'it clearly reveals extensive trade ties between India and Egypt as Roman and Indian ships sailed to coasts along Oman, Yemen and to the Red Sea — and the Horn of Africa.' There is also evidence of markets being regularly held in places like Dibba, Sohar and Dama as they were considered to be important commercial centres.

Reflecting on trade and ports of Oman, the book states, "The ports of Oman have always been historically at the centre of trade, facilitating the movement of reg-

ular and luxury goods including rice and cotton, gold, silk, porcelain and horses." It goes on to say, "While the Muscat Port can be dated back to the third millennium BCE, there are travel accounts in the 9th and 10th centuries which locate Muscat as the last freshwater source for ships going from the Gulf to India, East Africa and further to East Asia." Equally important were the ports of Sohar, Sur, Qalhat and Salalah playing crucial roles at different points in history.

A sizable part of the book brings in the interesting stories of families who were traders but the generations carried on to continue with the family business.

Dr Sandhya Rao Mehta, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University and co-author of the book, said, "We took about a year to complete it and it was

very challenging because my part was to interview members of the historical families who have been here for generations. I have learnt so much from their stories and they had lived in Muttrah, Muscat and Sur and documenting all of that was challenging because I wanted to do justice to all their stories."

Professionally, this has also been her research area, "When I first came to Muscat I was looking at migration and Diaspora literature and later I began to specialise on Oman and India and have been publishing materials on it as well."

As for Samuel Kutty, it was the hardship families took in travelling that left a mark, "If you look back 200 years ago, the families sailed from 20 to 30 days and that too with families including infants and when we spoke to them it was amazing to hear their stories."

CHANGING WORLD

Hot to trot: Shetland ponies prove popular during pandemic



FOR HUNDREDS OF years, the inhabitants of the northernmost part of Scotland and the United Kingdom have bred small horses — the Shetland pony.

The animals, named after the unforgiving northern archipelago in the North Sea, have long drawn attention for their distinctive shape, size and rough hair. But during the coronavirus pandemic they saw their value soar to new highs, prompting hopes of another bumper year as the islands' annual sale approaches.

"People had more money because they stayed at home and couldn't go on holiday, and a pony is a very nice way to spend your time", Sheena Anderson, chair of the Pony Breeders of Shetland Association, told AFP.

While demand for Shetland ponies has fluctuated over the last 12 months, prices in 2020 hit records of more than £3,000 (\$4,100, 3,500 euros) for one of the tiny horses.

In tougher times, they have sold for as little as a few hundred pounds each — and sometimes even less.

Breeders are now champing at the bit for the upcoming October 1 auction, which has been held online for the last few years.

Because of their size, Shetland ponies are cheaper and easier to maintain than larger horses, said Anderson.

And, as well as being relatively strong for their stature, "they're cute", she added.

This year the breeder is putting two of the ponies up for sale. She said as well as having a strong legs and a good "tail, top line and movement", the animals also have to have a certain look.

"It's like a beauty contest," Anderson explained, stroking Dester, a miniature beige specimen, barely one metre (3.3 feet) tall.



INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

The breeders are counting on high demand this year driven by the online sale, which has widened access to buyers from all over the world.

"We've had interest already from people in Germany and Norway", said Anderson, but buyers have also bid for the ponies from Russia, Canada and the UAE.

Prices remain very low compared to their larger cousins and pony breeders — who number about 100 on Shetland — often struggle to make a living.

"I do it as a hobby. I don't make any money on it", Anderson, a nurse by profession, said, adding that in other countries, like the Netherlands, breeding is better regulated, organised and more lucrative.

For the head of the breeders' association, the peaceful Shetland ponies are an integral part of the remote islands' culture and identity.

The horses are everywhere — grazing on wind-swept hills, their manes tossed in the strong ocean breeze, or walking on white sandy beaches buffeted by turquoise waves.

Elaine Tait, whose parents breed Shetland ponies, fell in love with the animals from the age of five, when she repeatedly told them: "I want a pony."

Her parents relented, then five years later at the age of 10, she got her second.

Today, alongside the family business, she has founded her own riding school for children and a separate business for tourists: The Shetland Pony Experience.

THERAPY ANIMALS

The Shetland ponies' tiny stature is thought to have been part of their adaptation to the islands' harsh climate. The windswept archipelago, home to some 23,000 people, 110 miles (180 kilometres) north of mainland Scotland, and just under halfway to Norway.

When the harsh winter sets in, grass is scarce and only the smallest creatures were able to survive.

As a result, the ponies have super strength for horses of their size and a century ago put it to use in agriculture or in coal mining.

Today, they are bought to show in competitions, for horse racing, breeding, to teach children how to ride, as pets or even therapy animals.

Libby Morrison, a therapist, explained on her website she has found "horse-human interaction to have a wide range of benefits for those affected by anxiety, depression, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and autism". — AFP



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CONSERVATION

Little fluffy clouds may help save Australia's Great Barrier Reef



To slow the speed at which rising temperatures and warm waters are bleaching the Great Barrier Reef's corals, Australian scientists are spraying drops of ocean water into the sky to form clouds to protect the ecological treasure.

Researchers working on the so-called Cloud Brightening Project say they are using a turbine to spray microscopic sea particles to thicken existing clouds and reduce sunlight on the world's largest coral reef ecosystem located off the northeastern coast of Australia.

The water droplets evaporate and only leave tiny salt crystals floating in the atmosphere allowing water vapour to condense around them, forming clouds, said Daniel Harrison, a senior lecturer at Southern Cross University who is running the project. "If we do that over a long period of time of a few weeks to two months when the reef is going through a marine heat wave, we can really start to lower the water temperature over the reef," Harrison said.

Dr. Daniel Harrison, Senior Lecturer at the National Center for Marine Science at Southern Cross University and Head of the Cloud Lightening Project, is seen during the second field trial at Broadhurst Reef on the



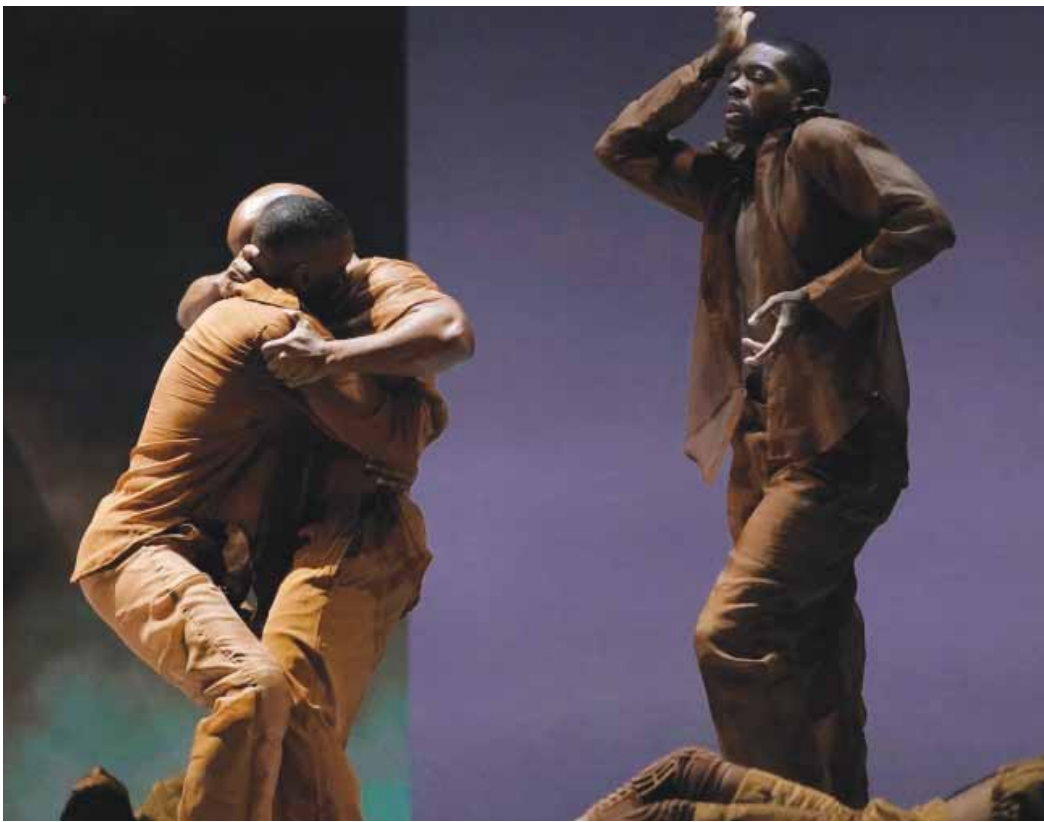
Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia in March 2021. The project underwent a second experiment in March, at the end of the Southern Hemisphere summer when reefs off northeastern Australia are at their hottest, and collected valuable data on the atmosphere when reefs are most vulnerable to bleaching.

The combination of light and warm water causes coral bleaching, Harrison said that by reducing the light over coral reefs by 6 per cent in summer, the "bleaching stress" would be reduced by 50 per cent to 60 per cent on the undersea ecosystem.

But the benefits of cloud-lightening will diminish over time unless other measures slow climate change. "If we have really strong work on climate change, the modelling shows that cloud brightness is enough to stop coral reef decline and actually be seen during this period while we reduce our carbon emissions," he said.

One of Australia's most famous natural attractions, the reef came close to listing the reef as a world heritage site in danger of extinction by the United Nations, although it avoided designation after lobbying by Australia. — **Reuters**

ENTERTAINMENT



Met Opera reopens with landmark first show by Black composer

AFTER AN 18-MONTH shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic and protracted labour disputes with its musicians and crew, the Metropolitan Opera reopened on Monday with a history-making debut — the first work by a Black composer.

"Fire Shut Up In My Bones," a poignant opera centred on the tension of growing up a Black man in the American South, was composed by Terence Blanchard, a top-tier jazz trumpeter and Spike Lee's go-to film score master for three decades.

When the premier US opera company in 2019 first announced its forthcoming staging, it was unclear when exactly "Fire" would come to Manhattan.

But the months of Black Lives Matter protests that reverberated nationwide and beyond over the summer of 2020 lent the project new urgency.

The Metropolitan Opera is the largest performing arts institution in the United States, but in its 138 years of existence has never before presented an opera by a Black composer.

Reopening the Met's doors with Blanchard's work offered an opportunity to make a statement.

It's progress "bigger than me," the Grammy-winning, Oscar-nominated artist said

when the Met first announced it would produce "Fire."

"It says more about what's going on in our country, what's going on in the world of art... and the statement that this makes."

"Fire," which originally premiered in St. Louis, is Blanchard's second opera. With a libretto from film director Kasi Lemons, "Fire" is based on the searing memoir of Charles Blow, a columnist at The New York Times.

The book recounts his coming-of-age as a black boy in the US Deep South, grappling with racism and abuse, sexuality and inner rage.

Blanchard, 59, is a show-biz regular: he's scored dozens of films during a vibrant career that has included working with greats like Herbie Hancock, Dr John and Stevie Wonder.

'MOMENTOUS'

About an hour before thousands of people dressed in evening-wear — including a parade of vibrant jeweled gowns and feathered shifts — began sashaying into the storied house at Lincoln Center, a long line formed outside an open-air amphitheatre in Harlem for a simulcast of "Fire."

Among that audience was Linda Taiton, who called it "sad" that it took the Met

more than a century to feature the work of a Black composer.

"There's so many Black composers who probably could have done this 50 years ago, 75 years ago," the 54-year-old education consultant said. "This is just America."

Blanchard's jazz-inflected score ushered the powerful show with a world-class set through a number of emotional scenes. The performance also featured several gripping dance sequences, including a collegiate step-dancing number that brought the audience to its feet with applause midway through Act II.

"Fire" began with Blow as a young child, played by the impressive Walter Russell III, and saw his development into a young adult, played by Will Liverman.

The acclaimed Angel Blue played his college girlfriend Destiny, and also appeared onstage throughout as a captivating metaphor for "Loneliness."

The Met's 3,800-seat theatre opens its doors at Lincoln Center after months of heated labour talks — a dispute that had threatened to derail the opening performance. But in late August, the orchestra struck a deal with management, which reportedly included pay cuts for musicians with vows to restore some of that pay once box office revenues hit 90 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

All customers and staff along with orchestra and chorus members must show proof of vaccination against Covid-19 during the 2021-22 season, as will attendees.

The rest of the Metropolitan Opera season features works by Verdi, Mozart, Wagner, Stravinsky and Puccini.

"Fire" is currently slated to run until October 23. — **AFP**

FESTIVAL

From ketchup to the telephone: Five Expo revelations



EXPO 2020 OPENS in Dubai on Friday, hoping to attract millions of visitors with its imaginative pavilions and technological advances.

Ahead of the six-month event, here are five innovations that featured at previous world fairs:

THE EIFFEL TOWER

The most famous Expo was perhaps the Paris 1889 edition, where the Eiffel Tower by architect Gustave Eiffel was unveiled.

The 324-metre (1,063-foot) "Iron Lady" was originally built as a temporary attraction, but became a permanent feature of the French capital's skyline and a world-renowned symbol of the country.

It was the world's tallest building until 1929, a title now held by Dubai's Burj Khalifa at 828 metres (2,717 feet).

THE TELEPHONE

The history of the telephone is closely linked with Expo, after Alexander Graham Bell's telephone was first demonstrated to the public at the Philadelphia world fair in 1876.

Almost 100 years later, a prototype wireless phone was showcased at the World Expo 1970 in Osaka in Japan, causing quite a stir. The same technology ultimately led to the first generation of mobile phones.

KETCHUP

US manufacturer Heinz started producing ketchup in 1876, introducing it that year at the Philadelphia world fair as "Catsup".

But it was not until Expo 1893 in Chicago that ketchup really made its mark, offering free watch charms with samples to spice up interest.

By the end of the fair, over one million pickle-shaped charms were handed out.

Other notable foods that were either popularised or introduced at world fairs include ice cream cones, hamburgers, hot dogs, peanut butter, cotton candy, and the club sandwich.

FERRIS WHEEL

In Chicago in 1893, more than 2,000 people at a time could ride the world's first Ferris Wheel, a giant contraption that rose 80 metres (more than 260 feet).

The attraction, built to rival the Eiffel Tower, was designed by George Washington Gale Ferris. It had 36 cars, each carrying up to 60 people.

The 20-minute ride was the most popular attraction at that year's fair, where the Midway Plaisance — a one-mile strip dedicated to entertainment — became the forerunner of amusement parks such as Disneyland.

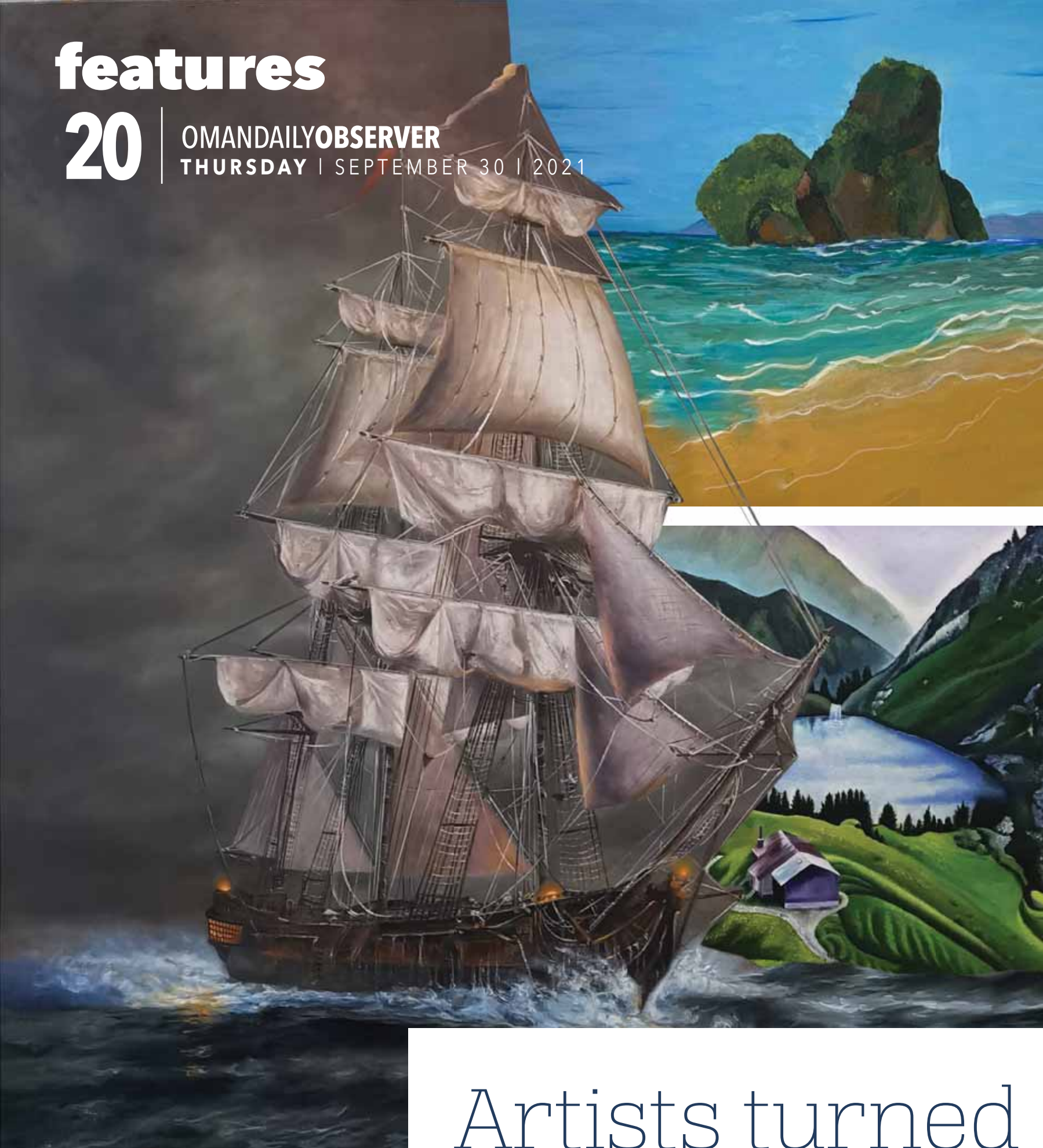
The "Chicago Wheel" was dismantled after the Expo and later returned for the 1904 fair in St. Louis, Missouri. Two years later, it was demolished and sold for scrap.

X-RAY

The X-ray machine, now standard equipment at hospitals and airports, was introduced to the public at the St. Louis Expo in 1904.

German Wilhelm Roentgen discovered the technology "by accident" in 1895, for which he was rewarded the first Nobel prize in physics in 1901.

The technology was then developed in the United States, with a number of companies producing X-ray machines by the early 20th century. — **AFP**



Artists turned curators for a virtual art exhibit

By Liju Cherian



Uma Gopinath



Rangrez Oman, the artist wing of Indian Social Club (ISC) Oman, turned joint curators for the month of September. They decided to go unbridled with the theme 'Simply 100,' the exhibition which was aired virtually. Each painting was on a 100x100 cm canvas. The theme was unique and just about any thought was alright as long as the canvas or paper size was a metre by a metre.

Soubam Priyanandan, Uma Gopinath, and Sushmita Gupta were the trio Indian artists who curated Rangrez.

While each of their works was done in their solitary confinement and none of them were really isolated from their surroundings.

The trio says they ended up hearing similar songs and stories and exposed to the same cultural and natural crises.

But each one is affected differently and therein lies its uniqueness.

"When the theme is 'just about any', we believe we truly get a glimpse of the mind and heart of the artists and that is what we set out to do," they said.

The three share extreme love and respect for each other which showed in the results too. Currently, the three of them are temporarily residing in three different cities of the world. Technology and their camaraderie played a great role in putting a stellar show of 48 paintings by 42 artists.

The Indian artist community under the aegis of ISC felt honoured that Rebecca Nigrinis, a Colombian, and one of the most popular and talented faces of expatriate artists, opened their ninth virtual show for 2021.

Sushmita said, "Uma is the backbone of Rangrez. The joy, pleasure and smooth working every single member experiences is all due to her. As an artist, she has grown in leaps and bounds and her paintings have attained a stature all its own."

"Soubam is the proverbial gentleman who is quiet and classy. His artistic sense weaves wonders every time Rangrez needs posters. He is a class act without fail and his paintings

reflect a deep and respectful connection with nature. They are dreamy and wonderful to say the least."

Soubam said, "Leading a non-commercial entity is always a challenging task. Sushmita manages gracefully to keep the team and members of Rangrez motivated and get the group going on smoothly — exhibitions after exhibitions. She has set a precedent of good leadership on how to manage a creative outfit."

"Uma translates a vision into action and a plan into activities. And she does it with ease and efficiency. She ensures all action points of a plan are aligned towards its goal and make them achieve. Which is why she is evidently the backbone of Rangrez."

About her work on 'Memories of the Sea', Uma says the painting is a recollection of a family vacation to the Phi Phi Islands. "The beautiful and scenic beaches calm your mind and soothe your eyes, at once. Life that I knew has since changed. All that has remained is the reminiscence of the past and a heart that yearns to embrace the vastness of the ocean, yet again."

She added that "Rangrez is truly Sushmita's baby which she nurtures it well, putting her heart and soul to every aspect of its events. Her energy is amazing and as an artist is a thinking artist who weaves stories on canvas."

About Soubam, Uma mentioned him as a true gift to Rangrez. "Every event that Soubam has been involved in, he comes up with such beautiful designs as minimalist and chic. As an avid nature lover, his art reflects his love for nature," she concludes.

The following six paintings were exhibited virtually.

- 'Charm of Spirits' by Mona Rathod
- 'Clipper' by Shashi Hemant
- 'Florescence' by Dr Madhurani Sawant
- 'Lake Sealpsee' by Jyoti Bokil
- 'Nuclear' by Sushmita Gupta
- 'Tropical' by Bhavna Maini

You can follow the writer through his Twitter: [@lijucherianoman](https://twitter.com/lijucherianoman)



Sushmita Gupta

