

P11

SMITH, SANJU
POWER
ROYALS



P15

INVESTORS SLASH
\$50 BILLION
FROM TESLA
MARKET VALUE



P19

MASIRAH
ISLAND, CLOSER
TO GOD AND TO
NATURE



OMAN

HM greetings to Guinea-Bissau

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Umaro Sissoco Embalo of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Embalo, and the friendly people of Guinea-Bissau further progress and welfare.

REGION

US seeks progress on Sudan relations

WASHINGTON: With weeks to go before US elections, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is racing to make a breakthrough with Sudan that he hopes could also benefit Israel. Sudan's new civilian-led government is urgently seeking to be removed from the US blacklist and is seen by Washington as open to becoming the latest Arab state to recognise Israel — a major cause for President Donald Trump's electoral base.

DETAILS ON P6

TO LATEST
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INSIDE



FRANCE BACKS HARIRI'S IDEA TO END LOGJAM

P6



FIRES, FLOODS HURL CLIMATE CHANGE TO FORE OF US ELECTION

P9

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 38°C
MIN: 26°C

SALALAH
MAX: 31°C
MIN: 25°C

NIZWA
MAX: 40°C
MIN: 26°C

SUNRISE 05.56 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

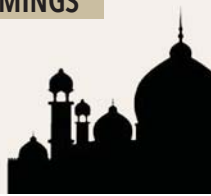
FAJR: 04:41

DHUHR: 12:04

ASR: 15:29

MAGHRIB: 18:07

ISHA: 19:17



RELIEF AID TO SUDAN BY SEA

The Sultanate continues operating relief aid operations to Sudan by sea, following massive flooding caused by heavy rains which have inundated large swathes of the country. The move comes in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, in pursuance of similar assistance and humanitarian efforts extended by the Sultanate to sisterly and friendly countries during emergencies or exceptional conditions.



AIRPORT REOPENING TRIAL SET

100 VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE PART IN READINESS DRILLS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Over 100 volunteers, both expatriates and citizens, will take part in the operational readiness trials of Muscat International Airport on September 25.

The trials which start at 9 am on Friday will be similar to ones which were conducted prior to the opening of the new Muscat Airport in March 2018.

Around 75 volunteers have been selected by Taawon Network to help authorities to implement the COVID-19 precautionary measures.

The Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the CEO of the Civil Aviation Authority are expected to give more details at a press conference on Thursday.

As part of the trials, Muscat Airport will be conducting health screening procedures and COVID-19 testing for all arriving passengers, and so we are inviting 150 volunteers to undergo full arrival process including registration, immigration, COVID-19 PCR tests (nasal swabs),



and exit through the baggage claim hall.

The airport will be also testing the drive-through COVID-19 testing facility with the help of a smaller number of volunteers.

As part of the trial, the volunteers will receive a free PCR test (worth RO 25), with the result communicated within 24 hours.

Resumption of flights is the key

operated from Muscat airport also declined by 60.6 per cent.

TRAVEL SLUMP

Global airlines called for airport COVID-19 tests for all departing international passengers to replace the quarantines they blame for exacerbating the travel slump.

Rapid and affordable antigen tests that can be administered by non-medical staff are expected to become available in "coming weeks" and should be rolled out under globally agreed standards, the head of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said during an online media briefing.

"We don't see any alternative solution that would be less challenging or more effective," IATA Director General Alexandre de Juniac said.

Airlines hammered by the pandemic are pressing governments to embrace alternatives to blanket travel restrictions that are still hampering a traffic recovery - and now tightening again in Europe amid resurgent case numbers.

Support for private sector till year end

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The packages which were announced by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19 in April to support the private sector companies and the national economy will continue till the year-end.

As per the details, sponsors will continue to pay the reduced Civil ID renewal fee of RO 201, instead of RO 301, until the end of this year.

Multiple establishments owned by the same partners may delegate their employees to work in any of those establishments when necessary.

Employers can renew the expired licence of their expatriate workers who are currently abroad without any fine after coordinating with the competent authorities.

Sponsors are exempted from paying fees or fines for the permits of their non-Omani employees if they leave the country permanently.

Work licences may be approved for a non-Omani workforce that is partial or temporary use, where fees are calculated for the number that the establishment wants.

Private sector establishments will be allowed to use the workforce of other establishments to work in their facilities according to a written agreement between the establishments.

The package also allows the affected private sector institutions and companies to terminate the labour contracts of the non-Omani workforce, provided that these institutions commit to paying all pending dues to the workers before leaving the country permanently.

Use screen time wisely to avoid vision damage

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

This is a pandemic truth that screen time has increased for everyone as most of the people do not have any option but to spend extended time on the screens due to their professional and other requirements.

Experts find an issue with the prolonged use of computers or any other smart screen for their adverse impact on eyes and other body parts. A senior ophthalmologist raised concern over cases of computer vision syndrome (CVS), the symptoms for which develop with the prolonged use of a computer.

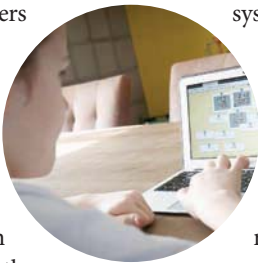
He is more worried about children who have to give more time to computer or smartphone screens for their online classes during the COVID-19 situation. While explaining the possible problems, he gave some tips to avoid the CVS and

minimise the impact of extended screen time on our eyes.

In an interview with the *Observer*, Dr Mukund Nayak, Senior Ophthalmologist, said, "Computers have become an integral part of our life. Overexposure to computer screens may cause permanent changes or damage the vision system, and ultimately may reduce the productivity of the affected person."

He cited recent data that suggested about 15 per cent of cases in any ophthalmic clinic were related to the excess use of a computer.

"The symptoms of CVS include eyestrain, headache, blurred vision, dryness in eyes, itching, twitching of eyelids, neck pain, shoulder pain, etc. Uncorrected visual conditions, poor computer design, and workplace ergonomics are contributing factors for CVS."



TURN TO P2



STARS OF SALALAH CAST A SPELL ON SHUTTERBUGS

Besides its wonderful natural sights, Salalah is one of the most spectacular places for stargazing due to its splendid beaches and wonderful wadis and mountains, especially during the khareef season. The more the visitors stay in Salalah, the more they discover and the more they fall in love with everything of it. Another reason that enriches its splendid nature is that Oman offers a large number of places where people can watch the stars. PHOTO BY SACHIN SINGH



MAFWR, OFMC sign deal



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) on Wednesday signed a memorandum of cooperation with Oman Flour Mills Company (OFMC). According to the memorandum, the company will buy locally produced wheat from farmers during the harvest season.

The memorandum was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, MAFWR Under-Secretary for Agriculture, and Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of the OFMC. — ONA

Oman sends aid to Sudan

MUSCAT: The Sultanate continues operating its relief aid operations to Sudan by sea, following massive flooding caused by heavy rains that inundated large swathes of the country.

Military transport vessels of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) set out from Said bin Sultan Naval Base on Wednesday laden with a variety of basic human requirements and other relief items. The relief aid is operated, in coordination with Oman Charitable Organisation.

The move comes in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, in pursuance of similar assistance and humanitarian efforts extended by the Sultanate to friendly countries during emergencies or exceptional conditions. — ONA

628 new cases, 10 deaths



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday announced 628 new cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, taking the total confirmed cases to 95,339.

The number of recoveries stood at 86,482, which is 90.7 per cent of the total cases reported so far.

Ten new COVID-19 related deaths were reported on Wednesday, taking the total to 875.

The ministry also pointed out that 64 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, bringing the total of COVID-19 patients currently in hospitals to 519, of whom 190 are in intensive care units (ICU). — ONA

Report cyber crimes, says ROP

NEVER SHARE INFO: Two people arrested on charges of extortion via social media

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has called on social media users to report any suspicious cyber crimes be it blackmailing or bullying.

“Report any attempt of any intruder to lure you to any immoral or illegal activity or if you are potentially exposed to online blackmail,” the Public Relations Department of the ROP told the Observer.

“Do not send personal pictures to a stranger or a new friend through any of the social media platforms, nor should you share personal information,” an official said.

This comes in the wake of the arrest of two people by the General Department of Criminal Investigations on charges of threatening and extortion via social media.

The culprit befriended the victims through a fake account on a social media platform where he claimed that he worked for a prominent company in a senior position and that he had lucrative deals for them. Later, he lured them with money and gifts to commit immoral acts and filmed the same. This was followed by continuous blackmailing and threats of extortion at the end of which the victims decided to report the same to the police.

“Cybercrimes are increasing and taking different forms,” according to Ruqaiya al Tobiyah, Team Leader, Cyber Security Alliances and Cooperation, Oman National CERT.

“This is even more at a time when children are allowed to spend more time online due to online classes. Make your children your friends and not alienate them. Let them share their day-to-day life details with you,” she said.

According to her, both girls and boys are equally subject to cyber blackmailing, cyberbullying, fraud, and revenge. The fraudsters take delay in reporting such crimes for granted and cases may go unnoticed.



Members of the families, teachers, and parents should educate their children about the dangers of using social media inappropriately and to recognise such attempts that aim at luring the children and to report any such experience to elders in time,” the ROP official said.

According to statistics available with the official sources, as many as 35 children were involved in cybersecurity crimes in Oman just in a period of six months last year.

Children between 13 and 16 years were said to be the victims of the cybercrimes during the period, and 22 cases were reported in the previous year, according to the Oman Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT). There were 27 extortion incidents, three fraud cases, and five hacked accounts last year.

Cut screen time to avoid ‘computer vision syndrome’

FROM PAGE 1

The symptoms related to CVS are generally temporary and decline after stopping computer work at the end of the day. But some people experience blurred vision and dryness even after work.

Besides prolonged screen time, other contributing CVS factors are glare on the screen, reflections of light from windows, wrongly placed monitor, improper blinking, and uncorrected refractive errors.

Dr Nayak said, correction of refractive errors, if any, like short-sightedness, long-sightedness, astigmatism, presbyopia, etc significantly reduce the symptoms of CVS. He suggested regular and comprehensive eye examinations to avoid this situation.

He clarified about radiation from computers and said, “Computers emit a small amount of radiation, like ultraviolet and infrared rays, these radiations have no direct impact on the eyes, as the quantity of these radiations is minimal.



Dr Mukund Nayak

There is no evidence that radiation from computers contributes to the development of cataracts.”

Workplace lighting, according to him, is an important factor for the development of symptoms of eyes. “Direct exposure of the natural light from the windows or overhead fluorescent lights should be avoided. Proper room design and arrangements are essential.”

The brightness of the screen and the surrounding room should be

Besides prolonged screen time, other contributing CVS factors are glare on the screen, reflections of light from windows, wrongly placed monitor, improper blinking, and uncorrected refractive errors

balanced. Filters can be used over the screen to reduce glare and reflections.

“Placement of computer is also an import contributory factor for the CVS. A viewing distance of 20 to 28 inches is generally recommended. The top of the screen should be below the level of the horizontal eye level of the operator.

High placed computers can cause easy fatigue and stress to the eye molecules. The eyes should be at least 15-20 degrees while viewing

the computer screen. The top of the screen also should be tilted to about 15-20 degrees away from the operator.

“Workstation furniture should be adjusted and designed so that the operator can easily change his position. The airtight environment is also a factor which traps vapours, which is an issue for contact lens users,” he said.

“Blinking more often and use of artificial tears will reduce the symptoms. Give rest to your eyes every 20 minutes, and look 20 feet away for 20 seconds (follow 20-20-20) rule. Get up from your chair every 2 hours and take a break of 15 minutes,” are some pieces of suggestions from Dr Nayak.

“Above 40-45 years of age, our natural lens gets harder that demands the use of corrective glasses to avoid eyestrain. Judicious use of computers and mobile phones is important to reduce the eyestrain headache and dryness of eyes. If any of these symptoms are experienced, consultation with an ophthalmologist is essential, he emphasised.

Oman Air to resume Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam flights

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEP 23

Oman Air will resume scheduled services to Zanzibar from October 1, including two flights per week connecting Muscat and Zanzibar, which will depart from Muscat on Thursdays and Saturdays, and return on Thursdays and Sundays.

Flights to Dar es Salaam will also depart on Thursdays and Saturdays with return flights on Thursdays and Sundays.

Guests travelling to Zanzibar or Dar es Salaam do not need to take a coronavirus test before they travel or when they arrive at their destination and no quarantine is required.

Citizens of Oman are not required

Guests travelling to Zanzibar or Dar es Salaam do not need to take a coronavirus test before they travel or when they arrive at their destination and no quarantine is required

to obtain a visa; citizens of other nations should review official sources of information to determine if they need a visa to enter the United Republic of Tanzania.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme



throughout all elements of the travel to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are onboard 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 every day.

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 steps have been taken to ensure that the airline’s guests and crew are safe at all times. Guests departing from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements and requirements during their flights, the airline said.



STARS OF SALALAH CAST A SPELL ON SHUTTERBUGS

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY SACHIN SINGH

Besides its wonderful natural sights, Salalah is one of the most spectacular places to go stargazing due to its splendid beaches and wonderful wadis and mountains, especially during the Khareef season.

The more the visitors stay in Oman, the more they discover and the more they fall in love with everything in it. Another reason that enriches its splendid nature is that Oman offers a large number of places where people can watch the stars.

The key to stargazing was scouting a location undisturbed by artificial lighting or light pollution. The period between April and September are the best to photograph the Milky Way in the Sultanate.

Spread over six months during weekends and holidays, we went scouting for clear skies to shoot Milky Way. This writer along with his family and members of Salalah photography club (SPC), visited many remote locations in the Dhofar governorate in Sultanate to photograph stars.

Hadbeen, Hasik, Jabal samhan, Fizaya mountains, Al Hoota beach, golden sand dunes of the empty quarter of were chosen to shoot stunning pictures of Milkyway galaxy.

Braving reptiles, spiders, ants and mosquitos, we wanted to get the best shots. Most of the locations are rarely inhabited places or deserts.

The photographers took care by carrying sufficient water and food for a comfortable stay in the lonely place for prolonged hours.



The night sky has many awesome and inspiring visions. Capturing these astronomical phenomena that are

often invisible to the naked eye keeps shutter bugs like us motivated and explore new challenges.

Foreign investments up 12 per cent in 2018

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyp

Foreign investment in the Sultanate registered a significant rise of 12.1 per cent to reach RO 19.969 billion at the end of 2018 compared to RO 17.806 billion in the previous year.

According to the latest Foreign Investment Survey conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, there has been a noticeable growth in foreign investment size, at both the direct and indirect levels.

The growth, says the report, "is supported by well-informed government policies, legislations and economic incentives at the best global standards and practices".

Foreign direct investments (FDI) represented 63.6 per cent of the total foreign investment in 2018, while other foreign investments, which includes trade credit, loans and project finance, was 32.6 per cent.

The share of foreign portfolio investment and financial derivatives were 3.7 per cent and 0.1 per cent, respectively.

The report points out that the flow of foreign investments could "also be ascribed to the regional and international prestigious position occupied by the Sultanate as an attractive environment for investments, together with the strategic location, advanced infrastructure, active and safe economic climate and transparent fiscal systems.

The oil and gas exploration sector was the dominant recipient of foreign



The UK was the major source with RO 6.624 billion in 2018 followed by the US with RO 1.553 billion and the UAE with RO 1.033 billion

investment at 48.8 per cent with a sum of RO 9.736 billion in 2018 compared to RO 7,519 million in 2017 and RO 5,267.2 million in 2016.

It was followed by financial intermediation (25.1 per cent), manufacturing (14.1 per cent) and transport, storage and communication (3.9 per cent).

At the same time, FDI in the country stood at RO 12.694 billion in

2018 compared to RO 10.662 in 2017, an increase of 19 per cent.

While the oil and gas exploration sector contributed 67.3 per cent of the total FDI in 2018 with an amount of 8,540.1 million, the financial intermediation and manufacturing sectors received 11.4 per cent and 9.1 per cent.

Although RO 12.694 billion FDI arrived from a total of 50 countries, just nine countries accounted for the major part of 86.9 per cent, the report points out.

The United Kingdom was the major source with RO 6.624 billion in 2018 followed by the US with RO 1.553 billion and the UAE with RO 1.033 billion. Other top investors were Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the Netherlands, India and Switzerland.

MoH organises workshop on pharmacoeconomics

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Occupational Development & Guidance section in the Directorate General of Medical Supplies (DGMS), in collaboration with Merck Company is holding a training virtual workshop on applying pharmacoeconomics.

Specialists in health economic management from the Sultanate and abroad along with the MoH pharmacists are participating in the workshop.

The three-week workshop aims to introduce the key concepts of Pharmacoeconomics and scientific ways of implementation and discuss the implications of results of pharmacoeconomics study in the Sultanate, as well as understanding the assessment of economic studies of the new and existing pharmaceutical products in order to make the best decision and ensure better results for the patient. — ONA



Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos PVT School is currently seeking teachers to fill the following vacancies:

- 1. Biology Teacher (Female).**
- 2. Physics Teacher (Female).**

Requirements: Candidates must have:

- B.A. in the subject /B.Ed.
- Minimum 3 Years experience.
- Must be resident in Oman.
- Minimum score 6 in IELTS.

Please submit your CVs in via E-mail
schoolhr@gmail.com

Note. CV from outside Oman will not be considered

Aquaculture set to see 5.2 pc growth

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyp

The aquaculture in Oman is expected to contribute \$5.20 billion to the state GDP, producing as much as 220,000 metric tonnes, with an estimated market value of \$900 million by 2040.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has already revealed its plan of investing \$1.30 billion in fisheries development.

"The investment is part of the government initiatives to help promote sustainable fishing and provide the necessary infrastructure to increase fisheries production in Oman," says a report by *Business Wire*.

Oman is one of the largest fish producers in the GCC region and a net exporter of fish and their products, fisheries. The aquaculture sector is the most important in Oman registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2 per cent during the period.

Oman Aquaculture Development Company (OADC), under its national food security programme, plans to double production from about 200,000 tonnes in 2016 to 480,000 tonnes in 2020.

"Oman's environmental advantage



provides a high potential for the development of aquaculture and there is a strong commitment from the government to develop this sector in a competitive and sustainable manner in harmony with the social, economic, cultural, and historic values of the country," the report points out.

The Ministry is making large-scale investments valued at \$1 billion across 15,000 hectares for the development of the aquaculture sector.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the

fish capture in 2018 accounted for 44,207 tonnes up from 26,677 tonnes in 2016.

In Oman, deep-sea fishing accounts for nearly 99.9 per cent of the total fish landing.

The World Bank Group has supported the fisheries sector in the Sultanate of Oman with a wide range of policies and technical advice, given uniquely for the Bank to the fisheries sector through a Reimbursable Advisory Service or RAS from 2016.

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#Living_with_COVID19



LET US NOT MAKE A MESS OF MASKS

KABEER YOUSUF

[@kabeeryousef](#)

Now that face masks and gloves have become a part of our daily life, rational disposal of the same too is equally important. Otherwise, it will be a bigger threat to the environment than plastic, experts warn. Riskier than plastic as most masks are for single-use and therefore not recyclable.

On a routine stroll, there more chances that one would come across masks on the pavements, roads, shopping trolleys and neighbourhoods.

"We have smarter, more responsible choices out there. We have reusable cloth masks as a clear biodegradable option just like any clothing item in our wardrobe," says Dana Sarhani, an environmental advocate.

"In my eyes, face masks have become the new plastic bags and there is simply no excuse for not using reusable ones in any part of our lives," adds Sarhani.

Reports suggest that an estimated amount of 129 billion face masks and 65 billion plastic gloves will be discarded every month of the COVID-19 pandemic globally.

And the effect on the environment? Just like plastic, they end up in the sea killing the marine creatures and enter our food chain.

"People as well as medics need to apply extra caution while discarding the single-use gowns, hand gloves, shoe covers, plastic caps and other Personal Protective Equipment, as these 'waste' must be infected", an MoH personnel has told the *Observer*.

"Put these items in the trash can and no plastic items including gloves, masks and wipes should be dumped into the environment. Proper disposal of PPE is important in preventing the spread of coronavirus when the threat of the second wave of the pandemic is looming," said Dr Benny Panakkan.

These anti-corona gears, once randomly dumped into the environment, break down into microplastics after entering into water sources.

"These waste, the majority of which is plastic, harm marine creatures when they eat it. They don't just get the plastic, they get the chemicals too", Ammujam Raveendran, an environmentalist said.

Masks discarded on the beaches add to the already existing pollutants.

"If there is one message I ask you to consider is please think of your children and grandchildren and the life they are inheriting. Imagine the world you are leaving behind for them... If you think 2020 was bad, think how each one of us will be totally accountable for creating the intolerable environment," Dana adds.

WHAT WE CAN DO

1 Don't throw our used masks and gloves around or leave them in a shopping trolley, irresponsibly.

2 Put used masks and gloves in a plastic bag when we take them off, and seal it before dumping it into a closed bin.

3 Create general awareness about responsible disposal of masks after use.

4 Install waste bins dedicated only to PPE in public places such as shopping centres, beaches and other places.



ASYAD group committed to sustainable shipping

GREEN PROTOCOL: To preserve Oman's marine ecosystem through its implementation of sound maritime transport practices

MUSCAT: The ASYAD group aims at achieving growth and business continuity while keeping the sustainability of marine life high on its agenda, by adopting international practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the Sulphur content in fuel oil in its operations. These efforts are in line with the Sultanate of Oman Logistics Strategy (SOLS 2040) to cement the country as a global logistics hub.

ASYAD Group, true to its values, has been geared up to celebrate the World Maritime Day, which falls on September 24, with the theme "Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet."

The logistics group is committed to preserving Oman's marine ecosystem through its implementation of sound maritime transport practices.

ASYAD Group adheres to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Annex VI), throughout its maritime operations as part of its efforts to protect the marine environment. Green initiatives, such as using Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO); prohibiting fuel or plastics discharge into the marine environment; and controlling ships ballast water and sediments are part of ASYAD Group's standard protocol.

Throughout its operations, the group translates the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the area of maritime transport into long-term initiatives. Oman Shipping Company has been adopting several measures to equip its fleet with innovative technologies. In addition to installing scrubbers on board the ships to clean the exhaust gas of ships, the company uses Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO) 0, which reduces sulfur dioxide (SO2) emission by 80 per cent, as well as silicone-based anti-fouling coatings for its ship hulls. Oman Shipping Company is also working on complying with the Ballast Water



Management Convention, which involves the continuous exchange of the ballast water on the way from one port to another by not less than 200 nautical miles from the nearest land.

All Omani ports pay attention to the sustainability of the environment by adhering to international regulations and standards. The Port of Salalah, fitted with reception facilities, which works in compliance with the international and local requirements for Zero Tolerance of Illegal Discharges from Ships, provides a host of compliant logistics services centred on the safety of marine life. As for the Port of Duqm, it was established according to the best international environmental and safety standards to

maintain maritime life.

In an unprecedented initiative, Sohar Port demonstrated its commitment to sustainable shipping by introducing a system that rewards international ships and shippers keen on reducing air emissions, in accordance with the IMO standards. Sohar Port gives a 5 per cent rebate on port dues to shipping companies that have made additional investments in their ships and crew to improve their environmental performance, safety and quality standards. This year witnessed a 40 per cent increase in rebates granted and 239 ships against 148 ships in 2019 were rewarded. Sohar Port is the only port in the Middle East and among 20 international ports

providing such incentives within the framework of the World Ports Climate Initiative (WPCI).

Adhering to the quality requirements of MARPOL, Oman Dry Dock Company boasts integrated plants for recycling and disposing of chemical waste, as well as filtering and purifying bilge water and oily effluents before being discharged into the sea. Up to the end of August 2020, the quantities of treated and discharged water increased by 29 per cent compared to that of 2019. Furthermore, Oman Dry Dock Company has sold 4,073 tonnes of the oil it recycled this year; adding another revenue stream to the Company and registering a 140 per

cent increase in the volume of sold recycled oil compared to last year.

Sinyar-Ferries have been following the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Annex VI) Air Pollution requirements, by limiting the Sulphur content in fuel oil and using eco-friendly waterjet propulsion solutions and built-in exhaust cooling systems; reducing gas emissions by 77% compared to regular ferry engines.

International Maritime College Oman (IMCO) provides process engineering courses and curricula supplementing the maritime transport sector with research outputs and a qualified national workforce, ready

to contribute to the advancement of marine engineering and deal with various safety, environmental and marine issues. Moreover, IMCO gives intensive courses to the future seafarers on international practices to minimise risks to the marine environment, in addition to the impact of safety and environmental issues on the industry.

ASYAD Group will continue to pursue its stance of harmonising between its drive for economic growth while implementing responsible business practices to reduce its impact on the environment by adhering to the international agenda, introducing eco-friendly technologies, and nurturing a green logistics sector. — ONA



From left Paul Bocuse, Marc Veyrat, Pierre Troisgros and Michel Guerard pose during the tribute awarded to the French Chefs, founders of the 'Nouvelle Cuisine' on the occasion of the First International Gastronomy Summit held in Madrid. — AFP

Legendary French cuisine pioneer dies aged 92

LYON: Pierre Troisgros, the legendary French chef and head of the country's greatest gastronomic dynasty, died on Wednesday aged 92, his restaurant said.

The chef and his brother Jean helped found the nouvelle cuisine movement, with their signature salmon with sorrel dish copied the world over.

Troisgros is the third great French chef to have died in two years, with his lifelong friend Paul Bocuse and the world's most starred chef, Joel Robuchon, both passing away in 2018.

The Michelin guide called him "a giant who was the equal of Bocuse, with whom he revolutionised cooking."

"His name will continue to shine bright," it added.

Troisgros and his son Michel have held the maximum three Michelin

stars since 1968 — making the provincial town of Roanne in central France a place of pilgrimage for gastronomes.

The same year the Gault & Millau guide proclaimed their hotel restaurant the best in the world, an honour again bestowed by the Zagat guide in 2007.

"We have a heavy heart this evening," tweeted the Paul Bocuse restaurant near Lyon, founded by Troisgros' friend, who was known as the "Pope of French cuisine".

Although Pierre Troisgros had long stepped back from the stove, he was a jovial presence at the family's hotel until they quit their ancestral restaurant opposite Roanne's train station three years ago for the neighbouring village of Ouches. The new restaurant, which has held onto its three Michelin stars, is now run by Michel and his son Cesar. — AFP

Saudi Arabia marks 90th National Day

MUSCAT: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) marked on Wednesday its 90th National Day, which falls on September 23 every year. The National Day commemorates the unification of the kingdom by King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud.

The sisterly Saudi Arabia has achieved tremendous accomplishments in the political, economic, social, intellectual, urban, security, military and health spheres.

The reign of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been featured by continuous reforms, comprehensive developments, prosperity, implementation of modern projects and welfare. The steady achievements have been crowned with Saudi Vision 2030, which is a vital strategic enterprise aimed at ensuring a dynamic future for the country at the political, economic and social levels.

On its part, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms the deep-rooted ties with Saudi Arabia. The Omani-Saudi relationships enjoy joint royal keenness from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques



Boys wave national flags with pictures of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his son Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during celebrations in Riyadh marking Saudi Arabi's National Day on Wednesday. — AFP

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The Saudi Ambassador to the

Sultanate stressed that constant cooperation between the two

countries helps boost the bilateral relations.

Hungary says EU borders must 'remain sealed'

BUDAPEST: Hungary's hardline anti-immigration government said Wednesday that the EU's borders must "remain sealed" after the 27-nation bloc unveiled its latest asylum reform plan including a "compulsory solidarity mechanism".

"Since 2015, the stance of the Hungarian Government on migration has been clear and unchanged,"

government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs said in a Twitter post.

"While Hungary does not support obligatory distribution, it does defend joint borders. And we expect to receive the same amount of support as other Schengen states protecting those external borders," Kovacs said.

"We must ensure that the external borders of the EU and the Schengen

Area remain perfectly sealed along all sections," he said. Since Europe's migration crisis in 2015 Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government has erected heavily guarded fences along its borders with Serbia and Croatia, and refused to accept EU mandatory relocation quotas of refugees from elsewhere in the bloc.

Budapest also built so-called

border "transit zone" camps for asylum-seekers that were described as "unlawful detention" by Europe's top court earlier this year.

Budapest closed the camps soon after that court decision, but Kovacs said Wednesday that to protect the EU's external borders, Brussels should set up "external hotspots" to process asylum claims. — AFP



France backs idea by Hariri to end cabinet logjam

BEIRUT/PARIS: France backed on Wednesday a proposal by a former Lebanese prime minister that could help break a deadlock blocking formation of Lebanon's new cabinet amid the Middle East nation's worst crisis since its 1975-90 civil war.

Paris has been pressing politicians for the quick formation of a government that will draw up reforms to tackle corruption and help attract international aid to fix an economy drowning in debt and struggling after a massive explosion at Beirut port.

Lebanese Deputy Parliament Speaker Elie Ferzli said he now saw "promising possibilities" for an end to the cabinet logjam. The process of forming a cabinet hit the buffers this month after Lebanon's two main par-

ties insisted they pick some cabinet posts, including the finance minister, which has been held by for years.

Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib, a Muslim under Lebanon's sectarian system of power-sharing, had sought to shake up ministerial positions with a new cabinet of specialists.

Former prime minister Saad al Hariri, a leading politician, offered a way out by proposing on Tuesday that an "independent" candidate be named as finance minister.

"This declaration represents an opening and all parties should understand its importance so that a government of mission can now be established," the French Foreign Ministry said.

France, the former colonial power,



Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri

Lebanese Dy
Parliament Speaker
Ferzli says he now saw
'promising possibilities'
for an end to the
cabinet logjam

has been spearheading international efforts to end the crisis. Lebanese politicians have already failed to deliver on their commitment to French President Emmanuel Macron to pick a cabinet by mid-September.

"There are promising possibilities that can be built on, but we have to wait a bit," the deputy parliament speaker said, after Hariri's proposal and following talks with Nabih Berri,

the powerful parliament speaker. Berri has picked previous finance ministers. His Amal Movement and the heavily armed, Hizbullah group, the two dominant parties, have insisted the ministerial post remain under their control.

President Michel Aoun, a Christian said on Monday Lebanon was going "to hell" if it could not form a government to ease a crisis that has paralysed the banks, sent Lebanon's pound into free fall and plunged many into poverty.

Lebanon's problems were compounded by the devastating August 4 blast at Beirut port.

Subsequent fires in and around the area and an explosion on Tuesday in south Lebanon have further rattled the nation. — Reuters

CONCERTS BACK IN EGYPT



Maestro Mohamed Saad Basha with members of Al Nour Wal Amal (Light and Hope) chamber orchestra of blind women greet the audience after the first concert, following months in limbo due to COVID-19 pandemic at the Manastery Palace in Cairo. — Reuters

Turkey, Greece agree to resume talks

ATHENS/ANKARA: Turkey and Greece have agreed to resume talks over their contested maritime claims in the eastern Mediterranean after a four year hiatus following weeks of tensions that culminated in a collision between their warships.

The talks, which broke off in 2016 after 60 rounds that made little progress over 14 years, will resume in "the near future" in Istanbul, the Greek Foreign Ministry said in a statement, without elaborating.

Turkey also gave no timing for a resumption of the talks but a senior official said they could begin by the end of the month. "There are positive developments," the official said.

Tensions flared last month after Ankara sent its Oruc Reis seismic survey ship into disputed waters, escorted by gunboats, to map out sea territory for possible oil and gas drilling. A Turkish

and a Greek warship collided during the standoff. Since then, Turkey has recalled the Oruc Reis, saying the move would allow for diplomacy ahead of an EU summit where members Greece, Cyprus and France are pushing for tough action against Turkey.

The meeting was postponed on Tuesday to October 1-2. On Tuesday, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan held a video summit with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country has mediated in the dispute, and EU Council President Charles Michel. "At the summit, where developments in the eastern Mediterranean were ... discussed, it was stated that Turkey and Greece are ready to start exploratory talks," Turkey's presidency said in a statement.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Erdogan's ruling AK Party, said preparations for the resumption of talks were under

way and that the two sides were working on the parameters.

Erdogan said he hoped the EU summit would bring new impetus to Turkey-EU ties, adding steps on updating a customs union between the two sides, visa-free travel and migration would help put ties on a positive basis. In a video address to the UN General Assembly, Erdogan also called for a regional conference of Mediterranean coastal states, which he said should include the breakaway Turkish Cypriots, to address maritime disputes.

Turkey has two oil and gas exploration ships in waters off the coast of the divided island of Cyprus, angering authorities in Nicosia. Ankara does not recognise the southern Greek Cypriot government on the divided island, and is the only country to recognise the Turkish Cypriot state to the north.

— Reuters

US seeks breakthrough on Sudan before election

WASHINGTON: With weeks to go before US elections, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is racing to make a breakthrough with Sudan that he hopes could also benefit Israel.

Sudan's new civilian-led government is urgently seeking to be removed from the US blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism, and is seen by Washington as open to becoming the latest Arab state to recognise Israel — a major cause for President Donald Trump's electoral base.

"The United States has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that compensation is finally provided to victims of the 1998 Al-Qaeda-backed terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania," Pompeo wrote in a letter to senators that was confirmed by congressional sources.

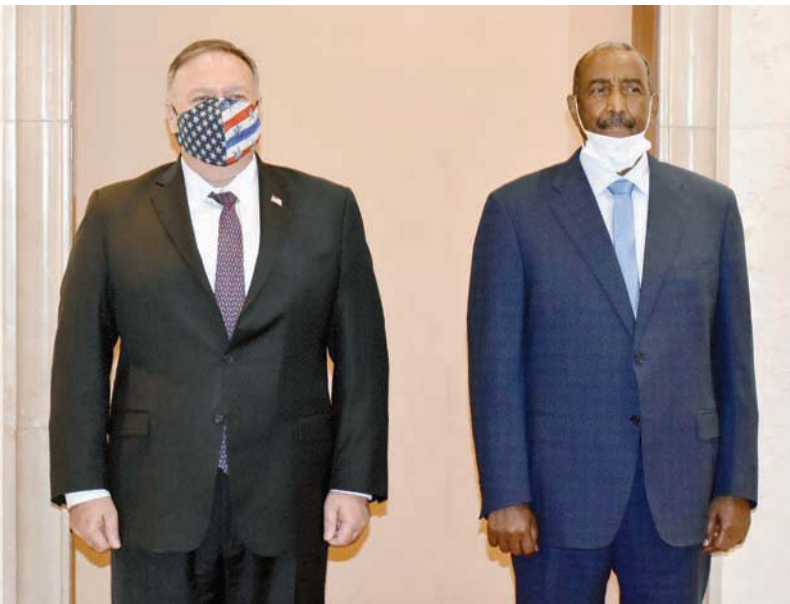
"We also have a unique and narrow window to support the civilian-led transitional government in Sudan that has finally rid itself of the dictatorship that previously led that country."

Sudan is one of four nations listed as a state sponsor of terrorism by the United States, severely impeding investment as businesses worry of legal risks in dealing with the country.

The designation dates back to 1993 when then strongman Omar al Bashir welcomed fighters including Osama bin Laden, the founder of Al Qaeda, which carried out the embassy attacks that claimed more than 200 lives.

Washington had been gradually reconciling with Bashir, who agreed to independence for mostly Christian South Sudan.

But Sudan was transformed last year when Bashir was deposed following a wave of youth-led protests. British-educated economist Abdalla Hamdok has become the new prime minister with a reformist mandate in a transitional arrangement with the military.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with Sudan's Sovereign Council chief General Abdel Fattah al Burhan in Khartoum. — AFP

Sudan's delisting has been held up by a dispute over a package of some \$335 million that Khartoum would pay as compensation to victims' families and survivors of the embassy attacks.

Completing a compensation package "is one of the highest priorities for the Department of State," a spokesperson said.

In his letter, Pompeo said it was "very likely" that an agreement on claims and on delisting Sudan from the terror blacklist would be completed by the end of October — days before the November 3 election.

But Congress also needs to pass legislation to provide Sudan immunity from further claims.

Senate Democrats are divided in part because the draft package would provide more money to US citizens than Africans, who made up the bulk of the victims — an arrangement some call discriminatory but others say is realistic and in keeping with precedent.

Some lawmakers also want further discussion on compensation for other attacks by Al Qaeda, notably the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole off Yemen.

Why the sudden push by Pompeo, who in his more than two years as America's top diplomat has rarely seemed preoccupied by Africa?

Sudan has hinted at a willingness to engage Israel, whose prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in February met Khartoum's top general, Abdel Fattah al Burhan, in Uganda.

The UAE and Bahrain last month recognised Israel, a coup for the Jewish state and a signature foreign policy win for Trump.

Pompeo briefly stopped in Khartoum in late August in the first visit there by a US secretary of state in 15 years.

Hamdok demurred in his meeting with Pompeo, saying that his transitional government, which is set to rule until 2022 elections, did not have a mandate to normalise relations with Israel. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

ALGIERS

Algeria journalist acquitted after year in detention

Algerian journalist Belkacem Djir, sentenced to three years' jail in a common law case, was acquitted Wednesday and is expected to be released after over a year behind bars, his lawyer said.

"The Algiers court has announced that journalist Belkacem Djir has been acquitted," Fatiha Rouibi wrote on Facebook.

Djir had been accused of using a "false identity" and "blackmail".

No other information was available on the case against him, with lawyers refusing to discuss it publicly while acknowledging privately that his case was "sensitive".

Djir, a 34-year-old journalist for

private television channel Echourouk News, was detained in July 2019.

He is one of several Algerian journalists currently in prison.

They include Khaled Drareni, Casbah Tribune news website editor and correspondent for French-language TV5 Monde, and Abdelkrim Zeghileche, head of a web-based radio station.

They are being prosecuted in cases linked to "Hirak", the anti-regime protest movement that began in February 2019.

Drareni was on September 15 handed a two-year jail sentence for his coverage of the movement that toppled Algeria's longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika last year.

NAJAF

Violence mounts against Iraqi doctors



Iraqi doctor Tariq Al Sheibani remembers little else beyond cowering on the ground as a dozen relatives of a patient, who had just died of COVID-19, beat him unconscious. About two hours later the 47-year-old director of Al Amal Hospital in the southern city of Najaf woke up in a different clinic

with bruises all over his body.

"All the doctors are scared," said Sheibani, speaking at his home in Kufa a few weeks after the August 28 attack. "Every time a patient dies, we all hold our breath." He is one of many doctors struggling to do their job as COVID-19 cases rise sharply in Iraq.

SANAA

16 civilians wounded in Yemen shelling

At least 16 civilians were wounded in shelling in the southwestern city of Taiz, a medical charity said on Tuesday. The shelling occurred on Monday in predominately civilian parts of the embattled Yemeni city of Taiz and surrounding areas, the international aid organisation Doctors without Borders (MSF) said in a tweet. Those injured include women, the elderly and children, with three under the age of 10, MSF said. All are being treated at a hospital supported by MSF.

On Monday, Yemen's government accused Ansar Allah fighters of shelling residential areas, leading to civilian casualties. The government and Ansar Allah fighters have been



fighting since late 2014. The Ansar Allah took control of the capital, Sana'a, and surrounding areas at the time, driving President Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi and his government to flee towards the south.

In brief

■ MUMBAI

RESCUE EFFORTS ON
IN INDIA BUILDING
COLLAPSE

Rescue workers battled rain and cramped conditions to scour through rubble and look for possible survivors as the toll from an apartment building collapse on the outskirts of Mumbai rose to 35, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

“It’s been more than three days, so we don’t know if there are any survivors any more, but we are not losing hope,” Satya Pradhan, the head of the National Disaster Response Force, said.

At least eight people are still missing and rescue personnel are clearing debris to look for them, said Pradhan. The building, a three-storey structure in a narrow alley of the industrial town of Bhiwandi, on the north-east outskirts of Mumbai, collapsed early on Monday.

■ TOKYO

JAPAN PM SUGA,
CHINA’S XI TO HOLD
PHONE TALKS

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Chinese President Xi Jinping plan to hold talks by telephone on Friday, a source with direct knowledge of the matter said as Japan’s new leader makes his first forays into diplomacy.

The softly spoken Suga has little diplomatic experience and has taken office at a time of rising tensions between the United States and China. As well as planning his first discussion with Xi for this week, he also spoke to US President Donald Trump on Sunday.

Japan and China have their own tensions over long-time issues including a territorial dispute over islands in the East China Sea.

THAI ROYALISTS MARCH AGAINST
CALLS FOR AMENDING CONSTITUTION

BANGKOK: Hundreds of Thai royalists marched to parliament on Wednesday to oppose calls from anti-government protesters for changes to the constitution as the assembly met to consider amending it.

The special session of parliament was convened after nearly two months of protests — the biggest of which drew tens of thousands of people at the weekend in the Southeast Asian country.

Protesters seek to change a constitution they say was engineered to ensure former junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha stayed on as prime minister after last year’s election. They want his departure and some protesters also say the constitution gives too much power to King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

The 2017 constitution was written by a military-appointed committee and passed a nationwide referendum in 2016 at which opposition campaigning was banned.

Prayuth said the 2019 election was fair. Warong Dechgitvigrom, who led the march to parliament by the royalist Thai Pakdee group, said he had submitted a petition



A group of royalists as they counter protest pro-democracy demonstrators and show support to the monarchy in Bangkok. — Reuters

with 130,000 signatures opposing constitutional change. “To amend the 2017 constitution, another nationwide referendum must be done,” Warong

said. “Nothing good would come out of this amendment. It will only benefit politicians.” The group’s move came after Thai legal watchdog group iLaw

submitted a charter draft to parliament on Tuesday ahead of Wednesday’s consideration. But the parliament secretary said that draft, backed by

over 100,000 signatures, would not be considered this week because the signatures must be verified first. Parliament will decide on Thursday how and what part of the constitution will be amended.

Protesters plan to rally outside the parliament to apply pressure. Parliament is made up of an elected lower House of Representatives, in which Prayuth’s backers increased their majority after a ban on a major opposition party early this year. Members of the Senate, parliament’s upper house, were all selected by Prayuth’s former junta.

Meanwhile, Thailand’s digital ministry said on Wednesday it would start legal action against Facebook, Twitter and Google this week for ignoring some requests to take down content, in what would be the country’s first such cases against major Internet firms. The ministry would file complaints with cyber crime police on Thursday after the US companies missed deadlines to comply fully with court-issued take down orders, digital minister Puttipong Punnakanta said.

— Reuters

■ CLIMBER LAID TO REST



Nepal Armed Police Force personnel give national honour to mountaineer Ang Rita Sherpa during his funeral in Kathmandu. A famed Nepali Everest climber nicknamed ‘snow leopard’ for his record of summiting the world’s highest mountain a record 10 times without bottled oxygen has died aged 72. — AFP

At least 380 whales dead in
Australia mass stranding

SYDNEY: Three hundred and eighty pilot whales stranded on the west coast of Tasmania have died so far in what rescuers believe is the highest number of stranding-related deaths recorded in Australia.

Rescuers have saved 50 of the animals from sandbars at Macquarie Harbour and another 30 are believed to still be alive, Nic Deka, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service manager, told reporters on Wednesday. “We’ll continue to work to free as many of the animals as we can,” Deka said.

“We’ll continue working for as long as there are live animals.”

On Monday, around 270 whales became stranded across three locations at Macquarie Heads. Another 200 more were found dead around 7-10 kilometres south of the original site on Wednesday morning. “This is definitely the biggest (mass stranding) in Tasmania and we believe it is the biggest in Australia,



Rescuers work to save a pod of whales stranded on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbour on the rugged west coast of Tasmania. — AFP

in terms of numbers stranded and died,” Marine Conservation Programme biologist Kris Carlyon said.

The cause may have been down

to “simple misadventure,” or feeding along the coast, according to the expert.

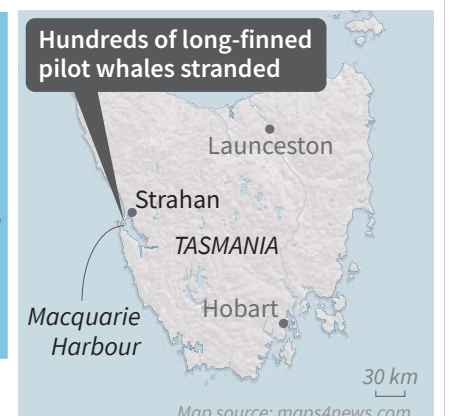
After testing various methods, around 60 rescuers landed on a

successful technique to refloat and relocate the whales using slings attached to boats. Pilot whales are a very social species with strong group behaviour, leading to concerns that whales could try to return to the herd despite having been rescued.

Carlyon has described the situation as “confronting,” saying that rescuers can hear the whales calling out to each other in distress. “In terms of preparing for and stopping these events in the future... it’s pretty impossible to do. There’s nothing to indicate that this was due to human cause, this is a natural event,” he said.

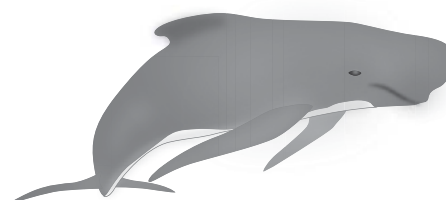
“We know strandings have occurred throughout history prior to humans. This was something that happened from the fossil record right through to the current day.” Authorities expect to rescue more whales later on Wednesday and will also meet to discuss how to dispose of the carcasses. — dpa

Australia whale strandings



Pilot whale

One of the largest members of the dolphin family



- ▶ Commonly seen in tight, sociable pods of 20 - 100 individuals
- ▶ Estimated Antarctic population around 200,000
- ▶ One of the species most often involved in mass strandings

Long finned:
Globicephala melas

Short finned:
Globicephala macrorhynchus

Named pilot whales because it was thought that each pod followed a “pilot” in the group

Weight: up to 2,300 kg

Length: 7.6 m

Diet: mainly arrow squid, common octopus, mackerel

Can dive to depths of about 600 m

Source: CSM/NOAA Fisheries/IUCN/TFS/parks.tas.gov.au

AFP



European Union’s plans tougher migration controls

BRUSSELS: The European Union’s executive launched a plan on Wednesday for overhauling migration rules in a bid to end years of bitter feuds in the bloc and provide a better welcome for refugees fleeing the Middle East and Africa.

It aims to step up returns, including by restricting visas for citizens of countries that refuse to take their nationals back. The EU now receives up to 1.5 million net new foreigners coming legally to live and work per year, compared to 140,000 asylum seekers arriving irregularly. About two-thirds of the latter group is expected to win asylum and should be sent away. The current rate of returns is around 30 per cent.

The plan would also seek to support foreign states in stemming migration before people reach Europe. It would also legally oblige all member states, in exchange for funding from the EU budget, to host some refugees - something rejected by Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and others.

A country would receive 10,000 euros (\$11,750) from the bloc’s budget per adult taken in. “We need these people because we are an ageing society,” said the top EU migration official Ylva Johansson.

Endless feuds over where to locate people have caused bad blood



A child is seen at the new temporary camp for migrants and refugees, on the island of Lesbos, Greece. – Reuters

between the Mediterranean-shore countries where they mainly arrive, the reluctant easterners, and the richer northern states where many of the newcomers aspire to live. In 2015, more than a million people made it to EU shores, overwhelming security and welfare networks, and fomenting far-right sentiment.

“Migration is complex, the old

system to deal with it in Europe no longer works,” said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. “Moria is a stark reminder,” she added, referring to a Greek migrant camp destroyed by fire this month. The Commission plans would scratch a rule that the first country of arrival is responsible for asylum requests, which put too much

burden on Mediterranean nations.

Under the proposal, those arriving would be assigned to countries based on family links, history of education or work, or having a visa from a member state.

According to the Commission, the EU now receives up to 1.5 million net new foreigners coming legally to live and work per year, compared to

“Migration is complex, the old system to deal with it in Europe no longer works

URSULA

European Commission chief

only 140,000 asylum seekers arriving irregularly. The plan was criticised by international Catholic charity Caritas, which said it could harm human rights, dilute legal safeguards and lead to more detentions.

It also took flak from countries who would prefer to talk about tightening borders and asylum laws. “We believe that the European Union and its member states must cooperate in keeping the looming migration pressure outside our borders,” said Hungarian government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs. “Hungary does not support obligatory distribution.”

But, highlighting the persistent divisions, the proposals won approval from Malta.

“Returning those with no right to asylum is crucial. Agree that solidarity must not be optional,” said Prime Minister Robert Abela. The 450-page proposals spanning five

different pan-EU laws put emphasis on sending back those who fail to win asylum. Intended to be in place from 2023, the plan also aims to open more legal routes for migrants and work better with countries hosting people before they reach Europe.

It would also put EU countries with external borders under closer monitoring to stop illegal pushing back of people after reports of such action by Hungary, Croatia, Greece and Malta. People saved at sea would be relocated in the bloc - rather than sent back - with charities not criminalised for rescues.

At times of regular immigration, EU states would be obliged to help under the new idea of “mandatory solidarity” by relocating or sponsoring returns, or offering material assistance on the ground in arrival countries. If, however, a country were under major pressure, it could seek to activate a crisis mechanism under which EU peers would be obliged to take people in or send them back. Returns commitments that fail to materialise in eight months - which national migration experts and some EU officials admit is tight - would transform into a relocation obligation, anathema to the easterners. “Bottom line for us is that we might, and very probably will end up with mandatory relocation,” said a senior diplomat from one of the eastern EU countries. — Reuters

Amid protests, Lukashenko inaugurated in unannounced ceremony

MINSK: Alexander Lukashenko was sworn in as president of Belarus on Wednesday in a previously unannounced ceremony in Minsk following a disputed election that has incited daily protests.

Lukashenko, 66, has led Belarus, a former Soviet republic between Russia and EU member state Poland, for more than a quarter-century, tolerating little dissent.

Lukashenko declared during his inauguration, in a private ceremony in Minsk’s Palace of Independence, that the country had averted an attempt at revolution instigated from “nefariously sophisticated” foreign powers.

“An unprecedented challenge was made against our statehood,” Lukashenko said, according to an official transcript. “The colour revolution did not take place,” he said, using a broad term for an apolitical pivot in a former Soviet state.

Electoral authorities say that Lukashenko received more than 80 percent of the votes in the August 9 election. Opposition supporters allege that the election was rigged.

The European Union has declared the election “neither free nor fair.” Germany,



Women wearing crowns walk down the street to protest against the presidential inauguration in Minsk. – AFP

Poland and several other EU member states have issued statements saying they would not recognise Lukashenko as president.

Following the surprise inauguration ceremony, German government spokesperson Steffen Seibert said in Berlin that the vote did not meet “the minimum requirements for democratic elections.” Poland’s Foreign Ministry

expressed a similar sentiment: “A president elected in an undemocratic election cannot be considered as one that holds his office legally, regardless of whether his swearing-in is official or clandestine.”

Lukashenko has assumed his sixth consecutive term as president. “Placing his right hand on the constitution, Alexander Lukashenko took the oath

in the Belarusian language,” state news agency BelTA reported.

In public appearances, Lukashenko usually speaks Russian. Lukashenko’s office said that several hundred people, including senior officials, media representatives and cultural, scientific and sports figures, had been invited to the ceremony.

The event’s date had not been previously announced to the public. Crowds of protesters gathered around central Minsk after the ceremony was revealed to the public, prominent independent news outlet Tut.by reported.

Wearing crowns, protesters mocked Lukashenko as a self-declared ruler. There have been protests in Belarus against Lukashenko’s leadership every day since the election, with such events regularly broken up by police. Weekend rallies in Minsk have repeatedly been estimated to have drawn more than 100,000 people.

Lukashenko, a former collective farm director, has presented himself as a guarantor of stability and socialist policy in the state. Belarus is one of the poorest countries in Europe. — dpa

UK to host ‘human challenge’ trials for vaccines

LONDON: Britain will host clinical trials where volunteers are deliberately infected with the new coronavirus to test the effectiveness of vaccine candidates, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday, citing people involved in the project. The government-funded project is expected to begin in January at a quarantine facility in London, the report said, adding that about 2,000 participants had signed up through a US-based advocacy group, 1 Day Sooner.

Any trials conducted in the United Kingdom have to be approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the health care regulator which looks into safety and protocol. The MHRA, 1Day Sooner and its 18-year old lead organiser, Alastair Fraser-Urquhart, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The industry has seen discussions in recent months about potentially having to inject healthy volunteers with the novel coronavirus if drugmakers struggled to find enough patients for final trials.

The FT report said that volunteers would first be inoculated with a vaccine and later receive a challenge dose of the coronavirus. It did not name the vaccines that would be assessed in the project. British drugmaker AstraZeneca, whose experimental COVID-19 vaccine being developed with the University of Oxford is leading the race, said that it was not involved in the programme.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian cops claim win against online piracy

ROME: Some 58 illegal websites, 150 related internet domains and 18 Telegram channels have been shut down in a major sting against online piracy, Italian police said on Wednesday.

The operation targets “around 90 per cent of audiovisual and publishing piracy in Italy,” the Guardia di Finanza police corps said in a statement.

Four people - identified with their online monikers “Diabolik,” “Doc,” “Spongebob” and “Webflix” - were reported for criminal prosecution.

According to police, they offered pay-TV content such as football matches, films, cartoons and porn, as well as pirated newspapers and magazines, software and manuals.

The Guardia di Finanza said it was in the process of identifying “around 1,000” subscribers to illegal pay-per-view football services, including some non-Italian residents.

They risk jail terms of up to three years and more than 25,000 euros (\$29,000) in fines for copyright infringement and prosecution for possession of stolen goods, police said.



People pay respects as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lies in repose in front of the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC. Ginsburg, whose death has opened a crucial Supreme Court seat that Republican President Donald Trump has promised to quickly and controversially fill against the wishes of Democrats, will lie in repose beginning at the US high court. Trump will announce his pick to replace Ginsburg with Senate Republicans promising a swift vote on the nominee. – AFP

11 killed, homes torched in DR Congo clashes

KANAGA, DR Congo: Brutal clashes between communities over farmland in central DR Congo earlier this month left 11 people dead, almost 10,000 displaced and nearly a thousand homes torched, a local charity said on Wednesday.

The renewed violence in the vast Central African country’s Kasai comes after the region saw thousands killed during a bloody 2016-17 rebellion. Pierre Mulumba Mpoyi, the head of the Catholic charity Caritas in Kasai-Oriental Province’s capital Mbuji-Mayi, said the latest clashes “broke out on September 5 and continued for three days.”

“The provisional toll is 11 dead, seven seriously wounded,” he said.

The charity has identified 924 homes that were torched, he said, adding that the dead and wounded came from all the communities. The fighting saw the communities of Bena Kabuya and Bena Mwemba clash with the Bena Nshimba over land for farming. A territorial administration official confirmed that the clashes had taken place, but did not give figures for the number of wounded and dead, saying the first report must be to the province’s governor.

COVID-19 – Infobesity and sarcasm

For every action, there is an equal or opposite reaction. We don't need to delve into Newton's third law, one of the principles of physics, to see it on everyday life. One example is the coronavirus material.

Engaging with the media means asking questions. Generally, what we see, are sources selecting queries. Answers, many times, are imbalanced, or 'half-baked'. Sources don't like to be probed.

The excess of repetition of awareness information has the opposite reaction: people reached the level of saturation. One of the consequences is the surface of sarcasm as a resistance mechanism – markedly when restrictions appear to lack logic to individuals.

Good quality information is a commodity; however, the trivial abundance of content thrown at us in different formats just makes things confusing – particularly, when manipulation occurs. Individuals face difficulties in identifying important information.

Managing communication efficiently is not easy; it is much worse during health or natural disasters. Nevertheless, attention to the use of language, balance, and cognitive perceptions are necessary.

For the last six months, we could identify some phases in communication — from the top- down and, horizontal



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MANAGING COMMUNICATION EFFICIENTLY IS NOT EASY; IT IS MUCH WORSE DURING HEALTH OR NATURAL DISASTERS

among the public. In the initial phase of the pandemic, communication was all about the what, how, where, why, and fear. Lots of fear. At this stage, it was when we realised that we were forced to stop doing things we liked to do - It was the time when we had to live in a state of uncertainty – and bombarded by all sorts of information.

The second phase was very confusing with the back and forth decisions followed by clarifications - many times, information was not clear. We also saw an outpouring of experts, including social media influencers, turned experts.

During COVID-19, the surge of infodemic created serious challenges to health authorities' communication tasks, with the growth of false news, conspiracy theories, and magical cure. Besides, several political leaders influencing the debate and guiding the response to the pandemic contributed to information toxicity. In the past, there were pandemics worse than coronavirus, but in those times, there was no Internet connectivity and social media.

The next phase focused on lockdown and its economic and social consequences. All talked on a large scale. Small businesses, children, and teens' concerns were hardly addressed. The languages of persuasion and punishment against those flouting social restrictions were sharp.

Blockades, fines, jail, and threats of public shaming were used to instil fear in the exchange of compliance. There are lessons from this observation.

We had it all: news stories, live debates, special documentaries, and of course, tons of social media material. The variety of conversations on the pandemic turned toxic. Still, the lack of a proper context to the health situation helped create an illusion that perhaps things are not as bad as claimed – within our own backyard, we can witness some age groups resisting to wearing a mask, or laughing at those wearing one - and so many times, media images showed authorities not wearing masks.

You call it 'infoxication' or 'infobesity' – no matter the name. A large volume of information in any topic can reach a point at which one feels brain fog - we can't digest it all.

However, the lack of a balanced and clear communication can create a sense of deceit.

In the newest phase, following the easing of restrictions, there are cautionary stories, staycation and pieces of economic recovery. Slowly, the issues and sequels of those who were infected or died are sliding away from the public eyes.

Individuals are far more concerned with family needs than to probe the media. The drums are beating for other more pressing issues.

FREAK EVENTS

Karachi floods hint at shifting monsoon

RINA SAEED KHAN

Flood-slammed Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, could face worsening urban inundations in coming years, in part as the South Asian monsoon shifts, climate scientists have warned.

The winds that drive Pakistan's annual monsoon, which arrives from the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, appear to be altering as a result of climate change, which could push more rainfall to Karachi - and less to key agricultural regions, they said.

"It's a new phenomenon and we need to understand it. It hasn't rained like this in Karachi for more than half a century," said Shaukat Ali, a meteorologist and senior scientific officer at the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) in Islamabad.

He said winds driving the monsoon from the Bay of Bengal appear to be shifting it northwards, away from its traditional core zone in the agricultural breadbasket of Punjab. Winds from the Arabian Sea have traditionally been weak but now seem to be strengthening, Ali said. This year monsoon winds were "extremely erratic", he said, with hotter temperatures in the Arabian Sea leading to monsoon depressions that dumped



It's new phenomenon and we need to understand it. It hasn't rained like this in Karachi for more than half a century
SHAUKAT ALI
Meteorologist

unexpectedly heavy rainfall on an unprepared Karachi, Pakistan's financial hub. "The sea and winds behaved very differently this monsoon," he noted.

Record-breaking heavy rain in Karachi in August killed over 100 people and disrupted the lives of many of the city's more than 15 million residents

as water flooded main roads and homes.

The city received its largest-ever-recorded rainfall total in a single day on August 24, when 230 mm of rainfall in just 12 hours, according to the Pakistan Meteorology Department. Over the month, Karachi received 484 mm of rain, the highest total in at least 90 years, it noted. Heavier rainfall in Karachi this year was in part the result of a La Nina phenomenon, a regular oscillation in Pacific Ocean surface temperatures that can drive changes in rainfall, said Moetasim Ashfaq, a climate computational scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the US state of Tennessee.

It was likely the larger driver of this year's shift in rainfall, he said. But as climate change warms oceans, it is also accelerating the evaporation of water, which then falls as rain — one significant additional driver of Karachi's floods, he said. Both scientists have been part of a research effort through GCISC to better predict extreme weather in South Asia and help countries adapt to it.

A paper published by Ashfaq and a dozen international researchers in June, in the journal Climate Dynamics, predicted that unchecked climate-changing emissions could shorten Asian monsoons, with more intense rain falling in a shorter period.

The rest of the year would then have longer dry periods, it said. These extremes could worsen floods, droughts, wildfires and other weather-related threats that already pose a problem in the region, the scientists said.

Malik Amin Aslam, the Pakistan prime minister's special assistant on climate change, said the reports indicate the "frequency and intensity of climate-triggered freak events is going up in Pakistan".

— Reuters

DESTRUCTIVE WEATHER

Fires and floods hurl climate change to fore of US election

MATTHEW LAVIETES

Previously overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic and the country's racial reckoning, climate change has hurled to the front of the US presidential race, as historic wildfires raged in the West and powerful storms battered the South.

Last week, Democratic contender Joe Biden tackled the issue of extreme weather from his home base in Delaware, calling US President Donald Trump a "climate arsonist" for failing to acknowledge the role of global warming in the Western wildfires. His Republican rival - despite disputing any climate change fingerprint in California's fires, the largest in the state's history - made a last-minute trip there to meet state officials and firefighters.

Edward Maibach, Director of the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, said the recent fires and storms had dominated the news cycle and pressed the point. "It's forced the issue of extreme weather and climate change into the election," he said.

Dozens of wildfires have raged across California and the Pacific Northwest, scorching more than 4.5 million acres within several weeks and killing several dozen people. The fires also have filled the air with harmful levels of smoke and soot, turning skies eerie shades of orange and sepia while worsening the public health crisis caused by COVID-19.

Simultaneously, Hurricane Sally pummeled the Gulf Coast last



Firefighters walk while defending the Mount Wilson Observatory in the Angeles National Forest during the Bobcat Fire in Los Angeles. – Reuters

POLLING HAS SHOWN THAT VOTERS RANK CLIMATE CHANGE BEHIND OTHER PRIORITIES, INCLUDING THE PANDEMIC

Wednesday, marking the 18th named storm in the Atlantic this year and the eighth to hit the United States with a tropical storm or hurricane strength.

Climate change may be a factor making storms like Sally move more slowly, scientists say, leading to catastrophic amounts of rainfall and widespread flooding.

Last week also saw the appearance of five named storms at once in the Atlantic, a rarity that has not happened

since 1971, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"What's very clear is that the record-setting extreme events of the past couple of months have captured the entire nation's morbid fascination," said Anthony Leiserowitz, Director of the Yale Programme on Climate Change Communication.

"People are just ... reeling," he added.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



Former
Ferrari chief
to ‘replace’
Carey as
F1 CEO



Stefano Domenicali

LONDON: Former Ferrari team principal Stefano Domenicali is set to become the new CEO of Formula One after leaving the Italian team earlier than expected, media reports said on Wednesday.

The 55-year-old Italian is to replace Chase Carey, who has been in charge since US group Liberty Media took over the sport in 2017, according to the BBC and Autosport.

While Formula One officials would not confirm the appointment of Domenicali, senior sources in F1 told the BBC it was a done deal. The news — which will also see American Carey remain as chairman in some form — has been communicated to the team bosses.

Domenicali took over at Ferrari from Jean Todt, now the FIA president, at the end of 2007 and tasted immediate success when Ferrari won the 2008 constructors championship — the last time they did so.

However, his term at Ferrari ended early when he stood up to then team president Luca di Montezemolo who wanted the head of the engine section to be sacked for incompetence.

He has subsequently filled a senior management role at Audi, before being appointed chief executive of Lamborghini, which is also part of the VW Audi Group.

Carey can step aside having overseen a shortened season played out with virtually no spectators due to the coronavirus pandemic.

He also will leave the CEO post with crucially all 10 teams agreeing a new Concorde Agreement, a new five-year commercial deal from 2021 which guarantees motorsport’s “sustainable” future. — AFP



Denver Nuggets’ Jamal Murray (27) passes the ball against Los Angeles Lakers’ Dwight Howard (left), Anthony Davis (middle) and Danny Green (right) during the second half of game three of the Western Conference Finals of the 2020 NBA Play-offs at AdventHealth Arena. – USA Today Sports

Murray takes Nuggets past Lakers

ORLANDO: Jamal Murray scored 28 points as the Denver Nuggets held off a ferocious late fightback from the Los Angeles Lakers to roar back into contention in the Western Conference finals series on Tuesday.

Murray nailed two crucial late three-pointers in the closing minutes as Denver held on for a 114-106 victory in game three to reduce the Lakers’ lead to 2-1 in the best-of-seven series.

But the Nuggets — who looked in complete control for long periods of the contest — were given a mighty scare by the Lakers in a thrilling fourth-quarter battle.

The Lakers had trailed by 20 points with just over 10 minutes remaining but whittled away the Denver lead to just three points with 3min 53sec left on the clock in Orlando.

But just as it looked as if LeBron James and Anthony Davis were poised to complete a remarkable comeback, Murray regrouped to take the game away from the Lakers.

The 23-year-old Canadian’s three-pointer from 26 feet gave Denver a seven-point advantage at 106-99 and he then provided the assist for Paul

Denver held on for a 114-106 victory in game three to reduce the Lakers’ lead to 2-1 in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals series

Millsap to make it 108-99. With less than a minute on the clock, Murray struck the dagger blow with a 29-foot three-point jump shot to make it 111-99 and effectively seal victory.

Denver coach Michael Malone said his team — who had suffered an agonising buzzer-beater defeat in game two on Sunday — were determined not to go 3-0 down in the series.

The Nuggets have already overturned 3-1 series deficits en route to the Western Conference finals.

‘NOT READY TO GO’

“I had no doubt we were going to show up tonight,” Malone said.

“We have won six straight elimination games. Everybody always has us packing our bags and leaving,



but we’re not ready to go. They’re a very resilient group and they have proved that time and time again.”

Asked about his late flourish, Murray said he had set out to lead by example. “That’s my whole energy, my whole approach to the game, not getting down if I miss a couple of shots,” Murray said.

“I’m just trying to be aggressive... but the most important part is the energy I bring when I’m talking to my team-mates, being a vocal leader, getting up and down and pushing everybody so they tend to follow. I just wanted to see them have a lot of fun today.”

The Lakers meanwhile were left reflecting on an uneven display which ultimately left James and Davis with too much to do.

James led the scoring with a triple double comprised of 30 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists, with six turnovers. Davis had 27 points, with Kentavious Caldwell-Pope (12) and Kyle Kuzma (11) the only other Lakers players to crack double figures.

Murray, who also had 12 assists, was backed with 26 points from Jerami Grant while Nikola Jokic weighed in

with 22 points, 10 rebounds and five assists.

“You put yourself in an 18-point hole, it’s tough to climb out of that,” Lakers coach Frank Vogel said.

“I thought Denver played with great energy throughout the game. We didn’t match it early, we matched it late. They’re a great basketball team so credit it to them for the win. They played a really good basketball game.”

“We were not as sharp as we could have been on both ends of the floor. We were playing at a high level, but were a little bit off in the first half.

“But I liked the spirit that the guys competed with down the stretch to try and make it a game.”

Game four in the series takes place in Orlando on Thursday.

The winner of the Western Conference will play either the Boston Celtics or Miami Heat in the NBA Finals.

The climax to the COVID-19-interrupted NBA season is taking place at Disneyworld in Orlando, where teams have been based in a secure ‘bubble’ since July in order to allow the NBA to complete the campaign. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

Ralf expects to see Mick in F1 next year

Former racing driver Ralf Schumacher expects to see his nephew Mick Schumacher in Formula One next season. “His learning curve this year has been very promising. I cannot imagine anything else than seeing him driving in Formula One next season,” he wrote in his column for Sky Sports.

“One thing is certain: he definitely has what it takes to drive in Formula One next year.” Michael Schumacher’s son currently leads the Formula Two drivers championship with 161 points and only two races are between him and the title. “He was runner-up in Formula Four (2016) and won the Formula



Three championship (2018),” Ralf Schumacher wrote. “He has proven over several years and racing classes he is one of the best. So it’s also clear he has the potential to join Formula One.” — dpa

FRANKFURT

Nurburgring can allow 20,000 fans

Germany’s Nurburgring can welcome up to 20,000 fans next month when it hosts Formula One on October 11, organisers said on Monday, after local authorities gave it the go-ahead alongside stringent health measures.

Spectators have been conspicuously absent from motorsport’s top competition this year due to restrictions to combat the coronavirus pandemic, but races later in the calendar have started to open up.

The previous event at Tuscany’s Mugello circuit held around 2,000 fans, and the organisers of this weekend’s Russian Grand Prix in Sochi are hoping for an audience of



30,000. Ticket sales will take place in several stages depending on how the virus situation develops, with the final allocation of seats not being sold until organisers can be sure of virus infection rates.

The maximum number of spectators allowed will also be just 20 per cent of the 100,000 top capacity of the circuit.

— AFP

TOKYO

‘King Kazu’ breaks records again at J-League

Kazuyoshi Miura, the 53-year-old Japanese footballer known as ‘King Kazu’, proved on Wednesday he was worthy of his crown after setting another record in a J-League first-division match.

Miura was in the starting line-up for Yokohama FC’s clash against Kawasaki Frontale, and at 53 years, six months and 28 days old easily smashed the record for oldest-ever J-League first division starter set by Masashi Nakayama in 2012.

Nakayama was a comparative spring chicken when he set the record aged just 45.

Kazu has already set records this year, becoming the oldest player in Japan’s league cup competition.



He was named in a J-1 squad earlier this month, but stayed on the bench.

Wednesday’s appearance was Kazu’s first in a J-1 match since 2007 and garnered plenty of attention

“Impressive! Kazu is my hero,” one of his fans tweeted. — AFP

PAKISTAN TO HOST ZIMBABWE FOR SERIES

Pakistan cricket authorities confirmed on Wednesday they would host Zimbabwe for a series of three one-day internationals and three Twenty20s starting next month. The tour will take place under “bio-secure” conditions to prevent the risk of spreading the coronavirus, the Pakistan Cricket Board officials said.



HYDERABAD’S MARSH OUT OF IPL WITH INJURY

Sunrisers Hyderabad’s Australian paceman Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of the Indian Premier League after injuring his ankle while bowling his first over against Bangalore, his team said on Wednesday. West Indies Test captain Jason Holder will replace him, the team added.

Rajasthan get past Chennai by 16 runs in IPL feast of sixes

SMITH, SANJU POWER ROYALS

DUBAI: Skipper Steve Smith cracked a match-winning 69 in Rajasthan Royal’s opening Indian Premier League game on Tuesday that produced a record-equalling 33 sixes in the Twenty20 tournament.

Smith, who faced concussion fears coming into the IPL, put on a key 121-run second-wicket partnership with Sanju Samson, who smashed 74, to guide Royals to 216 for seven and a 16-run win over Chennai Super Kings in Sharjah.

South African veteran Faf du Plessis made a valiant 72 off 37 balls with seven sixes but Chennai, led by Mahendra Singh Dhoni, ended on 200 for six in 20 overs.

Chennai were involved in another six-hitting fest against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the 2018 edition that also saw 33 sixes. Australian Smith opened the innings for Royals, inaugural IPL winners in 2008, and after the loss of the first wicket it was raining sixes with Samson hitting nine of them in his 32-ball blitz.

“Absolute pleasure to bat with him. He is the world’s best batsman,” said Samson, who brought up his 50 in just 19 balls and hit nine sixes in his knock.

“And when he goes out and bats 20 overs, it becomes easy for the others coming in.”

Smith got four hits over the fence and Jofra Archer smacked four in the final over to help Royals get 30 runs off South African quick Lungi Ngidi.

“They batted really well. Steve and Sanju. You have to give credit to their bowlers too,” Dhoni, who remained unbeaten on 29, said after the loss.

Smith passed a concussion test in the United Arab Emirates when he joined his IPL team after missing three one-day matches in England following a hit on the helmet during



practice. The much-delayed IPL, which was originally scheduled to start in March, moved out of India due to the coronavirus pandemic and is being played behind closed doors.

But Jay Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said the popular league had the highest ever opening day viewership for any sporting league across the globe when 200 million people tuned to watch Chennai beat Mumbai Indians on September 19. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS	
Y Jaishwal c&b D Chahar	6
S Smith c K Jadhav b S Curran	69
S Samson c D Chahar b L Ngidi	74
R Uthappa c Faf du Plessis b P Chawla	5
Rahul Tewatia lbw S Curran	10
Riyen Parag c MS Dhoni b Curran	6
Tom Curran not out	10
Jofra Archer not out	27
Extras (1b 0lb 3nb Open 5w)	9
Total (20 overs) 216-7	
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-132, 3-134, 4-149, 5-167, 6-173, 7-178	
Bowling: Deepak Chahar 4-0-31-1, Sam Curran 4-0-33-3, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-56-1, Ravindra Jadeja 4-0-40-0, Piyush Chawla 4-0-55-1	
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS	
M Vijay c T Curran b S Gopal	21
S Watson b R Tewatia	33
Faf du Plessis c Sanju b Archer	72
S Curran st Sanju b R Tewatia	17
Ruturaj Gaikwad st Sanju b R Tewatia	0
Kedar Jadhav c Sanju b T Curran	22
MS Dhoni not out	29
Ravindra Jadeja not out	1
Extras (0b 1lb 1nb Open 3w)	5
Total (20 overs) 200-6	
Fall of wickets: 1-56, 2-58, 3-77, 4-77, 5-114, 6-179	
Bowling: Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-44-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-26-1, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-38-1, Tom Curran 4-0-54-1, Rahul Tewatia 4-0-37-3	

Dhoni faces heat for slow start in chase



Chennai Super Kings’ MS Dhoni bats against Rajasthan Royals. — BCCI

DUBAI: India great Mahendra Singh Dhoni faced criticism on Wednesday for his uncharacteristically slow start in Chennai Super Kings’ unsuccessful run chase in the IPL against Steve Smith’s Rajasthan Royals.

Dhoni, the Chennai captain, sent up young England all-rounder Sam Curran and Indian Premier League debutant Ruturaj Gaikwad ahead of him in his team’s chase of 217 in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, on Tuesday.

Finally coming into bat in the 14th over, the veteran wicketkeeper-batsman scored just 10 runs off his first 13 balls while partner Faf du Plessis was on a hitting spree in his 72-run blitz including seven sixes.

The former India skipper, who announced his international retirement last month, only got going in the final over to hit three successive sixes but by then the chase was beyond Chennai who lost by 16 runs. “This is not what you call leading from the front. Batting at No 7 when you’re chasing what...213 (217)? The game was over. Faf was probably the lone warrior,” former India opener Gautam Gambhir told ESPNcricinfo.

“Yes, you can talk about MS Dhoni’s last over, but it was of no use to be honest. It was just all personal runs.”

Curran had smashed 18 off six balls after being promoted ahead of Dhoni, who last played in India’s semifinal exit of the 2019 World Cup, in Chennai’s win over holders Mumbai Indians in

“I haven’t batted for a long time. 14-day quarantine (in the UAE) doesn’t help’

MS DHONI

Chennai Super Kings captain

the IPL opener last week.

Dhoni, known for his finishing skills during the peak of his international career, said his lack of time in the middle prompted him to shuffle the batting order. “I haven’t batted for a long time. 14-day quarantine (in the United Arab Emirates) doesn’t help,” Dhoni, who remained unbeaten on 29, said in the post-match chat.

“Also wanted to try different things, give opportunities to Sam. Have the opportunity to try different things. If it doesn’t work, you can always go back to your strengths.”

Chennai coach Stephen Fleming told reporters, “MS is a specialist at the end of the innings, always has been.”

But the statements cut little ice with fans who criticised their cricketing hero with one Twitter user saying, “Next time Dhoni should warm-up before the match and not during the match.”

Dhoni though got some support from his fans who took note of his three big sixes with one hit going out of the Sharjah stadium. — AFP

Paire unsure of French Open after two positive COVID-19 tests

HAMBURG: France’s Benoit Paire, who was forced out of the US Open after testing positive for COVID-19, says his participation in the French Open next week is unclear after twice testing positive for coronavirus at the ATP tournament in Hamburg.

The 31-year-old retired at 6-4, 2-0 down to Norway’s Casper Ruud in the first round on Wednesday, later citing fatigue.

Paire revealed he had twice tested positive for COVID-19 in Hamburg, but was allowed to play on Wednesday after a negative result the day before.

“The problem is that I am tired,” a clearly frustrated Paire told reporters.

“I had a positive COVID (test) at the US Open, (spent) ten days in my room, then I had to go to (the ATP tournament in) Rome, I played, but I didn’t practise at all.

“Then I arrived here with (a) positive COVID-19 (result).”

The Frenchman said the only symptoms he has felt are fatigue, but “I am not sure if it’s the virus or just



Benoit Paire of France returns the ball to Casper Ruud of Norway during their first round match of the ATP-Tour German Open at the stadium Am Rothenbaum in Hamburg, northern Germany, on Wednesday. Paire gave up in the second set. — AFP

“I was negative after the US Open, negative in France, negative in Rome, positive in Hamburg — that’s all I know

BENOIT PAIRE

French player

having to stay in the room for ten days (at the US Open).”

“You practise for one hour, then go back to your room.

“Mentally, it’s difficult — honestly if it stays like this, I just want to stop.”

Paire painted a bleak picture of living under the uncertainty of his next COVID-19 test.

“I was negative after the US Open, negative in France, negative in Rome,

positive in Hamburg — that’s all I know,” he said.

“You don’t sleep,” he admitted, worrying about testing.

“I think it’s impossible to play tennis like this.

“I try because I am happy to be on court, but I was tired and I can’t move, so I had to stop,” he added to explain why he retired on Wednesday.

Having been removed from the US Open draw at the end of August, Paire’s health is again under the spotlight days before the main draw starts at the French Open.

“It depends on the results of the (next) test, if it’s negative, I play, if it’s positive, I don’t play and I go home — both solutions are good. I can see my family and dog,” he said.

“If it’s negative, I will be on court and try to do my best — but it will not be my best for sure.

“The only thing I want is the end of the season and to go home to practise. I hope next season will be normal,” the French player said. — AFP

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LEWANDOWSKI, NEUER AND DE BRUYNE NOMINATED FOR UEFA PRIZE



PARIS: Bayern Munich duo Robert Lewandowski and Manuel Neuer have been nominated alongside Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne for the Uefa Men's Player of the Year prize for last season, European football's governing body announced on Wednesday. The winner will be announced — along with the

Uefa Women's Player of the Year — on October 1, when Uefa hold the draw for this season's Champions League group stage at their headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland. Lewandowski and Neuer starred as Bayern won the Champions League, beating Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 in the final in Lisbon in August.

Polish striker Lewandowski scored an astonishing 55 goals in 47 games as Bayern won the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup. He top-scored in the Champions League with 15 goals. Goalkeeper Neuer also played a key role in Bayern's triumphant campaign, while Belgian playmaker De Bruyne

scored or set up 33 goals in the English Premier League and was nominated despite City finishing second to Liverpool domestically and going out of the Champions League in the quarterfinals to Lyon. Barcelona's Lionel Messi just missed out on being short-listed, coming fourth in the vote by a jury comprising the 80 coaches

of the clubs that participated in the group stages of last season's Champions League and Europa League, along with 55 selected journalists, one from each of Uefa's member associations. England star Lucy Bronze is a contender to win the women's prize for the second year running after helping Lyon win the Champions League for

the fifth season in a row before recently signing for Manchester City. Her Lyon colleague, the France defender Wendie Renard, is also short-listed alongside the Danish striker Pernille Harder, who recently joined Chelsea after helping Wolfsburg get to the Champions League final. — **AFP**

Clay queen Halep firm favourite for French Open

PARIS: Simona Halep is heavily favoured to add a second French Open title to her Grand Slam cabinet, brimming with confidence on the back of a 14-match winning streak and fighting fit having skipped the US hardcourt season due to COVID-19. The Romanian world number two won in Dubai before the professional season was suspended in early March, and added claycourt titles in Prague and Rome ahead of the Paris Grand Slam, which starts on Sunday having been rescheduled from May. Due to concerns over travelling during the pandemic, she skipped the US Open, opting to stay in Europe and prepare for Roland Garros, where

she won her first Slam in 2018. The former top-ranked player feels the decision leaves her better placed, both physically and mentally, to challenge for her third Slam title overall. "It is different (this year). It is true that I am fresher," Halep told reporters after her Rome win. "Of course I did work hard at home but I didn't have many matches, so my body is not that used ... And with these matches (I won) here I also feel confident. So it's a better chance." An aggressive baseliner with excellent court coverage, Halep last lost in the semifinals of this year's Australian Open to Spaniard Garbine Muguruza. Brightening her chances



further, the women's singles field in Paris will be missing defending champion and world number one Ash Barty of Australia, who opted against travelling, and US Open champion Naomi Osaka, who suffered a hamstring injury in New York. The tag of bookies' clear favourite — emphatically endorsed for Paris by Czech world number four Karolina Pliskova — has not always sat well with Halep. Before tasting success at Roland Garros two years ago she had lost three Grand Slam finals, including in 2017 at the same venue, when Latvian Jelena Ostapenko unexpectedly came from behind against a strangely subdued Halep to take her only Slam title to

date. The Romanian is determined to put no extra pressure on herself at this year's event, which she described as "just another tournament". "I've played really well this year with three titles already. I've played so much on clay, so I feel confident ..." she said. "I'll just be happy to take positives from this tournament and go there smiling ... and try to win every match I play. Every match is a battle, I am ready for it." She says a lengthy lockdown, which she spent at home in Romania, has made her mentally stronger and she feels she is more mature since the professional circuit restarted in August. — **Reuters**

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CMA signs contract for roll-out of Dhamani health insurance e-platform

NERVE CENTRE: Implementation of e-platform to be undertaken in three stages spread over 25 months

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

The Capital Market Authority has signed a contract with Infoline LLC, a leading provider of IT and outsourcing services, to set up an electronic platform to support the implementation of the Unified Health Insurance Scheme (Dhamani) in the Sultanate.

CMA Executive President Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi signed the agreement in the presence of a number of officials of the Authority. Under the contract, Infoline and its strategic partner IQVA will develop and roll out an e-platform for exchange of health information, claims settlement, funds transfer, requests for approvals and verification and checking insurance coverage between the parties in the insurance relationship and the



regulators and supervisors in the Sultanate.

The contract award follows a competitive tender that was drawn up based on the needs of the local market and following a series of meetings with stakeholders such as insurance companies, health service providers, Ministry of Health,

Ministry of Labour and Public Authority for Social Security. The tender also took into consideration regional and global experiences in health insurance services.

The Dhamani scheme, which consists of five key pillars, has been conceptualised by the CMA in collaboration with stakeholders.

When implemented, it will support the coverage of private sector employees, their dependents and visitors. In the lead up to its launch, the Authority drafted supporting regulatory and legislative statutes, set up a database for the health insurance sector, organised awareness campaigns and conducted actuarial studies on the prices.

The platform will contribute to the quality of insurance services and enhance transparency and accuracy of all transactions, as well as provide timely and accurate data to reduce the potential for insurance fraud and thereby boost confidence in the health insurance market. This outcome will benefit not only patients, but also other participants in the scheme as the e-platform will show the complete history of the patient, medicines and description

of the cases, and so on.

Given its technical and operational complexities, the Dhamani platform will be set up in phases. Phase 1 will take nine months to complete. This phase will provide linkages to the government entities concerned with the health insurance scheme, insurance companies and health services providers for online exchange of health insurance transactions. The second phase, which will take about 8 months to complete, will offer electronic payment features, verification of insurance coverage and data storage. Finally, the third phase — also spanning eight months — will support the training of all parties in the operation of the platform. In all, the Dhamani e-platform will take about 25 months to be fully implemented.

Amended law scraps system of filing of dual tax returns in Oman



CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

In a significant move, the Tax Authority has abolished the longstanding practice requiring taxpayers to file a provisional return of income within three months and an annual return of income within six months from the end of the accounting year.

Instead, taxpayers are now mandated to file only one tax return within four months from the end of the tax year.

Taxpayers are now mandated to file only one tax return within four months from the end of the tax year.

Tax Authority notifies imminent introduction of levy on sweetened drinks

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

The Tax Authority of the Sultanate has formally notified traders and distributors that sales of sweetened beverages are subject to a 50-per cent

additional levy known as 'Selective Tax' with effect from October 1, 2020. Sweetened beverages are defined as "any beverages containing sugar, derivatives or other sweeteners, and are considered to be sweetened beverages, i.e. concentrates, powders,

gels or preparations that can be converted into sweetened beverages", where juice products, fruit syrup, sports drinks, coffee drinks and canned tea are classified. The list excludes products such as 100 per cent natural fruit and



vegetable juices, milk and dairy products when they contain at least 75 per cent milk, supplements and beverages for special nutritional and medical uses.

The application of selective tax on sweetened beverages comes within the framework of the Unified Convention on Selective Tax for the GCC countries, where some GCC countries preceded Oman in applying

selective tax on these products.

The Tax Authority explained that in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Selective Tax Act, anyone engaged in an activity related to taxable sweetened beverages (import, production, trade or distribution) must provide notification of the balance (inventory) of these goods on the day before the date of the tax application (the stock they have at the end of September), provided within 15 days of taxation through the Authority's portal.

The Authority stressed the need for importers of selective taxable goods (including sweetened beverages) to verify the presence of products they import in the list of taxable products on the portal of the Tax Authority and must apply for the addition of a selective item through the e-Gate well in advance of the import of those goods (if their products are not included in the list), to avoid any delay in clearing the imported shipment when they arrive at customs outlets.

— ONA

Omantel pioneers 5G Technology through more network expansions

Muscat, 23 September 2020: Omantel — the leading company in providing integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate — continues its pioneering role in providing the 5G technology since it has launched the first 5G network in the Sultanate at the end of last year by expanding its network and adding new sites in a number of governorates around the Sultanate.

As part of its plans for expanding the 5G network, new stations have been added in the Wilayats where the service was previously launched. Furthermore, new stations were installed in a number of regions in 5 Wilayats where the 5G network was introduced for the first time. These Wilayats are Salalah, Taqa, Sur, Samail and Bahlaa. As a result, thousands of subscribers in these regions will be able to enjoy Home Internet with high speeds up to 1 Gbps.

The future starts here
Omantel 5G



Commenting on this, Engineer Aladddin Abdullah Bait Fadhil, Acting Vice President, Consumer Business Unit at Omantel, said: "5G technology is the latest addition to our network. Since we launched it last year, the network enabled us to offer high-speed Home Internet in several new regions. This, in turn, would support our contribution to enabling the digital transformation in the Sultanate".

"We are proud of our subscribers' response to the 5G technology. Over the past few months, new customers subscribed to different packages of our

**Aladdin Bait Fadhil:
The 5G network contributes to providing broader options and high-speed Home Internet to subscribers**

5G Home Internet service enjoying incomparable Internet speeds up to 1 Gbps which is perfect for online entertainment and games in addition to downloading and watching videos and movies easily. Our customers can choose from four different 5G Home Internet plans starting from RO 25. The 5G Home plan offers download speeds up to 20 Mbps, whereas the 5G Gaming offers speeds up to 40 Mbps, the 5G Entertainment which is the most popular plan offers download speeds up to 80 Mbps and the 5G Premium offers download speeds up to 1Gbps " Bait Fadhil added.

It is worth mentioning that 5G technology is considered one of the enabling technologies of the 4th industrial revolution such as the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology and mega data technology. It is envisaged that the services to be provided through the 5G network will lead to a breakthrough in many sectors including education, health, transportation and entertainment. Besides, it is a key component in future smart cities projects.

Omantel is the pioneering telecommunications company in the sultanate and the primary provider of integrated internet services for individuals, companies and government agencies. The company strives to promote growth and prosperity in all sectors of the Sultanate, along with providing a new concept of businesses and bringing in the global content and means of entertainment.

Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion

Announcement No. 6/2020

The Ministry announces the commencement of the annual industrial survey for the data of 2019 since July 14, 2020. The industrial enterprises have been addressed via e-mail.

The Ministry calls upon all industrial enterprises which have industrial licenses and are located within or outside industrial zones, ports and free zones to submit the required data through Invest Easy portal <https://www.business.gov.om/statsurvey> or the ministry's website: www.moci.gov.om.

For more inquiries, please contact the following numbers: (24828721/24828721/24828742/ 92488125)

Please note that data submitting deadline is on October 22, 2020.

Your cooperation is appreciated for the public interest.

moci.gov.om @moci_oman @moclip.om mcioman

It follows the promulgation of Royal Decree 118/2020 amending the Income Tax Law, which was published earlier this week in the Official Gazette.

"The amended tax law has, with effect from tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2020, removed the requirement to file a provisional return of income and settle taxes on the estimated income within three months from the end of the relevant tax year or accounting period," said leading audit, tax and advisory services firm KPMG.

"Taxpayers are required to file only one tax return within a period of four months from the end of the relevant tax year or accounting period. Tax is also now required to be paid within this period of four months. Previously, the time period for filing the final return and paying the balance tax was six months," the firm stated in an advisory circulated to clients and the general public.

KPMG, while greeting the change, urged taxpayers to keep in mind that audits of financial statements would need to be undertaken well in time. It said: "While the requirement to do away with the filing of dual returns is welcome, this would imply that audits of financial statements would need to be completed before the expiry of four months from the end of the relevant tax year or accounting period to allow enough time to prepare the tax return and meet the deadline."

The scrapping of the dual tax returns system is one of several amendments to the Income Tax Law vide Royal Decree 118/2020. It also includes, among other things, enabling provisions to facilitate the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) between tax jurisdictions, the introduction of tax residency provisions, and changes in the proceedings for appeals.



Trends in expatriate remittances in GCC

While the number of expatriate workers has decreased slightly in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in recent years, remittance trends have remained stable in most countries of the region during 2018 and 2019.

According to the Statistical Centre of the GCC countries, the UAE ranked the first in transfers, with remittances amounted to \$45 billion in 2019, down 2.4 per cent from the previous year. Saudi Arabia came in second with transfers totalling \$30.3 billion in 2019, down 8.1 per cent from 2018.

However, remittances from Kuwait increased in 2019 to \$14.7 billion, up 3.9 per

cent, while Qatar witnessed an uptick of 3.5 per cent to \$11.8 billion in 2019, earning the fourth place in transfers.

As for the Sultanate, expatriate remittances declined in 2019 to reach \$9.2 billion compared to \$10 billion in 2018, a decline of 8 per cent, and was placed fifth. Remittances from Bahrain decreased to \$2.9 billion in 2019, declining 11.6 per cent, which was the largest drop among the GCC countries.

Indicators provided by the Statistical Centre of remittances by GCC expatriates as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices put the Sultanate in the number one position at 12 per cent, followed by Kuwait at 10.9 per cent, UAE 10.7 per cent, Bahrain 7.5 per cent, Qatar 6.4 per cent, and finally Saudi Arabia 3.8 per cent.



Haider al Lawati
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THE GCC COUNTRIES ARE
DISTINGUISHED BY THE PRE-
SENCE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF
ASIAN WORKERS

The Sultanate and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have witnessed during the last period a decline in the number of expatriate workers as a result of the economic slowdown that the region witnessed since mid-2014 due to the drop in global oil prices, followed by the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted businesses across different economic sectors, prompting many expatriates to leave the region.

The GCC countries are distinguished by the presence of a large number of Asian workers. Many families in those countries depend on money that is remitted by relatives working in the Gulf, which helps recipients avoid poverty.

Based on official data, we find that

the number of expatriate workers in the Sultanate decreased to 1.6 million people at the beginning of this year, a decline also witnessed in the rest of the GCC after several decades of economic activity in the region. The Gulf economy played a major role in attracting foreign labour in light of the oil boom witnessed since 1973.

However, with a view to reducing their dependence on hydrocarbon revenues, the Gulf States are moving to put in place policies and programmes that seek to support national labour in various sectors as part of a push towards economic diversification. Nevertheless, the need for expatriate labour is likely to be revived once local economies recovers and the pandemic recedes into the background.

MEDC relocates 2,380 overhead line connections

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, a member of Nama Group, continues its efforts to rearrange the overhead line service connections of old premises in order to enhance public safety and ensure the connection points in these houses meet safety standards. This initiative comes in line with MEDC's obligation to ensure customer safety and protect them against electrical hazards.

In 2019, MEDC relocated 2,380 overhead line service connections in Muscat – part of 3,000 installations targeted for completion in 2020. To date, MEDC had already completed 2,770 modifications, bringing the total number of relocations in Muscat governorate to 5,150 connections / houses.

The overall number of connections targeted for modification exceeds 20,000. MEDC had subcontracted these tasks to qualified contractors to implement old overhead service connections in Muscat governorate over different phases. Homeowners have been requested to cooperate to ensure to successful completion of this project.

Lummus wins master licensor package for Duqm petchem project



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Lummus Technology, a global leader in developing and implementing process technologies, has been awarded a contract for technology licensing, process design package, training and advisory services, and proprietary catalyst and equipment supply by Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company LLC (DRPIC), a joint venture between OQ SAOC (OQ) and Kuwait Petroleum Europe BV.

“Our customers benefit from our comprehensive technology portfolio, as we provide them with multiple technologies for one project, combining and integrating these technologies, proprietary equipment, catalyst and services,” said Leon de Bruyn, President and Chief Executive Officer of Lummus Technology. “This helps our customers reduce their capital and operating costs and assures them that they are working with an aligned project team that minimises interfaces.”

The contract is for the planned new petrochemical complex in Oman with multiple units, including the largest natural gas to liquids unit licensed by Lummus to Oman Oil Facilities Development Company LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of OQ with a capacity of 48 MMSCMD, one of

the world's largest ethylene units with 1,600 kta ethylene capacity, a butadiene extraction unit with 161 kta butadiene capacity, and a CDMtbe unit (145 kta of MTBE) and 1-Butene separation (51 kta of 1-butene capacity) licensed to DRPIC. The arrangements also include the supply of Lummus' proprietary catalyst and SRT (Short Residence Time) cracking heaters to the Duqm Petrochemicals Project.

The units are part of the Duqm Petrochemicals Project, which is the second stage of DRPIC's integrated refinery and petrochemical complex, and will be located at Duqm on the Arabian Sea coast of Oman.

Lummus' Ethylene, NGL, MTBE/IB and Butadiene Technologies are best-in-class and recognised by the world's leading petrochemical companies, such as DRPIC.

The steam cracker will utilise the SRT heaters having the highest proven yields in the industry, and the low-pressure chilling train and patented multi-component refrigeration, which reduce investment costs and improve reliability by eliminating plant equipment. The next generation catalysts maintain proprietary formulations tied to our licensed processes that improve process economics by steering reactions to higher conversions and yields.

BUSINESS ALERT

MUSCAT

AMOUAGE DEBUTS A ROMANTIC ODYSSEY WITH RENAISSANCE COLLECTION



Marking the birth of a new era in the company's history, Amouage has revealed its Renaissance Collection.

Narrating a key chapter in the brand's odyssey to paradise, the collection features four alluring fragrances, Enclave, Crimson Rocks, Ashore and Meander, each depicting Amouage's romantic interpretation of encountering pure joy. Drawing inspiration from its home country, the Sultanate of Oman, these sophisticated blends of exquisitely contrasting scents are a liberating force of imagination created by internationally renowned perfumers including Domitille Michalon-Bertier (Crimson Rocks), Mackenzie Reilly (Ashore and Meander) and Julien Rasquinet (Enclave).

“Amouage is renowned for creating some of the most finely crafted perfumes in the world for over three decades. Continuing to build on this legacy, I want to take the brand on a quest. One that will see us explore new frontiers and discover new facets of the House,” said Renaud Salmon, Amouage Chief Experience Officer. “I chose to debut this epic fragrance odyssey with Renaissance, the rebirth where we translate what it means to experience pure joy, unbound by perception.”

MUSCAT



HUAWEI Y9A OFFERS YOU A SUPERCAMERA WITH SUPERCHARGE

Huawei recently announced the launch of Huawei Y9a.

To many, this is a brand-new product that has some features from some of Huawei's flagship devices.

The latest addition to the Huawei Y Series comes with a super camera, super charger, ample storage and a sleek design that catches your breath.

As a Huawei Y Series smartphone, the Huawei Y9a brings more upgraded camera capabilities. Huawei Y9a features a 64MP high resolution main camera which, together with an 8MP Ultra Wide Angle camera, 2MP Macro camera and a 2MP Depth camera, makes it ideal for shooting photos in a wide range of scenarios.

The 64MP Main Camera shines in indoor/outdoor settings in addition to lowlight and bright light surroundings. With The Ultra Wide Angle Lens offering a wider field of view.

With an angle up to 1200, the Huawei Y9a captures not just photos; you can also record Ultra Wide Angle videos. The 2MP Depth Lens works in conjunction with the Main Camera to blur the background, creating layering and a shallow depth-of-field effect to highlight subjects.

MUSCAT

HYUNDAI THINKS SMARTLY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL FOR CONSUMERS



Technology has significantly transformed the automotive industry so much that the way we travel in the future will not be the same as how it is today.

We are already seeing this revolution with almost all vehicles today integrated with advanced safety and entertainment systems that enhances the journey of millions of consumers.

With new trends such as autonomous vehicles and shared mobility set to hit the roads in the coming years as well as the surge of electric vehicles, travelling from point A to B will no longer be ordinary. It will have wide-ranging beneficial effects for not just the consumers but for also cities and towns.

For example, autonomous vehicles can pave the way for reducing traffic while shared transport will make commuting even more affordable. Electric vehicles, which are already widely driven worldwide, are an obvious choice for improving local air quality and thus drastically cutting pollution.

A lot of extensive work and research still needs to be undertaken before we are able to fully experience autonomous vehicles and shared mobility on a daily basis.

be'ah unveils Eco-Innovate Oman accelerator programme

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

The Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) has launched the Eco-Innovate Oman (EiO) accelerator programme to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) specialising in the environmental sustainability and waste management sectors, and to support the Omani SME ecosystem by promoting the circular economy. This programme is considered the first of its kind in the Sultanate and was launched last year in collaboration with Inspired Solutions, a business consultancy company.

The accelerator's main objectives

are to create jobs through entrepreneurialism and diversify Oman's economy in support of Oman's Vision 2040 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr Farah al Barwani, Research and Development Manager at be'ah, said: “We were glad to have chosen a number of ambitious SMEs in all levels of development and that have high potential in the fields of environmental sustainability, waste management, agriculture, education, aquaculture, biotechnology, environmental tourism, and other eco sectors.”

“The participating SMEs have completed the first stages of the accelerator which involved



Dr Farah al Barwani

The accelerator's main objectives are to create jobs through entrepreneurialism and diversify Oman's economy in support of Oman's Vision 2040

a three-month boot camp and 1-on-1 coaching sessions. They are currently involved in one-



William R Crew

on-one coaching sessions to further prepare them to become investment-ready. The final stage of

the accelerator involves preparing the SMEs to pitch to investors,” Dr Al Barwani added.

The EiO was launched at the end of 2019 and received the first batch of SMEs in March 2020. 14 startups were accepted to the programme based on their specialisations in resource management and environmental sustainability.

On the commercial side of the programme, William R Crew, CEO of Inspired Solutions stated: “It has been so exciting to personally witness the commercial development of the entrepreneurs who have been participating in Eco-Innovate Oman. Over the past many months they have all

grown and embraced the principles of impact entrepreneurialism-of creating not only financial returns, but also environmental and social returns as well.”

He also added: “During the 3 month-long boot camp earlier this year they learned the fundamentals of product/market fit and market research and validation. Right now they are being coached to prepare investment proposals and are learning how to pitch for investment growth financing. By the end of the year we anticipate that many of them will have secured funding and will be a position to scale up, not only in Oman but into the GCC and beyond.”

Venezuela launches London appeal in battle for \$1 billion in gold



People walk in front of the Venezuela's Central Bank in Caracas. — Reuters

LONDON: The Nicolas Maduro-backed Venezuelan central bank, Banco Central de Venezuela, launched a landmark appeal in London on Tuesday over \$1 billion of gold reserves held in the Bank of England's underground vaults.

The Banco Central de Venezuela (BCV) board controlled by the Maduro government is challenging a High Court ruling in July that the UK government "unequivocally" recognised opposition leader Juan Guaido as the interim president, therefore giving him control over the gold.

The outcome could also present "a further threat to the international perception of English institutions as being free from political interference, as well as the Bank of England's reputation abroad as a safe repository for sovereign assets"

Lawyers representing the BCV say selling the gold, which amounts to around 15 per cent of Venezuela's foreign currency reserves, would fund the response to the coronavirus and bolster a health system gutted by six years of economic crisis.

Guido's lawyers say the bullion is his to control as the British government, along with around 60 others around the world, recognise him as leader after claims Maduro rigged Venezuela's last presidential election two years ago.

The hearing is expected to last three days and will be the first time

such a tug-of-war has been conducted in the London Court of Appeal.

Banco Central de Venezuela board solicitor Sarosh Zaiwalla said in a statement the case raises a number of issues of international law, which forbids the interference by any country in the internal affairs of another.

The outcome could also present "a further threat to the international perception of English institutions as being free from political interference, as well as the Bank of England's reputation abroad as a safe repository for sovereign assets". — Reuters

In brief

■ KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA UNVEILS ADDITIONAL \$2.4 BILLION ECONOMIC STIMULUS MEASURES

Malaysian prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced on Wednesday an additional economic stimulus package worth 10 billion ringgit (\$2.41 billion) in a bid to help industries and citizens badly hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

The programme includes 7 billion ringgit in cash aid, assistance for small businesses and a wage subsidy scheme, Muhyiddin said in a televised address.

The announcement comes as Muhyiddin faces a challenge from opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who on Wednesday said he had secured a strong majority in parliament to form a new government. — Reuters

■ NEW DELHI

KKR TO INVEST \$755 MILLION IN RETAIL ARM OF INDIA'S RELIANCE

Private equity firm KKR & Co Inc will invest \$755 million in the retail unit of Reliance Industries Ltd, the Indian conglomerate said on Wednesday, bringing the total funding in Reliance Retail to \$1.78 billion within a month.

Reliance Industries, controlled by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, is lining up investors in its retail unit after the conglomerate raised just over \$20 billion this year from global investors, including Facebook Inc, by selling stakes in its Jio Platforms digital business.

The Mumbai-headquartered Reliance has approached investors in Jio Platforms about buying stakes in its retail arm, media had reported. — Reuters

■ WASHINGTON

US HOME SALES NEAR 14-YEAR HIGH IN AUGUST

US home sales surged to their highest level in nearly 14 years in August as the housing market continued to outperform the broad economy, though record home prices could be an obstacle for first-time buyers.

The National Association of Realtors said on Tuesday that existing home sales increased 2.4 per cent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6 million units last month, the highest level since December 2006. Data for July was unrevised at 5.86 million units. Last month's increase in homes sales was in line with economists' expectations.

Sales last month concentrated on the upper price end of the market. Existing home sales, which account for the bulk of US home sales, jumped 10.5 per cent on a year-on-year basis in August. Sales increased in all four regions. — Reuters



Sold homes are seen in the southwest area of Portland, Oregon. — Reuters

LONDON: Euro zone business growth ground to a halt this month as the service industry slammed into reverse, knocked by a resurgence in coronavirus cases that pushed governments to reintroduce restrictions and citizens to stay at home, a survey showed.

That renewed downturn for services more than offset the strongest manufacturing growth in two years. During the height of the pandemic, countries imposed tough lockdown measures to quell the spread of the virus, bringing economic activity to a virtual standstill, but as infection rates fell sharply, most measures were relaxed.

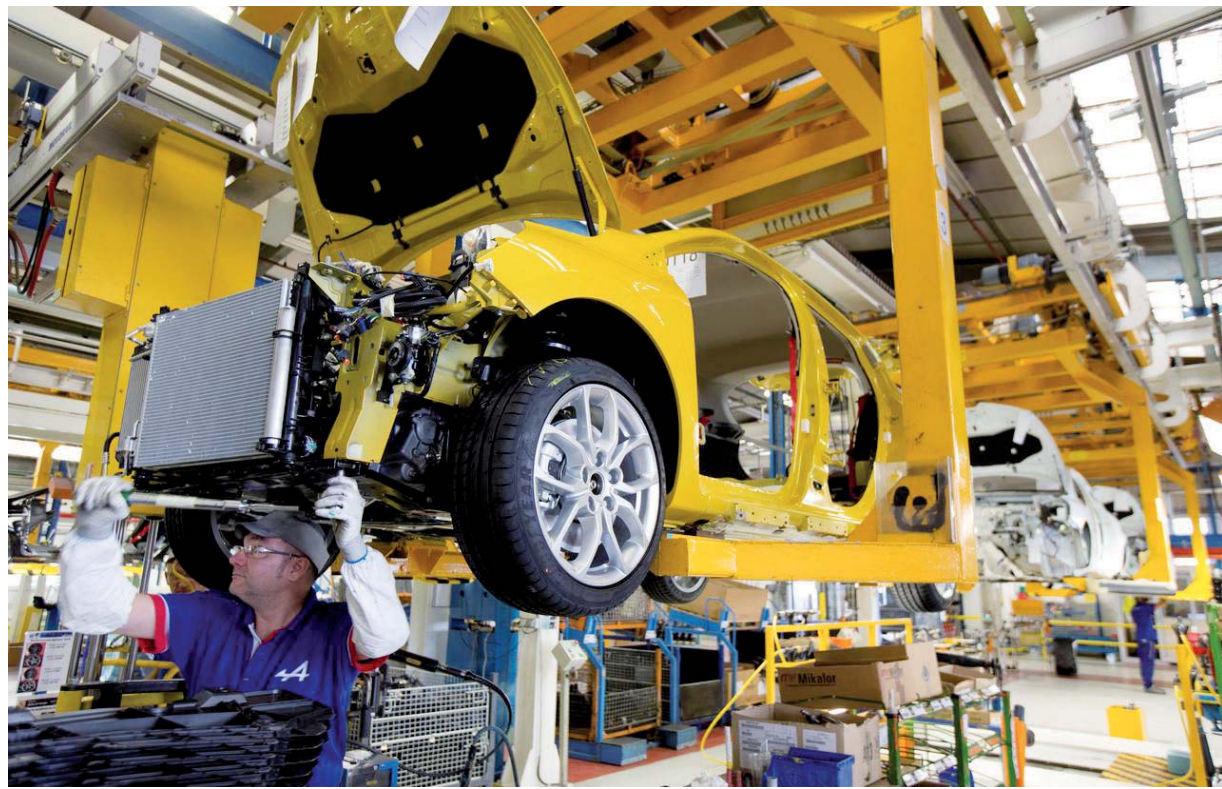
But case numbers have started rising again in key economies and governments have had to reimpose partial restrictions, sending IHS Markit's Flash Purchasing Managers' index down to 50.1 in September from August's 51.9.

That was only just above the 50 mark separating growth from contraction and well below the median forecast in a Reuters poll for a modest dip to 51.7.

"The euro zone's economic recovery stalled in September, as rising COVID-19 infections led to a renewed downturn of service sector activity across the region," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

"A two-speed economy is evident, with factories reporting that production growth was buoyed by rising demand, notably from export markets and the reopening of retail in many countries, but the larger service sector has sunk back into decline."

A flash PMI for the bloc's dominant service industry plummeted to 47.6



A man works on the automobile assembly line at an automobile factory in Flins, west of Paris, in this file photo. — Reuters

A two-speed economy is evident, with factories reporting that production growth was buoyed by rising demand, notably from export markets and the reopening of retail in many countries, but the larger service sector has sunk back into decline

this month from 50.5, significantly below the breakeven mark and the most pessimistic forecast in a Reuters poll that had predicted a reading of 50.5.

With demand falling and some of the activity coming from running down backlogs of work, services firms cut staffing levels for a seventh month. The employment sub-index dipped

to 47.6 from 47.8. Manufacturers fared much better, with the factory PMI climbing to a just over two-year high of 53.7 from 51.7 and a median forecast of 51.9.

While services came in below all expectations, manufacturing was above all of them. A sub-index measuring output which feeds into the Composite PMI rose to 56.8 from

55.6, its highest since early 2018.

But factories also cut headcount despite a surge in demand to its highest since February 2018. The new orders sub-index rose to 57.1 from 55.4, suggesting the manufacturing recovery would continue. Overall optimism improved, with the composite future output sub-index rising to 60.3 from 57.8, its highest since February, just before the full effects of the pandemic were felt.

"Encouragement comes from a further improvement in companies' expectations for the year ahead, but this optimism often rests on infection rates falling, which remains far from guaranteed for the coming months," Markit's Williamson said. — Reuters

Investors slash \$50 billion from Tesla market value

NEW YORK: Investors slashed \$50 billion from Tesla Inc's market value on Tuesday despite CEO Elon Musk's promise to cut electric vehicle costs so radically that a \$25,000 car that drives itself will be possible, but not for at least three years.

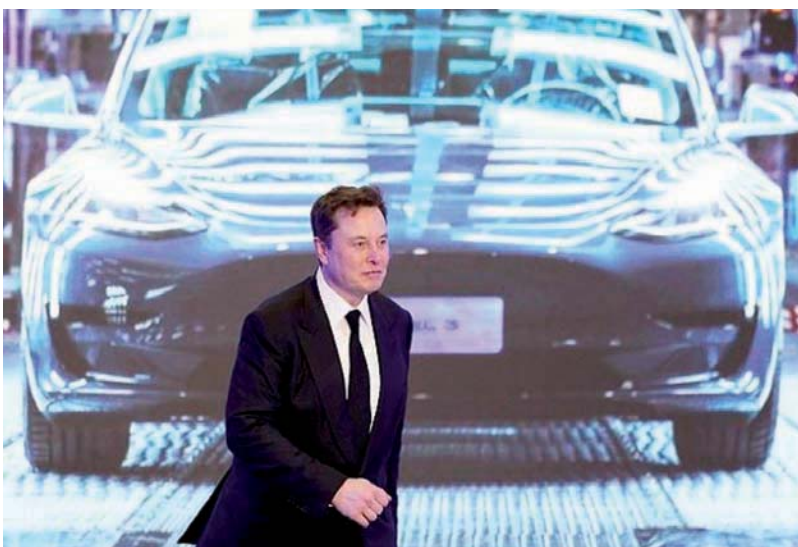
Tesla's market cap dropped \$20 billion in just two hours after trading closed on Tuesday, as Musk and other Tesla executives presented their new battery and manufacturing strategies. Shares closed down 5.6 per cent and dropped another 6.9 per cent after hours.

"Nothing Musk discussed about batteries is a done deal," said Roth Capital Partners analyst Craig Irwin. "There was nothing tangible."

Investors had expected two significant announcements at Musk's oft-touted "Battery Day": The development of a "million mile" battery good for 10 years or more,

Investors had expected two significant announcements at Musk's oft-touted "Battery Day": The development of a "million mile" battery good for 10 years or more, and a specific cost reduction target that would finally drop the price of an electric vehicle below that of a gasoline car

and a specific cost reduction target — expressed in dollars per kilowatt-hour — that would finally drop the price of an electric vehicle below that of a



Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk walks next to a screen showing an image of Tesla Model 3 car during an opening ceremony in Shanghai, in this file photo. — Reuters

gasoline car.

Musk offered neither. Instead, he promised over the next several years to slash battery costs in half with new

technology and processes and deliver an "affordable" electric car.

"In three years . . . we can do a \$25,000 car that will be basically on

par (with), maybe slightly better than, a comparable gasoline car," Musk said.

Musk acknowledged that Tesla does not have its ambitious new vehicle and battery designs and manufacturing processes fully complete. Tesla has frequently missed production targets set by Musk.

Tesla expects to eventually be able to build as many as 20 million electric vehicles a year. This year, the entire auto industry expects to deliver 80 million cars globally.

Building an affordable electric car "has always been our dream from the beginning of the company," Musk told an online audience of more than 270,000.

Tesla on Tuesday also introduced a new Model S Plaid, a 520-mile range sedan that can reach top speeds of up to 200 miles per hour (320 km per hour), with deliveries starting in 2021. The Plaid was listed on Tesla's website

at a price of nearly \$140,000.

At the opening of the event, Musk walked on stage in a black t-shirt and jeans as about 240 shareholders — each sitting in a Tesla Model 3 in the company parking lot — honked their car horns in approval.

To help drive down vehicle cost, Musk described a new generation of batteries that will be more powerful, longer lasting and half as expensive than the company's current cells

Tesla's new larger cylindrical cells will provide five times more energy, six times more power and far greater driving range, Musk said, adding that full production is about three years away.

To help reduce cost, Musk said Tesla planned to recycle battery cells at its Nevada "gigafactory," while reducing cobalt — one of the most expensive battery materials — to virtually zero. — Reuters



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FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call ☎91711118.
.....

FLAT'S for rent in Al Khuwair, Al Hail, Wadi Kabir, Al Falaj, MBD and Muttrah. ☎99119699/ 95250300/ 24813002.
.....

FLAT for rent at Al Khuwair 33, 4 bedrooms, majlis, 2 halls, kitchen and store. ☎99383446.
.....

For Rent

NEW family flats in Darsait near the beach, 5 bedrooms, hall with AC, 4 bathrooms, balcony with sea view, RO 450 per month. Contact: ☎99315986.
.....

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid roomwith toilet and 1 big hall ☎99370300.
.....

ONE bedroom flat at Darsait near Medical RO 170/-. Two BHK Al Khuwair RO 300/-. Athaiba behind Zubair RO 300/-. (24790449, Fax: 24790559.
.....

NEW apartment for rent, one room, 2 toilets, kitchen and dinning. Location, Al Khoudh Market, Red Taj building, 7th floor. Per month rent RO 190/-. ☎92838118.
.....

WELL maintained 1&2 BHK and office space/store available at Rex Road. Contact ☎92227165
.....

APARTMENT for rent in Maabela 8 in Muscat. It's the highest one of the other two. 3 rooms with 3 toilets one family room, small store and air-condition. ☎71136222.
.....

SHOWROOM and flats FLATS for rent near Diwan Zafraniya area end of Muttrah Corniche close to (Muscat Shiva Temple), family, bachelor. Contact ☎99083071, 99323015.
.....

FLATS for rent in Salalah European design, farm view, good situation in the centre near the sea, new flats. ☎92181524 WhatsApp.
.....

NEW apartment in Ruwi near church consists of 2 rooms with its facilities. Contact. ☎94664635, 95850345.
.....

INDUSTRIAL land 5,500 sqm in Jufnin ☎95490842, 97928817.
.....

1BHK & 2 BHK flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. ☎93994402, 93994403, 24834644.
.....

For Rent

APARTMENTS for rent in Bausher Al Amin Mosque area 1) Apartments for rent and offices in the district Al Amin Mosque two rooms, hall, kitchen and two bathrooms system RO 250 negotiable equipped and divided offices for rent to companies an area of 600 metres 2). We have furnished and unfurnished apartment rooms for monthly rent all over Muscat to communicate. ☎96444111 or 96672277.
.....

FLAT for family for rent, Alaom Al Akhtar shop, behind Irani Bank, Abu Abdullah ☎99627724, Abu Abdulrahman ☎99315490.
.....

FAMILY flat, air-conditioner, middle Al Khuwair ☎93663380.
.....

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call ☎99238012/ 24704994.
.....

WE have a farm for rent. The fee is RO 1/ metre. The farm is located on Muscat-Yeti road. It is suitable for labour residency or for storage purposes. Contact ☎99639269.
.....

FLATS in Al Wadi Al Kabir near to the Al Kuwaiti Mosque. ☎99425958.
.....

Situation Wanted

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
.....

MALE, Indian Civil Engineer, 30 yrs in Oman with Ministry & Consultants seeks suitable position. Work visa upto Sept 2021. Contact. 99315714.
.....

INDIAN female Accountant cum Inventory Controller with 15 years of experience, capable to handle from quotation till finalisation. Preference Muscat area. Contact ☎96414771.
.....

PAKISTANI male driver, 8 years experience in Oman, knows Arabic, seeks job. ☎96551602.
.....

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact ☎96511338. Email: rkdhannush11@gmail.com
.....

I NEED a driver job, urgent, with NOC paper. My name: Masum Billah. ☎968 94991705.
.....

LADY Indian English teacher with over 25 year experience, currently seeks full time position in colleges or training institutions. Responsibilities in English language teaching or soft skills trainer with preference for aviation sector. Possess valid Omani driving license. Contact GSM ☎92541510
.....

Wanted

WANTED scraps HMS1 & HMS2 scrap all kind of copper scrap. Connect us: ☎90765659.
.....

Acc Available

SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact ☎99657906
.....

For Sale/Rent

COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact ☎94272979, 96252664.
.....

(NEW 3 STOREY VILLAS for sale/ rents **WADI KABIR/ AL KHUWAIR**), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). ☎96596348.
.....

For Sale

Institution Licence contact ☎95595512.
.....

RESIDENTIAL building in Al Hamriya. Income RO 1,200. Required RO 115,000. ☎92273379.
.....

RESTAURANT in an excellent location in Salalah with equipment and workers. ☎93397812.
.....

FOR sale: Extravagant and furnished residences for female students in Al Khuwair, Al Mawaleh and Al Khoudh along with all assets. ☎99001332.
.....

MAINTENANCE: 1. AC Maintenance & Servicing; 2. Fridge, Washing Machine & Dish washer repairing; 3. Painting & cleaning services; 4. Electrical & Plumbing Carpentry work. Contact: ☎99447257, 97014234, 24504281.
.....

JEWELLERY workshop attached with showroom for sale at Walja, Way Number 4301, Al Fursan Street, shop Number 25. ☎24835276, 93035380.
.....

Situation Vacant

A LEADING Training Centre located in Muscat, looking for **Highfield Food Safety & HACCP**, level 1-4 courses trainer, with Omani driving licence. CVs send to kashoob1@yahoo.com
.....

WE are urgently for **AC & Auto electrician** (car electrician) who can join immediately. Contact: ☎99677756.
.....

Buying

AL Awsad Modern LLC, electronic and furniture used. ☎99834373.
.....

We buy used and broken cars which have instalments in cash. ☎90202090.

DIESEL Tanker, 1,600 gallon Volvo, 1987. ☎92836774.
.....

1) A LAND IN HALBAN behind GUtech is offered for sale. The land enjoys a permit for twin-villa.

2) A LAND is for sale in Mabaila 8 owner. ☎95959166.
.....

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) ☎99242445, 99327939.
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PAINTING, Plumbing, Building maintenance, Excavation, Stone Pitching, Gabion. ☎99057348.
.....

A SHOWROOM in Al Qurum in strategic location with extravagant interior design on 280 sqm is offered for sale at RO 25,000. ☎92470024.
.....

PICK-UPS, Double Cabin, Buses, Cranes, Primover & Trailers. ☎99465358 & 99454660.
.....

Situation Vacant

JOBS ARE AVAILABLE
A bilingual private school in Al Khoudh is hiring **Chemistry teacher**
Biology teacher
Qualifications:
At least 3 years of experience in teaching IELTS certificate band 6. For more information. Contact ☎96062530
.....



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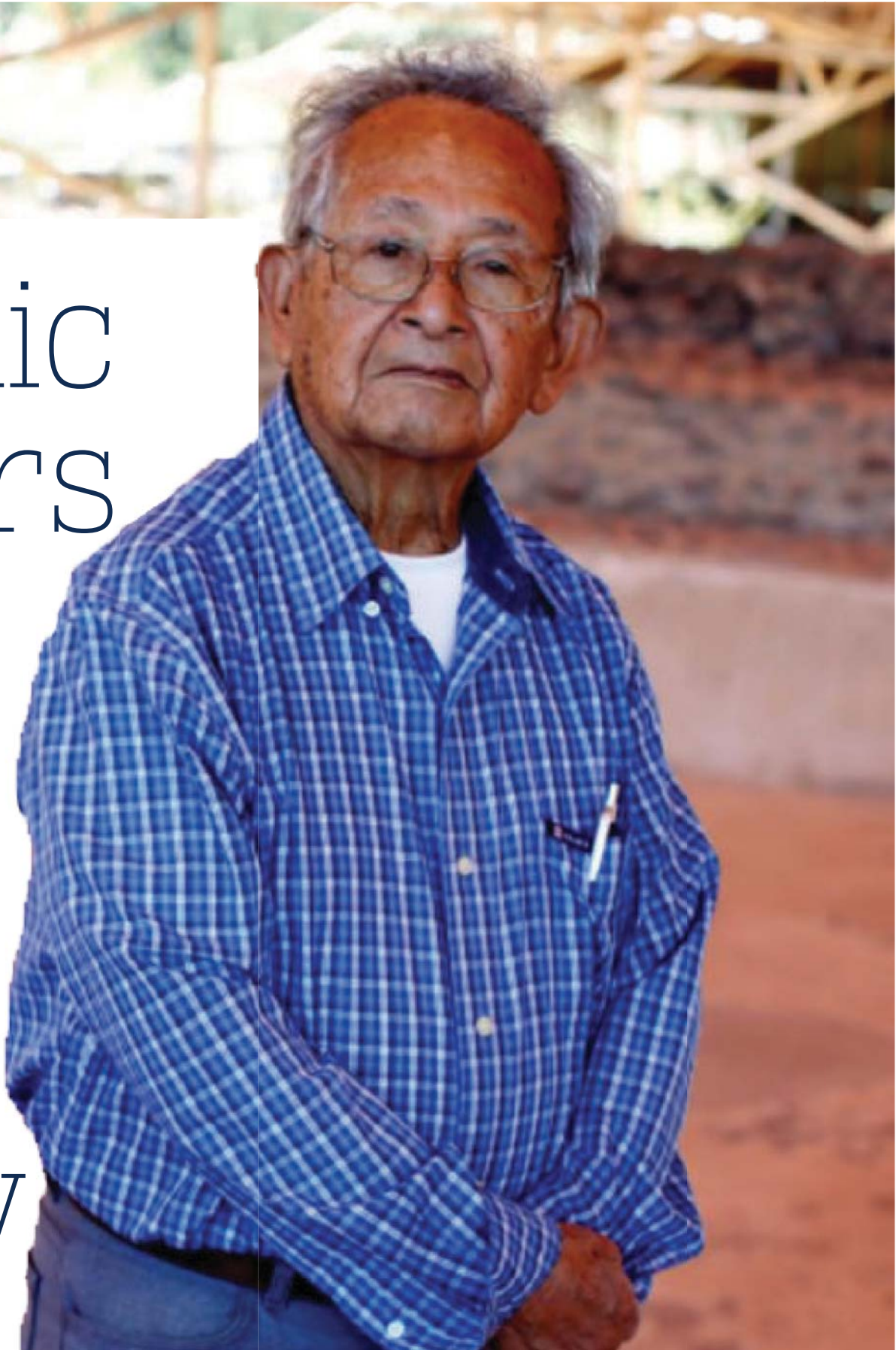
CLASSIFIED SECTION


RUWI

95919344/ 24649594/
99841230/ 99639264/
Behind Royal Oman Police, Adjacent to Dhofar Building, Ruwi.



Beyond public view, scholars unravel mystery of writing in ancient Mexican city



TEOTIHUACAN, Mexico: Among the many mysteries surrounding the ancient Mexican metropolis of Teotihuacan, one has been especially hard to crack: how did its residents use the many signs and symbols found on its murals and ritual sculptures?

The city's towering pyramids reopened to visitors earlier this month as pandemic restrictions eased. But perhaps its most interesting and extensively-excavated neighbourhood, featuring a patio floor with rare painted symbols, or glyphs, remains off-limits to tourists.

The discovery in the 1990s of the puzzling red glyphs, most laid out in neat columns, has led a growing number of scholars to question the long-held view that writing was absent from the city, which thrived from roughly 100 BC to 550 AD.

Their ultimate ambition is to harness the steady drip of new finds to one day mimic the success their peers have had decoding ancient Maya or Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Teotihuacan — which lies in a dusty plain about 30 miles (50 km) outside the modern Mexican capital — was once the largest city in the Americas, home to at least 100,000 people.

Yet much is unknown about the civilisation that inhabited it, including what language its native inhabitants spoke and whether they developed a system of writing akin to that of the Aztecs, who dominated the area some eight centuries later and revered its ruins.

Experts have debated several theories for the glyphs. They say they may have been used to represent symbols used to teach writing, or place-names of subjugated tribute-paying cities, or even as signs used in disease-curing rituals.

Art historian Tatiana Valdez, author of a book published this year on the glyphs of Teotihuacan, says the patio's 42 glyphs, many in linear sequences, amount to the longest text ever found at the city's ruins.

Overall, she says more than 300 Teotihuacano hieroglyphics have

The discovery in the 1990s of the puzzling red glyphs, most laid out in neat columns, has led a growing number of scholars to question the long-held view that writing was absent from the city, which thrived from roughly 100 BC to 550 AD.

been tentatively identified so far.

Countless ancient Mexican codices — accordion-style folded paper books covered in hieroglyphics — were ordered burned in colonial times by Catholic authorities. Only about a dozen still exist.

Valdez is convinced such books were also part of Teotihuacan's literary tradition, over a millennium before the bonfires.

"I think Teotihuacan used hieroglyphics, and used them well because we've found so many," she said, pointing to thousands of mostly clay figurines with painted or incised glyphs that have been found on the site.

Valdez said the sheer number of figurines found with glyphs on tiny headdresses or on their foreheads could mean some access to writing was available to commoners.

Walking around La Ventilla, where the glyphs patio is located, is tantamount to exploring an ancient neighbourhood, featuring temples, artisan workshops, intricate apartment compounds and finely painted murals.

The government-run National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) said additional



work is still needed to be able to open it to tourists, but did not offer any timeline.

The neighbourhood's major excavations were completed years ago.

ELUSIVE TEXTS

Drawings and photos of the city's most recently confirmed glyph are set to be published in a scholarly paper next year. Found in 2016 on the back of a miniature stone altar, it features a triangle in a round cartouche with three dots underneath. The single glyph likely represents the specific year it was dedicated.

It is the kind of find expected by Joyce Marcus, an archaeologist at the University of Michigan who has argued that writing was absent in the city.

"So far, we have not seen the long texts," she wrote in an e-mail.

"Writing is rare at Teotihuacan when its 'texts' are compared/contrasted with those at Maya sites," she added, pointing to the Mayan city of Tikal, a contemporary of Teotihuacan in present-day Guatemala. Tikal is home to monuments with columns of glyphs that in recent decades have been large-

ly deciphered.

A painted mural uncovered in the 1960s in Teotihuacan shows what appears to be a priest holding a book. It was a "hugely important" discovery, said Christophe Helmke, a leading scholar of the city's writing system at the University of Copenhagen.

He cautioned against expecting texts on public monuments or sculptures in the city, and said writing in Teotihuacan was probably mostly confined to its books.

He suggested future advances will likely come from new mural or ceramic finds, but not books, which are unlikely to turn up due to the speed of deterioration of the paper or animal skins used by ancient scribes.

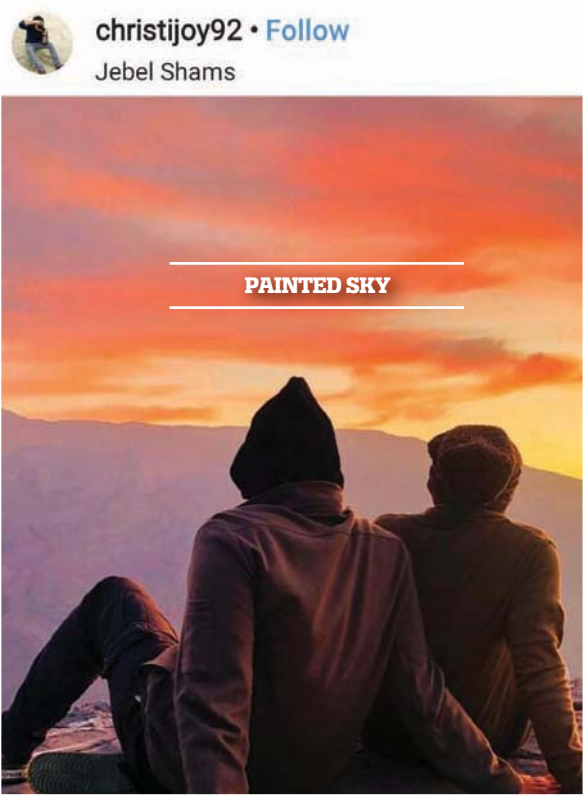
David Stuart, a University of Texas archaeologist and epigrapher who has pioneered the decipherment of ancient Maya writing, said the lack of knowledge about what language was spoken at Teotihuacan complicates efforts to read its glyphs.

"It's true that many still say that Teotihuacan had no writing system," he said.

"But in fact it's there." — **Reuters**



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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COOK LIKE A CHEF

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BBQ Pulpo: Lightly charred octopus infused with tangy barbecue sauce



SEAFOOD TREAT

Asado at the Sheraton Oman has won several distinguished awards through the leadership of its current executive chef, Adil Shaikh. As the restaurant adapts to the new normal, they are bringing back some of the favourites that have put them on the map as one of the go-to destinations for memorable dining. Currently offering Gaucho Night every Thursday where they showcase some of the best barbecues inspired by the American cowboys, they are also relaunching Seafood Wednesday providing even better diversity in Oman's culinary scene. To give you a taste of what they offer, Chef Adil is sharing four of their beloved dishes — something to surprise your family with when you have the time to cook them something extra-special.

PREPARATION METHOD

Fill a large pot 1/2 full with water. Add 2 tablespoons kosher salt, peppercorns, bring to a boil over high heat.
Meanwhile, place the octopus on a cutting board. Using a wooden spoon or meat mallet, pound the octopus multiple times, starting in the middle and moving down each tentacle to tenderize the meat.
Dip tentacles into the boiling water 3 times, holding them in the boiling water 2 to 3 seconds each time, until the tentacles curl up. Submerge entire octopus in the boiling water. Bring water back to a boil, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until octopus is fork-tender, 45 to 60 minutes. Remove from heat and cool for 30 minutes.
Grill for medium-high heat and lightly oil the grate.
Grill octopus with marinade Bbq until charred on all sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove from heat, slice into pieces, and place on a serving platter. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, squeeze lemon over top, sprinkle with parsley, and season with salt and pepper to taste.



ABOUT THE CHEF
CHEF ADIL SHAIKH

Executive Chef
Sheraton Hotel, Muscat

Adil Shaikh is currently the Executive Chef of Sheraton Oman Hotel located in Muscat. He has been associated with the hotel since its re-opening in 2016.

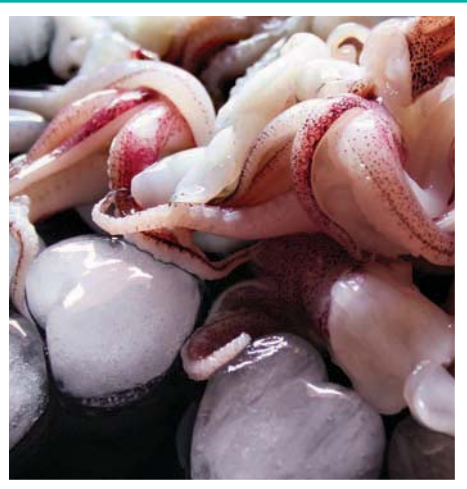
With an enriching career of over 15 years, he has successfully launched award-winning restaurants as an integral game changer in hospitality operations. Having won several prestigious recognitions and awards including Battle of the Chef Dubai and participated at several distinguished culinary platforms in the Middle East, he draws immense inspiration from the ever-evolving culinary world. His illustrious career spans across the Middle East & Asia in renowned Luxury, Business & Leisure Hotels & Resorts.

An avid foodie Adil is a strong advocate of 'Go Local.' He is committed to showcasing the flavours and tastes of lesser-known local ingredients, farm-fresh produce and regional cuisines. An astute, hands-on chef, Adil curates bespoke dining experiences that delve deep into authentic flavours, traditions and intricate nuances of each cuisine.

Off duty, you will spot him being an absolute foodie and exploring local cuisines of various cultures. On other days, he uses his kitchen as an interactive platform to celebrate the love for great food and memorable dining experiences that stand the test of time with his guests and loyal clientele.



INGREDIENTS:



PULPO

- 2 tbsps kosher salt
- 1 tbsp black peppercorns
- 1 Kg octopus, head and beak removed
- 2 tbsps extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 lemon
- 1/2 tbsp minced fresh parsley
- 1 pinch salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 Cup Smoke bbq Sauce

WHITE BEANS
CHIMICHURRI

- 1 can white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup packed fresh parsley
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 3 tbsps red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2-4 tbsp warm water



In a food processor, combine the white beans, parsley, garlic, red wine vinegar, oregano, salt, and red pepper flakes. Pulse until finely chopped. slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Drizzle in the water 1 tablespoon at a time until the chimichurri is smooth and creamy.

TRAVEL TALES

As Rome boosts micro-mobility, some complain of E-scooters gone wild



ROME: They're a far cry from the ancient Roman chariots immortalized in the 1959 classic movie "Ben-Hur", but critics say they can be just as dangerous in the wrong hands.

Thousands of electric scooters are filling the cobblestoned streets of central Rome as people seek alternatives to crowded public transport amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

To encourage environmentally friendly "micro-mobility," authorities have licensed eight companies, including Lime and Bird, to operate about 6,000 E-scooters. Thousands more are on the way, a prospect that has some local residents worried.

Mayor Virginia Raggi has encouraged electric mobility in the Italian capital, where buses occasionally catch fire due to poor maintenance and metro stations have been shut for months because of broken escalators. Many Romans have begun using the scooters to get to work and tourists enjoy darting from the Colosseum to the Vatican and on to the bridges over the Tiber River.

The battery-operated vehicles have also caught on because Rome's hills are too steep for most cyclists.

The law says they cannot be used on sidewalks, cannot go faster than 25 kph on streets or more than six kph in large pedestrian islands. They are banned from bicycle paths within the city limits. The minimum age for their use is 14 but riders under 18 must wear a helmet.

But there have been complaints of dangerous driving and several injuries involving the vehicles. Some have even been seen travelling on the city's fast and treacherous ring road.

"They violate every basic road and traffic rule," said resident Carmen Golia. "A regular driving license should be required."

Police said that in the month of July they issued fines of up to 400 euros (\$473.88) each to more than 150 users. Critics say this is too little.

An app on a user's smartphone locates the nearest scooter and the customer is billed automatically, usually according to the distance driven.

Many are left near ancient monuments or blocking sidewalks, leaving some upset residents to take matters into their own hands.

In early September, a woman knocked down like dominoes about a dozen scooters parked on a sidewalk in front of one of Rome's most famous theatres before police stopped her.

The number of scooters is expected to grow to about 16,000 in the coming months.

Bird, which operates around 2,500 scooters in Rome, has staff to reposition badly parked vehicles and the company allows users to report misconduct and abuses.

"If someone violates the rules we send an alert. If this happens more than once we can impose fines or block the account," said Cristina Donofrio, general manager of Bird for Italy. — **Reuters**



MASIRAH ISLAND, CLOSER TO GOD AND TO NATURE

STORY BY RAY PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY LENA PETERSEN

Noted British actor Benedict Cumberbatch observed that, “You come into this world on your own, the same way that you leave it. It’s made me want to live a life less ordinary.” That’s not the kind of quote that you will usually find from someone in the smug bubble of film and television but demonstrates a unique appreciation of the true value of living your life well.

Another of a similar ilk maybe, and similar sentiments certainly, is Hope Kponi, a recent graduate from the University of Benin, in Nigeria who writes:

*I’m not scared of dying,
I’m just scared of not living.
Watching life go by without being a
part of it,
Sipping reality’s liquor without get-
ting drunk,
Touching the sky without flying.
I have lived trapped inside this body
Wondering when and how I’d live
Little knowing that I have been living
Just on other people’s terms.
From now on, I’m living for me.*

... and I think maybe we should all, especially in a time of COVID-19 inspired reflection, engage with nature, the land, sun, sea and skies, when and wherever we can.

These thoughts wandered into my mind, and rather unusually and fortuitously maybe, stuck around, while I was standing on Biyad Beach on Masirah Island as the Sun came up on a beautiful morning recently. The thoughts lingered, and persisted through catching a nice Koffer fish (and missing some as my concentration drifted somewhat from the fishing), eventually prompting me to put the rod down and just look around me at the beauty that nature has wrought in this amazing country.

I put my rod down for a while and just stood, lost in thought for half an hour as the light waves softly for once, caressed the shore, washing my stubborn footprints away, massaging my feet and toes gently as I removed my trainers to dwell on this almost ethereal experience. For those few minutes I felt closer to lost friends and loved ones than ever before. This, maybe

because faith has never become a tangible and complete part of my life, that Mother Nature has assumed the role? I know I wiped away tears, because it felt like Mum, Dad, my sister Gayleen, and my good friend Steven were here, with me. It was a surreal experience, powerful and compassionate, because when they went, they were gone, and I was left with no pain and no regret at all, only happiness!

The following day we took a road trip, wanting to check out the kite-surfing beaches and to see what the fishing prospects were on that side of the island. It’s certainly not a demanding drive, and maps are of very little use, and we were soon convinced that exploration was the best policy. One of the most interesting sights between the road and the sea was an interesting black hulled wooden vessel, maybe 50 meters above the high tide line, it was a graphic illustration of a different boatbuilding culture, with metal nails and rivets used throughout its cladding. I loved the fact that we could write our own history for this vessel as we admired it, with thoughts of the Arabian Nights, Ali Baba, and Ibn Battuta never far away.

Not far away was Ghab Beach, where a handful of local fishing boats graced either side of a little headland. Lena swam in the calm, unbelievably clear waters, while I climbed the headland to check out the view, and then wandered back to sea level and had a couple of casts without attracting any bites. Telling myself there were no fish here today, I picked my way carefully through the tidal rocks and pools at the foot of the headland when my attention was taken by a big Rock Hamour cruising in his element less than 2 meters from me. All I could do was laugh out loud at his timing and audacity!

Sure enough, as day dawned the next day, we returned to Biyad Beach, to be closer to God, closer to nature, and closer to our loved ones, a compelling footnote, here yet again appreciating the ‘Jewel of the Arabian Gulf’ that is Oman.



We returned to Biyad Beach, to be closer to God, closer to nature, and closer to our loved ones, a compelling footnote, here yet again appreciating the ‘Jewel of the Arabian Gulf’ that is Oman



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MASIRAH ISLAND, CLOSER TO GOD AND TO NATURE

Masirah Island has some of the most immaculate waters that are ideal for swimming and snorkelling. The island also boasts some of the best fishing spots in the country. In some months, the mornings can be cold and misty. In other months, it can be warm and rustic. One thing is for sure though throughout the year, its calm and gentle soothing waves will always make you think deep about life just like this writer... **P19**

DAILY PICKS

DISCOVERY

BEYOND PUBLIC VIEW, SCHOLARS UNRAVEL MYSTERY OF WRITING IN ANCIENT MEXICAN CITY

Among the many mysteries surrounding the ancient Mexican metropolis of Teotihuacan, one has been especially hard to crack: how did its residents use the many signs and symbols found on its murals and ritual sculptures? Story on **Page 17**

WHAT TO EAT

LIGHTLY CHARRED OCTOPUS INFUSED WITH TANGY BARBECUE SAUCE

Sheraton Hotel Executive Chef Adil Shaikh continues his offering of easy to prepare meals at home. Do you love seafood? Then this BBQ Pulpo will be perfect for you... Story on **Page 18**

READ

SO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT RACE

BY IJEOMA OLUO

A look at the contemporary racial landscape of the United States.

TRAVEL TALES

AS ROME BOOSTS MICRO-MOBILITY, SOME COMPLAIN OF E-SCOOTERS GONE WILD

They're a far cry from the ancient Roman chariots immortalized in the 1959 classic movie 'Ben-Hur', but critics say they can be just as dangerous in the wrong hands... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Dating back to 1968, Hispanic Heritage Week is dedicated to celebrating the Hispanic or Latino heritage. To celebrate today, why don't you try some of the Latino seafood or better yet, hang out with your Hispanic friend to learn a little bit more of what make their culture unique.