



ZAINAB AL NASSRI AND
LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, OCT 3

The tropical cyclone Shaheen made landfall between the wilayats of Al Musanah and Al Suwaiq with torrential rains and heavy winds with speeds ranging from 120-150km/hr, a statement from the Oman News Agency said.

Three people, including a child died, and two went missing in Oman on Sunday as the cyclone Shaheen brought heavy rains and landslides in the Sultanate.

“The impact might reach Dhahirah, Al Buraimi and Al Dhakhiliyah. Heavy to moderate rains and strong winds are expected in north and south Al Sharqiyah governorates. The sea condition is rough across the coastal areas of Sea of Oman – from south of Sharqiyah to Musandam,” said Bushra al Sadi, meteorological specialist from Oman Met Office. According to the meteorologist at the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre so far the amount of rain received in Muscat is 170 mm. The wadis in the governorate were flowing in full capacity on Sunday.

“The amount of rain received in this short duration is high because the average annual amount of rainfall registered in Muscat Governorate is 100 mm. In few hours on Sunday we received rainfall almost double the annual average,” said Dr Said al Sarmi.

He added: “The weather experienced in Muscat is expected to continue for the next six to 12 hours. Maybe after six hours we might see the reduction in the intensity in rainfall and it

may decrease gradually. Rain in North Al Batinah can last for 24 hours.”

International weather experts are looking at Shaheen as an extremely rare event as it is being looked upon as the second cyclone in modern record to enter the Sea of Oman.

The long hours of rain and strong winds saw many trees uprooted and roads being submerged under water. The Muttrah Seafont also saw damage caused by strong winds and high waves. Many low-lying areas from Muscat and other governorates recorded overflowing wadis.

Meanwhile people in the coastal areas have been evacuated. There has also been evacuation from the low-lying areas in Ibri and Dhank. Ten people were rescued from Qurum to safety. A part of a mountain collapsed in Wattayah, but no casualty was reported.

The Sultan Qaboos Street from Burj Al Sahwa to Qurum Bridge has been closed for now. The Mawaleh area faced flooding around houses and the roads. There has been a complete evacuation in Qurum commercial area. In some parts of Qurum electricity has been cut off for safety reasons.

“Please stay at home and do not put yourself in risky situations. Follow the weather bulletins and only step when everything is cleared out,” said Dr Said al Sarmi.

The National Committee for Emergency Management has stated that it is forbidden to open sewage covers until in the presence of specialists from the Oman Company for Water and Wastewater Services.



PHOTO BY ABDULRAHMAN AL HINAI

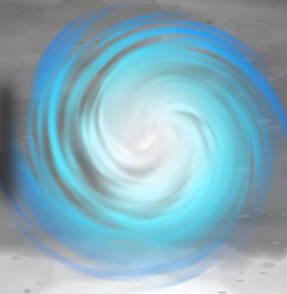
Cyclone Shaheen was downgraded to a tropical storm after it had hit land, Oman meteorology service said in a tweet on Sunday. Suwaiq is witnessing torrential rains due to the tropical storm. Electricity has been cut off as precautionary measure in some parts of the wilayat

HM GETS PHONE CALLS FROM LEADERS OF QATAR, KUWAIT AND PALESTINE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received phone calls from Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, and Mahmoud Abbas, President of Palestine, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, to check the situation in the Sultanate, after it was exposed to Cyclone Shaheen. They expressed their solidarity with the Sultanate, praying to the Almighty to grant His Majesty good health and to spare him and the Omani people from all harm and misfortune. HM expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the leaders for their kind initiative, praying to the Almighty to protect them and their countries from all evil and harm. – ONA

MUSCAT RECEIVES RECORD RAINS IN CYCLONE’S WAKE

Cyclone Shaheen brought heavy rains across the coastal-belt governorates. Amounts of rain recorded in some meteorological stations of the Civil Aviation Authority showed Muscat city receiving 152.4 ml Al Amerat 117.2 ml Bousher 51.4 ml. Massive rainfall of as much as 500 cm (20 inches) was expected in some areas, potentially causing flash floods. Cyclones steadily lose their power once they stop travelling over ocean waters and Shaheen was downgraded to a tropical storm after it had hit land, the local meteorology service said in a tweet. When its eye crossed land, the cyclone was carrying winds of between 120 and 150 km per hour (75-93 mph). **SEE P6**



Volunteers rescue a nest full of baby chicks from an uprooted tree in Muscat.

MUNICIPALITY CLEARS FALLEN TREES, MUD FROM ROADS



KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

The civic authorities have started clearing obstacles for smooth water passage from roads and valleys, as many areas got flooded even before the land fall of the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

At many places, roads and valleys were filled with mud, debris and soil accumulation, and uprooted trees and fallen branches.

As the wind continued to blow and water gushed forth, felling trees and accumulating debris all the

way, cleaning workers were seen performing their duty in view of any emergency in following the adverse climatic conditions.

"We have been on duty since morning deploying workers to all places that were affected by the rains and flash floods," a supervisor from the Muscat Municipality, who was seen during the rains in Wattayah, told the Observer.

Volunteers of several NGOs took part in clearing the roads along with the civic workers and removed the tree branches etc that

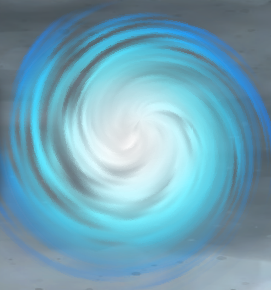
blocked the roads.

"We joined the municipality workers in helping them clear the roads, and we feel that it's our duty as responsible residents," Mohammed Vanimel, representative of an NGO, said.

They said it would be a herculean task to clear up several kilometres of roads covered by muds and dirt following the rains.

"But, with the support of all citizens and residents, we are hopeful that life returns to normal in a day or two as united as we stand," he said.





3 PEOPLE DIE, OVER 2,700 EVACUATED

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnassri

Three people, including a child died, and two went missing in Oman on Sunday as the cyclone Shaheen battered the Sultanate with heavy rain and strong winds. The number of shelter centres in the various governorates of the

Sultanate reached 136. Forty-five shelters have already been open.

Of 2,734 who were evacuated at the time of reporting, 1,989 are Omanis, and 736 residents, said Hamoud al Mandhari, Head of Relief Department, National Committee of Emergency Management.

Al Mandhari said those

centres received people and families who were evacuated from their homes located on the Sultanate's coastline areas, which are the most affected by the cyclone Shaheen.

People from some low lying areas or living closer to major Wadis have also been accommodated in the shelter

homes. These areas are prone to get flooded in such situations.

"We are taking care of the requirements to accommodate the affected people, and it will continue till the situation becomes normal," he said.

On Sunday, the National Committee for Emergency Management announced the

death of a child in Al Amerat. He drowned in a pool of water caused by incessant rain since Saturday afternoon.

Lieutenant Faisal bin Ali al Thuhli, from the Public Authority for Civil Defense and Ambulance (PACDA), said the authority's teams in Muscat rescued 31 citizens who were stuck in their

vehicles as well as 29 citizens who were trapped in their homes due to overflow of wadis or accumulation of water in certain areas. They were sent to shelter homes safely.

Cyclone brought medium and heavy rains to Muscat, South Al Batinah, and parts of North Al Batinah on Sunday.



SAF and health sector gears up for emergency situation

MUSCAT: As part of the action plan of the National Committee for Emergency Management, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Main Military Committee tasked with tackling emergency situations held a meeting on Sunday to study ways to lend support to citizens, residents and establishments amid developments of the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

Emphasis was laid on services to be rendered to affected areas as decided by the National Committee for Emergency Management.

In the meeting, held via videoconferencing, the chairman and members of the Main Military Committee listened to a briefing from sub-committees in the governorates of the Sultanate.

The briefing included the latest



cyclone-related developments in the governorates, as well as ways to activate support plans, cooperation and coordination with government departments concerned.

Meanwhile, establishments affiliated to the Ministry of Health continue providing health services to patients during the

tropical cyclone Shaheen, which is currently affecting a number of governorates in the Sultanate.

The Ministry of Health raised the preparedness of its establishments in governorates that are expected to be affected. It also activated the emergency response sector, emergency subcommittees and plans related

to such circumstances.

The ministry ensured the availability of personnel, medicines, medical supplies and other needed logistical services used in emergency cases.

Health establishments in other governorates, that might not be affected by the cyclone, are also on standby to provide support.

The treatment services of kidney patients in some health establishments were transferred to other establishments. Moreover, one of the health centres in the Governorate of North Al Batinah was evacuated.

Moreover, the Ministry of Health's call centre receives case reports and inquiries 24/7, and helps in guiding people to activated health establishments based on their treatment needs.

— ONA





Flights to and from Muscat got diverted, delayed

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Flights expected to land at Muscat International Airport were either diverted to Salalah or departures were delayed by nearly 24 hours, according to various airline sources.

“We will soon be informing about the delayed departure

timings in accordance with the developments arising out of the storm and its aftermath,” a source at the airline said.

All flights to and from Muscat International Airport have been postponed and rescheduled to a later date in the evening or until further notice, Oman Airports said in a statement. “We would like to point out that flights

through Muscat International Airport continue to operate. Some flights have been rescheduled based on the airport procedures to avoid the direct impact of the weather situation. We would like to alert everyone to check the dates of their trips and any updates around them, via an auto-updated flight schedule in the Oman Airports App available

on smartphones. Also, they can review their travel agencies or airline offices.”

The decision was taken to avoid any risks that may result from the direct impact of climatic conditions on the operation of operations at the airport. Due to the weather conditions, SalamAir flights to Doha and Jeddah were AL rescheduled for further

notice. Due to exceptional weather conditions, a number of incoming and outgoing flights at Muscat International Airport have been rescheduled as per given times, Oman Air said in a statement.

Salam Air from Kozhikode to Muscat landed at 7.30 am and passengers were given food and shelter. Social workers too came

for their assistance.

Air India Express has informed the Observer that in view of the cyclone, following flights are delayed by 24 hours; IX 117/118 Delhi-Muscat-Delhi; IX 549/554 Trivandrum -Muscat; IX 817/818 Mangaluru-Muscat-Bangaluru-Mangaluru; and IX 123/616 Lucknow- Muscat-Trichy are among them.

HOTELS ON COASTAL STRIP TOLD TO EVACUATE

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The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism called on all hotel establishments located on the coastal strip, from Muscat Governorate to North Al Batinah Governorate, to evacuate inmates and visitors to alternative places.

“The evacuation is necessitated due to the tropical storm Shaheen that is advancing towards the coastal areas of the Sultanate”, a circular from the ministry said.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources called on farmers, beekeepers and livestock breeders to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of beehives and livestock.

A circular from the ministry called on everyone to stay away from wadis and not to approach dams.

Earlier in a statement, Major Mohammed bin Salam Al-Hashami of the National Committee for Emergency Management said the low-lying areas located on the coastal strip of the Governorate of Muscat were witnessing rise in the water level due to the extended waves. “This may increase in the coming hours due to the rise of the water level and the entry of water into the homes in the areas”, he said.

The low-lying areas in Muscat are mainly Qurum, Azaiba and Al Ghubra, as well as Seeb adjacent to the coastal strip.

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Health ministry provides emergency services

MUSCAT: Establishments affiliated to the Ministry of Health continue providing health services to patients during the tropical cyclone “Shaheen,” which is currently affecting a number of Governorates in the Sultanate.

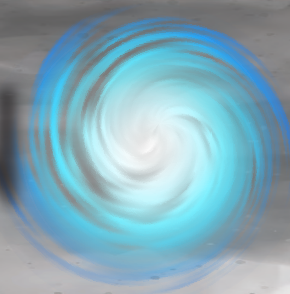
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Shop ordered to close for raising foodstuff prices

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has ordered the closure of a commercial establishment in Barka for raising prices of foodstuffs taking advantage of the adverse weather

situation. According to a statement from the Authority, the shop was found to have violated the consumer protection law, especially during the current situation. "The commercial establishment raised the prices of foodstuffs, taking

advantage of the present climatic conditions arising out of the tropical cyclone Shaheen in the Sultanate," the statement said. Although the Authority did not reveal the name of the establishment, it said that "any breach in the rights of the consumer, including price rise

will be dealt with seriously", The Authority, in a statement earlier, said it has already chalked out a comprehensive plan, including the formation of teams of officials to deal with the situation. "The teams, which will work in alternative shifts in morning and

evening, will keep a watch on the markets and prices of commodities and services", the statement said. In addition, the officials will follow up on consumer complaints and will interact with owners of commercial establishments to ensure the supply of all essential commodities.



Muscat receives record rainfall

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

Muscat received 170 millimeters in the wake of cyclone. The wadis in the governorate were flowing in full capacity on Sunday, such as in Bousher.

“The amount of rain received in this short duration is high because the average annual amount of rainfall registered in Muscat Governorate is 100 millimetres. In a few hours on Sunday, we received rainfall almost double the annual average,” said Dr Said al Sarmi, Meteorologist from National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Center, Civil Aviation Authority.

The weather experienced in Muscat is expected to continue for the next six to 12 hours.

In the capital Muscat, vehicles were tyre-deep in water and streets left semi-deserted.

Across the sea in Iran, six people were killed in Chabahar port in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, parliament’s news agency ICANA reported, citing deputy speaker Ali Nikzad.

“Infrastructure, including electrical facilities and roads, was damaged,” provincial governor Hossein Modarres-Khiabani told Iran’s official IRNA news agency.

The eye of the storm was located 220 kilometres (130 miles) off the coast of the province, he said.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) also went on “high alert”, emergency services said.

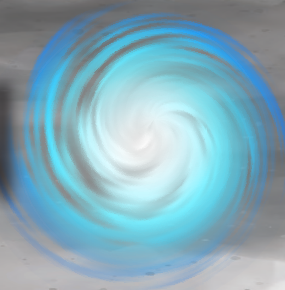
In July, northern Oman was hit by heavy rains, hail and strong winds.

And in May 2018, Cyclone Mekunu hit southern Oman and the Yemeni island of Socotra, killing at least 11 people.

The UAE also braced for the storm, with emergency authorities urging people to avoid beaches and low-lying areas.

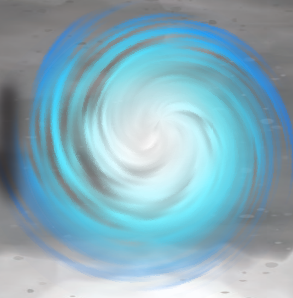
“We would like to assure everyone that the concerned authorities are on high alert and prepared to deal with any upcoming tropical situation,” its National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority said Saturday. All construction work was suspended in Al-Ain, bordering Oman, and children were told to study remotely on Monday and Tuesday. — With AFP inputs





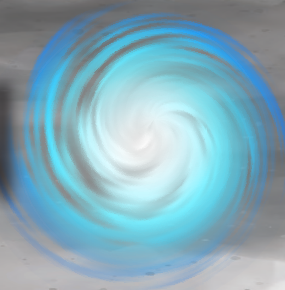
CYCLONE SHAHEEN BEARS DOWN ON OMAN





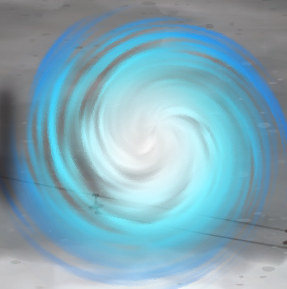
ROADS TURN RIVERS IN MUSCAT





VEHICLES

WASHED AWAY



LOW LYING AREAS

FLOODED



In brief

ROME



ROME VOTES IN MAYORAL POLLS DOMINATED BY RUBBISH

The people of Rome voted on Sunday to elect a new mayor who will have the daunting task of tackling poor public transport and disastrous rubbish management in the Italian capital, dubbed one of the dirtiest cities in the world.

Across the country from the Eternal City to Milan, Naples and Bologna, voting kicked off late on Monday for municipal elections being closely watched as a bellwether ahead of 2023 general elections.

But in Rome — one of the world's filthiest cities, according to a ranking last month by the British magazine Time Out — residents are more concerned with the perennial transport, flooding, waste and pothole woes.

MOSCOW



GEORGIA RULING PARTY WINS LOCAL ELECTION

Georgia's ruling party won a commanding lead in a municipal election held a day after the arrest of former president Mikheil Saakashvili, who had returned from exile to support the opposition.

The ruling Georgian Dream party won 46.7 per cent of votes to 30.7 per cent for the United National Movement (UNM), founded by Saakashvili, according to results released on Sunday by the Election Administration of Georgia with of 99.97 per cent of votes counted.

In the capital Tbilisi, incumbent mayor Kakha Kaladze won 45 per cent of the vote, while the chairman of the opposition UNM, Nika Melia, received 34 per cent.

PARIS



FRENCH TYCOON BERNARD TAPIE DIES AGED 78

Bernard Tapie, the French business magnate, actor and politician whose swashbuckling career earned him millions of fans despite a litany of legal convictions, died aged 78 on Sunday after a four-year fight with stomach cancer.

"Dominique Tapie and his family have the immense sadness to announce the death of her husband and their father, Bernard Tapie, this Sunday," they said in a statement to La Provence newspaper in Marseille, in which Tapie was a majority stakeholder.

BLAMES GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS FOR AN EXODUS OF FOREIGN LORRY DRIVERS

British PM backs Brexit strategy despite supply crunch



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson walks through the Conservative Party annual conference venue, in Manchester, Britain, on Sunday. — Reuters

Britons had voted for change in the 2016 Brexit referendum, and again in the 2019 election when the Conservatives were returned to power.

"They voted for the end of a broken model of the UK economy that relied on low wages and low skill and chronic low productivity," he said.

"What we can't do in all these sectors is simply go back to the

tired, failed, old model and reach for the lever marked uncontrolled immigration, with people at low wages.

"So yes, there will be a period of adjustment."

Johnson also rebuffed Conservative critics who are angry at his government's increased tax burden and state intervention.

"If I can possibly avoid it, I do not want to raise taxes again,

of course not, nor does (finance minister) Rishi Sunak," he said, ahead of Sunak's keynote address to the conference on Monday.

Johnson can point to a successful Covid vaccination roll-out, which has so far seen more than 82 per cent of all over-16s double-jabbed.

But anger persists in some quarters at his handling of the pandemic and a death toll of more

than 136,000, as well as claims of cronyism for Covid contracts.

On Brexit, he has angered Brussels by threatening to shelve problematic new trading arrangements for Northern Ireland, and tensions are high with France over fishing rights. Protesters, some holding EU flags, gathered near the Conservative conference venue.

"Corrupt Tory government. Liars, cheats, charlatans. Get them out now," a banner read.

Last week, opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer attacked Johnson as a Brexit-obsessed showman without a plan, even if his popularity remains relatively high with the public. "We have a fuel crisis, a pay crisis, a goods crisis, and a cost of living crisis, all at the same time," Starmer told his own party conference.

Johnson meanwhile faces an outcry over the murder of Sarah Everard by London Metropolitan Police officer Wayne Couzens.

The 33-year-old marketing executive's abduction in south London in March triggered nationwide anguish and debate about the safety of women and girls.

Couzens, 48, was on Thursday jailed for the rest of his life after falsely arresting Everard on the pretence she had broken coronavirus restrictions, before raping and murdering her.

— AFP

Blast rocks Kabul after Taliban hold victory rally

KABUL: Taliban supporters and senior figures held their first mass rally near Kabul on Sunday, but their show of strength was overshadowed by a bomb blast near a mosque in the Afghan capital.

No foreign government has yet recognised the former rebels' rule, though their hold on power within the country is becoming stronger, seven weeks after they took Kabul. But in a sign that the Taliban victory has not brought an end to violence after Afghanistan's 20-year conflict, an explosion killed at least two civilians and wounded several more outside Kabul's Eid Gah mosque.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had said on Saturday that a prayer ceremony would be held at the mosque for his mother following her recent death. He made no reference to this on Sunday as he tweeted that the

blast had killed several civilians in the area.

Civilians in bloodied clothing were seen by AFP arriving at the nearby Kabul Emergency Hospital.

"Our initial information shows two civilians were killed and three wounded in the blast," interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti said.

Taliban fighters arriving at the hospital handed over their weapons and stripped off their body armour to go in to donate blood, and the hospital said on Twitter that four patients were being treated.

The blast, which could be heard across the centre of the capital, came shortly after the new Taliban "interim government" staged a rally just outside the capital, from which they were driven out in 2001 in a US-led operation launched after the 9/11 attacks. — AFP



Taliban fighters sit at the entrance gate of the Kabul Governor Building in Kabul on Sunday. — AFP

In Venezuela, a village on stilts slowly succumbs to mud



Aerial view of stilt houses in Congo Mirador, Zulia state, Venezuela. — AFP

CONGO MIRADOR, Venezuela: Congo Mirador was once an idyllic spot: a community of homes on stilts that seemed to float on the calm waters of a lagoon in western Venezuela. Now, the community is inundated with mud, a victim of silt generated by the Catatumbo river.

Most of its residents have left, and Congo Mirador is slowly fading away.

The river's source is in Colombia, and it flows into Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo, one of the biggest lakes in South America.

The Catatumbo's path has been diverted numerous times over the years, slowly sending muddy sediment, plant life, tree branches

and other debris into the village — to the point where it has been overwhelmed by the mess.

Where once there were fish, now there are weeds.

"There was a magnificent lake, and now it's become a jungle," laments Euclides Villasmil, one of the few residents of Congo Mirador who has remained there.

Only about 10 families, out of 200 who once lived there, are still in their homes. The village once was buoyant and loud; now, it's dead quiet.

No one knows exactly when the invasion of Congo Mirador actually began, but residents say sedimentation was already starting to ruin the pristine waters back in 2013, when tiny mud

islands formed.

An aerial view of the village captured by a camera drone leaves the false impression that Congo Mirador exists in the middle of a lush green field — in fact, it's a swamp and life is increasingly difficult.

Along with the mud, there are snakes, toads and other creatures, and parasites that have progressively changed the ecosystem to such an extent that the village is a ghost town.

Only a few pillars remain of the medical clinic that once served the village's 700 residents. Some homes have been ransacked, stripped of anything of value: from the doors to the windows, even the faucets and pipes. — AFP

A SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR SAIED DWARFS EARLIER PROTESTS

Thousands rally for Tunisian leader

TUNIS: Thousands of supporters of Tunisian President Kais Saied rallied in the capital and other cities on Sunday to back his suspension of parliament and promises to change the political system, acts his critics call a coup.

The demonstration of at least 8,000 people in central Tunis was by far the biggest since Saied seized executive power in July — a show of support by his supporters that dwarfed two protests over the previous two weekends against his actions.

Thousands of other Saied supporters rallied in Sfax, witnesses and local media said, while others rallied in Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa and Monastir.

Opposition to his moves has also grown in recent weeks as most of the political establishment, the powerful labour union and foreign donors have come out against his suspension of parts of the constitution. Saied has frequently cited public backing for his moves against the political elite and a system of power-sharing between president and parliament that he says has thwarted the popular will.

Demonstrators waved Tunisian flags and carried placards railing against Ennahda, the moderate party that is the biggest in parliament and has acted as Saied's main antagonist.

One chant called Ennahda leader and parliament speaker Rached Ghannouchi, who has urged the suspended chamber to restart its work, an "assassin".

"We demand that Saied dissolve Ennahda and the political parties involved in



Tunisians chant slogans supporting President Kais Saied during a rally at the Habib Bourguiba avenue in the capital Tunis on Sunday. — AFP

corruption," Noura Bensalah, one of the demonstrators, said. The president plunged Tunisia into a constitutional crisis in July by suspending the elected parliament, dismissing the prime minister and assuming executive authority.

Last month he brushed aside much of the constitution to say he could pass legislation by decree, casting into doubt Tunisia's

democratic gains since its 2011 revolution that triggered the "Arab spring" revolts across the Arab world.

Saied's intervention followed years of economic stagnation and political paralysis, aggravated by an impoverishing lockdown last year, a slow-starting vaccination campaign and street protests.

Many Tunisians blame those

ills on a corrupt, self-interested political elite, and they see Saied, an independent elected in 2019, as a champion for ordinary people.

Among his supporters, Saied's intervention is widely regarded as a long-overdue reset of a democratic experiment that established interests pulled off course. — Reuters

Libya's FM confirms departure of some foreign fighters

KUWAIT: Libya's foreign minister said on Sunday that some foreign fighters have left the country as the unity government seeks to marshal international help to withdraw the many who remain.

"The reports are correct. There is a very modest start," Najla Mangoush said at a news conference in Kuwait when asked whether some foreign fighters had been removed.

"We are still seeking a larger and comprehensive organisation for the exit of mercenaries," she said.

Libya's warring sides, backed by regional powers, remain entrenched with allied foreign mercenaries along front lines in defiance of a ceasefire agreement.

Any more significant withdrawal of foreign mercenaries has appeared far off

amid arguments over the role of regional forces allied to each side and stumbles in efforts to agree ground-rules for a national election.

There has been little peace or security in Libya since the 2011 Nato-backed uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi. The country split between warring eastern and western factions in 2014.

Eastern forces were backed by the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt. The previous government in Tripoli, in the west, which was recognised by the United Nations, was supported by Turkey.

The warring sides brought in mercenaries, including via Russia's Wagner group, from Syria, Sudan and Chad among other countries, the United Nations has said.

— Reuters

JERASH FESTIVAL OF CULTURE AND ARTS



A member of the Mexican Ballet Folkloric Yaocauhtli perform in the ancient Roman city of Jerash, a popular attraction 50 km north of Jordan capital, during the final day of the annual Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts on Saturday. — AFP

In Cyprus, migrant parents decry separation from children

KOFINOOU, Cyprus: "I can only cry. I'm devastated — my family too," said 25-year-old Syrian Kawthar Raslan, cradling her newborn child in a migrant camp on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

She was dumped at the camp by authorities after being separated at sea from her husband and other children, aged just one and three.

The family left Lebanon's capital Beirut on August 22 on board a boat carrying dozens of other Syrian migrants, destined for Cyprus, a European Union member state 160 km away. Around 10 km from the Cypriot coast, the boat was intercepted by coastguards seeking to send the vessel back to Lebanon.

A video filmed on board, seen by AFP, shows migrants crying out "Help us!" to the coastguards.

Seeing the pregnant Kawthar

was close to giving birth, the coastguards took her to Cyprus.

But they left most of the other passengers — including the rest of her family — in the boat, which returned to Lebanon.

Lebanon is home to more than a million Syrian refugees who have fled their country's decade-old civil war.

And Lebanon has been beset by a devastating economic crisis, which has propelled hundreds of Syrians towards Cyprus.

But Cyprus, with the EU's highest proportion of asylum seekers per capita, last year signed an agreement with Lebanon to send back all illegal migrants who attempt to reach the island by boat.

"I almost died when I heard about my family being sent back to Lebanon," Kawthar said, sitting on a mattress on the floor of a



Kawthar Raslan, 25-year-old Syrian refugee, holds her baby Yazan at the Kofinou asylum centre near Larnaca. — AFP

prefabricated cabin in Kofinou camp in the south of the island.

"They knew that my husband and my children were with me and they prevented them from

following me," she said of the Cypriot coastguards.

"I will never forget that moment."

Kawthar gave birth to a son,

Yazan, on August 23, a day after being picked up by the coastguard.

Originally from Idlib in northwestern Syria, she urged Cypriot authorities to "show compassion" and allow her to be reunited with her family.

"I can live neither in Lebanon nor in Syria," she said.

Cypriot authorities say only migrants with refugee status have the right to be reunited with their families.

But among the 7,700 Syrian asylum seekers who have arrived here since 2018, less than two percent have achieved this status, the UN refugee agency UNHCR says.

Back in Lebanon, Kawthar's husband is struggling to care for the family.

"The children are traumatised, only one word comes out of their

mouths — 'Mummy'", Hassan al-Ali told AFP in the village of Ain El-Tefaha, where he rents a room, around 30 km from Beirut.

"We were on board the boat under a scorching sun and the children were very thirsty," he remembered.

"My daughter wasn't moving — I thought that she was going to die," he added, his voice breaking with emotion.

Like Kawthar, Issa Chamma, another Syrian on board that day, found himself in Kofinou camp.

Originally from Aleppo, the 37-year-old migrant suffers from lung problems, and he was also separated from his family after losing consciousness onboard.

His wife and three children, aged from two to 11, even "spent two days in prison on their return to Beirut," Issa said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

AMMAN

Jordan's king, Assad hold first phone call

Jordan's king held a telephone call with Syria's president on Sunday, the palace said, in the first such conversation between the two leaders since Syria's war erupted a decade ago.

King Abdallah II and Syrian President Bashar al Assad discussed "bilateral ties and means to bolster cooperation", a statement said.

During their call, Abdallah stressed Jordan's "support for efforts to safeguard Syria's sovereignty, stability and



territorial unity", it added.

There were no further details but the Syrian presidency released a similar statement, which was carried by state media. The call was the latest sign of warming of ties between Syria and Jordan.

TEHRAN

Iran urges US to unfreeze \$10bn to show 'intentions'

Iran's foreign minister has called on the United States to unlock \$10 billion of Tehran's frozen assets to clear the way for a return to a nuclear deal.

If the Americans have "true intentions, let them release some of our assets, for example \$10 billion frozen in foreign banks", Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in an interview with state television broadcast late on Saturday.

"But the Americans are not prepared to unlock them for us



to be assured that they've taken into account the interests of the Iranian people at least this one time over the past decades."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken renewed warnings that time was running out for Iran to return to the 2015 nuclear deal.

ADEN

Clashes kill four fighters in Yemen's Aden

Clashes in the Yemeni city of Aden between members of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) killed at least four fighters before armoured vehicles were deployed and calm was restored, security sources and residents said.

Residents had reported heavy gunfire throughout the day in Aden's central Crater district that houses government headquarters and the central bank. The port city has seen tension between the internationally recognised



government and the STC over control of the south of the country.

The prime minister returned to Aden last week from Saudi Arabia and is residing at the presidential palace in Crater along with other government ministers.

OMAN BRACES FOR SHAHEEN-INFLICTED DAMAGE, LOSSES

KEY MEASURES:
SOHAR Port temporarily suspends marine operations hours before Shaheen makes landfall

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

As much of the northern half of the Sultanate remains hunkered down for what has been forecast as a tropical cyclone of ‘Gonu-like’ ferocity — a reference to the Super-cyclone Gonu that slammed Oman with devastating effect in 2007 — corporates, contractors and insurers are now braced for potentially severe business disruptions and losses unleashed by Tropical Cyclone Shaheen which made landfall on the country’s Batinah coast on Sunday night.

North and South Batinah governorates, along with adjoining Muscat Governorate, while no strangers to adverse weather events, are particularly vulnerable when menaced by powerful storms. After all, this extended region accounts for more than half of the country’s population, and also contributes the lion’s share of Oman’s industrial and economic output.

Of particular concern for market observers is Suhar, presently the industrial powerhouse of the country underpinned by Sohar Port and Freezone (the Sultanate’s principal commercial gateway) Suhar Industrial City.

Also clustered in and around this industrial port city are, among other infrastructure elements, gas-based power plants, water desalination schemes and road networks that are critical to the economic well-being of much of the northern half of the country.

Given that Shaheen is the latest in a succession of cyclones to batter the Sultanate with increasing frequency and magnitude, resulting in significant insurance and other economic losses as well, a high-level representative of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has called for a strategic, national-level response to risks associated with these natural phenomena.

“It’s high time we look at risk management as a joint responsibility of the government and private sector insurance companies to address all risks emanating from natural phenomena, such as Shaheen,” said Murtadha bin Mohammed Jawad Ibrahim al Jamalani, Chairman — OCCI’s Finance and Insurance Committee. Not to do so would leave the government hemorrhaging scarce financial resources in offsetting losses caused by such events, he warned.

“We need to work together to look at risk management from all angles, including national catastrophes, and human and social impacts,” Al Jamalani



stressed. “It’s untenable for the government alone to shoulder the entire cost burden stemming from such weather events. This burden should be shared in some fashion between the private sector and the government. While some issues fallen within the remit of the government, others fall on the shoulders of the private sector.”

Al Jamalani called for the establishment of a special department within the Chamber to oversee risk management. Such an initiative, he noted, would strengthen and advance the interests of the private sector in the management of insurance risks stemming from natural disasters.

SOHAR PORT SUSPENDS OPERATIONS

Hours before Shaheen came ashore, Sohar Port and Freezone announced a temporary suspension of marine operations at the commercial gateway. In a statement, Mark Geilenkirchen, CEO of Port of SOHAR, said: “Due to the ongoing adverse weather conditions the Sultanate is currently facing, marine operations at the Port have been temporarily suspended and will resume once it is safe again. This is in accordance with international standards and the directives received from the Government of Oman. The safety and security of all SOHAR workers

and stakeholders remains top priority.”

An emergency response plan has been activated in preparation for Shaheen’s arrival, the CEO stated. “Our HSSE team and concerned authorities on the ground are continually monitoring the situation and have ensured that all necessary controls are in place to mitigate any additional risks and to safeguard business continuity.”

A number of insurers contacted by the Observer said they were concerned for key economic developments and projects lying in Shaheen’s path along the Batinah coast. While all major high-value investments are suitably insured

against storm damage, some losses are inevitably borne by the owners, it is pointed out.

Another area of concern is Barka in South Al Batinah Governorate which hosts Khazaen Economic City, an upcoming destination for warehousing and distribution, light manufacturing, logistics and dry port operations. Additionally, investments in warehousing capacity have proliferated all along South Al Batinah in light of its proximity to the capital city.

Meanwhile, flooding in parts of Muscat Governorate brought back memories of Supercyclone Gonu, which inundated entire neighbourhoods, wrecked road

infrastructure, damaged utilities and claimed a number of lives.

In Qurum, CCC — one of the city’s earliest shopping landmarks which had been virtually submerged during Gonu — was hit this time around as well, despite significant improvements to drainage channels in the area. The outlets of many leading retail brands were inundated in the latest flooding, but no casualties have been reported.

Visuals circulating on social media also appeared to suggest that scores of private cars were submerged in flood water at various places in Muscat and elsewhere. Floodwaters had entered the basements of some residential buildings trapping many cars parked there. While motor insurance mandatorily covers cars from risks related to Storms, Tempests and Fires (STF), insurers are expected to refuse compensation for vehicles left behind in wadis or flood-prone low-lying areas, according to experts.

Even before Shaheen made landfall last night, tidal surges had unleashed some damage to coastal roads, shore facilities and roadside ornamentals in the capital region and other parts of North and South Batinah.

In the Riyam Park area of Al Bahri Street (Muttrah seafront road), crashing waves smashed decorative pots and other fixtures that adorned the street, littering the road with debris. Elsewhere along the corniche, towering waves also toppled sections of the boundary barrier overlooking the bay.

Earlier, Muttrah Souq — a tourist landmark on Al Bahri Street that was shuttered by authorities ahead of the storm — was inundated by floodwater. Any damage is expected to be reduced in light of measures encouraging shop-owners to store their merchandise well above ground level.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES:

Majan Electricity Company, member of Nama Group, took to social media on Sunday to announce that it had cut supply to 13 distribution stations in the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Saham as a “precautionary measure”. The utility cited seawater ingress into networks in the wilayat for its action. The temporary measure, it noted, was warranted by a desire to avert “an immediate danger to lives and property”.

In Muscat Governorate, where power failures were reported in parts of the city overnight on Saturday, Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) said it had scrambled technical teams to address these outages. The utility cautioned people against venturing close to malfunctioning electrical assets, such as fallen poles, substations, transformers and electrical boxes.

DECADE AFTER JOBS' DEATH, HAS APPLE TRADED MAGIC FOR PROFIT?

SAN FRANCISCO: Ten years after Apple founder Steve Jobs' death, the firm has grown into a colossus of devices and services that is the world's most valuable company, but the tech legend's diehard fans lament its lost aura of revolution.

"Apple doesn't innovate anymore" or "Steve Jobs is turning in his grave" are the type of disillusioned tweets that pop up especially during product launches led by Tim Cook, who took Apple's reins in August 2011.

On the surface, Jobs — who died October 5, 2011 after a battle with pancreatic cancer — left the company DNA imbued with his demanding intensity.

At every launch, Cook delivers the same hyperbolic turns of phrase that Jobs once did to unveil even incremental changes to the cameras or chips in its range of phones, tablets and other devices.

But are these game-changing innovations in the post-Jobs era?

"Apple lost the ability to bring out products that could revolutionize a market," said Tech industry analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group.

"They became a financially-focused company very effective at milking its faithful users," he added.

The company has impacted hundreds of millions of lives since its 1976 founding in a garage, with



devices like the iPod launched in 2011 and the 2007 release of the iPhone that put the internet in people's pockets.

Since then, Apple has released an internet-connected time piece, the Apple Watch.

"The measure of Apple is always innovation, that's what people focus on... another aspect of a company being successful is its ability to change themselves," noted analyst Carolina Milanesi.

Apple has indeed diversified by adding many services carefully

integrated into its devices: music, payments, videos and games.

The company had to learn a world outside of the hardware business, a strategy Milanesi described as "more ropes that bring people to Apple... and keep them here."

It's a direction that would probably not have been rejected by Jobs, who always tried to control his customers' experience from start to finish, according to the biography written by Walter Isaacson.

In any case, the company under Cook has delighted Wall Street: the Apple brand was worth about \$350 billion ten years ago — and is worth \$2.358 trillion today.

"In our opinion (Apple is) going to \$3 trillion over the next six to nine months," predicted analyst Dan Ives.

Like many observers of the Californian behemoth, and unlike some fans of Jobs, he believes that Apple has never stopped inventing.

In particular, he cites the development of the M1 chip,

which replaces Intel in some new devices.

"I think Apple evolved with time and so has Cook, and I think the one thing that Jobs was a huge believer in was innovation organically," said Ives.

He noted the iPhone will continue to be the "heart and lungs" of Apple's growth story for years to come, but he sees a virtual reality headset and even an Apple car by 2024.

It's hard for the nostalgic detractors alike to deny that Cook

and his teams have navigated contrary currents in recent years.

The global chip shortage doesn't seem to have much affected the company's ability to meet demand.

It's political compromises to retain the Chinese market, contrary to its privacy commitments, has been contained to upsetting its critics.

Apple has also been relatively unscathed so far on the anti-trust front compared to fellow giants Google and Facebook, despite being forced to loosen control over its App Store.

But it is in the sights of European and US regulators who view the behemoth's dominance and global reach with extreme suspicion.

There are also thorny issues like the recent emergency software fix to protect against a breach by the potent Pegasus spyware, and Apple's sudden decision to delay an anti-child abuse measure that drew criticism from privacy advocates.

Some observers say Jobs' tempestuous manner would not have suited the management of such delicate matters.

"The last ten years, I don't think Jobs' style would have survived," said Milanesi, referring to his famously volcanic persona.

"In my view, Cook is a better leader for where we are in the market environment and as a society," she added.

— AFP

How AI-led gamification is enhancing industrial learning and productivity

Gamification — the use of game mechanics, strategies and visual elements in a non-gaming context — has been around in some form for many years. It was in the 2010s, however, that it really started to be embraced by industry, and analysts now forecast the global market to value \$37bn by 2027, up from \$6.33bn in 2019.

In the industrial sector, use of gamification is currently being driven by an ageing workforce and the need to pass expertise and knowhow onto a new generation of workers that are digital natives.

Having grown up playing videogames with where they can interact, explore, make mistakes and try again, these employees are more likely to engage with training that makes use of gamification, bringing to life learning in a way they understand and embrace.

Industrial uses of gamification Many of the problems faced in an industrial setting are similar to those players must tackle in a game, and so the pleasure we get from playing a game can be harnessed in sectors as varied as nuclear and automotive to great effect.

Scientists have shown that the chemical reaction gaming provides can improve motivation, promote cooperation and enhance learning and knowledge retention, and so tools have been developed to take advantage of this.

One study found that 85 percent of employees are willing



Industrial training has taken advantage of gamification for many years, but when AR and VR is paired with AI, employee engagement, learning and productivity reaches a new level

ANDREW MCCLOSKEY
AVEVA CTO

to spend more time on training programmes with gamified dynamics, and that gamification doesn't just appeal to younger workers — 97 per cent of employees over 45-years-old said they believe it would help improve their work.

Tools can make use of a wide variety of gameplay elements from points and leaderboards through to teammates, missions and time limits to achieve its goals. These can go beyond just training staff,

also enabling the simplification of complex tasks or improving on-site productivity through the use of tablets that offer augmented reality views of machines.

Augmented, extended and virtual reality (AR, XR and VR) tools have been used for many years in industrial settings, with operator training simulators (OTS) creating a realistic virtual copy of a control room where trainees can safely learn how to use equipment.



But just as large, unwieldy mobile phones have evolved into compact touchscreen computers, simulators have become high fidelity systems that combine dynamic process simulations, virtual control systems and replicated interfaces to match the look, feel and behavior of an actual plant. Even before a plant is built.

From training, to learning by doing

This is thanks to the use of

artificial intelligence (AI), which takes gamification to the next level. When AI is combined with these gamified processes, organizations can leverage the principles of gamification in real time, moving from training, to learning by doing.

Known as immersive training, AI connects the simulator with a virtual copy of the work environment called a digital twin, enabling trainees to learn how to use the plants systems virtually

before moving into the real-world environment.

Immersive training systems (ITS) are already being used by many organizations, including the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), which is training its field and control room operators through a high fidelity process simulation, coupled with a virtual walkthrough plant environment.

"It's very important that we prepare our professionals before they go into the real-world working environment," says Manna Ali al Farhoud, TL Operations Technical Personal Development Support Services Group (S&EK) at KOC. "This ensures operational safety as we make sure they're efficient and safe operators before they're permitted to work in the plant."

Furthermore, with an ITS, any action within a virtual environment can be set to trigger the thermodynamically correct reaction at the plant in real-time. It's now possible to pull together all the data from a plant — or indeed, from several plants — into a digital representation on a handheld tablet, and then activate a specific process at a single plant, perhaps after consulting in real-time with a colleague on the other side of the world.

Enabling the connected worker The all-encompassing solution links together teams across the value chain — from control room operators and field workers through to maintenance crew and other critical members of staff — teams can collaborate remotely across geographies and time zones to surface new solutions at unprecedented speed.



Oil prices buoyed by soaring gas rates ahead of OPEC+ meet

LONDON: The sharp rise in wholesale gas prices is spilling over into the oil market, with looming demand for electricity generation and heating likely to further spur the sector this winter.

The spike in demand and consumption could lead the OPEC+ alliance of oil exporters, which meets in Vienna on Monday, to scale up their production plans.

“We could see an additional oil demand boost of nearly one million barrels per day (bpd) for December 2021, half of which we deem quite likely to materialise from incremental oil-for-power generation in Asia,” said Bjornar Tonhaugen, an analyst Rystad Energy.

“The remaining half is more uncertain and hinges on a colder-than-normal start of winter in the Northern Hemisphere, which would drive oil for heating.”

If gas prices remain prohibitively high, some countries in the Middle East and Asia may explore temporarily increasing use of their oil-fired power plants, according to Fitch analyst Dmitry Marinchenko.

Overall, oil-fired generation represents only a small portion of global electricity production, around three percent in 2019, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). That lags far behind 37 per cent for coal and 24 per cent for natural gas.



However, Tony Syme, macroeconomic expert at the University of Salford Business School, said that only “a small minority of power plants” in Britain and the US can switch between coal and gas for power generation.

“This number has been declining over the last three decades as the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels has become more important,” he said.

The price of crude oil, which is subject to many other factors, has risen following the surge in gas prices, but not as sharply.

The additional demand for oil amid the gas price spike is difficult to quantify, but could be “up to 320,000 bpd... over the next six months in Asia and Europe”,

according to S&P Global Platts Analytics.

US bank Goldman Sachs estimated “the potential capacity for gas-to-oil substitution could be larger should gas rally further, of up to 1.35 million bpd in power and 0.6 million bpd in industry” in Asia and Europe.

However, this volume represents only two percent of global oil demand, which is expected to pass the 100 million barrels per day mark next year, according to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC.

“While manageable from an oil market perspective, such a one-standard deviation weather shock would nonetheless represent \$5 per barrel upside to our \$80 per barrel Brent forecast,” Goldman

Sachs said.

Members of the oil exporters’ cartel and its allies, together known as OPEC+, must decide whether to ramp up oil production or risk further price inflation.

Olivier Daguin, an investor at OFI AM, told AFP the extent of the switch from gas to oil “will depend mainly on the difference in price between the two”.

The gap has widened considerably in recent days.

In Europe, gas prices continue to soar. The Title Transfer Facility (TTF), a Europe-wide virtual trading point for natural gas in the Netherlands, reached the 100 euros (\$116, £86) per megawatt-hour (MWh) mark for the first time in its history on Friday.

This is five times more than at the start of the year, while oil prices have doubled over the same period.

European gas is now roughly twice as expensive as Brent North Sea crude oil — which cost \$80.75 dollars per barrel on Tuesday, its highest price in three years — using notoriously difficult conversion methods

“Asia spot natural gas prices are now trading at near the equivalent of \$180 per barrel of Brent crude, meaning that oil’s appeal as a gas substitute for power generation is almost irresistible,” said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA. — **AFP**

Tesla vehicle deliveries hit another record in Q3

Tesla Inc said on Saturday it had delivered a record electric cars in the third quarter, beating Wall Street estimates after Chief Executive Elon Musk asked staff to “go super hardcore” to make a quarter-end delivery push.

Tesla has weathered the chip crisis better than rivals, with its overall deliveries surging 20 per cent in the July to September period from its previous record in the second quarter, marking the sixth consecutive quarter-on-quarter gains.

In China, rising exports to Europe and the introduction of a cheaper Model Y helped boost Tesla’s production, analysts said.

Musk said Tesla suffered an extremely severe parts shortage earlier in the third quarter and had urged employees to make



quarter-end delivery push, Reuters reported last month, citing an internal company email. “The end of quarter delivery wave is unusually high this time,” he said in the email.

Tesla delivered 241,300 vehicles globally in the July to September quarter, up 73 per cent from a year earlier. Analysts had expected the electric-car maker to deliver 229,242 vehicles, according to Refinitiv data. — **Reuters**

Abu Dhabi’s ADNOC Drilling starts trading with \$10b market cap

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) got listed on Sunday its drilling unit in a \$1.1 billion initial public offering (IPO), the largest ever on the Abu Dhabi stock market.

ADNOC Drilling, whose share offering received over \$34 billion in demand, is expected to be among the 10 largest companies on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, based on a market capitalisation at listing of about \$10 billion.

“This important milestone will bolster the expansion and diversification of Abu Dhabis equity capital markets and further the development of the UAEs economy and private sector”, ADNOC said in a statement.

The IPO is the latest move by Gulf oil giants ADNOC and Saudi Aramco to raise cash from outside investors as they try to diversify sources of income in their oil-dependent economies.

Saudi Aramco listed in late 2019, raising \$29.4 billion in the world’s biggest IPO.

ADNOC will continue to own an 84 per cent majority stake in the unit, while Baker Hughes will



retain its 5 per cent shareholding. Helmerich & Payne will hold 1 per cent through its IPO cornerstone investment.

ADNOC increased the size of the IPO to 11 per cent of share capital because of oversubscription. It had previously targeted selling a minimum stake of 7.5 per cent.

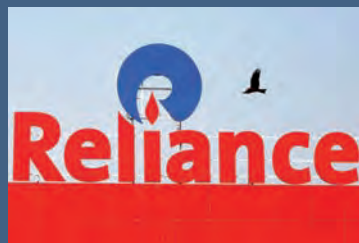
The sale is the second public flotation of a company owned by the Abu Dhabi oil major after the 2017 listing of ADNOC Distribution, the largest operator of petrol stations and convenience stores in the UAE.

Abu Dhabi National Oil Co.’s drilling unit rose as much as 25 per cent on its trading debut, after raising Dh4.05 billion (\$1.1 billion) in the emirate’s biggest ever listing. — **Reuters**

Reliance sets up a subsidiary in UAE for trading oil

MUMBAI: Reliance Industries said on Saturday it had set up a wholly owned subsidiary in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for trading in crude oil, petroleum, petrochemical products and agricultural commodities.

Reliance International Ltd (RINL), the new subsidiary, is yet to commence operations, the parent company said in an exchange filing, adding it had invested \$1 million in the new



business.

In its brief statement, Reliance Industries, which operates the world’s biggest refining complex at Jamnagar in western India,

gave no reasons for its decision to set up the new unit and its reasons to locate it in the UAE, though it is in line with it becoming more international in its focus.

It previously bought stakes in a number of overseas exploration and manufacturing assets, and in June it entered an agreement with Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (ADNOC) to build a multi-billion dollar chemical project in Ruwais, marking the group’s

first investment in a greenfield overseas project.

Reliance Industries in June announced the appointment of Saudi Aramco Chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan as a director of Reliance’s board and said this was the “beginning of the internationalisation of Reliance”. The group hopes to formalise this year a deal to sell a 20 per cent stake in its oil-to-chemical business to Aramco. — **Reuters**

IMF board to intensify Georgieva probe

LONDON: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board will reportedly intensify its investigation on Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva this week, while also speaking to investigators who said she pressured World Bank staff to alter data to favour China, people with knowledge of the meetings said.

The board will question lawyers from the WilmerHale firm on Monday about their World Bank investigation report, three people familiar with the plans said.

The report alleged that Georgieva, as the bank’s CEO in 2017, applied undue pressure on staff to alter data in the flagship “Doing Business” report to benefit China.

Georgieva, who has strongly denied the accusations, will appear in person before the board Tuesday, the day she is to deliver a virtual speech about the IMF and World Bank annual meetings Oct 11-17, two of the sources said.

The interviews could prove

pivotal in either building or eroding IMF shareholder support for Georgieva. Thus far, the fund’s most influential member governments, including top shareholder the United States, have withheld public comment, preferring to let the review process play out. Britain last week said in a statement to Reuters that it supports transparency in the matter.

The World Bank tasked WilmerHale with investigating the “Doing Business” data irregularities identified in 2020, issuing its findings implicating Georgieva just over two weeks ago.

The probe has been led by former US Attorney for the District of Columbia Ron Machen, who is co-chair of WilmerHale’s white-collar defense and investigations practice.

The investigation’s report contends Georgieva and former World Bank President Jim Yong Kim’s office pressured staff to manipulate data so China’s global



ranking in the “Doing Business 2018” study of investment climates rose to 78th from 85th.

The motive was allegedly to help win Beijing’s support for a major capital increase that the bank’s management was seeking at the time. An IMF spokesman declined

to confirm the planned meetings. Spokespersons for WilmerHale in Boston and Washington did not respond to requests for comment.

A spokesperson for Georgieva also declined to confirm the meetings but said in an emailed statement that Georgieva “will not be

deterred by these false allegations and remains committed to fulfilling the vital mission of the IMF”.

One person familiar with the plan said the board was expected to question the WilmerHale team about its investigatory process –

the scope of its assignment, how it conducted the probe and how the decision was made to publish the results, which came with little prior notification to Georgieva.

Other questions will seek details on the links drawn in the report between the changes to the “Doing Business” data inputs for China and the capital-raising campaign, which resulted in a \$13 billion increase to the World Bank’s paid-in capital in 2018 that boosted China’s shareholding.

Another source said there also will likely be questions over discrepancies between witness interviews, the report’s conclusions and later public statements from at least one person interviewed.

Shanta Devarajan, the former World Bank economist who oversaw the “Doing Business” 2018 report released in October 2017, said he never felt pressure from Georgieva, and that the WilmerHale team used only half of his statements.

Machen did not respond to a request for comment. — **Reuters**

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

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

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features



With the first strike, he fell in love with welding

Mohammed al Subhi is a young Omani entrepreneur who fell in love with welding. While it is one of the professions that is being looked down on in Oman, Mohammed is motivated to change perspective about what constitutes a good job dedicating his time and talent in recycling materials and putting unique touches on them...**P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



UNDER THE WHISPERING DOOR

BY TJ KLUNE

When given seven days to cross over, Wallace tries to pack in a lifetime's worth of living in that week.

Jane Fonda to be honoured with humanitarian award by Women In Film

JANE FONDA WILL be honoured with the first-ever humanitarian award from Women In Film (WIF), the group has said. The actress and activist,

83, is being recognised for "the rare feat of being an icon in the worlds of activism and storytelling", WIF said. And the group's humanitarian award will be

named in Fonda's honour. WIF executive director Kirsten Schaffer said: "Jane Fonda has spent her entire career as a fearless advocate for people and the planet. "No matter what the cost to her career or even her individual safety, she has put the needs of social justice ahead of her own; finding meaning and purpose, friendship and community in the pursuit of a better world. She has led by example, and we couldn't be prouder to name our humanitarian award after her." Two-time Oscar-winner Fonda – whose best-known film roles include Kluge, Coming Home and On Golden Pond – was one of the main figures of the 1960s counter-culture movement and

staunchly opposed the Vietnam War. She has recently dedicated her time to raising awareness of climate change. Fonda will be honoured at a ceremony at the newly opened Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles on October 6. Other honourees include Joker actress Zazie Beetz, who will receive WIF's Max Mara face of the future award. And receiving crystal awards are Zendaya, Marlee Matlin, Sian Heder, Jean Smart, Hannah Einbinder and Ashley Levinson. Comedian Jenny Yang will host the event. WIF was founded in 1973 to help further the careers of women in the screen industries. — PA Media/dpa





CNN showcases Oman and its people

BY KABEER YOUSUF

THE SULTANATE OF Oman's survival strategy post the pandemic, especially at a time when it's diversifying away from its dependence on hydrocarbons and boosting investments in more sustainable projects had been featured on CNN.

In a special half-hour show 'On Oman,' CNN's Eleni Giokos travelled to Oman to see how the country is pushing its economic future forward, shifting from petrodollars to tourism and mining thus diversifying the national income sources.

"From aviation to the ports, and from tourism to manufacturing, Oman is betting big on its 2040 Vision plan," said Eleni Giokos, who fell in love with the country at first sight.

The programme that featured the airport, major industries, airlines sector, travel and tourism, ports and women empowerment and career prospectus and fisheries sector also spoke to key people representing each sector.

"The aviation industry is very interesting. It touches everything for instance, from hotels to tourism, to travellers, even to the simple taxi driver, depends on the airline industry", said Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman, Oman Air.

"For every dollar we spend, we contribute five or six dollars into the national economy. At the moment we fly to 34 destinations, but through code sharing with other airlines, we can take people to more than a hundred cities from North America to the Asia Pacific region. So basically, we can connect, our passengers to anywhere, throughout the world."

As to local career prospec-



tus, Shatha al Balushi, a pilot with Oman Air since 2016 was featured saying more female pilots will soon be flying the national carrier flights.

"I am confronted with so many questions from ambitious Omani women who want to be a pilot and they want to know how it is to be a pilot and other nitty-gritty facts which show that they are keen to become pilots", she said.

As to attracting tourists to the Sultanate, Mark Evans, the General Manager of Outward Bound Oman, adventure tour operator, described what makes the country so unique for tourists.

"It may not be the wealthiest country in the region, but in terms of thinking and wise leadership, and growth at a pace that does not destroy the culture, but culture and economic development move forward, hand in hand, Oman's got it pretty bang on, I would say", said Evans.

Economists in Oman say niche companies like fragrance house Amouage are delivering an important message to the rest of the world.

"These are the tugs that we can pull people into Oman and

say, hang on, if you've bought yourself a bottle of Amouage, wouldn't you like to visit the country? These are not going to be large industries, but they're going to be highly valuable, perhaps luxury brands, perhaps highly personalised brands. And I think those are going to be the ones that Oman is going to be remembered for", said Adham al Said, Assistant Professor of Economics at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

"We've had an oil crisis, we've had a pandemic, and still we did grow every single year and we have been growing every single year since I've been here. So, basically, it's the big story of success, of new investments and new things coming into the port and into the Freezone", said Mark Geilenkirchen, CEO of SOHAR Port and Freezone.

The representatives of the Sultanate's fishing too expressed optimism and Dawood al Wahaibi, CEO, Al Wusta Fisheries detailed how

they have adapted to be more environmentally conscious.

"You can have your vessel to really be fit, ecologically, environmentally, be right, by deploying sensors within your nets, we call them Turtle Exclusive Devices (TED) meaning that is pushing all the big fish out. It gets automatically rejected from the nets. Then, the nets, they are big enough to allow all the small fish out", he was featured.

The CNN programme further delves into how Oman is on a major quest to move away from oil and diversify the economy, tapping into these new economic frontiers and how the strategically positioning of major sectors can help Oman achieve its goals of Vision 2040.

Follow the writer on Twitter: @kabeeryousef

ROYALTY WATCH

Descendant of tsars becomes first royal to marry in Russia since revolution



A DESCENDANT OF Russia's former imperial family married his Italian bride on Friday in the first royal wedding to take place on Russian soil since tsarist times more than a century ago.

Grand Duke George Mikhailovich Romanov tied the knot with Victoria Romanovna Bettarini, an Italian, at St. Isaac's Cathedral in Russia's former imperial capital St Petersburg.

Russian Orthodox clergy conducted the elaborate ceremony, watched by hundreds of guests who included the groom's mother, Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna of Russia – the self-proclaimed heir to Russia's imperial throne – and more than a dozen minor European royals.



George Mikhailovich's great-grandfather, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, fled Russia during the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, escaping first to Finland and later relocating with his family to Western Europe.

Russia's last tsar, Nicholas II, his wife and five children were murdered by a revolutionary firing squad in July, 1918, in the cellar of a merchant's house in Yekaterinburg, a city 1,450 km (900 miles) east of Moscow.

George Mikhailovich, 40, was born in Madrid and has lived most of his life in Spain and France.

Bettarini, 39, who converted to the Russian Orthodox faith last year and took the name Victoria Romanovna, was led to the altar by her father, Roberto Bettarini, who has served in the Italian diplomatic service.

George Mikhailovich visited Russia for the first time in 1992 and moved to Moscow in 2019, where he works on a number of charity projects.

The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia for over 300 years before Nicholas II abdicated in early 1917, setting the country on course for the Bolshevik Revolution in November of that year, civil war and 70 years of Communist rule.

Russia's Orthodox Church in 2000 canonised Nicholas II, who had been portrayed as a weak leader by Soviet authorities. — **Reuters**



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AROUND THE WORLD

FASHION

Hermes hosts fashion show at Paris airport hangar



FRENCH LUXURY

group Hermes International (HRMS.PA) shuttled the fashion press to an airport on the outskirts of Paris for its spring ready-to-wear catwalk show, sending fitted leather crop tops, silky dresses and relaxed trousers down a circular catwalk set up in a hangar. Robot cameras whizzed around the runway and dropped from the ceiling, filming the models as they marched past the audience seated on a platform at the center of the space.

Paris Fashion Week, which runs through Oct. 5, has kicked into full swing this season with dozens of labels holding in-person shows following months of disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hermes women's ready-to-wear creative director Nadege Vanhee-Cybulki added modern touches to her feminine silhouettes, with paper-bag waists on long skirts and trousers.

In a nod to the house's tradition as a saddlery maker, tops and jackets were embellished with discrete leather buckles and studs, while yellow jackets in leather brightened the muted palette of neutral colors. For the finale, the bronze-hued panels serving as a backdrop rolled to the side, offering an open view on the runway of the Bourget airport, a hub for private jets.

The models lined up and were facing the audience when an airplane landed. — **Reuters**

DIGITAL TRENDS

Seller basks in 'Squid Game' fame of his 'sweet and deadly' treat



A SOUTH KOREAN

sweet featured as one of the lethal challenges in the Netflix (NFLX.O) hit TV drama "Squid Game" has become a global craze, boosting business for the candy seller who provided the confection for the show.

The series has become a viral hit by depicting childhood games with deadly consequences. One of the challenges has the cash-strapped contestants on the show carving out the symbol etched into a brittle sugar candy called dalgona without cracking the whole piece or risk being shot by masked enforcers.

Dalgona is typically sold with a variety of shapes but "Squid Game" featured four, a triangle, circle, star, and an umbrella. One piece is about 2,000 won (\$1.68) but you can get a buy-one, get-one-free deal if you don't crack the first one.

An Yong-hui, 37, has been making dalgona for the past eight years in a university district in the capital Seoul. He and his co-workers used 15 kg (33 lb) of sugar to make 700 candies for the filming in June 2020 of the show's third episode, which is described by Netflix as equal parts "sweet and deadly".

As the show's popularity has surged since its premiere last month, An

hasn't been able to go home for a week in order to meet the demand from eager "Squid Game" fans that start queuing up outside his 2-square-metre (2.4 square yards) street kitchen at 11 a.m.

He now sells more than 500 dalgona a day, from less than 200 before the show's premiere.

"We are thinking we should place a rifle here as well," An said, chuckling at his reference to the show's outsized repercussions for failure.

On the show, the down-trodden contestants vie for a prize of 45.6 billion won (\$38.40 million) by competing in games that recall a more idyllic pre-digital time.

Netflix said in an article on the show's creation that director Hwang Dong-hyuk's selection of childhood games was deliberate to make the show more relatable to the audience.

For South Koreans, dalgona sellers were a fixture in front of schools until the early 2000s but the trend has died down since then and, according to An, the candy is even older.

VIRAL EXPLOSION

"I have heard so much about the dalgona challenge from my dad and grandma and was always curious," said Lee You-hee, a university freshman in Seoul.

"It was my first time trying and was shocked at how easily it breaks!" she said, after failing the challenge while standing near An's stand.

In line with the show's viral explosion, international viewers are posting their efforts at making dalgona and passing the challenge on video-sharing platform TikTok and other social media.

Even e-commerce marketplaces such as Amazon (AMZN.O), eBay (EBAY.O) and Coupang are selling dalgona cooking kits and tools for as much as \$29.99.

In Singapore, the Brown Butter Cafe was the latest business to tap the Squid Game hype and the drama of the dalgona challenge.

Sitting with brows furrowed and an intense look of concentration, Squid Game fan Wang Chen, 32, picked away unsuccessfully at his delicate dalgona candy.

His failure on Friday would have meant certain death in Squid Game. But in the Brown Butter Cafe, it just means missing out on a prize.

"I almost made it ... if you're so strict as in the real TV show, then I'm gone," Wang said.

Wang looked over at friend Zhang Qi's attempt. "This is a disaster. She might have been dead in the first minute," he said. — **Reuters**

ENTERTAINMENT

Golden Globes group adds new members as it works to diversify



THE HOLLYWOOD FOREIGN Press Association said on Friday it had added 21 new members as part of its efforts to diversify the ranks of the organization that hands out the Golden Globe awards for film and television.

The additions bring the HFPA's membership total to 105. Among the new members, nearly half are women and six are Black, according to an HFPA statement.



A Los Angeles Times investigation published in February found the group had no Black people among its 87 members. The newspaper also raised long-standing ethical questions over the close relationships between the HFPA and movie studios that may influence the choice of Golden Globe nominees and winners.

The outcry that followed prompted broadcaster NBC to cancel its 2022 broadcast of the Golden Globes.

The HFPA promised a series of reforms including diversifying its membership rolls and prohibiting members from accepting gifts. With the new members, 18 of the total identify as Asian, 12 as Latino and nine as Middle Eastern.

The group plans to expand its membership further in 2022 and hopes to revive the awards show in 2023. — **Reuters**

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With the first strike, he fell in love with welding

By Abdulaziz al Amri

His gaze is fixed on the metal object in front of him. Once he put metal against metal, sparks flew around him. His thick welding helmet protecting his face from the burn. Ask anyone how they envision a welder and this common concept will be shared by many, if not all.

While welding is one of the oldest professions (possibly as long as metals had been used), in Oman, it is beginning to become a growing trend as a profession amongst young Omanis.

"There were some fields of professions that Omanis wouldn't think of approaching as a source of income. This idea has all changed, allowing people to spread their creativity in different areas and this also opened new horizons for entrepreneurs to start their own projects", said Mohammed al Subhi, a young Omani entrepreneur who fell in love with welding.

"I remember the first process I tried, which was stick welding, and with that first strike, I fell in love with it. Everything about it I love," he said.

Mohammed has this talent of recycling the materials found in the environment and making something valuable out of them. He makes usable and beautiful things with unique touches that attract people and make them stop when they see his works.

His humble attempts started in 2018 as a hobby. When he felt that he could make something attractive out of this hobby, he decided to join A'Seeb Vocational College on welding and metal forming engineering. He then realized that he is halfway towards achieving his dream and establishing a career that wasn't planned for but accidentally created for him.

He knew that with each strike, he can build a dream and with a new different idea, he will get a customer. With the help of his brothers, he started a small workshop to exhibit their works and gradually people started to know them which resulted in the expansion of projects that they do.

"Getting the welding tools and all other equipment is not an issue. The market in Oman has them. It might be cheaper if I get things from other countries but the Covid 19 status has made things challenging for us. We could accept this but one of the things that made our lives impossible is the feedback we get from many discouraging people who undermine the work of a welder," Mohammed said.

Mohammed felt that many Omanis still don't understand that there has been a dramatic change in the country not only in professions but the availability of jobs. He finds it disappointing that there are still those who look down on what is otherwise a very noble and valid profession.

"Their retro view on some professions was way beyond our tolerance at the beginning of our career. However, we were determined to make people accept our field and that Omanis can work in each area they like," Mohammed said.

Residing in Wadi Al-Abyad in Nakhal might be another challenge. "When you are away from the commercial active areas, the income might be restricted. I think if we can open our workshop in the capital city where such works are required more, we will grow faster", al Subhi shared.

Mohammed knew that the societal pushback is something they have to deal with but passionate about what he does, he wanted to create a mental change within the society. He wanted to make this change one project at a time impressing even the pickiest of clients with beautiful work.

Mohammed believed that as a country, Oman is seeing a massive challenge when it comes to generating jobs for its citizens. Creative and innovative young Omanis are finding the gaps in the market and are creating services to address those gaps. He said this kind of forward-thinking should be supported and not discouraged.

Just like him, young Omanis are now engaged in different types of commercial activities, spreading the culture of the importance of seizing all possible opportunities to build a better future for themselves and the whole country.

There are challenges on the way but Mohammed is determined to face them head-on knowing fully well the potential it would open up for his future.

"We promote our works through our Instagram platform @_brothers.workshop. We are pleased now with the positive feedback we receive from our audience. We will fight together to expand our project further and build a good reputation," Mohammed said.

