

OCC ready to host WC qualifiers

The Omani Cricket Club (OCC) announced its full readiness to receive the participants in the T-20 Cricket World Cup qualifiers. The event will be hosted by the Sultanate from October 17 to 21, 2021, at the club's stadiums in the Wilayat of Al Amerat. The club has completed all preparations to host these qualifiers in which Oman, Bangladesh, Scotland and Papua New Guinea will take part. — ONA



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OMAN OBSERVER

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INJURED MESSI RULED OUT OF MIDWEEK ACTION WITH PSG



P13

SULTANATE WINS US TRADE DISPUTE



P20

MEMORIES OF VISITING FANJA FROM THE WADI



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on the death of Field Marshal Mohammad Hussien Tantawi, former Minister of Defence and Chief of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sympathies to President Sisi, the family and the brotherly people of Egypt. His Majesty prayed to the Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in peace in Paradise and grant his family fortitude to bear the loss. — ONA

ANNUAL CAMEL RACES TO KICK OFF TODAY

The 19th Annual Festival for Camel Races 2021/2022 will kick off today. The festival is organised by the Royal Court Affairs represented by the Royal Camel Corps. The first competitions will take place on Al Bashayer Camel Race track in the Wilayat of Adam. The festival will conclude with the final race for His Majesty's Cup for camel races. SEE P5

READ IN

OPINION P9

We won't be safe if others are in danger
Samuel Kutty

Wait a while... for the booster dose!
Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

INSIDE



EGYPT'S FIRST POST-MUBARAK RULER, TANTAWI, DIES

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BIDEN SAYS US NOT SEEKING 'COLD WAR'

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STRATEGIC PROGRAMMES FOLDER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Economy has made available the digital version of the 'Strategic Programmes Folder', one of the most important documents of the 10th Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) which lists result-based mechanisms for effectively implementing the plan and also achieve objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The folder lists 430 Strategic Programmes divided as per the plan's four broad themes and 12 priorities, in addition to the priorities of developing the youth sector and information and communication technology, which were introduced during the development of the 10th Five-Year Development Plan.

The digital version of the 'Strategic Programmes Folder', made available by the Ministry of Economy, deals with 'Man and Society,' and includes 156 programmes.

The second theme 'Economy with a Competitive Structure' lists 165 programmes, the third and fourth themes 'Sustainable Environment' and 'State with a Responsible Administrative Apparatus' list 56 and 53 programmes, respectively.

The Strategic Programmes Folder was prepared as per the methodology approved by ministry.

While the Sultanate has good experience in developing strategic plans overall, it was felt that some of these were not delivering desired results. This prompted the ministry and its working groups to adopt result-based planning to ensure that strategic objectives of the long-term vision and the medium-term development plan are linked to specific and tangible outcomes for citizens.

For example, improved public services will lead to higher living standards, a more attractive investment and business climate, a competitive economy on the local and global levels and creation of new job opportunities for Omanis.

TURN TO P2

STRATEGIC PLAN TO FOCUS ON MAN AND SOCIETY

DIGITAL VERSION OF STRATEGIC PROGRAMMES FOLDER UNVEILED



RESULT-BASED MECHANISMS FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF OMAN VISION 2040

THE PLAN HAS FOUR BROAD THEMES AND 12 PRIORITIES

TO ADOPT RESULT-BASED PLANNING TO ENSURE OBJECTIVES ARE MET

IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES WILL LEAD TO HIGHER LIVING STANDARDS



Sayyid Fatik receives Ethiopian Ambassador

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said received at his office on Tuesday Dr Ayrorit Mohamed Yassin, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Sultanate, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty. The ambassador expressed her thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to her from His Majesty, the government and the Omani people, which facilitated carrying out her assignments.

DETAILS ON P2

Public Prosecution warns of abusive writings, rumours

MUSCAT: The Public Prosecution Department has issued a statement outlining penalties awarded to people found guilty of abusive writings or spreading rumours or publishing news attributing criminal acts to certain individuals or establishments.

The statement reads as follows: "In the light of findings from social communication platforms and, given the steady rise in the rate of abusive writings, offensive rumours and attribution of criminal acts to certain individuals or establishments and, since circulating matters via social communication platforms is not an official method of reporting and may negatively impact investigations, the Public Prosecution hereby incriminates the publishing of abusive or offensive news.

"It asserts that such behaviour is considered a crime which deserves imprisonment for a maximum of three years and a fine of RO 3,000. The Public Prosecution affirms that it will take legal action against all those involved in abusive writings or rumours and those who promote, circulate or instigate such acts." — ONA

Omani cavers explore Well of Hell in Yemen's Al Mahra

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

On an exploratory journey to study caves, the Omani Caves Explorations Team (OCET), in cooperation with the Yemen Geological Survey and Mineral Resources Board, visited Al Mahra Governorate in the Republic of Yemen to study Well of Barhout Cave, also nicknamed Well of Hell.

The Well of Barhout, a

giant hole located in the desert of Al Mahra, has remained unexplored for many years, but the Omani team could successfully reveal its secrets and document what they had seen there.

With love to experience and adventure, the cavers descended into the hole, at the bottom of the well, and documented the environmental and geological

characteristics of the sinkhole with a set of images and dates.

The team mentioned that a detailed report on the hole and its geological surveys will be released in the coming days.

Linked to many myths and legends that went viral in various media, the deep hole is 30 metres wide and 112 metres deep. At a depth of approximately 65m from the surface, water emerges from

holes on the walls forming splendid waterfalls.

The hole contains various cave sediments. It is also a home for many creatures including snakes, frogs and beetles.

The OCET members aim to explore more caves in the area, expressing their appreciation to the local authority for all the support extended to them during the visit.



WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 35°C Min 29°C SALALAH: Max 31°C Min 26°C NIZWA: Max 39°C Min 25°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:56 FAJR: 04:40 DHUHR: 12:05 ASR: 15:31 MAGHRIB: 18:09 ISHA: 19:19

In brief

LABOUR MINISTER
TAKES PART IN GCC MEET



MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Labour, took part in the 7th meeting of GCC Ministers of Labour. The meeting, held via video-conferencing, was chaired by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour. The meeting discussed a number of items related to labour affairs in the GCC countries.

31 NEW COVID-19
CASES, NO DEATHS



MUSCAT: As many as 31 new cases of coronavirus (Covid-19) were registered in Oman during the past 24 hours. For the fourth day in a row, no new Covid-19-related deaths were reported. This brings the total number of positive Covid-19 cases to 303,490 in the Sultanate. The total number of Covid-19-related death cases reached 4,093, the Ministry of Health said. The ministry said that 397 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 294,354 recoveries.

■ SPRING SEASON BEGINS IN DHOFAR



The spring season or Al Sarb began in Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday. Al Sarb continues for three months and ends on December 21. Sunshine, moderate weather, low humidity and stable sea conditions mark the spring season in Dhofar where breathtaking scenery adorns the mountains, plains and deserts. — ONA

Strategic plan to focus on man and society

FROM PAGE 1

This result-based mechanism will also contribute towards protecting the environment, fighting climate change and promoting sustainable use of resources.

Finally, these outputs will lead to administrative, institutional and legislative development that will generate jobs, boost productivity, enhance participation and achieve good governance.

For the plan's development,

the ministry's and the Plan's working groups were keen on applying a "participatory planning" approach and included a larger number of participants representing relevant government agencies, the private sector and civil society.

This approach has made all parties equally responsible for implementing the Plan's Strategic Programmes, achieving their goals and providing resources to address the challenges that may

face implementation. The Plan's working groups held total of 195 events including workshops and coordination and consultative meetings with focus groups. These were attended by 1,900 participants.

While developing the Strategic Programmes, the working groups used best international approaches and practices such as selecting a specific goal from Oman Vision 2040. Once the goal was chosen, the team provided a simplified

description for it and listed the best methods (collectively called a Strategic Programme) to achieve it.

The team then identified the main entity responsible for its implementation. The final step was estimating the programme's cost and implementation period. This methodology ensured that the rules of good governance were applied in managing the programmes and their allocated resources. — ONA

Ethiopian
envoy bids
farewell

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said received in his office Dr Ayrorit Mohamed Yassin, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Sultanate, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

The ambassador expressed her thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to her from His Majesty, the government and the Omani people, which facilitated carrying out her assignments.

The ambassador also wished His Majesty a good health and a long life.

She also wished the Omani people further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

HH Sayyid Fatik expressed his utmost thanks for the ambassador's efforts exerted to serve the relations between the Sultanate and Ethiopia. He wished the ambassador success in her future duty. He also wished the Ethiopian people further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

CBO working to fix payment hiccups

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) said that some of its payment systems are experiencing intermittent interruptions in view of a technical issue since Tuesday. The CBO has affirmed in a statement that the specialised teams are working on the issue and the services will be resumed as soon as possible.

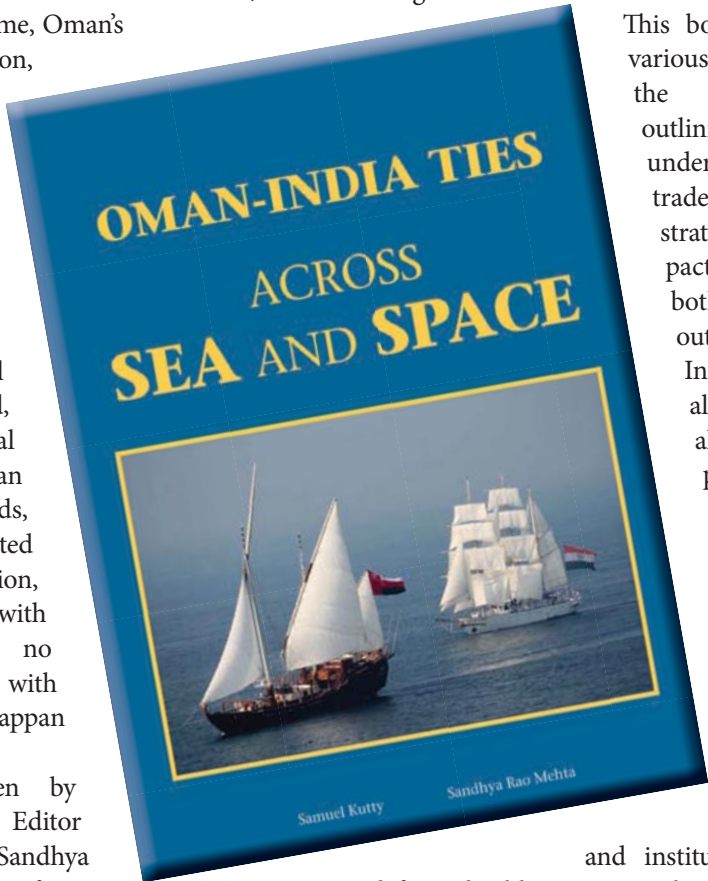
A tale of two countries, its peoples
and connections that bind them

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Across Sea and Space is a chronicle of millennia-old ties between Oman and India as well as the narratives of peoples of these two countries. The Oman-India relations have roots in the Bronze Age. At that time, Oman's first recorded civilisation, Majan, had established sea borne trade with the Indus Valley civilisation. Archaeological evidence in the eastern province of Oman, such as Ras al Jinz and Ras al Hadd, found archaeological items such as Harappan pottery, shards, objects associated with ornamentation, besides stamp seals with iconography that is, no doubt, associated with the ancient Harappan civilisation.

The book written by Samuel Kutty (Senior Editor of the Observer) and Sandhya Rao Mehta (Associate Professor of SQU) is a celebration of the close ties of India with Oman, going back to the prehistoric past, enriched in the present with ties which are strategic, economic and scientific, but also familial, educational and cultural. While the civilisational ties between India and Oman can be ascribed

to historical maritime trade linkages, it has been sustained through the millennia with close contact and travel, linking the two countries through the soft power of cultural exchanges and cemented by official pacts on trade and a variety of avenues of mutual interest, including



defence, health, technology and education. Facilitated by physical proximity and long standing cultural ties, India and Oman share a deep cultural and commercial geography which has also led to influences in popular culture as well as literary and linguistic heritage. This book sketches this

dynamic relationship, from its rich historic past to the multifaceted one it is today. It focuses on prehistorical relations between the two neighbours, separated, or united, by the Arabian Sea, tracing ties throughout history. It also details economic, social, cultural and educational ties. This book also outlines the various official ties between the two governments, outlining memoranda of understanding, bilateral trade, defence agreements, strategic partnership pacts and investments in both countries. While outlining the Oman-India relationship in all its facets, this book also points to future possibilities which will ensure the continuity of meaningful ties between the two partners.

The book incorporates original photographs from a range of individuals and institutions, including The National Museum, Oman, the National Museum of India, the National Archives, Delhi, the Indian Embassy in Muscat, the Indian Social Club, the historical Indian community in Oman, as well as from individuals, including photographers and painters.

The book will be launched officially later this month.

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DRL-0421-00184

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In brief

SULTANATE
PARTICIPATES
IN ARAB WATER
FORUM

DUBAI: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, today took part in the 5th Arab Water Forum held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The forum, which is hosted every 3 years by the Arab Water Council in collaboration with the Arab League, will continue till September 23, 2021. The Sultanate's delegation was headed by Eng Ali bin Mohammed al Abri, Under-Secretary for Water Resources. The forum addresses the challenges facing the Arab countries in the field of water resources. It also explores suitable solutions. The forum also discusses preparations to participate in 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal in March 2022, in addition to exchanging expertise and techniques through the exhibitions organised on the sidelines of the forum.

AGREEMENT FOR
INCUBATOR AT SOHAR
UNIVERSITY

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) on Tuesday signed an agreement with the University of Sohar to establish, manage and operate an incubator dedicated for entrepreneurs at the university. The agreement also provides for the development of 10 new small and medium enterprises. The hands-on practices also The agreement was signed by ASMED Chairperson Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah and Prof Barry Winn, President of Sohar University.

National Museum unveils model of *baghla*

MUSCAT: The National Museum displays a model of Muscat armed *baghla* vessel (1253-54 AH/1838 CE). The 1/25 scale model took four years in the making. It is made of pear wood, ebony, linen, canvas, metal and brass.

The *baghla* was the largest deep-sea trading and cargo vessel of the Arabian Gulf, and the most ornate of the big Arabian ships. She was fitted with two or occasionally three masts and was distinguished by ornamental projections that resembled the quarter galleries found on European line-of-battleships of the 12th-13th century AH/18th-19th century CE.

The stem-post curved gently upward to a stem-head which was topped with a bollard-shaped decoration — a further form of ornamentation peculiar to the *baghla* vessel.

Although the *baghla* was predominantly a merchant vessel, it could also be effectively armed for use in warfare. This model represents an armed *baghla*, measuring approximately 40 metres long by 45 metres high, fitted with ten 12-pounder Blomefield pattern cannons. In the early 13th century AH/19th century CE, the Blomefield was regarded as the most efficient breaching weapon in existence.

Oman has had a long relationship with the sea. With an extensive coastline, the story



of Oman's past is in many senses a maritime history. For millennia, fishermen sailed along its coasts for their livelihood. Omani traders carried goods across the seas as

early as the third millennium BCE, and by the Islamic Period, they were part of a vast trading network that extended from China to East Africa, the single longest maritime

trade route at the time. In the last four centuries, Omanis had established two maritime empires that connected Oman with the Arabian Gulf, Makran Coast and

The *baghla* was the largest deep-sea trading and cargo vessel of the Arabian Gulf, and the most ornate of the big Arabian ships. She was fitted with two or occasionally three masts and was distinguished by ornamental projections that resembled the quarter galleries found on European line-of-battleships of the 12th -13th century

East Africa.

All of this activity has shaped the maritime culture of Oman. As Omanis braved the seas, they became excellent navigators and produced a rich navigational literature. They developed an active tradition of boat building, using the materials and tools available to them to build a wide variety of vessels. Today, Oman continues its relationship with the sea. It has a modern navy, prosperous seaports and leads the region in historical reconstructions. These sea-craft are the symbols of Oman's interaction with the rest of the world.

— ONA

Pandemic does not hinder Omani honey output

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The marketing outlets for the sale of Omani honey, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in malls and online shopping platforms, achieved positive results, as the quantity sold amounted to three tonnes worth RO 50,000.

The types of honey that are marketed predominantly are Sidr, Simr and multi flora — from different sources of flowers. But also popular are frankincense honey from Dhofar as well as Arabica gum.

There are almost 6,000

beekeepers in Oman and the youth continues to be drawn to this traditional occupation.

The ministry had organised separate two batches of beekeepers at Oman Avenues Mall and Muscat Grand Mall.

Senior Quality Specialist at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Hassan al Lawati, said this year there were the challenges of the pandemic and coinciding with the summer holiday season. Nevertheless the beekeepers marketed their products.

"There was a dip in the number of participants as usually we have about 60 to 70 beekeepers but this



year we only had 55 beekeepers. We had two batches of 12 beekeepers (each batch stayed for four days) at Oman Avenues Mall, while two batches of 18 participants were at Muscat Grand Mall, from August 24 to 31", he explained.

Dr Hassan explained that there are two seasons for Omani

Honey and they are summer honey during June and July and the second season in the period of October and November which is when Sidr honey is produced.

"So accordingly the ministry conducts two shows to promote Omani Honey. Next show will be in December. Beekeeping is practised throughout Oman — Al Batinah, Al Sharqiyah, Dhofar, Musandam and Dhahirah. But the majority of the beekeepers come from Al Batinah, Al Sharqiyah and Dakhiliyah", he noted.

This year it was not just plain honey, there was saffron with honey, blackseeds, honey with frankincense as well as ginger.

Oman Air to
resume Muscat-
London flights

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, will resume flights between Muscat and London (Heathrow) from September 22, 2021. The flights will operate on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, departing Muscat at 14:25 local time and arriving in London at 19:10 local time.

Flights from London will depart at 20:50 local time and arrive in Muscat at 07:15 local time on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. All flights are scheduled to operate with Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are on board the aircraft and in Oman's airports. Distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of everyday.

Cabin crew all wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal service has been modified to further ensure safety, and a number of other measures have been implemented to ensure that the airline's guests and crew are safe at all times.

Guests who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority website, caa.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter the Sultanate.

Guests travelling to the UK should ensure they are aware of official requirements to enter or transit through the country.

Beach lovers collect 1,000kg of trash, call for awareness

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

A group of beach lovers collected 1,000kg of trash from some beaches in Salalah when they decided to be part of the World Beach Clean-up Day (September 18). Their decision to hit the beaches to clean them was timely because Salalah, till recently, had a sea of humanity visiting all the tourist spots, including beaches during the khareef season.

Though mountains were the first love of the tourists during the season, those who visited the beaches were not all responsible tourists. Despite the civic body's efforts to keep the beaches clean, huge masses of garbage were seen at most of the beaches.

The beach cleaners started for Mirbat early morning in 15 Jeep Wranglers, all part of Dhofar Jeep Club, as the volunteers were a mix of locals and expatriates. Some joined the clean-up drive in their personal cars, while many others chose carpool to reach the destination. "Let's be honest,



cleaning that beach on one day won't make a lingering difference for the beach itself. However, bringing the people together, raising awareness, spreading the word of 'leaving nothing behind' in our communities and on social media is my main aim", said Augustin Delesalle, who is an engineer by profession.

Participants were a happy blend of Omani and expats of all ages, male and female, newcomers and experienced cleaners.

"Due to the high expected number of people, we chose a long beach to enable participants

to spread in groups. Also, we had made sure that it could be accessible by the car evacuating the garbage bags. The most challenging job was to organise the logistics for 104 participants: Transportation, garbage weighing, garbage bags evacuation, snacks and drinks supply. But the entire organisation team did a brilliant job!", said Augustin.

He agreed that plastic itself is not an issue. "Littering, over consumption, linear consumption model are issues. We have to tackle the problem at its source. For that, a wise mix of pedagogy, rules,

penalties and incentives must be implemented."

Hugo Lopez Martinez, Salalah Adventure founder, found it an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of conservation of nature.

"This was our honest effort to raise awareness on beach cleaning as the materials left by the visitors at the beaches are dangerous for marine animals", he said.

For Dr Upasana Venaik Malhotra, dentist at Lifeline Hospital in Salalah, "The main idea was to spread awareness about the alarming rise in plastic disposal

in and around the beaches, how it is affecting the aquatic life and also increasing plastic dump waste which will not take minimum 5,000 years to resorb... Expectation is to reach maximum awareness and involve maximum people possible, seeing so much of enthusiasm will eventually encourage generations to come and help in persevering the environment."

"Participants range from all age groups, from 6-year-old to 70 years. People from all professions came forward to participate in the clean-up. This beach is non-commercial and still it's alarming to see so much trash. The most disturbing things I found were the number of plastic straws, chips wrappers and so many fishing ropes disposed of carelessly. What was heartbreaking was to see so many dead fishes on the shore", she said.

"I think putting garbage bins after every two kms or so can help people to throw waste responsibly and also strict laws regarding fines for littering should help", Dr Upasana suggested.



SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Whether carbon capture for climate mitigation, renewable energy for our daily consumption and protection from storm surges, ocean and marine systems provide us with many essential services.

As the global population grows, we are probing deeper and further into the oceans — for fish, oil, gas, minerals and new genetic resources — in an attempt to keep pace with increasing consumption.

And this finally damages the oceans that sustain us!

UN Environment Programme in a reports points out, “Oceans face the threats of marine and nutrient pollution, resource depletion and climate change, all of which are caused primarily by human actions.”

These threats place further pressure on environmental systems, like biodiversity and natural infrastructure, while creating global socio-economic problems, including health, safety and financial risks.

In Oman, the marine environment, with its beautiful coastline extending over 3,165 km, is one of the most important economic, social and environmental factors of the Sultanate, with natural resources and aesthetic views overlooking three seas — Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman and Arabian Gulf.

The Sultanate is continuing its efforts to review and update environmental laws, legislations, and coastal zone management plans.

The government also makes continuous efforts for coordination with all sides, bodies, sectors and environmental associations related to the marine environment to

cooperate in order to preserve the marine environment, its resources and its vital diversity.

As part of the government’s Sustainable Development Goals 2030, along with several other measures, an assessment of marine resources and the addition of new marine natural reserves are under way as well as the continued rehabilitation of the affected areas.

“The Sultanate realises the importance of environmental permits and their regulatory role,” stresses the draft of the 2030 Goals.

In order to achieve the objectives of protecting the marine environment and the conservation of marine biological resources, the Sultanate has given special importance to the implementation of studies, establishment of marine conservation zones, promulgation of legislations, implementation of coastal zone management plans, rehabilitation of degraded areas and the cultivation of mangroves in its various governorates.

In addition, campaigns are regularly organised to clean the environment and control turtles and marine mammals, as they are important for the sustainability and balance of the marine environment.

The Sultanate leaves no stones

Mangroves are one of the main components of the Omani marine environment. There is one species in the Sultanate — Avicenna Marina — which is able to adapt to the nature of the Omani environment, and is distributed in several coastal areas

turned in its efforts to prevent marine pollution in all forms. Coordination with the competent authorities in the Sultanate and the regional organisation is carried out through a comprehensive national plan to follow up the red tide phenomenon and limit its impact.

In the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, the Sultanate has given attention to marine ecosystems — coral reefs and mangroves — through the implementation of the Coral Reef

Management Plan of the Sultanate.

Coral reefs are located in five major sites in the Sultanate. These sites receive special attention, which is reflected in the implementation of coral reef clean-up campaigns as a result of the increasing number of nets and fishing equipment in these environments and their adverse effects.

Consistent with biodiversity development approaches, coral reefs are facing threats to their growth, with the degradation of some areas. The use of coral reefs has been successful in finding alternative ecosystems for lost coral and complex food chains and the Sultanate of Oman has sought to spread many artificial structures in both Al Fahal Island, Damaniyat Island and Musandam Governorate.

The Sultanate also dropped a number of floating wharves in Bandar Al Khairan and Bandar Al Jissah, as well as the Damaniyat Islands Nature Reserve, with the aim of protecting coral reefs from the damage of boat anchors as they land on the seafloor.

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and is distributed in several coastal areas.

The total area covered by the Avicenna trees in the Sultanate is about 1,030 hectares, and in order to preserve those trees, the cultivation project of the Avicenna was launched in April 2000, through the establishment of 4 plant nurseries, and the cultivation of more than 600 thousand seedlings until the end of 2018.

Oman has 21 species of large whales and dolphins, of which 17 are small to large dolphins, 3 species of baleen whales and toothed whales (sperm whales).

Studies and research have shown, by satellite tracking, that the Omani humpback whale is a resident whale and remains in its habitats near the coast of Oman due to the seasonal climatic conditions that occur in the area south of Oman, where they provide various sources of food for whales throughout the year, instead of migrating to the South Pole in search of food, unlike other species of whales living in the South of the globe, making it a very rare species, as the numbers seen for this type did not exceed 100 whales.

There are also several species of marine turtles including the Loggerhead Turtle, the Hawksbill Turtle, the Green Turtle, the Olive Ridley Turtle and the Leatherback Turtle.

A national task force has been formed to study the causes of mortality and the trends of mammals and turtles, which is one of the indicators of the health of the marine environment and one of the essential elements of the marine ecosystem.



Injaz Oman unveils winners of student company competition

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Injaz Oman announced the names of the winning companies in the 10th of the 'Student Company' programme and competition on Monday. The ceremony was held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) under the patronage of HH Sayyid Fahl al Said, Special Envoy to His Majesty the Sultan, alongside a number of Highnesses and Excellencies, as well as senior officials from the public and private institutions participating in the programme.

At the college level, T2C company won the award sponsored by the Zubair Corporation for the best student company in the Sultanate for 2021 to represent the Sultanate in the regional competition, sponsored by the Zubair Corporation. Korea Motiv won the award for the best sustainable product, also sponsored by the Zubair Corporation, and Tharaa winning the award for the best innovative product, sponsored by Boeing.

At the school level, Hirfa won the award sponsored by OMINVEST for the best student company, Ajwan won the award for the best sustainable product and Purex won the award for the best innovative product.

For the sub-awards category sponsored by Boeing, Boon was the winner of the 'Elevator Pitch' award, which saw an innovative demonstration of the idea in just 90 seconds.

Commenting on the Zubair



Corporation's sponsorship of the competition, Rashad al Zubair, Chairman of the Corporation's Board of Directors, stated, "Supporting and nurturing entrepreneurs has always been a key strategic objective of the Zubair Corporation, reflecting our role and contribution to society. Therefore, our initiative to sponsor this competition, organised by INJAZ Oman, seeks to promote and spread the culture of entrepreneurship among youth in the Sultanate."

"Through our partnership with Injaz Oman, we are keen to support participating student companies and enable them to transform their ideas into projects that can be implemented on-ground. We extend our warmest

congratulations to all the winners and wish them a bright future towards further progress and achievements," he said.

Khawla al Harthiyah, CEO of Injaz Oman, said, "This year, we witnessed fierce competition from the participating student companies. Despite the difficult conditions imposed over this year due to health conditions, we were able to overcome the current situation by utilising modern technologies. This way we were able to help students present their projects and encourage them to develop their creative ideas."

"Thankfully, we are conducting the ceremony to honour the winners, whose victories were well-deserved, alongside all the participating

students and organisers. We congratulate all the winning companies of the 10th edition of the programme and wish them continued success. Last but not least, we would like to extend our warmest gratitude to the sponsors of the competition, which was aimed at fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among young people," she added.

The jury panel for the competition this year included several specialised experts, namely Adel al Hubaishi, Executive Manager of the Zubair Small Enterprise Centre (Zubair SEC), Majid al Amri, CEO of Thawani Technologies, Abdullah al Saidi, CEO of Nafath Renewable Energy, and Abdullah al Abri, CEO of Makers of Progress.

STAI 2021 to inculcate scientific temperament among students

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 21

To inculcate scientific temperament and innovative spirit among the students, Indian School Salalah under the aegis of Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, launched 'STAI 2021 — Science Technology and Innovation' on September 18, 2021.

The launch ceremony was graced by the chief guest Dr Amer al Rawas, Chairman, Themar Group. Other dignitaries were Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, Sirajudeen Nhelat, DIC Indian School Salalah, Keynote speaker Dr Varsha Kelkar, Fellow, Royal Society of Chemistry, HoD Department of BioTechnology, University of Mumbai, Dr Syed Ahsan Jamil, President, School Management Committee, Indian School Salalah and Principal of the host school Deepak Patankar.

The event was attended by the members of the Board, School Management Committees, principals of various Indian schools in Oman, teachers and participating students.

In his presidential address, Dr Syed Ahsan Jamil, President of School Management Committee, focused on the need to inculcate scientific attitude in today's generation and develop a sense of curiosity and creativity which will help humanity and make the world a better place to live in these challenging times.

The introductory message by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, highlighted the technology integration in various walks of human life today. Events like STAI are organised with an objective of providing a stage to young talents to showcase their talents in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation. "STAI 2021 recognises the inquisitive minds of children and fosters their individual growth through research and exploration," he said.

The two days mega inter school event STAI 2021 commences on September 25 with an inaugural ceremony followed by a series of events for two days culminating with a valedictory ceremony on September 26

This mega event on Science, Technology and Innovation 2021, featuring the tagline "Curious by Heart, Creative by Minds" was launched virtually by chief guest Dr Amer al Rawas, Chairman of Themar Group.

In his inaugural address, he appreciated the initiative taken by Indian schools to organise Tech events. Science and technology go hand in hand and it is the effective implementation of theoretical knowledge which makes technology as a way of life, he added.

Indian School Salalah has marched majestically to accomplish 40 years of academic excellence since its inception in 1981 and in the gracious presence of the Indian School Board Chairman and other dignitaries ISS@40 logo was unveiled in a video presentation.

Sirajudeen Nhelat, DIC, Indian School Salalah, in his felicitation highlighted the three-fold aim of STAI. It helps students to develop the curiosity in various areas of science and technology and to provide an arena for practical implementation of the acquired knowledge.

Keynote speaker for the launch ceremony, Dr Varsha Khelkar, an expert in the field of science and technology, shared her views on environment and biotechnology, with emphasis on diagnostics and therapeutics, paleontology and archival preservation, bio-prospecting and bio-valorisation.

She urged students to take up research as a career as it is extremely rewarding.



Annual camel races kick off today

ADAM: The 19th Annual Festival for Camel Races 2021-2022 will kick off on Wednesday. The festival is organized by the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) represented by the Royal Camel Corps. The First competitions will take place in Al Bashayer Camel Race track in the Wilayat of Adam, the Governorate of A'Dakhiliyah.

In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA), Humaid Ali

Al Zaraq, Director-General of the Royal Camels Corps, said that His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik accords attention to camel races in the Sultanate.

Al Zaraq noted that the festival will include 11 stations distributed among the Sultanate's governorates, including a number of competitive races, camel milking and beauty pageant competitions in Dhofar Governorate, as well as

beauty pageant competitions at the Sultanate level.

The festival will conclude with the final race to win His Majesty's Cup for camel races. It will start from Al Bashayer Arena in Adam, which will hold three consecutive races, the first of which will be held on 22 and 23 September. The second race will take place on 6 and 7 October while the third race on 20 and 21 October. — ONA

Demand for basic science courses, especially physics, is rising

Most of the parents feel that their children study engineering or medicine and if not then management. In fact, the saturation point is reaching for engineering. That's the reason even engineering is starting sub specialisation courses.

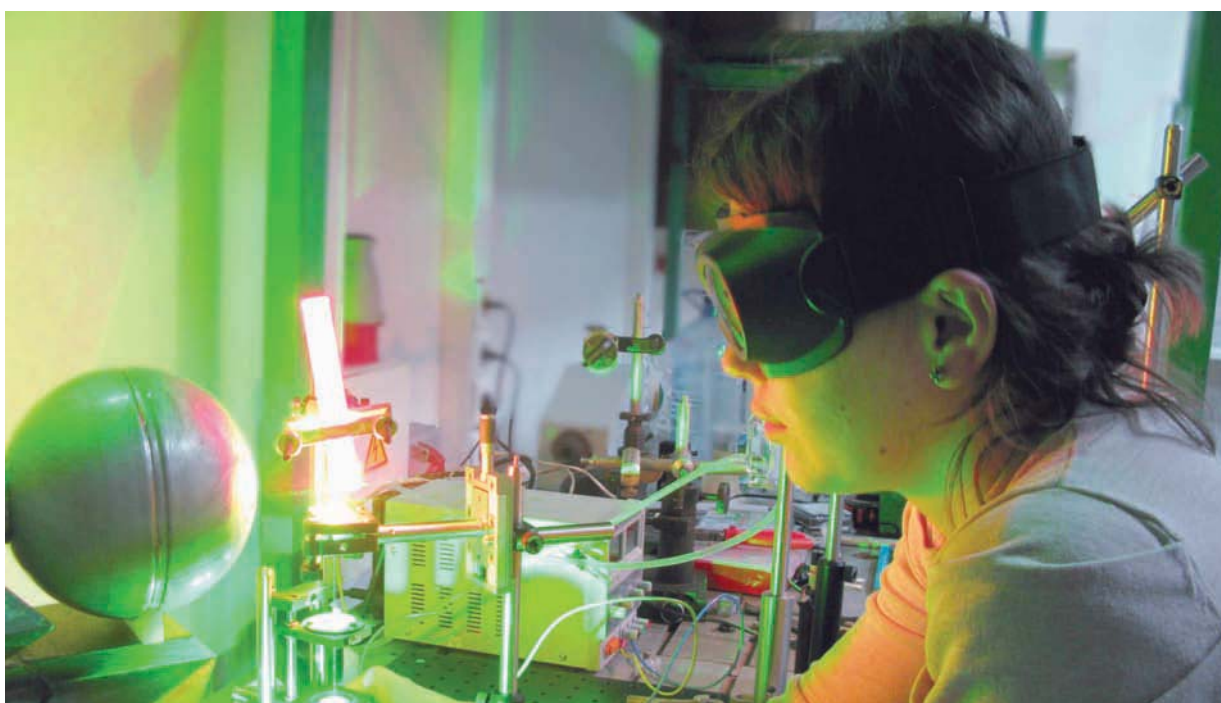
The demand for the physical and biological sciences once again is tremendously increasing. Especially physics is taking the leading position due to its multi specialisation wings.

Importance of physics

Physics touches every aspect of our lives. It involves the study of matter, energy and their interactions. As such, it is one area of science that cuts across all other subjects. Other sciences are reliant on the concepts and techniques developed through physics. Physics focuses on the general nature of the

Discoveries such as magnetism, electricity, conductors and others made modern conveniences, such as television, computers, phones in the present era

natural world, generally through a mathematical analysis. Most of the articles say that Maxwell in 1877, who introduced the term into physics, had noticed how the interpretation of electromagnetic induction was different depending on whether one considers a magnet approaching a wire loop or a loop approaching a magnet. Isaac Newton is popularly remembered as the man who saw an apple fall from a tree, and was inspired to invent the theory of gravity.



Scope for physics graduates

There are tremendous openings for physics graduates either with Bachelor, Master or Doctorate. Mostly research, teaching and technical side they have a good

position. Most physics graduates can join as Accelerator Operator, Applications Engineer, Data Analyst, Design Engineer, Lab Technician and Laser/Medical Engineer.

Courses in Oman

In Oman many universities and colleges are offering physics courses with diversified specialisations. University of Nizwa, Oman's first private university, offers Medical

Physics and Laser Physics which are in good demand. Sultan Qaboos University also offers Medical Physics at Bachelor level and even PhD also offered here.

Many aspects of modern society would not have been possible without the important scientific discoveries made in the past. These discoveries became the foundation on which current technologies were developed. Discoveries such as magnetism, electricity, conductors and others made modern conveniences, such as television, computers, phones in the present era. In the United Nations Millennium Summit held in 2000, it was recognised that physics and the sciences will play a crucial role in attaining sustainable development. Physics helps in maintaining and developing stable economic growth since it offers new technological advances in many fields.

Text by Dr Mohammed Shafiuddin

PM SAYS PLOTTERS CAME FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE MILITARY

Sudan says coup thwarted, accuses Bashir loyalists

KHARTOUM: Sudanese authorities said they had foiled an attempted coup on Tuesday, accusing plotters loyal to ousted president Omar al Bashir of a failed bid to derail the revolution that removed him from power in 2019 and ushered in a transition to democracy.

Sudan's military said 21 officers and a number of soldiers had been detained in connection to the coup attempt, and a search continued for others involved. All locations affected by the attempt were under army control, it said.

The coup attempt points to the difficult path facing a government that has reoriented Sudan since 2019, winning Western debt relief and taking steps to normalise ties with Israel, while battling a severe economic crisis and facing down challenges from those still loyal to Bashir.

A ruling body known as the

Sovereign Council has run Sudan under a fragile power-sharing deal between the military and civilians since the overthrow of Bashir. Elections are expected in 2024.

"What happened is an orchestrated coup by factions inside and outside the armed forces and this is an extension of the attempts by remnants since the fall of the former regime to abort the civilian democratic transition", Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said in a televised statement.

"This attempt was preceded by extensive preparations represented by lawlessness in the cities and the exploitation of the situation in the east of the country, attempts to close national roads and ports and block oil production."

The streets of the capital Khartoum appeared calm, with people moving around as usual and no unusual deployments of security forces, a witness said.



Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok chairs a cabinet meeting in Khartoum on Tuesday. — AFP

Early on Tuesday morning, a witness said military units loyal to the council had used tanks to close a bridge connecting Khartoum with Omdurman, just across the River Nile.

A government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said plotters had tried to take control of

state radio in Omdurman.

The suspected instigators of the coup attempt had been arrested and were being interrogated, government spokesman Hamza Balol said on state TV, adding that the last pockets of rebellion at Al Shajara camp in south Khartoum were being dealt with.

It was not the first challenge to the transitional authorities. They say they have foiled or detected previous coup attempts linked to factions loyal to Bashir, who was deposed by the army after months of protests against his rule.

In 2020, Hamdok survived an assassination attempt in Khartoum.

Those involved in the latest effort would be held to account, Hamdok said on Tuesday.

"For the first time, there are people who were arrested during their implementation of the coup", he said, repeating earlier calls for the reform and restructuring of Sudan's sprawling security apparatus. Sudan has gradually been welcomed into the international fold since the overthrow of Bashir, who is sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over alleged atrocities in Darfur in the early 2000s.

The ICC's chief prosecutor held talks with Sudanese officials last month on accelerating steps to hand over those wanted over Darfur. Despite a peace deal signed last year with some Sudanese rebels, there has been increased unrest in the western region of Darfur as well as local clashes in Sudan's east.

This week members of the Beja tribe blocked Port Sudan and highways leading to it.

Sudan's economy has been in deep crisis since before Bashir's removal and the transitional government has undergone a reform programme monitored by the International Monetary Fund.

Underlining Western support for the transitional authorities, the Paris Club of official creditors agreed in July to cancel \$14 billion of Sudan's debt. But Sudanese are still struggling with rapid inflation and shortages. — Reuters

EU urges reforms after Lebanon govt confirmed

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Tuesday welcomed the confirmation of Lebanon's new government and called on Beirut to kickstart urgent reforms needed to drag the country out of crisis.

"The announced agenda of the new government outlines important steps to address Lebanon's multifaceted crises, including resuming negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, implementing structural reforms, notably of the electricity sector, and holding the 2022 elections as scheduled", EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

"It is now time to begin the path to recovery with the credible implementation of urgent and essential reforms to address the needs and demands of the Lebanese people."

Borrell said that "all political parties and their leaders have a responsibility to support and actively contribute to such efforts".

On Monday, Lebanon's parliament approved Prime Minister Najib Mikati's new

cabinet, tasked with salvaging the country from economic meltdown after 13 months of political deadlock.

The crisis has depleted central bank reserves, devalued the currency by more than 90 per cent and plunged three out of four citizens below the poverty line, while those who can are emigrating by the thousands.

The EU had threatened Lebanon's political elite with sanctions if they did not come together to form a government.

Earlier, Lebanon's parliament on Monday approved Prime Minister Najib Mikati's new cabinet, tasked with pulling the country out of a deep economic crisis after 13 months of political deadlock.

The World Bank has called it one of the planet's worst economic crises since the 1850s.

After a marathon eight-hour session to examine the government's action plan, 85 lawmakers voted for the new ministerial line-up while 15 voted against, according to a tally announced by speaker Nabih Berri. — Agencies

Egypt's first post-Mubarak ruler, Tantawi, dies aged 85

CAIRO: Egypt's Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, who headed the military junta that ruled after president Hosni Mubarak's ouster in the Arab Spring protests, has died at age 85, the presidency said on Tuesday.

After his stint as Egypt's de facto leader, he was soon sacked by the country's first freely elected president, Mohamed Mursi, and spent his remaining years largely out of public view.

President Abdel Fattah el Sisi paid tribute to him in a statement that confirmed his death, calling him one of "Egypt's most loyal sons".

"He dedicated his life to serving the nation for more than half a century... (He was) a statesman who took responsibility for running the country during a very critical time," the statement added, referring to the tumult after the 2011 revolution.

The government newspaper *Akhbar al-Youm* said the field marshal died on Tuesday "after giving a lot" to his country.

The European Union's delegation in Cairo paid tribute to Tantawi in a tweet, saying he had served Egypt "decades in crucial roles throughout his career".

President Sisi declared a period of national mourning, without specifying how many days.

A veteran of Egypt's wars and



A supporter holds a poster of Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi. — Reuters

politics, Tantawi had long served as Mubarak's defence minister and as chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Tantawi became the acting head of state of the Arab world's most populous country after an 18-day popular uprising during the region's "Arab Spring" protests ended Mubarak's rule in early 2011.

Like all Egyptian leaders from the overthrow of the monarchy in

1952 to the 2012 election of Mursi, Tantawi came from the ranks of the military.

Born in 1935, and of Nubian origin, Tantawi began his career as an infantryman in 1956. He served during the 1956 Suez Crisis, and in the 1967 and 1973 Middle East wars against Israel.

After taking charge of the country, his ruling council quickly said Egypt would stay "committed"

to its regional and international treaties, implicitly confirming that its landmark 1979 peace treaty with Israel would remain intact.

In 1991, Tantawi was on the side of the US-led coalition in the first Gulf War after Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

He served as Egypt's minister of defence and military production for 21 years and became the army chief in 1995. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TEL AVIV

One dead after Palestinian runs over police aide

A Palestinian man killed an Israeli police aide and injured a police officer in an attack, according to Israeli sources.

The man ran over the two officers in the north of the country, Israeli media reported on Tuesday, citing police. A suspect has reportedly been arrested. Police are investigating whether there were others involved. Several Israeli media outlets reported that police officers had checked a construction site in the town of Nahariya to look



for Palestinian workers without valid work permits.

Thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip have work permits for Israel.

BEIRUT

2 rebel commanders killed in Syria drone strikes

Drone strikes killed two commanders close to Al Qaeda in the Idlib region of northwest Syria, a war monitor said.

The raids were carried out by the US-led international coalition battling militants in Syria and Iraq, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The US military acknowledged killing an Al Qaeda official, shortly after the coalition said it had not carried out any strikes in Idlib province on Monday. "US forces conducted a kinetic



counter-terrorism strike near Idlib, Syria, today, on a senior Al Qaeda leader", a US Central Command (CENTCOM) spokeswoman, Lieutenant Josie Lynne Lenny, said in a statement.

WASHINGTON

US to hand over 'Gilgamesh' tablet to Iraq

The United States will formally return an illegally imported 3,500-year-old tablet recounting the epic of Gilgamesh to Iraq this week, the United Nations' cultural body Unesco announced on Monday.

The ancient tablet, which a wealthy US collector had acquired along with other Iraqi artefacts to display in the Washington Museum of the Bible, will be handed over to Iraqi officials at the Smithsonian Institution on September 23.



Unesco called the repatriation of the tablet, along with 17,000 other artifacts sent back to Iraq in July, "a significant victory in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects."

In brief

NEW DELHI



INDIA GOVT WON'T BUY PFIZER, MODERNA VACCINES

India's government will not buy Covid-19 shots from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, three government sources said, mainly because domestic output of more affordable and easier-to-store vaccines has jumped.

That essentially means the globally popular vaccines, which their makers have pledged not to sell to private parties during the pandemic, will not be available for now in the world's two most populous countries — China and India. The Indian government has also declined to meet the US companies' requests for legal protection over any side-effects from the use of their shots, which are currently made only in the US.

KUALA LUMPUR



OVER 80% OF MALAYSIAN ADULTS VACCINATED

Eight in 10 adults in Malaysia have received two doses of coronavirus vaccine, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said on Tuesday.

"Congratulations," the recently installed premier said of the milestone, exhorting Malaysians to "keep fighting Covid-19."

Despite reaching the 80-per cent "herd immunity" target ahead of time, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin warned that the government aimed to "track down" those yet to be jabbed.

Hard-hit sectors such as tourism are hoping that inoculations can pave the way for reopening and recovery.

SINGAPORE



SINGAPORE ARRESTS 18 SUSPECTS IN FAKE WORK PERMIT PROBE

Singapore's Manpower Ministry said on Tuesday that 18 people have been arrested over the past week on suspicion "of bringing foreigners" to the city-state "on work passes obtained through false declarations."

The ministry said it had "uncovered a potential syndicate suspected of setting up several shell companies to apply for work passes," after it carried out "detailed analyses" spanning "a few months."

The arrests came after last week saw a rare flare-up in parliament over concerns that foreign workers were taking jobs from locals. The detainees could be jailed for up to two years.

GROWING TOLL OF SEVERE COVID-19 AMONG UNVACCINATED PEOPLE

Calls grow among Singapore experts for vaccine mandate

SINGAPORE: Some health experts in Singapore are calling for mandatory vaccination against the coronavirus with a growing toll of severe Covid-19 among unvaccinated people as infections surge and with vaccine take-up plateauing at 82 per cent of the population.

The government has linked reopening to vaccination targets but it paused the easing of restrictions this month to watch for signs that severe infections could overwhelm the health system. "I would love to see vaccine mandates in over 60s, they are the group most likely to die," said Dale Fisher, an infectious disease expert at the National University Hospital in Singapore.

"It's the same reason that age group was selected early for vaccines, the same reason that age group has been selected for booster jabs."

Singapore has been a model for coronavirus mitigation since the pandemic began with mandatory masks, effective contact tracing and a closed border.

In all, 62 of its 5.7 million people have died and new daily infections were for months no more than a handful.

But, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the Delta variant has in recent months been spreading and new daily cases have risen to about 1,000. Several countries including the United States, France and Italy have announced mandatory vaccination programmes, concerned the Delta variant and a slowdown in vaccinations will thwart plans to get back to normal.

Of vaccinated people in



Office workers spend their lunch breaks at the central business district in Singapore. — Reuters

Singapore who caught the virus from May 1 to September 16, only 0.09 per cent of them had to go into intensive care or died. The rate for the unvaccinated was 1.7 per cent. Data for the elderly is particularly striking.

Of infected unvaccinated people aged 80 or older, 15 per cent of them had to be treated in intensive care or died. Only 1.79 per cent of the vaccinated in that age group needed intensive care or died.

Singapore has not made vaccination compulsory because the Pfizer and Moderna shots only have emergency approval in the country although it has limited activities such as eating out for the unvaccinated.

Neither company responded to a query on whether it had applied

for full approval in Singapore.

With about 87,000 seniors still unvaccinated, some experts say full approval could pave the way for a mandate.

"Vaccination is much more protective than the other measures we have in place, and less economically and socially damaging," said Alex Cook, an infectious disease modelling expert at the National University of Singapore.

"If we are not to enforce vaccination, it seems odd to enforce weaker and more costly measures."

The number of patients requiring oxygen support or intensive care jumped more than five-fold this month to 146, including 18 in ICU. The government is worried the

numbers in ICU could grow quickly on an exponentially rising base of infected people, especially if they are elderly and unvaccinated.

Singapore has about 100 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients, and it can increase that to nearly 300 at short notice.

A vaccine mandate could take the form of curtailing activities for unvaccinated people related to their work, leisure and use of public transport, said infectious diseases doctor Leong Hoe Nam.

"You cannot go to the malls or take public transport or eat out unless vaccinated," he said, giving examples of possible restrictions. Only vaccinations against diphtheria and measles are mandated by law in Singapore.

— Reuters

Macron and Modi vow to 'act jointly' after subs dispute

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday vowed to "act jointly" in the Indo-Pacific region, as a row intensified with Australia and the US over a ditched submarine contract.

Macron's telephone talks with Modi were timed conspicuously as French anger appears undiminished after Australia pulled out of a submarine contract in favour of US submarines as part of an alliance with Washington and the UK.

US officials have said US President Joe Biden is seeking a phone call with Macron in the coming days to ease tensions but this has yet to materialise, with Macron taking the unprecedented step of recalling France's ambassadors to Australia and the United States. The French presidency said both leaders agreed they would "act jointly in an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific area".

Macron assured Modi of France's continued "commitment to the strengthening of India's strategic autonomy, including its industry and technology base, as part of a close relationship based on trust and mutual respect".

The statement from Macron's office said France and India's shared approach would be aimed at promoting "regional stability and the rule of law, while ruling out any form of hegemony".

— AFP

Afghan merchants fear for future as Taliban takeover raises costs and custom duties

HERAT: Merchants in the historic Afghan trading city of Herat fear for their future after being hit by Taliban tax collection and a backlog for goods to clear customs.

The country's third-biggest city is a strategic hub along the ancient Silk Road — with nearby borders to Iran and Turkmenistan — and is a key generator of revenue for the country.

Although the Taliban blame rampant corruption by the previous government for a rise in costs for importers, businessmen in Herat say they face going under if the Taliban do not lower taxes. "I'm feeling really hopeless," merchant Faghir Ahmad said.

Since the Taliban stormed to power in mid-August, food prices have gone up, the cost of fuel has risen and there are fewer opportunities to make money. Afghanistan's central bank has access to only a fraction of its usual financing, and is cut off from the international banking system and its own foreign currency reserves.

It means cash is in short supply and banks are enforcing a weekly withdrawal limit of \$200 per person.

"First when the Taliban came,



Afghan men work at a customs office warehouse in Herat on Monday. — AFP

the people were very happy because we saw that security was coming, but unfortunately now the price for everything has gone up and people aren't able to afford things," said Ahmad, who imports food into the western city from Iran. Ahmad was one of about 40 Herat business leaders at a rowdy Herat city Chamber of Commerce meeting this week, complaining of taxes and

a backlog of 3,000 trucks waiting to be processed. Customs officials were long accused of taking bribes from traders, pocketing the cash instead of collecting revenue for state coffers.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a press conference on Tuesday that the Taliban hadn't raised taxes, but were rather collecting them properly for the first time.

“First when the Taliban came, people were very happy because we saw that security was coming, but now the price for everything has gone up

FAGHIR AHMAD

A merchant

"The system under the previous government had a lot of problems with corruption, but it was OK," said Abdul Latif Yousufzai, who trades in food and cleaning products.

"Under this (Taliban) system we do not have any problems with corruption but the taxes have been raised, and we cannot pay that much. I'm really not hopeful for the future."

At Herat's customs clearance centre this week, workers unloaded plastic bottle tops, plates, salt cakes and long-life cream cheese from trucks into warehouses in the midday heat.

The labourers said that since the

Taliban took control of the facility, their already-meagre wages have gone down, and sometimes they don't know if they will be paid at all.

Mir Allam, 70, sat with a group of fellow workers in the shade next to a truck after a shift.

"We did tough work but we got less money," he said, revealing to AFP he had just been paid about \$1.25 for unloading a 20-tonne lorry with six others. Another grey-bearded worker, who did not want to give his name, said that under the previous system he was paid immediately after unloading a truck. "Now, when we have finished the work, it's not clear if they will pay us or not."

Younes Qazizadeh, head of the Herat Chamber of Commerce, said he was working with the merchants and the Taliban to reach a resolution, adding he believed business should never be related to any political system or regime. "When any new regime comes to a country there will be some problems," he said.

"People came here to speak their voices and they are lobbying the Taliban government to bring changes for the trade of Afghanistan," he said. — AFP

Canadian PM Trudeau clings onto power without majority

MONTREAL: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday acknowledged he will need to work with other parties after he fell short of winning a majority in parliamentary elections, leaving him once more dependent on opposition legislators to govern.

Trudeau, 49, was re-elected to a third term on Monday after calling a vote two years early, hoping for approval of his free-spending response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 2019, he had been working with a minority, forced to make deals with other parties to push through legislation.



Canada's Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau takes a selfie with a supporter, after the Liberals won a minority government, at the Jarry Metro station in Montreal. — Reuters

But provisional results showed virtually no change from the 2019 election, delivering up another minority and begging the question of why Trudeau had called a vote that the official opposition Conservative Party portrayed as a cynical power grab.

Trudeau, in power since 2015, said he had a clear mandate to continue the path to recovery while conceding Canadians did not want to be thinking about politics or elections.

"You just want to know that your members of parliament of all stripes will have your back through this crisis and beyond," he

told supporters in Montreal. "You have given this Parliament and this government clear directions."

The result suggests there will be little change in approach from the Liberals, who racked up record levels of debt and massive budget deficits fighting Covid-19.

Trudeau, who promised tens of billions of dollars in new investments during the campaign, will once again rely on the support of the smaller left-leaning New Democrats, who want even more social spending. "We're getting more of the same as what we had before. I don't think markets are going to react either way," said

Martin Pelletier, senior portfolio manager at Trivest Wealth Counsel.

The Canadian dollar was trading slightly higher at 1.2766 to the greenback, or 78.33 US cents, in Asian trading on Tuesday.

Provisional results showed the Liberals ahead in 155 constituencies, short of the 170 Trudeau needed to control the 338-seat House of Commons. The Conservatives were on 122 with the New Democrats on 26.

"The message Canadians are sending loud and clear is they like the direction the government is taking the country in but they're

The result suggests there will be little change in approach from the Liberals, who racked up record levels of debt and massive budget deficits

not quite sure they want to give anybody carte blanche," former close Trudeau adviser Gerry Butts told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

Around 800,000 mail-in ballots will be counted on Tuesday, which could affect the final tally in some seats.

The result is a blow to the right-leaning Conservatives, whose leader Erin O'Toole had tried to take a more centrist approach to attract progressive voters.

For the second election in a row the party won a larger share of the popular vote than the Liberals, who nevertheless triumphed with their lock on major urban centres.

O'Toole, who said he was sure Trudeau plans to call another election within two years, said he had called the Liberal leader and challenged him to put the unity of Canada first. — Reuters

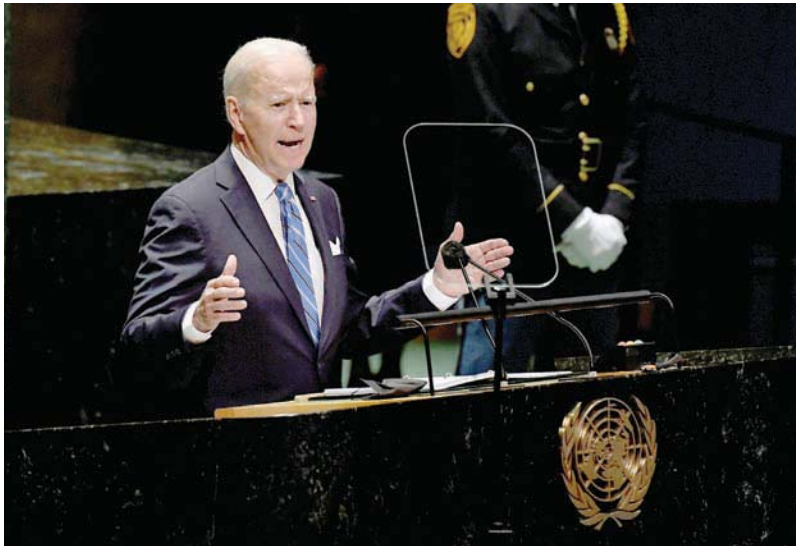
Biden says US not seeking 'Cold War'

UNITED NATIONS: President Joe Biden told the world on Tuesday the United States is not seeking a new Cold War with China as he vowed to pivot from post-9/11 conflicts and take a global leadership role on crises from climate to Covid.

Addressing the UN General Assembly for the first time as president, Biden promised to work to advance democracy and alliances, despite friction with Europe over France's loss of a mega-contract.

The Biden administration has identified a rising China as the paramount challenge of the 21st century, but in his United Nations debut he made clear he was not trying to sow divisions.

"We are not seeking a new Cold War or a world divided into rigid blocs," Biden said. "The United States is ready to work with any nation that steps up and pursues peaceful resolution to share challenges even if we have intense



US President Joe Biden speaks during the 76th Session of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York on Tuesday. — Reuters

disagreement in other areas."

Biden did not mention China by name, other than voicing alarm about human rights in Xinjiang.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is set to address the General Assembly later in the day but by video in light of Covid-19 precautions.

Biden declared himself to be the first US president in 20 years not to be running a war after his controversial pullout of troops from Afghanistan, where the Taliban swiftly took over.

Instead, America is "opening a new era of relentless diplomacy" in which military power must be

the "tool of last resort."

"The mission must be clear and achievable, undertaken with informed consent of the American people and whenever possible in partnership with our allies," Biden said from the UN rostrum where previous US presidents, notably including George W Bush, have pushed for military action.

Opening the General Assembly, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of growing divisions between the United States and China and urged dialogue.

"I fear our world is creeping towards two different sets of economic, trade, financial and technology rules, two divergent approaches in the development of artificial intelligence — and ultimately two different military and geopolitical strategies," Guterres said.

"This is a recipe for trouble. It would be far less predictable than the Cold War." — AFP

UK charges another Russian for nerve attack on double agent



Sergei Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were found unconscious but both survived the attack.

LONDON: British police said on Tuesday a third Russian had been charged in absentia with the 2018 Novichok murder attempt on former double agent Sergei Skripal, saying they could also now confirm the three suspects were military intelligence operatives.

The attack on Skripal, who sold Russian secrets to Britain, caused one of the biggest rows between Russia and the West since the Cold War, leading to the tit-for-tat expulsion of dozens of diplomats after Britain pointed the finger of blame at Moscow.

Russia has rejected any involvement, casting the accusations as anti-Russian propaganda.

Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious, slumped on a public bench in the southern English city of Salisbury in March 2018, and they, along with a police officer who went to his house, were left critically ill in hospital from exposure to the military-grade nerve agent.

A woman later also died from Novichok poisoning after her partner found a counterfeit perfume bottle which police believe had been used to smuggle the poison into the country.

In September 2018, British prosecutors charged two Russians, then identified by the aliases Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, with conspiracy to murder Skripal and the attempted murder of Yulia and the officer, Nick Bailey.

Dean Haydon, the UK's Senior National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism Policing, said prosecutors had now

authorised them to charge a third man, Sergey Fedotov, who was aged about 50, with the same offences.

Haydon also said Petrov and Boshirov were really named Alexander Mishkin and Anatoliy Chepiga, and that Fedotov's true identity was Denis Sergeev.

They were a three-man GRU team which had carried out operations on behalf of the Russian state in other countries, and there had been discussions with Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, he said, the first time that the police had categorically identified them as Russian spies.

The attack on Skripal, who sold Russian secrets to Britain, caused one of the biggest rows between Russia and the West since the Cold War

"We can't go into the detail of how, but we have the evidence that links them to the GRU," Haydon told reporters, describing them as highly-trained. "All three of them are dangerous individuals."

As with the other two Russians, British police had obtained an arrest warrant for Fedotov and they were applying for Interpol notices against him, he said.

All three men were now believed to be in Russia, with whom Britain has no extradition treaty and the Russian authorities had so far offered no cooperation, Haydon added. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

PRAGUE Czech police again recommend charges against PM

Shortly before parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic, police have again recommended fraud charges against Prime Minister Andrej Babis (pictured).

Files related to the investigation, supplemented by several witness statements, are now before the public prosecutor, the judicial authorities confirmed on Tuesday. He must decide within two months whether to bring charges, close the case or — as he has done several times before — order further investigations. The deadline can be extended. The



so-called Stork's Nest affair is about the accusation of fraud involving EU subsidies. Babis is accused of having obtained subsidies for the construction of the Stork's Nest spa resort in the amount of almost \$2.35 million in 2008.

WELLINGTON New Zealand steps closer to tighter terrorism laws

New Zealand's parliament took a step closer on Tuesday to making it easier to arrest and prosecute terrorists planning attacks, just weeks after an IS-inspired assault by a knife-wielding assailant wounded seven people at a supermarket. The Counter-Terrorism Legislation Bill passed its second reading in parliament with the ruling Labour Party and the main opposition National Party voting in favour, while smaller parties like the Greens opposed it.

The bill, an amendment to the



2002 Terrorism Suppression Act and other related laws, will be enacted once it clears a third reading. The government said the legislation addresses a major gap in the law by criminalising planning or preparation for a terrorist act.

MADRID Lava about to reach sea due to Canary island volcano

The volcanic eruption on the Canary island of La Palma resulted in increasing amounts of damage. So far, more than 160 buildings have been destroyed by the lava, state television broadcaster RTVE reported. More than 100 hectares are already covered with a thick black layer of lava.

It is running about 1,000 degrees Celsius and is now coming out of nine vents in the area of Cumbre Vieja, in the south of the Spanish island.



According to civil defence workers, the number of evacuees has increased to almost 6,000. Most of them were reportedly accommodated by relatives or in private homes in other parts of the island.

King of the ring rumbles for Philippine presidency

RON LOPEZ AND ALLISON JACKSON

Manny Pacquiao is idolised by many in the Philippines both for his punching power and rise from poverty to the peak of world boxing. But his support of a deadly war on drugs and homophobic views have drawn plenty of detractors.

Known in the Asian archipelago as “The National Fist”, Pacquiao has parlayed sporting success into the political ring, and now has his sights set on a high-stakes rumble for the presidency.

Pacquiao declared on Sunday he will run for the top job in the 2022 elections, vowing to tackle poverty and corruption as he seeks to win over voters with his rags-to-riches story.

“I feel what you’re all feeling, I know the suffering that you have experienced and I know that you are all tired,” said Pacquiao after accepting the nomination of a rival faction in President Rodrigo Duterte’s ruling party.

After two terms as a congressman and one as a senator, Pacquiao’s ambition is not unrealistic in a country famed for its celebrity-obsessed politics. But victory is far from assured.

Fans see Pacquiao, an eight-division world champion, as living proof that success is possible for anyone who works hard, no matter their origins. But critics accuse the high-school dropout of lacking intellect and being a frequent no-show in the senate, raising questions about his ability to run the country of 110 million people.

Less than a year out from the elections, Pacquiao has risked political capital in a public stoush with Duterte, who rivals the boxer for the affections of many Filipinos and previously mentioned him as a possible successor.

He has also stirred controversy by backing Duterte’s deadly drug war, which rights groups say has killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men and sparked an investigation by the International Criminal Court.

“His popularity as a boxer will not 100 per cent translate to his popularity as a politician,” Ted Lerner, a US-born sports journalist in the Philippines, said.

Pacquiao dropped out of high school at 14, sold doughnuts on the roadside and became a grocery stacker to help his mother support two younger siblings. Within a few years, the diminutive southpaw was a pro boxer. — AFP

I feel what you’re all feeling, I know the suffering that you have experienced and I know that you are all tired

MANNY PACQUIAO
Former boxer



INNOCENT AND PLAYFUL!

A child plays among coca leaves in the Pichari district, Ayacucho Department, Peru. Coca farmers and relatives of victims of a Shining Path massacre in Peru’s largest coca-growing valley demand that the authorities put an end to the guerrilla remnants after the death of historical leader Abimael Guzman, who is to be cremated. — AFP

We won’t be safe if others are in danger



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

FOR ARGUMENT
SAKE, ONE CAN
SAY THAT THE
VIRUS WON’T
LEAVE THE
SURFACE AND
JUMP ON
YOUR FACE

We all have been optimistic that we will overcome the pandemic and that we will go back to work, gather in restaurants and theatres and sports stadiums. We also are confident that our children will come out of the screens and will be able to study in schools and spend time with their friends.

Even as the dreaded coronavirus is still ripping through the globe, we are relieved that everything is limping back to normal in the Sultanate. Of course, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we have started seeing it.

Although an immediate end evades the pandemic, its intensity is diminishing, and that our streets will return to something approximating usual, if not with the same hustle and bustle as before.

What we do over the coming months can ensure that our cities and all other areas of activities run again. But for this, we have to protect ourselves against occurrence of similar scenarios in the future. This is the time we must show the way forward.

Now, over 20 months into this unprecedented situation, people have become accustomed to lives and the

routines of the pandemic. Cases have plunged significantly after rapid pace of vaccination.

As the shops and other commercial establishments opened, the number of people on the streets has started slowly swelling. Along with these signs of normalcy are the menacing rise of littering. No place is exempted.

Everywhere you look there are discarded gloves and masks in streets and parking lots, left behind by people who were not bothered to find a trash bin.

Many of the gloves and masks worn by people to prevent the spread of Covid-19 are finding their way onto sidewalks in an act, I consider, as a sign of disrespect to the fellow beings. Despite repeated appeals by health experts and authorities, I wonder why they dump it wantonly!

For argument sake, one can say that the virus won’t leave the surface and jump on your face. Also you claim that the clean-up crews picking up this kind of litter are safe as long as they wear gloves. But they are still a hazard to both humans and the environment.

Studies have revealed that coronavirus is primarily transmitted through droplets

of mucus and saliva when a person sneezes or coughs. Masks stop these droplets from reaching other persons’ body parts. But if an infected person throws away the mask in the open, it will definitely affect all who come in contact.

Evidence also suggests masks may be a source of harmful micro plastic fibres on land and in waterways and litter. When they are discarded into the environment, it goes into sewer systems or water bodies. It breaks down into micro plastics, which still attract pesticides and other harmful chemicals. So when the marine animals eat it, they don’t just get the plastic, they get the chemicals too.

No doubt, it is frustrating to see the unscrupulous act of littering public places. With such behaviours, where is our dignity? Where is our respect or civic sense? We always judge everyone and everything! And what we don’t like, we claim it as a violation of our rights!

But where are these rights when we throw masks and gloves that can infect others and malign the environment?

We should remember the fact that we won’t be safe if others are in danger!

Wait a while... for the booster dose!



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Everyone has recently noticed how corona cases (Covid-19) have started falling, as well as the cases of hospitalisations and this is true, reflecting the measures that the government has taken and is still taking to reduce the rise in coronavirus cases. Undoubtedly, now that we have more clarity, we can think about whether there are individuals who need booster doses of the corona vaccine, yet more questions loom on the horizon: When exactly should these people get those doses? Is it better to load additional antibodies as quickly as possible, or should people wait until rates of corona cases start to rise again?

Let me start with a simple start and say: If you are already eligible for a third dose, because you are immune-compromised or weakened as a result of related diseases, you can get it! Especially since for many people with weakened immunity, for example, the first or second dose may not trigger a strong enough response in the body to provide lasting protection.

In fact, most people’s antibody levels peak a few weeks after the initial coronavirus vaccinations. The problem is that (a few weeks) just an average rate. What I mean here is that different people develop antibodies at different

rates. In general, healthy young adults’ immune systems work quickly and can begin to approach peak antibody levels in as little as seven days. While older adults or those with weakened immune systems can take weeks longer.

In addition, we must be realistic. Predicting when, for

IF YOU ARE ALREADY
ELIGIBLE FOR A THIRD
DOSE, BECAUSE YOU ARE
IMMUNE-COMPROMISED OR
WEAKENED AS A RESULT OF
RELATED DISEASES,
YOU CAN GET IT!

example, corona will be at its peak, if this is repeated, requires predicting when the spread in any society will be at its highest levels, which is almost impossible to do with any accuracy. Not to mention that we will likely see another increase in the coming months, but determining the exact week or month in which cases will peak in a particular place is not possible!

Most importantly, at the moment we do not have a consistent seasonal pattern for another wave for instance, because all the increases we have seen have been shaped by behaviours such as the use of masks and physical or social distancing.

At end, the spread of the virus in any region may be more important than, if I may say so, the details of your personal vaccination schedule. While everyone else is waiting, vaccine makers can update and develop vaccines to provide better protection against Delta strain for instance and set up trials to collect better data on how their original doses and boosters perform. Probably here I think it’s important not to just say, should I get a booster dose or not? But instead, we wonder and say is it better to get a booster vaccine now or save the chance for later?

The author is a physician, medical innovator and writer

Sport

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f t i y u



Al Mouj Muscat Marathon returns

OMAN'S TOP RUNNING EVENT TO BE HELD ON FEB 10, 11



Dignitaries during the press conference at Kempinski Hotel in Muscat. – SHAMSA AL HARTHY

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

The Sultanate's premier running event, Al Mouj Muscat Marathon, is all set to take place in 2022 after the 2021 edition was called off due to the pandemic.

The 2022 Al Mouj Muscat Marathon will feature seven race distances.

Marathon – 42.2 km, half marathon – 21.1 km and there will races for 10 km, 5 km, 3 km, 2 km and 1 km. The marathon, half marathon and 10 km will be held on February 11, while the 5 km and the Kids' races are scheduled to held on February 12.

The 2020 edition had close to 11,000 participants, and the 2022 Al Mouj Muscat Marathon is expected to attract a large number of participants.

The details were unveiled at a press conference attended by representatives from Al Mouj Muscat, Oman Sail and Sabco Sports.

The lifestyle destination, Al Mouj Muscat, pledged its support for the sixth time as title sponsor, based on a commitment to further contributing to tourism and sport tourism in the Sultanate.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "The Al Mouj Muscat Marathon is a great match for our values to promote an active and healthy lifestyle for both residents and visitors of Al Mouj Muscat. In 2022, runners from across Oman and around the world will enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the destination and be a part of a festival which will cater to a variety of ages, fitness levels and experience."

Oman's leading sports agency Sabco Sports has been handed over the marketing of the event from Oman Sail as the renowned sporting event enters a crucial phase during the impact of Covid-19 across the world.

"Oman Sail took over management of the annual Al Mouj Muscat Marathon in 2017



the local youth while inviting world-class athletes for the event, according to Sayyid Aymen al Busaidi, Vice-Chairman of Sabco Group.

"The event has been the perfect platform for the local youth as well as schoolchildren to embrace the healthy lifestyle of running. We will not keep any stone unturned to give awareness of the marathon in the schools as well," Al Busaidi replied to a query.

The organisers are diligently working towards creating an environment where all safety protocols are in place during the event and in close coordination with the government authorities who are taking all measures to ensure Covid-19 is under control in the country by the end of the year. The marathon will be open only to fully vaccinated participants.

All information about Al Mouj Muscat Marathon as well as registration details are available on www.muscatmarathon.om.

Organised by Muscat Road Runners in 2012 with 135 competitors, Muscat Marathon has quickly grown in stature. In 2017, the event became known as the Al Mouj Muscat Marathon with Al Mouj Muscat, Oman Sail and Muscat Road Runners joining forces.

In 2019, the marathon, marathon relay, half marathon and 10 km routes were all certified by world-running organisation AIMS, aligning the event with International Association of Athletic Federation (IAAF) standards.

The last edition hosted just over 11,000 runners competing in six race categories across a two-day festival of running in which 103 different nationalities were represented.

Kenya's Pius Karanja was the men's champion of the main marathon (42.2 km) in 2020 with a timing of 2 hours, 19 minutes and 4 seconds. Ethiopia's Astede Habtamu (02:39:50) claimed the women's title.

from Muscat Road Runners, and successfully registered in excess of 10,000 runners from over 100 countries last year. It has planted the seeds of growth, nurturing its appeal with recognised international standards and based on a commitment to benefit the local private sector we have given the management to leading sports entity, Sabco Sports," said Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO, Oman Sail.

"Al Mouj Muscat Marathon has built a reputation and a loyal fan base within Oman, and we are confident that the upcoming edition will bring even more members of the community to start running and get fit and will also attract an international audience to visit Oman and experience an authentic experience," he added.

FOCUS ON YOUTH, SCHOOLS
Muscat Marathon will keep its focus on schoolchildren and

Pakistan 'used and binned' by 'Western bloc', says Raja



PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja during a news conference in Lahore. — Reuters

LAHORE: Pakistan have been “used and binned” by the “Western bloc”, cricket board Chairman Ramiz Raja said on Tuesday, adding that he thinks Australia will join New Zealand and England in cancelling their tour of the South Asian country.

England on Monday called off their men's and women's teams tour of Pakistan next month citing the “mental and physical well-being” of the players.

It followed New Zealand's abrupt abandonment of their tour minutes before the opening fixture in Rawalpindi on Friday following a security alert from their government.

“How I wish today that I was still a YouTuber, rather than the chairman of the cricket board, because I would have absolutely taken on New Zealand and England unabashedly,” Raja told a virtual news conference.

“It's the feeling of being used and then binned — that is the feeling that I have right now,” the former Pakistan captain said. “I certainly feel that we are up against a western mindset, a Western bloc.”

Raja pointed out Pakistan's trips to New Zealand and England last year defying the Covid-19 situation and felt the withdrawals by them would have a domino effect.

“West Indies could be a little jittery and we know that the Australians will probably do what

the New Zealanders and England have done. So there goes our domestic international calendar.”

Cricket Australia has said it would “talk with the relevant authorities once more information becomes known” ahead of its scheduled tour early next year.

Shunned by all after the deadly 2009 attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in Lahore, Pakistan have been trying to woo back top international teams.

Raja felt particularly let down by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). “A little bit of hand holding, a little bit of caring was needed, especially after New Zealand pulled out, and we didn't get that from ECB,” he said.

England, who last visited Pakistan in 2005, are scheduled to tour the country in the 2022-23 season but Raja, who had a chat with ECB Chairman Ian Whatmore, is taking nothing for granted.

“I said what is the guarantee of England coming back and playing here? ... because a month before that tour you can easily quote tiredness, players being spooked again, sick of living in a bubble.”

The ECB declined to respond to Raja's comments, saying it had nothing to add to Monday's statement. According to media reports, the PCB is facing losses of \$15-25 million due to the tour cancellations. — Reuters

KKR DRUB RCB BY NINE WICKETS

KOHLI UNIMPRESSIVE IN 200TH IPL MATCH FOR BANGALORE

DUBAI: Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore suffered a crushing nine-wicket loss to Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday hours after he announced to step down as captain at the end of this Indian Premier League.

It remained an unforgettable evening for Kohli who fell for five in his 200th IPL match and Bangalore were skittled out for 92 with Kolkata spinner Varun Chakravarthy returning figures of 3-13 in Abu Dhabi.

The 32-year-old Kohli, who put out a video message of his captaincy exit on the opening day of the revived IPL on Sunday, is still searching for Bangalore's first title win in the Twenty20 tournament.

“Sometimes it can take you a game, I hope not two, to get into the tournament, you have to stay with the eight-ball, if you're not, the other teams will be all over you,” Kohli said after his team's first match of the UAE leg.

Kohli, who last week announced his decision also to quit India's T20 captaincy at the end of the T20 World Cup in October-November, has been under close scrutiny as a leader in recent months.

Kohli was made Bangalore's captain in 2013, but despite his superstar status, the team's best finish was losing in the 2016 final.

His record without a title is often compared to India's vice-captain Rohit Sharma who has secured five IPL crowns for holders Mumbai Indians.

RCB were at the receiving end of an inspired Kolkata bowling performance with Chakravarthy and Andre Russell taking three wickets each to flatten the opposition batting.

Seam bowler Prasidh Krishna took down Kohli, trapped lbw after the skipper opened the batting with Devdutt Padikkal who top-scored with 22.



Varun Chakravarthy of Kolkata Knight Riders bowls against Royal Challengers Bangalore during the IPL match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi. — BCCI

Bangalore lost regular wickets to Chakravarthy's mystery spin that got key batsman including Australia's Glenn Maxwell for 10 and Sri Lankan import Wanindu Hasaranga for nought.

“Pretty good from Varun, he's going to be a key factor when he plays for India,” Kohli said of the spinner who is included in India's World Cup squad.

“It's great guys who've got the opportunity to play at the international level. He's someone who is going to play in the near future for India, it's a great sign.”

Shubman Gill, who made 48, and debutant Venkatesh Iyer, who hit an unbeaten 41 off 27 balls, then put on 82 for the first wicket as Kolkata chased down their target in just 10 overs.

The Eoin Morgan-led side need

“**Bit of a collapse for us, bit of a wake-up call and we might as well have this at the start of the second leg so that we know exactly what we need to work on**”

VIRAT KOHLI
Bangalore captain

to win five of their remaining six matches to stay in the race for a play-off spot.

The tournament resumed on Sunday after it was halted in May because of a devastating surge in pandemic deaths in India, prompting foreign players to

rush home. Many have not come back including England's Ben Stokes (Rajasthan Royals) and Pat Cummins (Kolkata) of Australia.

“Bit of a collapse for us, bit of a wake-up call and we might as well have this at the start of the second leg so that we know exactly what we need to work on,” Kohli said in his post-match interview.

Kohli suggested his team appeared rusty in the shorter format.

“You can make that argument... but as professionals, you're expected to turn up and adjust to formats, that's the dynamic of world cricket today,” Kohli said.

“We have never found any trouble doing that but sometimes it can take you a game to get into the tournament.”

— Agencies

SRH looking to bounce back, Iyer returns for Delhi



Not a lot has been right for Sunrisers Hyderabad this season. Firstly, David Warner was stripped off the captaincy and then altogether dropped from the playing XI. SRH, however, could only manage a single win out of seven matches in the first phase.

This speaks volumes of the tension building up in the team. The absence of Jonny Bairstow might create an opening for Warner, the most successful all-time player for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Qualification is still a possibility for Sunrisers but it's going to be more than tough to win all the remaining seven games and that too when they are completely shattered out of confidence after the first phase. But then miracles do happen, don't they?

Sunrisers is more than capable

of bouncing back, even if it is as a party spoiler. David Warner, Rashid Khan, Jason Roy, Jason Holder, Mohammad Nabi, Sherfane Rutherford, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and all under the captaincy of cool Kane Williamson, make top lethal international players. When they combine with some premium Indian talent, everything looks possible. Though the main concern for Sunrisers Hyderabad has been the middle order.

IYER BOOST FOR DELHI

Delhi also lost their main player and captain (Shreyas Iyer) in the first phase, but now he is back and could solve a lot of team combination problems for Delhi Capitals. In his absence, Delhi looked towards Steve Smith's service, but now they might be able to pair in Anrich Nortje and Kagiso Rabada, which would make their death overs very lethal.

Delhi would allow Rishabh Pant to captain the remainder of the tournament and this would allow their initial captain Shreyas



Did You Know?

Amit Mishra if selected, would be the first player to feature in 100 matches for Delhi franchise. In IPL, he is just 4 wickets behind Lasith Malinga's tally of 170 wickets.

Rashid Khan — has a tremendous T20 record in Dubai, having picked 17 wickets in 12 matches at an economy rate of 4.55.

Delhi Capitals have hit the fewest sixes in IPL 2021 (32), but have hit the most fours (142).

Iyer to enjoy his game as a player. Captaincy has only added grace and responsibility to Rishabh Pant's shoulders. He has not only been more practical, but his shot selection also has been quite good. Qualification doesn't look like a matter of concern, with just two wins required out of six games.

Many eyes will be on the old war horse Ravichandran Ashwin, who has got selected in the T20 world cup team for India. His experience and variations make him quite lethal, but then wouldn't India be looking for some batting contribution from Ashwin, and this is his opportunity to show his power hitting skills through the IPL and then cement his place in the Indian team. Previously, he was struggling to find a place in the Indian Test team, despite being the most experienced spinner.

PONTING DELIGHTED

“I am absolutely delighted to have Shreyas Iyer back in our line-up. It was devastating for him and

the team that he dislocated his shoulder just before the start of IPL earlier in the year. He's a world class player, been an exceptional player for the Delhi Capitals for a long time now, our previous skipper as well. Iyer coming into the line-up makes our team look a little bit more complete. I think in the first part of the tournament, we played well but our overall balance just didn't feel right.”

WHAT TO EXPECT?

Since Delhi is a way more balanced side and filled with confidence, definitely they would like to start the second phase with domination, especially against a team who had struggled to win that one game as well. But then, this is game of cricket and one good wicket, catch or run out, can change the momentum of the entire game and Sunrisers would be counting on all its senior talents to stand up for that one exceptional performance to boost the morale of the team.

Oman dominate USA to finish tri-series on top

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Ayaan Khan's superb all-round performance powered Oman to a thumping 72-run victory against USA in a Cricket World Cup League 2 game at Oman Cricket Academy Ground One in Al Amerat on Monday.

Ayaan struck a patient 41 to help Oman to 274 for 7 and then ran through USA with a sterling 4 for 36 spell that showcased his bowling prowess as well.

This was Oman's third win in four games as the hosts ended another tri-series on top, stretching its lead to 22 points from 14 matches. USA are a distant second with 14 points from 16 games followed by Scotland at 9 from 8.

Oman will next host Scotland and PNG in the next tri-series of the competition, starting on September 25. Oman's first game will be against PNG the next day.

USA needed a solid start to chase the total down on a wicket that appeared to support spin but found itself on the back foot as it was reduced to 97 for 4. Ayaan started the slide as he removed Monank Patel for a well-made 56. Khawar Ali teamed up with Ayaan to hasten the tourists' fall as it folded up for 202 in the 40th over. Khawar picked up 3 for 49.

Oman coach Duleep Mendis was delighted with how success was achieved in the tri-series without some of its main players.

"This is a wonderful achievement by the players who were brilliant for much of the series. Ayaan had a fantastic game today and contributed to the team's win. Of course, we missed our two main players Aqib Ilyas and Khawar who were not fit. I wasn't happy to see Khawar lower down the order but we needed his bowling today and he did not disappoint us," he said.

"We want our players to be in peak form before the World



Oman's Jatinder Singh plays a shot at Amerat Stadium. - Faisal al Balushi



Ayaan Khan receiving man of the match prize from Oman Cricket Chairman Pankaj Khimji.

Cup starts and today's game was a good example of that. It is a great morale booster to win three games out of four.

We will be going into the next tri-series with much more confidence," he added. Oman's secret to a competitive total lay

in partnerships as most of the batters spent some good time in the middle, backing each other up to keep the scoreboard

ticking. The 58-run opening stand between the prolific Jatinder Singh and debutant Pruthvikumar Machhi laid the

This is a wonderful achievement by the players who were brilliant for much of the series. Ayaan had a fantastic game today and contributed to the team's win. Of course, we missed our two main players Aqib Ilyas and Khawar who were not fit. I wasn't happy to see Khawar lower down the order but we needed his bowling today and he did not disappoint us

DULEEP MENDIS
Oman head coach

foundation for what turned out to be a good total to defend.

Captain Zeeshan Maqsood dealt in sixes during a crucial 69-run fourth wicket partnership with the promising Ayaan, hitting half a dozen over the ropes with consummate ease. Curbing his natural instincts to attack, Ayaan was the perfect foil to Zeeshan's flamboyance as Oman continued to march ahead.

Naseem Khushi ended the innings with yet another assault, striking a quickfire 35 not out, slamming three sixes and two fours whereas Sandeep Goud contributed a fluent 25 including two big sixes. Nosthush Kenjige was the most successful US bowler, taking 3 for 49.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman 274 for 7 in 50 overs (Zeeshan Maqsood 53 - 6x6, Jatinder Singh 42 - 6x4, Ayaan Khan 41 - 2x4, 1x6, Naseem Khushi 35 not out - 2x4, 3x6, Pruthvikumar Machhi 25 - 2x4, Sandeep Goud 25 - 1x4, 2x6. Nosthush Kenjige 3-49) beat USA 202 all out in (Monank Patel 56 - 2x4, 2x6, Gajanan Singh 48 - 3x4, 1x6. Ayaan Khan 4-36, Khawar Ali 3-49) by 72 runs.

Injured Messi ruled out of midweek action with PSG

PARIS: Lionel Messi will miss Paris Saint-Germain's game away to Metz on Wednesday due to a knee injury which coach Mauricio Pochettino has said was the real reason behind his surprise decision to take the six-time Ballon d'Or winner off against Lyon at the weekend.

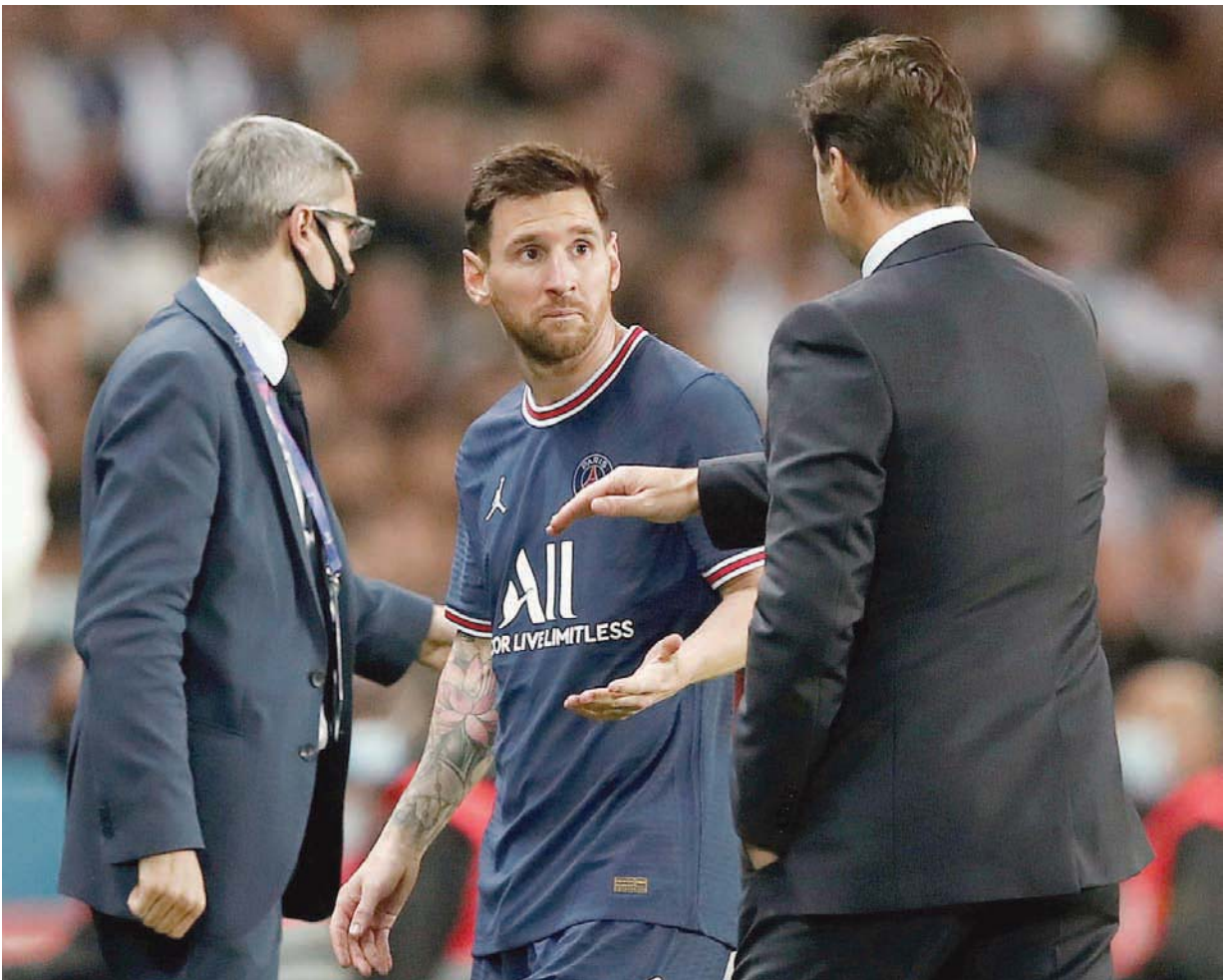
The Argentine star underwent an MRI on Tuesday after taking a knock to his left knee during Sunday's 2-1 win. Results showed signs of bone bruising, the club said in a statement.

Messi was replaced by Achraf Hakimi, a full-back, after 76 minutes against Lyon, on his first home appearance as a PSG player since arriving from Barcelona.

The 34-year-old appeared to reject Pochettino's hand as he walked past his coach towards the Paris bench but the former Tottenham Hotspur boss later defended his decision to take Messi off without mentioning the injury.

On Tuesday he admitted that Messi's fitness was the reason he made the change with the scores level at the time.

"On the touchline we are always observing the players, seeing what is happening during the match, and we saw that Leo was looking at his knee," Pochettino told reporters.



Paris St Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino with Lionel Messi as he is substituted. - Reuters

"We are pleased with the way he played. He played very well in the first half, and the only thing missing was a goal.

"He played for 76 minutes and

with all the information we had we decided to take him off," added Pochettino, who said he accepted that substituting a player of Messi's status might surprise observers.

"Of course I understand the situation and I accept it as it is. 'Best thing for him'

"It is not a surprise for me, but the priority is always the well-

On the touchline we are always observing the players, seeing what is happening during the match, and we saw that Leo was looking at his knee

MAURICIO POCHETTINO
PSG coach

being of the player and in this case we thought it was the best thing for him to take him off.

"All great champions always want to be on the pitch and that is understandable."

Mauro Icardi's stoppage-time headed goal secured victory for PSG against Lyon, leaving them with six wins out of six in Ligue 1 this season and already five points clear of second-placed Marseille, albeit having played a game more.

They will be expected to keep their run going away to a Metz side who are winless and prop up the

division, although Pochettino may heavily rotate his squad.

PSG are at home to Montpellier at the weekend, when it remains to be seen if Messi will return. They then host Manchester City in the Champions League next Tuesday, September 28.

"We have a squad of 35 players. They all deserve to play but there are not enough places," admitted Pochettino.

The Argentine manager has also come in for criticism for the way his all-star team played against Lyon and in last week's 1-1 draw at Club Brugge in the Champions League.

Those were the first two matches in which Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe had all played together, but Pochettino says he needs time to get his ideas across.

"In general, in the past, in normal times, you had six or seven weeks in pre-season, lots of friendly matches to work on things.

"Now we need to try things as we go along, during games. It is not a situation we like much but we have to get used to it."

There is a full round of games in France on Wednesday with Marseille aiming to continue their unbeaten start away at Angers.

— AFP

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PDO’s Yibal Khuff mega project comes on stream

LANDMARK VENTURE:
Spanning an area of 1.68km2, YKP is the second largest, and most technically complex project in PDO’s history

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Petroleum Development Oman’s (PDO) Yibal Khuff Project (YKP) has started production, marking a key milestone for the landmark facility.

The installation’s first sour wells were opened earlier this month introducing sour oil to the YKP Central Processing Facility, and the project has already started exporting crude oil to the Main Oil Line.

The plant’s capacity will be ramped up over the coming months.

Spanning an area of 1.68km2, YKP is the second largest, and most technically complex project in PDO’s history — with Covid-19 adding another layer of complexity over the past two years of construction and commissioning



activities.

YKP is of a high strategic value towards meeting Oman’s growing medium and long-term oil and gas demands, as well as reducing PDO’s net non-associated gas import.

The mega project will be delivering — when fully operational — five million cubic metres of gas per day and around

20,000 bpd of crude.

PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister said: “The YKP coming on stream is a source of great pride for PDO. Despite the challenging environment and scale of this project, the project team were able to stay the course and deliver the project with an amazing HSE record, exceeding 46 million Lost Time Injury-free manhours.

Both Company and contractor staff have shown outstanding dedication and commitment to overcome many hurdles to reach this stage of the project.”

Around 1,200 Omanis have been employed on site in the construction of the facilities, with a further 200 nationals deployed as fully qualified welders. Around \$400 million were also awarded

to Omani companies for the provision of goods and services.

This project has achieved several significant firsts, including the first to deliver the tallest column ever fabricated for PDO in Oman. This ‘Made in Oman’ acid gas recovery unit absorber stands at 48 metres high, four metres in diameter and weighs 291 tonnes.

It has also delivered one

of PDO’s first Steam Turbine Generators, taking the heat from some of the facilities’ processes and using it to generate steam. The plant will be able to generate 13MW of electrical power, supplementing the 45MW of the Yibal Khuff Power plant.

YKP Project Manager Munir al Hammadi said: “In addition to safety, the project team maintained quality as another main driver throughout the execution of the project, ensuring an elaborate Quality Assurance and Control scheme was in place resulting in a world-class quality delivery of the project.

The project is also considered the first to allocate a scope for SMEs whilst ensuring the full development of the deployed 200 Omani welders including their redeployment to other projects. It is worth highlighting that this team of Omani welders have managed to successfully complete the highest diameter welds in the project.

“We are very proud of this milestone and thank the all the teams as well as individuals who stood up to the challenges to achieve this major milestone.”

Measures by Oman, GCC help ease pandemic impact on food security: FAO

SUPPLY DISRUPTION: The world has gone ‘off-track’ in its commitment to achieve zero-hunger: Dr Nora Ourabah

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Dr Nora Ourabah Haddad



Oman and fellow member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have adopted far-reaching strategies to support their national food security objectives in response to the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Representative of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to the Sultanate of Oman.

Addressing a virtual conference on the importance of agri-nutrients for global food security, Dr Nora Ourabah Haddad, said the Gulf states had put in place concrete measures to secure their national populations’ food requirements at the outset of the pandemic threat.

The two-day forum was organised by Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) last week.

“In anticipation of potential food supply disruptions in April 2020, the GCC countries adopted a Kuwaiti proposal to create a unified Gulf Food Security Network. This was about setting

up special arrangements at border controls and customs posts covering the movement of basic foods and medical supplies,” said the FAO Representative.

Additionally, GCC governments took steps to diversify food import sources, support trade facilitation and strengthen agricultural, fisheries and aquaculture production.

Measures were also initiated to smooth transportation of commodities from production to consumption areas. Further, the establishment of e-agriculture and ecommerce platforms also enabled linkages between producers, on the one hand, and traders and consumers on the other, she said.

Referring to measures implemented by the Sultanate, in particular, the official cited the Omani government’s

decision, early on in the crisis, to allocate about RO 10 million for the procurement of basic commodities. Supply of potable water to local populations was strengthened, while the water requirements of industries were met as well. In other measures, agriculture and fisheries production was ramped up, private investment in R&D encouraged, and the benefits of new technology development extolled.

At a global level, however, the Covid-19 outbreak did have a devastating impact on the food situation in many parts of the world, said Dr Haddad.

“The pandemic has crushed the global economy, generating a dual shock both on the supply and demand side, and threatening food security. In fact, even though there is enough food for everyone

in the world, accessing it is another issue. It’s not a given!” she lamented.

Citing recent FAO statistics, the official warned that the world has gone “off-track” in its commitment to achieve zero-hunger.

“We still have almost over 800 million in the world going to bed hungry, which is an unfortunate situation made worse by the pandemic. The high cost of healthy diets, coupled with persistent high levels of income inequality, has put healthy diets out of the reach of close to three billion people in the world”, she said.

Thus, in addition to food supply disruptions unleashed by the pandemic, the attendant global economic downturn led a surge in job losses that in turn, “triggered a food crisis induced by lack of income”.

Besides, food diets became less diverse as many people survived mainly on staples and less on fruits and vegetables and meat and dairy products.

These poor diets are likely to contribute to higher rates of malnutrition, especially in medium and long-term, with women and some minority group expected to be disproportionately penalised, the FAO Representative stated.

Sultanate wins US trade dispute



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

International law firm Curtis announced on Tuesday that it helped deliver a significant victory for the Omani government and local aluminium sheet and foil producer, Oman Aluminium Rolling Company LLC (OARC), in a year-long investigation by the US Department of Commerce into allegations that the Sultanate unfairly subsidised OARC’s operations.

The pivotal issue in the case was the charge that the Sultanate directed banks in Oman to provide OARC with preferential lending. An international Curtis team, comprising lawyers in Muscat, Geneva, and Washington, successfully beat back the allegations.

The result was a “negative” finding on the banking issue by the Commerce Department and only minimal duties for OARC, preserving its access to the US market.

This is Curtis’ second major victory in Oman involving

allegations of unfair subsidies led by partner Matthew McCullough, who specialises in US countervailing duty law. In 2015, McCullough directed a Sultanate defence representing both the Government and a local PET resin producer to a complete victory in a similar US proceeding.

“Such cases give a government the opportunity to demonstrate internationally that its economy works on competitive, transparent, market-oriented terms”, commented lead partner Matthew McCullough. “A successful result like this helps to preserve and attract inward investment and deters new cases by showing the allegations to be baseless.”

Muscat Managing Partner Simon Ward added, “This case also demonstrates Curtis’ ability to provide immediate legal support in Oman, while drawing on our international team to deliver effective, practical and efficient legal services in highly specialised areas of international and commercial law such as US countervailing duty law.”

OAB training programme to enhance ICV

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has recently launched an advanced programme to provide Omani talent, college, and university graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance their prospects of securing jobs within the banking sector.

This two-year programme is in line with the bank's strategy to support national competencies by providing them with the practical experience necessary to achieve success in the future. The programme reflects positively on the bank's economic development plans for by investing in Omani youth and promotes sustainability.

OAB aims to improve economic progression through investment in the local youth workforce, increasing sustainability, driving knowledge transfer and enabling banking technology localisation within the Sultanate.

The programme also reinforces the the bank's commitment to empowering national talent, with the graduates gaining valuable practical experience that will To help them start their career in the



banking sector.

The bank will work closely with each graduate employee to identify their abilities and match them with their career aspirations. They will be assigned to different divisions of OAB's operations, rotating between Corporate Banking, Credit Admin, Credit Review and Trade Finance, to nurture wider expertise of banking products and services. The two-year programme is open to proactive

and determined Omani nationals who are recent graduates in finance, or accounting with a GPA of 2.4 or higher.

The programme will also present a chance to the graduates to learn from seasoned OAB professionals across a wide range of business departments. It will touch upon all areas of business banking, with each segment of the programme being supported by a mentor, in order to evaluate graduate performance, assist and

provide a model of commitment, productivity, and professional responsibility.

The programme encourages personal growth with professional qualifications and training that is critical to a career in banking. It has been specifically designed to maximise the potential of each candidate with a designed development plan.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be

established in the Sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 150 ATMs spread across Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App.

Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

Win your new Kia Cerato in dream Kia campaign

MUSCAT: Kia in Oman, recently launched the new 22 MY Cerato. The new Cerato, is sports-inspired and driver centric, built on Kia's experience-orientated platform. With a modern, cutting-edge appearance, the new Cerato's introduction sees a facelifted, sport-inspired design which brings the brand's advanced safety functions and high-tech features to a car with a dynamic stance.

The new Cerato is now available with the year's most exciting campaign from Kia. Win your New Cerato Back instantly through Scratch & Win Offer, or pay only 50 per cent for Your Car Back, Or Chance to Double Your Cash Gift Or Win Periodic Services up to 100,000 kms and yes VAT is on Us which can be used as part of Down Payment. The campaign is valid until December 28.

Available in 2 variants 2.0/1.6L, the refreshed Cerato utilises full LED headlights which appear as slender lines with the radiator grille to underline the redesigning of the face of the model, defining the car's sporty exterior. At the rear, strong horizontal lines add a bold appearance with depth to the fluid exterior design. Under the hood, Kia's new and significantly improved 3rd generation powertrain engines, supports the Cerato's fuel efficient drive.

Inside the Cerato, drivers can enjoy the best of comfort and technology, with high resolution 8-inch display screen and a 4.2-inch colour TFT LCD cluster for an improved, convenient driving experience. With the car's new and improved IT connectivity thru Android Auto & Car Play, Kia's new Multi-connection Bluetooth and voice recognition allows for a wire-free user experience.



Sohar Intl to be the 'Digital Transformation Partner' at New Age Banking Summit Oman

MUSCAT: Leading innovation in Oman's banking industry with effective futuristic strategies, Sohar International is slated to be the Digital Transformation Partner at the New Age Banking Summit Oman.

In line with Oman Vision 2040 which emphasises on promoting digitalisation in the country, Sohar International has leveraged technological advancements to innovate its processes, introduce new products and increase customer engagement.

The sixth edition of New Age Banking Summit Oman will be held today at the Majan Ballroom in Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Muscat. The event, which will be hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani and supported by Oman Banks Association, will honour Tahir al Amri, Executive President, Central Bank of Oman as the chief guest and



keynote speaker.

The event will also be attended by senior-to-mid level bankers, Fintech experts, finance and investment professionals, insurance experts and business consultants.

Commenting on Sohar International's sponsorship of this relevant event, Ahmed Al Musalmi, CEO, Sohar International said, "Oman's banking sector has been undergoing a transformation in sync with the path breaking changes seen globally with adoption of new technologies to better customer service.

The New Age Banking Summit is a great platform that brings together industry stalwarts to discuss and enlighten audience of the many facets of change that the banking and finance industry is presently undergoing.

Bank Muscat partners with Outward Bound Oman for training staff

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has partnered with Outward Bound Oman to provide its employees with specialised training that will further improve their teamwork, critical thinking and effective communication skills.

Two batches of bank employees participated in these training workshops held recently at the headquarters of Outward Bound Oman in Al Khoudh. Outward Bound Oman is well-known for its focus on the development of human talent through a unique, intensive and immersive learning environment.

The training workshop for Bank Muscat employees aimed to raise their awareness of the importance of focusing on customers, and to introduce them to the importance of work ethics, and how it can be applied in the work environment.

It also pointed out the importance of dealing in a professional manner with colleagues, managers and the bank's customers. In addition to enhancing the ability of employees to assume new responsibilities and adhere to the



highest standards of integrity at work, the workshop also included several assorted activities to enhance their participation and interaction during the training.

Said bin Salim al Aufi, Group Deputy General Manager — Human Resources, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat recognises that its employees are its core strength and the primary reason for its success and accomplishments. Hence, it continuously invests resources and time to further develop their capabilities. The bank is also closely supporting efforts for further development of Omani youth through specialised programmes and courses to realise national development goals. We thank Outward Bound

Oman for their excellent training that focuses on communication, teamwork, confidence, critical thinking and creativity. This will help our employees unleash their full potential and contribute immensely both to the bank and Omani society in general."

Mohammed bin Darwish al Zadjali, CEO, Outward Bound Oman, said: "From school students to job-seekers and the emerging talent of leading organisations, Outward Bound Oman courses have helped shape the lives of thousands of people in the Sultanate, helping equip individuals with the right competencies and capabilities to support the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040.

MHD new offerings on Volvo S90 and XC60 and XC90 a great hit

MUSCAT: Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD), the proud distributor of premium Volvo cars in the Sultanate, has rolled out a bouquet of fresh benefits for buyers of Volvo S90, XC60 and XC90 models.

When price, safety and performance come into play, there is no better choice than Volvo cars. Beside the special price being offered, MHD is now offering other amazing benefits to its customers. As per the new offers, the price of Volvo S90 starts at RO 17,495, and SUV XC60 starts at RO 15,495. Volvo's flagship SUV model XC90 is now priced at RO 23,495.



Among the plethora of other benefits included are Volvo merchandise, auto Glym paint polish, free registration for the first year; warranty for five years or unlimited km/75,000 km service for 5 years.

Other attractions include facility for trade-in offers; financial services (subject to bank approval), etc. However, the prices being offered do not include VAT @5 per cent.

The new S90 which pampers its

occupants with opulence and top-end technology is packed with intelligent features such as driving assistance, expansive luxury and cutting-edge technology such as the turbocharged engine, and its pure indulgence on wheels.

The XC60, synonymous with safety, is the perfect crossover vehicle that enables one to enjoy an urbane setting as well as adventure environs. It is handsome on the outside, and has a beautiful interior. Refined, ravishing, revolutionary and roomy are some of the words that would come to the mind of a connoisseur at the first glance of this vehicle. With a power of more than 250 bhp in the diesel variant, and special Intellisafe features, it ensures a power-packed yet safer-drive option than ever before.

The XC90 is inspired by Swedish grace. Quite rightly so, as it is definitely charming on the

outside with a design that defines class, purity and minimalism. Its inside is powered by smart technologies such as Park Assist Pilot, 360-degree camera and City Safety Technology, keeping in tune with Volvo's legacy of safety.

Gung-ho about Volvo's ongoing campaign, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE, observed, "The Volvo range, known for being in tune with the needs of its customers and the society, has definitely raised the bar when it comes to its features and seamless engineering. Our new offerings have been getting a resounding response, thanks to our customer-centric approach."



UK banks push for staff return while US hindered by Delta

WHILE London's biggest banks prepared for a widespread return to the office this month, the Delta Covid-19 variant forced many on New York's Wall Street to push back plans.

Banks including Barclays, Bank of America, Citigroup, Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley expected a wave of employees to return to their UK headquarters over the course of the month.

Investment banks in the financial district of London and in Canary Wharf, opened their doors again after thousands of employees have spent nearly a year and a half working from home throughout the pandemic. Banks were hoping most staff will spend at least some of their time in the office during September.

Between 25-35 per cent of JP Morgan's 11,000 employees in London have been coming into the office throughout the summer. Bank of America expect most UK-based staff to be back by the end of this month.

As of August 31, most UK employees at Citigroup will have spent three days a week in the office, while Barclays has also asked bankers to spend more time in the office from this month.



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

FINANCIAL SERVICES FIRMS BELIEVE FLEXIBLE WORKING IS 'HERE TO STAY'. 'WHILE THERE ARE CLEAR BENEFITS OF WORKING FROM HOME AT LEAST PART OF THE TIME, FOR MANY BUSINESSES AND WORKERS, CENTRAL OFFICE HUBS STILL HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY'

Fewer than 30 per cent of Morgan Stanley's UK staff have been coming into the office, but investment bankers have been working two to three days on rotation throughout the summer, according to dealmakers.

The bank has been increasing numbers gradually this month.

Goldman Sachs, which has lured staff back with free canteen food and ice cream in recent months, has between 30 and 40 per cent of its 6,000 UK staff coming into its UK headquarters.

Numbers are expected to rise during the remainder of the year.

Credit Suisse has delayed a widespread return to its US offices for unvaccinated employees by a month to October. In the UK, however, all employees are expected to spend at least some of their working week in the office this month.

In New York, where the push back to the office began in June, plans have been hindered. Credit Suisse, Bank of Montreal, Jeffries, Perella Weinberg Partners and Wells Fargo have all delayed office returns by at least a month amid an increase in Covid cases.

Goldman and Morgan Stanley have both mandated vaccines for their US employees, but have not changed plans to ramp up employee numbers in their New York offices. JP Morgan has also kept its plans for a Wall Street return on course.

Some banking executives remain intent on bringing employees back to the office en masse.

Goldman Sachs boss David Solomon called working from home an "aberration" and has long pushed for a widespread

return, particularly for junior staff. JP Morgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon and Morgan Stanley CEO James Gorman have also called on staff to come back, although more flexible working is likely at all three banks.

Some European rivals have signalled a permanent change to their working practices. HSBC, Societe Generale, Standard Chartered, UBS and UniCredit are among those to implement permanent hybrid-working options for their employees.

More than 120,000 people work in Canary Wharf, while about 374,000 are employed in the City of London across financial and professional services.

Policy chair of the City of London Corporation, Catherine McGuinness, said that financial services firms believe flexible working is "here to stay". "While there are clear benefits of working from home at least part of the time, for many businesses and workers, central office hubs still have a crucial role to play."

She added: "Many employees are eager to return to the office for at least part of the week."

A recent poll of senior financial executives found that a large proportion (36 per cent) wanted to return to the office for three days a week.

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

OECD lowers global, US economic growth forecasts

PARIS: The OECD warned on Tuesday of an "uneven" global economic recovery as it lowered its 2021 growth forecasts for the world and the United States while raising the outlook for Europe.

The world economy has bounced back this year on the back of stimulus measures, the rollout of effective Covid vaccines and the resumption of many economic activities, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said.

"The recovery remains very uneven, with strikingly different outcomes across countries", the OECD said in its interim economic outlook.

Global gross domestic product has surpassed its pre-pandemic level following last year's Covid-induced recession.

Global output is now expected to expand by 5.7 per cent this year, down 0.1 percentage points from the organisation's previous forecast in May.

But the outlook for 2022 has slightly improved, with 4.5 per cent growth now

expected, up by 0.1 points.

"Output and employment gaps remain in many countries, particularly in emerging-market and developing economies where vaccination rates are low", the report said.

The OECD lowered its growth outlook for the United States, from 6.9 to 6.0 per cent this year. The US Congressional Budget Office has forecast 6.7 per cent growth for the world's top economy.

The OECD's eurozone forecast, however, was raised by one point to 5.3 per cent, though the outlook varied within the single-currency bloc, with higher growth now expected in France, Italy and Spain while Germany was not performing as well.

The growth prospects of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey have also improved, while those of Australia, Britain, Japan and Russia were lowered. The forecast for China, the world's second biggest economy and a driver of global growth, remained unchanged at 8.5 per cent. — AFP

Stocks attempt rebound from Evergrande-led sell-off

SINGAPORE/LONDON: World stocks stabilised on Tuesday and oil prices recovered from the previous day's heavy selling, as investors grew more confident that contagion from the distress of debt-saddled Chinese developer Evergrande would be limited.

The STOXX index of Europe's biggest shares rose 0.6 per cent while Wall Street futures rebounded 1 per cent after the S&P 500 and Nasdaq suffered their biggest daily percentage drops since May on Monday. German and US government bonds, in heavy demand amid the stock market sell-off of Monday, saw yields slip 2-3 basis points respectively.

Investors pointed to the broadly positive market backdrop with central bank money-printing and the recovery in the world economy post-pandemic as reasons to stay bullish.

"Accommodative monetary and fiscal policies and macro recovery are still suggesting a buy-the-dip strategy", said Angelo Meda, head of equities at Banor SIM in Milan.

Some caution still lingered however, given the simmering worries over the spillover from an Evergrande debt default, as well as a raft of central bank meetings including Wednesday's Federal Reserve statement that may bring the bank a step closer to tapering.

MSCI's index of world stocks was flat, having plunged 1.6% on Monday. S&P 500 futures were almost 1 per cent higher but the index stands around 4% below record highs hit in early-September.

Asian shares sold off earlier on Tuesday with Hong Kong's Hang Seng down 0.1 per cent by late afternoon, while Japan's Nikkei returned from a market holiday



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

with a drop of 2 per cent.

China's yuan steadied in offshore trade, recouping a little of the losses that sent it to a three-week low on Monday. Evergrande shares fell 4% as focus now shifts to Thursday when the company is due to make bond interest payments.

An all-staff letter from chairman Hui Ka Yuan promised the firm would fulfil its responsibilities and "walk out of its darkest moment".

Struggling for cash, the developer owes \$305 billion and markets worry a messy failure could reverberate through China's property sector and everything exposed to it — primarily banks and then the broader economy.

While Chinese mainland markets are closed for a public holiday, there was little evidence of that yet. Major Chinese state media made no mention of Evergrande's troubles. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

HANOI

Bamboo Airways to sign \$2 bn deal with GE

Vietnam's Bamboo Airways will sign a deal valued at nearly \$2 billion with General Electric to purchase GENx engines to power Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, the airline said. The deal will be signed in the United States later on Tuesday in the presence of Vietnam President Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Bamboo said in a statement.

The GENx engines, due to be delivered in 2022, will be used on the airline's wide-body Dreamliner fleet to operate planned non-stop routes between



Vietnam and the United States, the company said. "This new signing agreement will be an important milestone for the airline to expand its transcontinental flight network, connecting Vietnam with medium- and long-range markets", the statement said.

LONDON

JPMorgan takes on rivals with launch of digital bank

JPMorgan is challenging British rivals on their home turf with the launch of its long-awaited digital retail bank, Chase, as part of what the US lender hopes will be a global expansion.

The launch marks the first foray into retail banking outside North America by one of the United States' most dominant lenders, heaping pressure on British incumbents such as Lloyds, Barclays, NatWest and HSBC which are already battling low interest rates and upstart digital



rivals. "We have been watching in which markets customers are really ready to do their banking primarily through digital channels, and the UK frankly leads the way in this respect" said Sanoke Viswanathan, Chief Executive of the new Chase bank venture.

PARIS

Universal Music shares soar in stock market debut

Shares of Universal Music, whose line-up features The Beatles and Taylor Swift, soared on the label's stock market debut on Tuesday, bolstering confidence in one of the largest IPOs in recent years. The music giant was floated by its owner, French media giant Vivendi, with shares jumping from a debut price of €18.50 to over \$29 on the Euronext Amsterdam index.

The world's biggest label, with a catalogue of four million titles, was valued at \$39 billion on the



eve of its market introduction. Shares of Vivendi, by contrast, sank by more than 15 per cent on the Paris CAC 40 stock exchange as the media company offloaded a majority stake of its crown jewel.

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MECHANICAL engineer, 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

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RESEARCH & Administrative Assistant, Recruiter and Co-Ordinator, M.Sc. in Sustainable Development with 12 plus years of experience, Female, Indian, looking for employment. Contact: 98260708

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SMART Indian, excellent English, Arabic speaker, 17 years Oman experience in Airport, Hospital, Media EPC seeks Admin/ Hr/ Project coordinator/ Operations. 99283938.

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EXPERIENCED Indian with BBA and Commerce graduate, looking for suitable openings in Sales and Marketing. Well versed in English, Arabic, Hindi and Urdu. Possess valid Oman driving licence. Contact GSM 95236249, E: shairazshkh80@gmail.com

SENIOR Accountant, with 15 years of Accounting experience in Oman seeks immediate placement. Can handle accounts independently including finalisation. Ready to join immediately. NOC available. Please contact: 78581435.

INDIAN male, 24, B.E. computer science, masters in GIS from UK. Seeking placement in GIS field. Having Oman driving licence. Contact: 99738614.

INDIAN male, accountant with 8 years experience in GCC (4 years in Oman), doing up to finalisation of accounts, looking for suitable placement, Oman D/L & NOC available, Mobile: 93849217, email: ishaque150@gmail.com

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, Projects, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

INDIAN, male, Master Degree in Accounting, 15+ years of experience in Oman, UAE & India as Finance / Accounts Manager/ Chief Accountant. Looking for a job and have noc on visit. Contact: 79007124/ 78039524. email: kadercok@outlook.com

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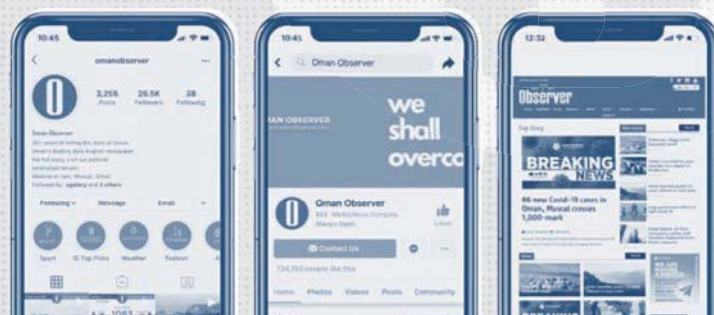
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features



Memories of visiting Fanja from the wadi

Visiting places in Oman opens a lot of doors for discoveries. When this writer visited Fanja four years ago, she was mesmerised by the old towers that can be found all over the village. As she revisits the place, this time through the wadi, she is reminded of that first visit and recollected what made her awe-inspired by its charm... **P18**

READ

BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY

BY QIAN JULIE WANG

A 7-year-old girl and her parents encounter difficulties in New York City when they leave China in the 1990s.

Picasso family hands over artworks to pay French tax

ONE OF PICASSO'S daughters has given eight of his artworks and a book of drawings to the French state in lieu of inheritance tax at a ceremony on Monday.

Six paintings and two statues by the Spanish master were handed over to the state-run Picasso Museum in Paris by his daughter Maya Ruiz-Picasso, his daughter by French model

Marie-Therese Walter.

They include "The child with the lollipop sitting under a chair", likely featuring Maya as a child, and representing a fearful world on the eve of World War II, according to grandson Olivier Widmaier Picasso.

He was at a press conference at the museum alongside Culture Minister Roselyne Bachelot, who called the dona-

tion "one of the most important of recent decades".

The works were heirlooms for his children, and include a statue in a Polynesian style of a type the artist kept as totems in his workshop.

The oldest work is dated to 1895 — a traditional portrait of his father, "Don Jose Ruiz", also a painter.

The most recent is "Head of a Man", a cubist portrait from summer 1971, two years before his death at the age of 91.

They will be on show at the Picasso Museum, which has the largest collection of his works in the world, from April 2022.

The value of the works was not given for reasons of tax secrecy, as the donation allows 86-year-old Ruiz-Picasso to pay off her inheritance tax in kind. — AFP



ART



Sahara camel race glory brings boy jockey big dreams for his future

TEN-YEAR-OLD MOUSSA will bask in the glory of the week-end camel race in Niger for a long time. Little higher than his victorious charger's knees, the boy fairly flew across the desert to snatch first prize in one of the most prestigious events of the Sahara.

The competition drew racing camels from across Niger — and further afield — to the oasis town of In Gall, the country's traditional gateway to the Sahara and scene of the annual Cure Salee gathering of Tuareg and Wodaabe nomads.

But it was Moussa — more used to long, hot days tending his father's cattle in the desert — who won Saturday's big race.

Moussa does not go to school but has been riding camels, cantankerous beasts that roar, snort and spit foul-smelling bile at their enemies, since he was three years old. At seven, he says, he began venturing out solo. "I used to be afraid to ride camels alone", he says.

Now one metre (three foot three inches) tall, Moussa is dreaming of a golden future in

which he will have "plenty of camels" and above all "will win other races".

The race is a highlight of the three-day nomad festival, when far-flung herders lead their cattle from up to 400 kilometres (250 miles) away, converging on three springs of water rich in mineral salts that give the gathering its name.

MUSIC AND MARRIAGES

The celebration comes after the rains in mid-September, with music and ritual dances, courtship and weddings and vaccinations for beasts and their masters, bringing relief from the nomads' increasingly hard lives — marginalised and trapped in a region riven by violence.

For this brief respite, people prefer not to talk about their troubles but to just have fun.

"There is football in Europe, here we have camel racing", says Khamid Ekwel, a renowned owner of racing camels.

So at dawn on Saturday, hundreds of herders pushed against the barriers of the stadium — a track of five kilometres

(three miles) in the desert marked out by stones painted white — to watch the race over two laps.

Dozens of pick-ups are strategically parked to give spectators standing on their roofs the best view. Others have brought their camels — around two metres at the shoulder — to gain a little height. Everyone waits under the sun rising in a blue sky, betting on the 25 animals in the race.

The camels soon arrive and are placed behind a green rope stretched across the starting line. The jockeys are young — for the lighter they are, the faster the beasts will go.

Lahsanne Abdallah Najim, a race official and himself owner of one of the favourites, is stressed: He must ensure an orderly start, but at the same time wants his animal to win.

The big moment is here. Najim gets into his pick-up, signals to about 15 people to climb in the back, readjusts his scarf on his nose, then clamps down his brakes while waiting for the white flag.

The flag drops. The camels

head off at a gallop. The spectators shout. Najim's vehicle and a dozen others roar off, kicking up a sandstorm. Soon, we can't see much, the animals are already far ahead.

'A WINNING CAMEL'

In his car, Najim smiles: "There are some who choose speed now, but they will be last in the end. It's on the second lap that you need to accelerate."

After the first five kilometres, four camels are neck and neck and Najim's animal is one. Under his scarf he recites passages from the Quran.

Motorcycles and pick-ups spin on the track and their drivers scream but the jockeys pay them no heed.

Their only aim is to coax their camels to go ever faster in the final sprint to the finish.

"It was a terrible final sprint", Najim says. "Even more terrible for me because I'm fourth."

The four frontrunners are soon brought in front of the platform where Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum is installed.

Little Moussa is grinning broadly after his victory on a camel named Mahokat ("the madman").

Mahokat's coach, Mohamed Ali, is happy but not surprised.

Before the race, he had predicted: "This camel is a winning camel. This very day, inshallah."

Such prized camels may live in the depths of the desert but they are known across the region: Regularly winning races. Their owners are rich, but say they are not looking for money.

"There are prizes of course, but they are not what interest us. It is to win", Hassan Mohamed, owner of a large stable, says with a smile.

"We are looking for pleasure and glory alone." — **AFP**

ANIMAL PLANET

Older sisters better for elephants than brothers, research suggests



YOUNG ELEPHANTS benefit from having older sisters more than older brothers, new research suggests. Researchers at universities in Finland, Britain and Myanmar found that Asian elephant siblings influence younger offspring from early on through to later-life.

Being raised with older siblings strongly increased the calves' long-term survival compared to not having a sibling.

The study of semi-captive Asian elephants in Myanmar also found that sisters had a bigger impact than older brothers.

Female elephants raised with older sisters had higher long-term survival and reproduced for the first time an average of two years earlier, compared to those with older brothers.

Reproducing at an earlier age is generally associated with more offspring over the course of an elephant's lifetime, researchers say.

While male elephants raised with older sisters had lower survival but higher body weight, compared to those with older brothers.



According to the researchers, this seemingly detrimental effect maybe explained by a live-fast, die young strategy, where the positive early increase in body mass could lead to survival costs later in life.

Dr Verane Berger, at the University of Turku in Finland — lead author of the study, said: "Our research confirms that sibling relationships shape individual lives, particularly in social species, such as the elephants, where cooperative behaviours are essential to the development, survival and reproductive potential of individuals."

The long-term consequences from sibling effects are understudied in long-lived animals, perhaps because the logistical challenges of field studies make it hard to investigate effects over an animal's entire lifespan.

In this study, researchers were able to overcome this by studying a population of government-owned, semi-captive timber elephants in Myanmar, for which extensive life history records are kept.

During the day these animals are used as riding, transport and draft animals.

At night they live unsupervised in forests and can interact and mate with both wild and tame elephants.

The calves are raised by their mothers until they are five when they are trained for work. The Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE) imposes regulations on the daily and annual workload of elephants.

For the study published in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*, researchers used a large, multi-generational data set of semi-captive Asian elephants to look at the influence the presence and the sex of elder siblings on the body mass, reproduction, sex, and survival of the next calf. The records included reproductive and longevity information for 2,344 calves born between 1945 and 2018. Researchers say that as the study was correlational, the influence of external factors outside sibling effects, such as the quality of maternal care and elephants' workload and management, cannot be excluded. — **PA Media/dpa**

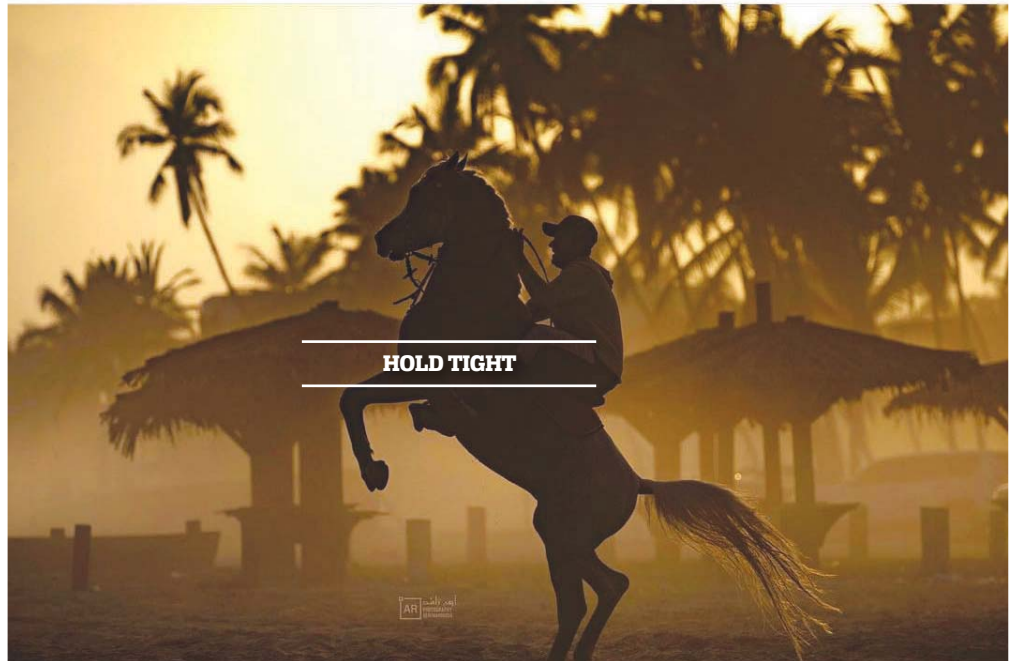


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ENTERTAINMENT

Permission to Dance? BTS sing their way through United Nations



FULLY VACCINATED South Korean band BTS danced its way through the United Nations in a Monday broadcast, promoting global goals tackling poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change ahead of the annual UN gathering of world leaders. The seven-member group filmed a music video to its song 'Permission to Dance' in the world body's New York headquarters over the weekend, dancing through the General Assembly hall and out into the gardens. It was broadcast during an event on the Sustainable Development Goals.



BTS — whose members declared they were all fully vaccinated against Covid-19 — also appeared in person at the event in the General Assembly, introduced by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. They are the UN's Special Presidential Envoys for Future Generations and Culture.

They shared their thoughts and those of young people worldwide on the past two years and the future, expressing their frustration during the pandemic.

"I was saddened to hear that entrance and graduation ceremonies had to be cancelled," said Jeon Jung-Kook, known as Jungkook. "These are moments in life you want to celebrate and missing out on them must have been upsetting. We were heartbroken when our long planned concert tours were cancelled."

They praised the resilience of youth, saying they were not "Covid's lost generation."

"I think it's a stretch to say they're lost just because paths they tread can't be seen by grown-up eyes," said BTS group leader Kim Nam-Joon, known as RM.

Kim Seok-Jin, known as Jin, added: "Instead of the 'lost generation' a more appropriate name would be the 'welcome generation' because instead of fearing change, this generation says 'welcome' and keeps forging ahead." — Reuters

FASHION

5 things to know from London Fashion Week



LONDON FASHION Week closed with a flourish Tuesday, the first major return to live runway shows in the British capital in 18 months following the coronavirus pandemic.

Here are five points that stood out from the London spring/summer 2022 collections:

BACK TO NORMAL... SORT OF

February's edition was held online and a few in-person shows took place last September, but this time, audiences were back with a vengeance, without social distancing requirements or mask mandates.

Guests, however, had to show proof of vaccination or a negative test for Covid-19. Some designers eager to return to the traditional format went all out. South Korea-born designer Rejina Pyo took over the swimming pool at London's Olympic Park. Athletes opened and closed the show with spectacular dives in a well-choreographed routine.

Turkish-British designer Erdem Moralioglu marked 15 years in the business by taking over the majestic British Museum for a "love letter to London's idiosyncratic soul". At the heart of his collection, inspired by the poet Edith Sitwell and the painter Ottoline Morrell, romantic black-and-white silhouettes dominated, with dresses in lace and florals.

EMERGING TALENTS

Two major brands, Burberry and Victoria Beckham, were absent, allowing emerging talents to take centre stage. Among several alumni of London's

prestigious Central Saint Martins fashion school was Albanian designer Nensi Dojaka, 27, in her first solo show. She showcased glamorous creations, some transparent, and others in graphic detail.

The Fashion East "talent incubator" was also an opportunity to discover the stars of tomorrow, such as Chet Lo, and his giant yellow picot shoulder bags.

OPTIMISM AND VITALITY

French designer Roland Mouret said he wanted to reflect the changes in society since the lifting of lockdown restrictions, celebrating "an optimism" in the season's silhouettes, prints and colours.

"The collection is rooted in an understanding of the new ways (women) live their lives and how they dress, as the world is re-emerging," he added.

For anyone wanting to party after spending the winter months inside, look no further than Canadian Mark Fast's neon, figure-hugging outfits. Apple green and fuchsia were a stand-out choice of colours for many designers.

BACK TO CHILDHOOD

The return to childhood inspired several designers, such as Britain's Molly Goddard and Saul Nash.

Nash, 28, featured young men gravitating to a London bus stop — a nod to his teenage years in Hackney, in the northeast of the British capital. The sportswear ace reimagined that stable of school-boy uniforms — the short-sleeve shirt — with breathable fabric inserts and a zip. Goddard, known for her airy tulle dresses, reimagined the

outfits she wore as a child in adult proportions. "I was eight months pregnant when I started designing this collection and imagined the clothes my child would wear," she said. "I was fixated on smocked dresses, tracksuit bottoms and ballet pumps."

ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The fashion and textile industry is the third most polluting sector in the world, accounting for some five per cent of global greenhouse emissions.

Prompted by environmental movements such as Extinction Rebellion, many designers are changing their practices.

Rather than ordering new materials, Canadian Edeline Lee said she used fabrics from past collections as she worked on it during lockdown.

"I felt like it would be wrong to order fabrics for the new collection — no one was even going out — so we decided to use all the fabric that was leftover in the studio," she said.

"That's how I ended up with 53 colours."

Osman Yousefzada used TENCEL Luxe, a thread made from sustainably sourced wood pulp, as an alternative to silk.

At the British Library, Phoebe English, whose collections are made entirely in England, also presented works made with recovered textiles and using natural dyes. "Now we think very differently about what we use to make the clothes that we make. And we do that because of the huge environmental cost that the fashion industry has," she said. — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

Scientists in Singapore transform fruit leftovers into antibacterial bandages



SCIENTISTS AT NANYANG Technological University (NTU) in Singapore are tackling food waste by turning discarded durian husks into antibacterial gel bandages.

The process extracts cellulose powder from the fruit's husks after they are sliced and freeze-dried, then mixes it with glycerol. This mixture becomes soft hydrogel, which is then cut into bandage strips.

"In Singapore, we consume about 12 million durians a year, so besides the flesh, we can't do much about the husk and the seeds and this cause environmental pollution," said William Chen, director of the food science and technology programme at NTU.



The fruit's husks, which make up more than half of the composition of durians, are usually discarded and incinerated, contributing to environmental waste.

Professor Chen added that the technology can also turn other food waste, such as soya beans and spent grains, into hydrogel, helping limit the country's food waste. Compared to conventional bandages, the organo-hydrogel bandages are also able to keep wound areas cooler and moist, which can help accelerate healing. The researchers say using waste materials and yeast for the antimicrobial bandages is more cost effective than the production of conventional bandages, whose antimicrobial properties come from more expensive metallic compounds such as silver or copper ions.

A durian wholesaler, Tan Eng Chuan, said that he goes through at least 30 crates of durians a day during durian season - as much as 1,800 kg. Being able to use the parts of the fruit that are ordinarily discarded, he said, was an innovation that would make enjoying it "more sustainable". — Reuters



Memories of visiting Fanja from the wadi

By Roselyn Banguis-Ebuen

The first time I saw Fanja was through the chaotic beauty of raindrops on the car window while my friend was slowly trying to figure out where the road was. That was four years ago. We were headed to Rustaq to visit Ain Thowarah but a beautiful, refreshing rain decided to welcome us as we exited Muscat. Seeing the lush green canopies of the date farms from afar, my husband suggested we go check out what that 'luscious beauty' was all about.

The rain didn't last long as it usually does in September. But it was enough to drench the plants on the field and as they sway with the cool breeze, I thought they were happy to have that moment of respite from the heat.

Passing through the snaking road that led towards the farms, I was barely listening as the two men in front erupted into a verbal fight over which road to take. Not paying them any mind and from where I was seated in the back, I took my time enjoying how the old and new mix together in that village that to this day remained nameless to me.

Even then, under my breath, I whispered it looked 'beautiful.' It was a charming scene, one that I usually just see in post-cards — the brown, dominating presence of the village ruins peeking from the sea of green.

We stopped by an old mud tower, the same tower that overlooks the newer bridge a few hundred kilometres away. My two companions dashed off to climb it and seeing how rotten it looked, I rebuked the idea but eventually changed my mind when I saw them on the top shouting the beauty they see down below. It was safe, they said.

The tower was on someone's farm although the owner might be home faraway enjoying late lunch with his family. When I slowly climbed the muddy stairs, I realised that it was sturdier than I first thought. While some portions of it were damaged and the stairs were missing some good steps, I was able to get to the top without a problem.

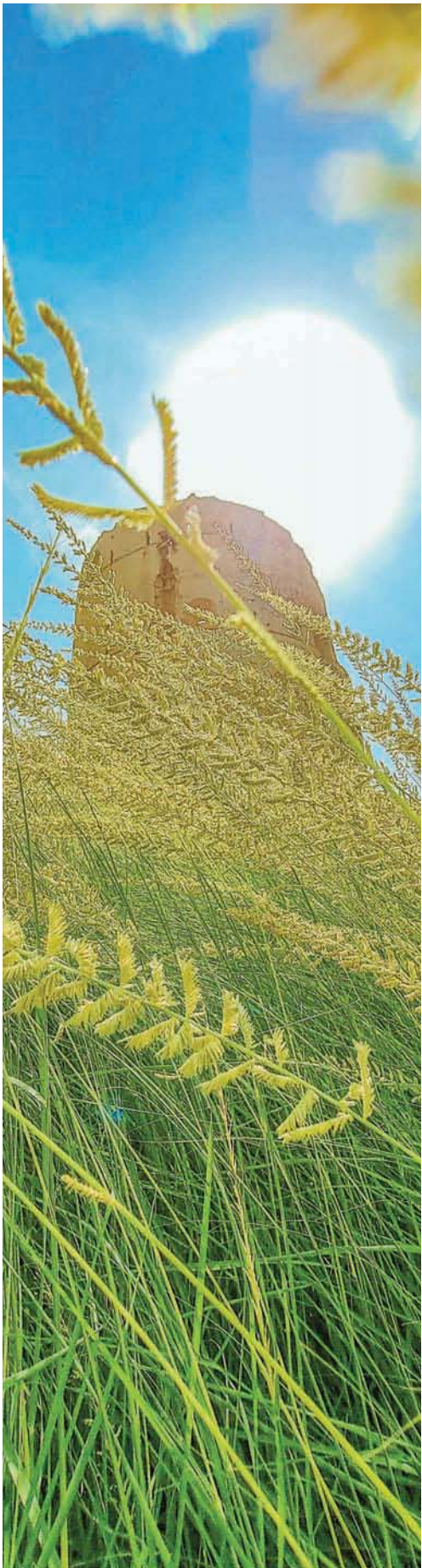
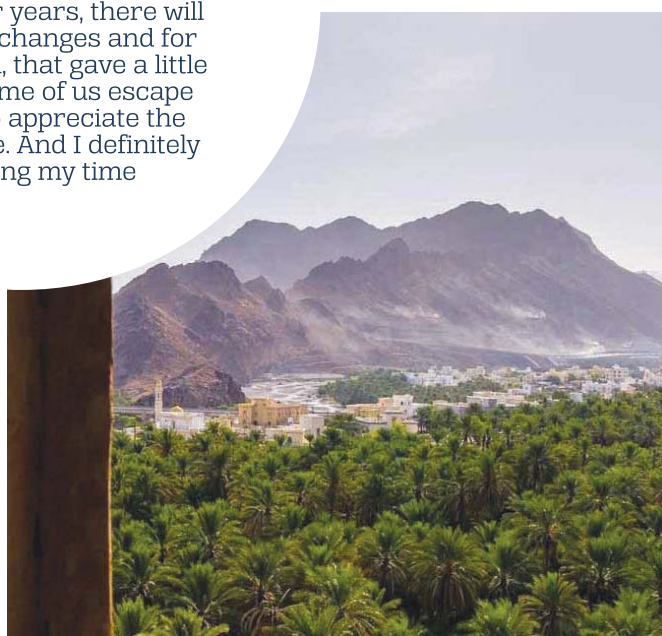
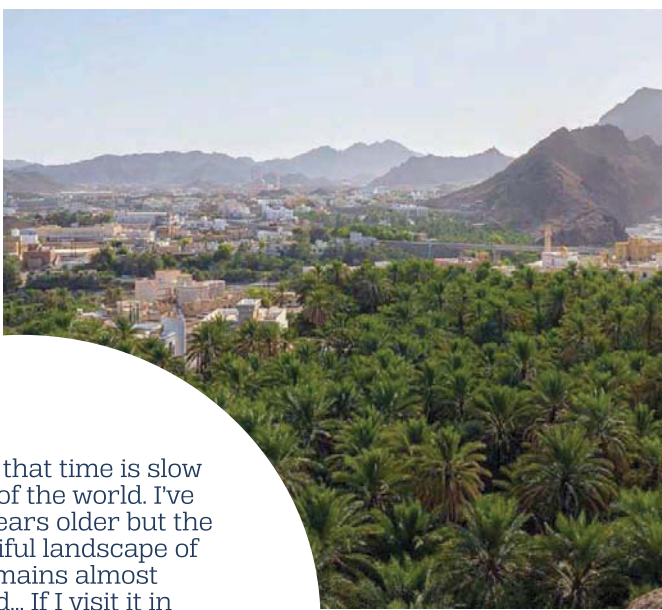
There were small windows facing nearly all directions. Seeing that my two excited companions were both hunched on the one facing the mountains, I inched forward to the one facing the wadi.

"This is not a place for an Omani woman", I said to myself. Knowing what I know now, different towers in Oman served different purposes. This one in particular is a watchtower allowing the villagers to see who is coming. From where I was peering through, I can see the falaj down below barely a metre away from a cliff that drops towards the wadi.

In my next visits, I would dis-



I told myself that time is slow in this part of the world. I've grown four years older but the stark, beautiful landscape of Fanja remains almost untouched... If I visit it in another four years, there will still be little changes and for some reason, that gave a little comfort. Some of us escape big cities to appreciate the beauty of life. And I definitely am taking my time



cover that the farms are divided into different owners. The water flows continuously but is divided among the farms.

I was only at the top of the tower for 10 minutes but it felt like a long time. There were so many things to process, so many scenes to appreciate, and so much history to contemplate. I wondered where that ancient Fanja village was, the one where they used to have dance celebrations on special occasions. They said that a spring runs eternally under that ancient settle-

ment and that very spring has been providing the villages with the water they need for their farms.

I remembered enjoying trailing the falaj and the awe I felt to see the tower from the point of view of the wadi. It was a powerful tower and rising above the tall grasses, I could have sworn I saw a photo of it a long time ago, somewhere not Oman and somewhere in the wet, landscape of Ireland or Britain.

That first visit to Fanja would only get enhanced with every visit. On our next visits,

we discovered many more amazing things — the roads that cut through the heart of Fanja actually is a shortcut to the roads of Rustaq, that the pots that are sold in the souq are delivered from the potters of far off wilayats including Bahla. I've tried my first dried shark from the Fanja souq and I've also bought my first Oman mementoes from a forgotten store at the far end of the old market.

We recently explored Fanja again but this time traversing the long expanse of the wadi.

The wadi bed is still dry but the plants on the farms are still as lush as ever. We saw that first tower we climbed four years back and from where we were parked in the wadi, it was as powerful as I remembered it — a little bit older but still possessing so much character it covers the sun from some angle.

The grasses still waved, the wind still cool although there was no rain. This is what I love about Oman. It's the little discovery that you can't have anywhere else. As I followed

the falaj trail passing by the tower, my naughty excited dog Pfiper jumping around, I told myself that time is slow in this part of the world. I've grown four years older but the stark, beautiful landscape of Fanja remains almost untouched just like the way I saw it the first time. If I visit it in another four years, there will still be little changes and for some reason, that gave a little comfort. Some of us escape big cities to appreciate the beauty of life. And I definitely am taking my time.