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P10

OMAN CLUB THRASH NIZWA, SEEB EDGE SOHAR



P13

OMAN'S SECOND OLDEST PRIVATE POWER FIRM TO LIQUIDATE



P19

RARE EINSTEIN PAPERS SET RECORD AT PARIS AUCTION



MUSCAT

HIS MAJESTY SENDS CABLES OF GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of greetings to Zeljko Komsic, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Komsic and his country's friendly people. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Chan Santokhi of the Republic of Suriname, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Santokhi and his country's friendly people. — ONA

HM RECEIVES MORE ND GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has received more cables of greetings on the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day. His Majesty received cables from leaders of various countries. In their cables, the leaders wished His Majesty the Sultan good health, happiness and long life. They also wished the Omani people further development and prosperity under His Majesty's wise leadership. DETAILS ON P2

READ IN

OPINION

A historic visit strengthens ties

Ali Al Matani

P9

Building a strong culture of savings

Haider Al Lawati

P16

INSIDE



ROBOT WAITERS TAKE IRAQI'S MOSULITES TO THE FUTURE

P6



ANDERSSON ELECTED SWEDEN'S FIRST WOMAN PM

P8



OMAN, SYRIA TO FOCUS ON CONSERVATION OF HERITAGE

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday received Dr Bouthaina Shaaban, Political and Media Adviser to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and Chairperson of the Wathiqat Wattan Organisation. Dr Bouthaina Shaaban conveyed greetings of President Bashar al Assad of Syria to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. The meeting touched on cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Syria, with emphasis on the conservation of heritage and the consolidation of intra-Arab relations. DETAILS ON P2 PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI

‘Youth Centre’ to serve as pool for developing talents

MUSCAT: In continuation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's attention to youth and his Royal directives to listen to them and empower them to effectively contribute to the comprehensive development march and Oman's Renewed Renaissance process within the context of Oman Vision 2040 and the 10th Five-Year Plan, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has announced the establishment of a new facility to be named 'Youth Centre.'

HH Sayyid Theyazin underscored the importance of the role of youth in nation building. He affirmed that the Youth Centre will serve as "a pool for developing youth talents, discovering their talents and mentoring

their innovations".

The Youth Centre is launched in association with the Sultanate of Oman's celebration of the glorious 51st National Day. HH Sayyid Theyazin is keen on making the Youth Centre a facility that aligns with the aspirations that youth have envisaged within Oman Vision 2040.

HH Sayyid Theyazin pointed out that the new centre figures among the ministry's initiatives to develop a composite system of modern youth facilities in all governorates of the country — facilities that, he hopes, are capable of responding to the expectations of youth, groom their talents and champion their innovations.

The ministry will later unveil the details of the Youth Centre. — ONA

Sultanate determined to stem human trafficking

3-YEAR NATIONAL PLAN IS FOCUSED ON A SET OF GOALS

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman affirmed that it is resolute in its war against human trafficking which, it said, contradicts its noble humanitarian goals.

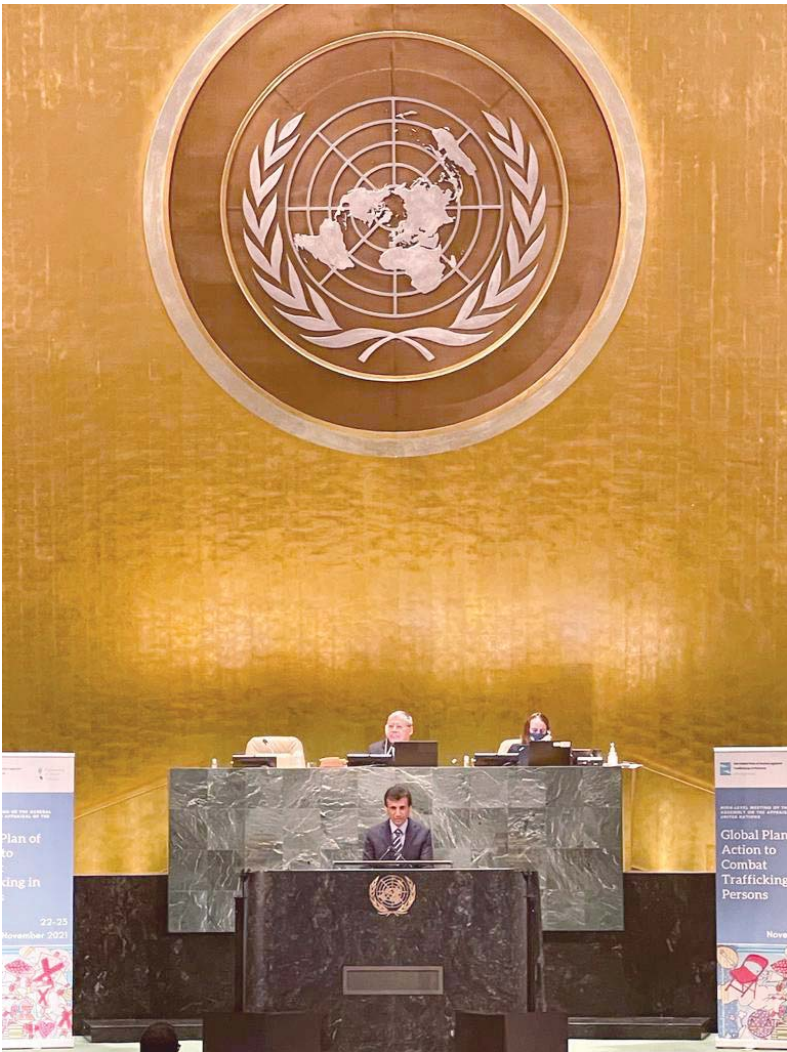
Dr Mohammed bin Awadh al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman at the United Nations, who delivered the Sultanate of Oman's speech at the UN meeting convened here, said that the Sultanate of Oman accords special importance to the issue of human trafficking. For that purpose, the Sultanate of Oman formed a specialised body, which is the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT), founded in 2008 to implement various programmes, workshops, symposiums and conferences to raise awareness about the phenomenon and propose ways of addressing it and eradicating it by legal means.

Dr Al Hassan added that despite the global hurdles posed by coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman never wavered in combating human trafficking.

"Here, I would like to point out that the Sultanate of Oman's 3-Year National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking (2021-2023) focused on a set of goals, among them "training frontline workers" and "raising social awareness".

Dr Al Hassan spoke about successful initiatives launched by the government of the Sultanate of Oman in cooperation with the private sector and civil society institutions to combat human trafficking. The programme includes 'Insan' (or human-being) initiative, aimed to raise public awareness about human trafficking by educating workers and employers about the phenomenon and means of reporting its perpetrators.

"In addition to these efforts, the government of my country joined a number of global treaties and regional and international



Dr Al Hassan delivers the Sultanate of Oman's speech at the UN meeting.

“Despite the global hurdles posed by coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman never wavered in combating human trafficking

DR MOHAMMED BIN AWADH AL HASSAN

Permanent Representative

agreements on combating human trafficking. The pacts included the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised

Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, the Convention against Torture that resists all forms of mistreatment, severe or inhuman or unprofessional penalties, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Arab Protocol for Prevention and Combating Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery. Concluding the speech," Dr Al Hassan said that the Sultanate of Oman is committed to the UN Plan for the Eradication of Human Trafficking, by all legal means, to eliminate the phenomenon and keep society clear of all its perils. — ONA



CARING THE TURTLES

The Turtle Protection and Monitoring Programme launched by the Environment Agency in October continues its work in Ras Al Hadd Turtle Reserve in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, with the participation of more than 300 volunteers from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The programme aims to protect, control and monitor turtles by implementing several activities such as cleaning beaches, encouraging young people to volunteer environmentally and educating the local community not to use lights inside the reserve.

HM receives National Day greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received more greetings on the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day. His Majesty the Sultan received greetings from Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, King of Malaysia, President Ilham Heydar Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan, President Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyz Republic, King Carl XVI Gustaf of the Kingdom of Sweden, President Armen Sarkissian of the Republic of Armenia, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine, President Alexander

Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus, President Milos Zeman of the Czech Republic, President Zuzana Caputova of the Slovak Republic, President Borut Pahor of the Republic of Slovenia, President Julius Maada Bio of the Republic of Sierra Leone, President Aleksandar Vucic of the Republic of Serbia, President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic, President Nicolas Maduro of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, President Paul Biya of the Republic of Cameroon, President Egils Levits of the

Republic of Latvia, Duke Henri of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, President Andry Rajoelina of the Republic of Madagascar, President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh of Mongolia, President Katerina Sakellaropoulou of the Republic of Greece and Dr Hussein Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar. In their cables, they wished His Majesty good health, happiness and long life. They also wished the Omani people further development and prosperity under His Majesty's wise leadership. — ONA



Fahd receives Syrian President's adviser

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday received Dr Bouthaina Shaaban, Political and Media Adviser to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and Chairperson of the Wathiqat Wattan Organisation. Dr Bouthaina Shaaban conveyed greetings of President Bashar Al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. HH Sayyid Fahd expressed his best wishes for the Syrian leadership and the Syrian people further progress and growth.

He affirmed that "The Sultanate of Oman accords full attention to heritage-being the nation's historical memory, so that upcoming generations could consult and benefit from this civilisational reservoir on a regular basis". The meeting touched on cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Syria, with emphasis on the conservation of heritage and the consolidation of Arab relations. They also reviewed major developments in the regional and international arenas. Dr Bouthaina Shaaban expressed her delight at visiting the Sultanate of Oman. She commended the progress the

Sultanate of Oman made in different fields, notably the management of national records and archives and its keenness on promoting historical studies. She also valued her talks with Omani officials, noting that the outcome would reflect positively on bilateral cooperation. The meeting was attended by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority and Dr Bassam Al Khateeb, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Oman reviews foreign investment opportunities

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a meeting on Wednesday with the honorary consuls of the Sultanate of Oman in Turkey, Germany, Czech, Finland, Lithuania and Uganda. The meeting discussed means of boosting cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries represented by the consuls. The meeting also reviewed investment opportunities of interest with these countries. The meeting comes within the framework of the visits

programme being organised by the Foreign Ministry for the Sultanate of Oman's consuls to the friendly countries. The honorary consuls expressed their thanks for the Foreign Ministry's initiative of organising the visit programme, particularly conducting meetings with Omani government and private officials with the aim of closely familiarising with economic policies within the framework of Oman Vision 2040. The honorary consuls also visited the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

during which they attended Invest in Oman Forum. They also took part in the pavilion's celebration of the 51st Glorious National Day. The honorary consuls commended the heritage and future vision of the Sultanate of Oman showcased at the pavilion, especially in the fields of sustainability, environment and economic and tourism diversification. The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department at the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

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Ministry of Information gains membership in Unesco panel

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman concluded its participation in the 41st session of the Unesco's general conference in Paris on Wednesday. The Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Information was granted a four-year long membership in the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth was also granted a four-year long membership in the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS). The Unesco Education Committee's membership comprises the Oman National Committee for Education, Culture and Sciences, as well as the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The Sultanate of Oman, during the current session of the Unesco general conference, has succeeded in adding the Omani navigator



Ahmed bin Majid al Saadi to the list of influential world personalities. The listing was recognised within the Unesco's International Programme of celebration of historic events and influential persons in celebration of the 600th birthday of the Omani navigator. Moreover, on the sidelines of the general conference, the 16th edition of the Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental

Preservation was awarded jointly to Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and University of International Cooperation, or "Universidad para la Cooperación Internacional (UCI)," represented by the Latin America School for Protected Areas or "Escuela Latinoamericana de Áreas Protegidas - ELAP" - Costa Rica. — ONA

Career exhibition held in Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, NOV 24

Students of the College of Applied Sciences Nizwa and Nizwa College Technology jointly held a career exhibition. The exhibition was held under the auspices of Dr Mohammad bin Juma al Kharousi, Dean of the College, in the presence of Dr Hafez al Rahbi, Dean of Nizwa College of Technology, staff and students. The aim of the exhibition was to introduce students to the courses and their future career paths. It also talked about college transfer. The exhibition covered careers in mass communication, design



and business administration, engineering, IT and business studies. Maitha al Buraiki, a member of the Student in Advisory Council for College of Applied Sciences, said: "The exhibition focused on

the sub-specialties in the college. It explains the methods of study in them and the nature of projects during the study period. And what are the career paths that students can pursue during their university studies."

Envoys greet His Majesty on 51st National Day

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 24

To mark the occasion of the Sultanate of Oman's 51st National Day, a number of foreign ambassadors accredited to the Sultanate of Oman congratulated His Majesty and the citizens of the Sultanate of Oman, on behalf of their governments and the people of their homelands. Ambassadors were interviewed by the management of the first Omani website that highlights the life and achievements of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.



THE US government and the American people congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani people on the occasion of Oman's 51st National Day. Oman and the United States share the common desire to create a better future for the next generation. Our thriving economic, security and cultural partnership is anchored by deep historical bonds of friendship. We look ahead to many more years of prosperous cooperation. Happy National Day, Oman. **Leslie M Tsou, Ambassador of the United States**



I WOULD LIKE to take this opportunity to convey, in the name of King Felipe VI and the Government of Spain and its people, our warmest congratulations to HM the Sultan, and to the friendly people of this beloved country. Lately with the Cyclone Shaheen that hit the region and previously with the Covid-19 that affected the whole world, no efforts were spared to save lives and restore the damages caused by this natural disaster. Thanks to the Government of Oman under the wise leadership of HM the Sultan, the country could rise and face these challenges. I am confident that our bilateral relations that date from decades between both the monarchies will continue to contribute for further progress in the various fields of mutual interests. **Maria Luisa Huidobro, Ambassador of Spain**



KENYA AND OMAN enjoy warm and deep-rooted friendly relations that is strongly anchored on a shared long-standing historical and cultural connection that dates as far back to the 17th Century. One of my great pleasures in Oman is hearing some Omanis speaking Kiswahili, indeed as the saying goes, 'language is the roadmap of culture'. I remain confident that our warm and fruitful bilateral relations will continue to be strengthened under the wise leadership of HM. In the name of Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, the government and people of the Republic of Kenya, I wish HM as well as the government and the friendly people of the Sultanate of Oman good health, peace and prosperity. **Mohamed Dori Yakub, Ambassador of Kenya**



ON THE OCCASION of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman and on behalf of the President of the French Republic, its people, I convey our congratulations to HM and the Omani people. Our partnership has deep historical roots. Based on trust and mutual respect, it is reflected in a concrete way in all areas: Political dialogue, military and security cooperation, investment, education and culture. France deeply values and encourages the role of the Sultanate of Oman in promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect for international law, sustainable development and social justice. We can and I am sure that we will do more together. **Véronique AULAGNON, Ambassador of France**



IT IS A GREAT honour and pleasure to extend warm congratulations to HM and the people of Oman on the occasion of the Sultanate's 51st National Day. On this auspicious day, I am reminded of the proud history of Oman, which made this country an oasis of stability and progress in the region. With deep-rooted ties from the 16th century, Turkey and Oman enjoy excellent bilateral relations in many fields with a higher momentum every year. May Allah continue to bestow his blessing to the people of Oman and HM with good health, peace and welfare. **Ayşe Sözen Usluer, Ambassador of Turkey**



ON THE OCCASION of the 51st Anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to send first of all my thoughts to the people and the families who suffered from the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit so hard the country this year. I would also like to remember and express my deep solidarity to those affected by tropical Cyclone Shaheen last month. I would like to commend the Omani authorities for their effective and successful response both to the pandemic and the preparedness and recovery from the cyclone. My sincere wish is to see the country meet soon its vital targets of economic diversification and recovery, of state apparatus modernisation, digitalisation and sustainable growth for the benefit of its citizens, as wisely and consistently directed by HM. **Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy**



ON BEHALF of the Philippine Embassy and the Filipino community in Oman, I wish to convey to HM the government and to the friendly people, my sincere felicitations on their National Day. I congratulate HM for his wisdom and astuteness in his rule, as exemplified in Oman's success in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic. With over 40,000 Filipinos in Oman, Oman is one of our important partners in the region. I look forward to further strengthening relations between our two sisterly countries. **Imelda M Panolong, Ambassador of the Philippines**



ON BEHALF of the Republic of Korea, I would like to express my sincere congratulation on the 51st Anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman. Under the wise leadership of HM, the Sultanate of Oman has returned to normal life gradually after Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, active high-level exchanges took place this year. The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos established the long-lasting friendship between Oman and Korea, HM will further develop the friendly relations of our two countries and I will remain devoted to deepening our friendship. **Kim Chang-Kyu, Ambassador of Korea**



ON THE GLORIOUS occasion of the 51st National Day of Oman, on behalf of the President, the Government and the

citizens of Hungary, it is my greatest honour to express to HM and the people of the Sultanate my most heartfelt appreciation, greetings, congratulation and best wishes. We look forward to continuing the strong bilateral relations and to further strengthening them for the sustainable progress and prosperity of our two nations, in the years to come. **Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary**

'Shabab Oman II' attracts visitors in Dubai



Air Vice Marshal Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Thani, Assistant Commandant for Ports Affairs in Dubai Police, on Wednesday toured *Shabab Oman II*.

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel (RNOV) *Shabab Oman II* is carrying on with its mission in extending bridges of friendship between the Sultanate of Oman, Arab and friendly nations. *Shabab Oman II* docked in various ports around the world to connect with cultures and to highlight Oman's civilisation and its people worldwide. The vessel's 5th international voyage themed "Oman, A Renewed Approach" she visited the GCC member states, capping up its voyage by taking part in activities of Oman Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai.

The vessel embodies one of the prosperous images of Oman's Renewed Renaissance. Moreover, the vessel welcomes visitors till November 30 by treating them with a presentation on the vessel's lifespan, from being built to its current 5th international voyage. There is also a daily exhibition on board the vessel, which showcases glimpses of Oman's past and present. The exhibition is held daily from 10 am to 1 pm and from 4 pm to 6 pm.

The Royal Cavalry showcases a collection of horse-related items, in addition to an album of images of previous shows performed by the Royal Cavalry. The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) also participate in the exhibition by showcasing historic military collectables and books on Oman's military history.

Air Vice Marshal Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Thani, Assistant Commandant for Ports Affairs in Dubai Police, on Wednesday toured *Shabab Oman II*. The guest was briefed on the ship's route as part of its 5th international voyage themed "Oman, A Renewed Approach", as well as the activities held on board the ship. — ONA

Tender

مدائن
madayn

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

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
13/2021/PEIE/HQ-13	CONSTRUCTION OF PUMPING STATION WITH WATER MAIN DISTRIBUTION LINE FROM AWQAD R/A TO RAYSUT INDUSTRIAL CITY 1 & 2	9-12-2021	3-1-2022	Pipeline Network Construction and Drilling Wells	First and above	100

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

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

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

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

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

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

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JOBS OF TOMORROW

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

[@lakshmioman](#)

What are the jobs of tomorrow? The debate can be endless but many feel there is one area where the potential is, but it is constantly evolving and that is the world of Big Data.

At the Big Data and Analytics Meet 2021 by Comex, supported by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, National Centre for Statistics and Information and partnered with Oman Information Technology Society and Oman Society of Petroleum Services, discussions were held about the Sultanate of Oman's digital future and as a driver of Oman Vision 2040. At the same time, the *Observer* took the opportunity to look at the potential areas where students could foresee exploring this field for their future.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS IN CAREER PATH?

Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park, said that students should be guided and that this is where the private sector and education field should come together to convey the message to the children on which are the areas they should start focusing on for them not to miss the future.

"The fourth industrial revolution's components are very clear today – we have artificial intelligence, IoT, Big Data and analytics and software languages. Today a lot of students are geared up towards learning Python because it is the language of AI. I think there should be more of this alignment between the private sector and education sector in order for all of us to benefit from the skill set our students will come up with in the future," he explained.

Abdulaziz Jaafer, CEO of ETCO, feels the specific areas ought to be classified as short term and long term goals. "If we are talking about the near future that is the next two years in the Sultanate of Oman, I believe cyber security, data scientists, analysts are good domains, however if we look at the long term future and that is five years plus then I believe all these types of data are being facilitated now are going to be used for different purposes such as artificial intelligence AI, IoT and automated decision making. For that, students who are going to be graduating in the next five to six years, I think they would have to look into these specialisations but also one more area that is not being talked about too much, which is cyber law," he pointed out.

According to him, cyber law is not being looked at but cyber cases and cyber frauds are being taken longer to be treated or delayed being given a judgment because there are no specialised professionals in that domain. "I think this is an area that should be explored," he noted.

The future is in Big Data, cloud and analytics. "There might be other countries ahead of us but we are moving forward fast. I believe 2040 as a vision has digitalisation as one of the main pillars, which for sure will upscale the economy of the Sultanate of Oman," said Asaad al Sadi, Acting CEO, data2cloud.

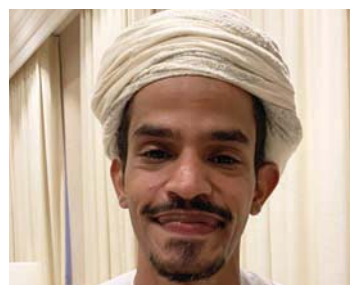
"I believe data is an asset and in my career I used to work on critical function that used to depend on data while setting the proper plan and strategies so have seen the value of data and how it impacts our tasks



The fourth industrial revolution's components are very clear today – we have artificial intelligence, IoT, Big Data and analytics and software languages. Today a lot of students are geared up towards learning Python because it is the language of AI

**MAQBOOL
AL WAHAIBI**

CEO of Oman Data Park



Mohammed al Tamami



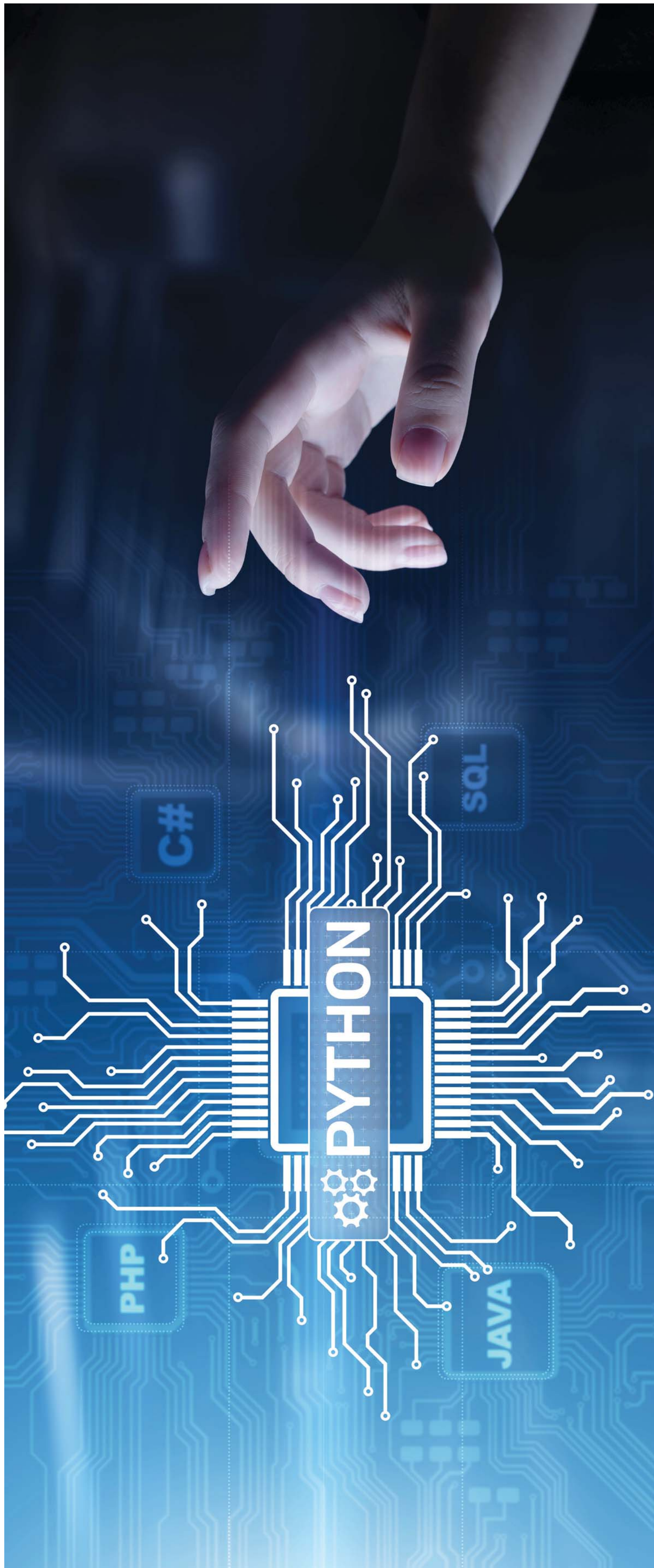
Abdulaziz Jaafer



Asaad al Sadi

and operations and how it helps us in recommending the right steps for the decision makers to take the right way forward, I used to go through lot of papers on data science and attended courses. This helps," Al Sadi reflected.

The human touch will never go out of trend, says Mohammed al Tamami, co-founder and COO of Mamun Financial Technologies. "This is more like my personal opinion – technology, data and careers and demands for jobs will always exist in that space, but I think significantly overlooked is intuitive and creative industries because I still would want to buy an art from a human and not from a machine. It is harder to be challenged. Lawyers could be challenged but not intuitive and creative industries. So I think creative industries and the earning potential is significantly going to make a comeback and even more exciting is how creativity can be scaled across the Internet," Al Tamami said.





All eyes on opening of Saudi-Oman road

VINOD NAIR
vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman has been rated and praised highly for the quality of its expressways and highways. Developing them has a big deal, given that they must be built by cutting and trimming the mountains.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology has been focusing on expanding the secondary road network for better urban-rural connectivity and developing dual carriageways to reduce head-to-head collisions.

The roads have been developed to the highest safety standards and not to forget that their maintenance is equally a challenge due to constant threats of flowing wadis after heavy rains.

According to the ministry, the length of paved roads under its jurisdiction is 16,013 km as of December 2020, while that of dirt(gravel) roads is 17,069 km.

The Adam-Haima-Thamrait dual carriageway has been one of the important national projects for its role in connecting the south and central of the Sultanate of Oman with the north.

All eyes are on the news related

to the opening of the Sultanate of Oman's first direct road link with Saudi Arabia, a roughly 800 km carriageway that will provide strong new impetus to trade, commercial and economic ties between the two countries.

According to officials, the road passes through the Empty Quarter. Around 160 km of the road is on the Omani side while 580 km will be in Saudi Arabia.

This will save more than 16 hours of travel time between the two towns at each end. The road is key to transporting goods from the port of the city of Duqm to Saudi Arabia, which will enforce the Sultanate of Oman position as a logistics hub.

It may be noted that Royal directives were given for the implementation of Diba-Lima-Khasab road by finding alternative routes to accomplish the project due to the urgent need for it.

The road will play a vital role in connecting villages and wilayats of Musandam Governorate — easing traffic, facilitating the movement of inhabitants, and serving the overall goals of development and economic prosperity in the Sultanate of Oman.

Death of young turtles raise a stink in Al Wusta Wetlands

They were killed due to the pollution of either their food or habitat. Further investigations could reveal the exact cause of the death of these turtles

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
DR JACKSON ACHANKUNJU

It was an unusual saddening sight when I noticed more than a dozen dead turtles within a stretch of 200 metres, along the Al Wusta Wetlands of the Sultanate of Oman.

I was on my research mission to study the seaweed diversity across the southern governorates of the Sultanate Oman. The obnoxious smell in the wetland caused me to look around for its source.

The Al Wusta Wetlands that overlook Masirah, the largest island of the country, also serves as a spot for the nesting and feeding of Hawksbill, Loggerhead and Green turtles. It is interesting to note that five out of the seven species of marine turtles in the world are found in the Sultanate of Oman. Four of them are nestling turtles namely Green Turtle (Sul Hafah Al Khuthera), Loggerheads (Rimani) and Olive Ridley (Al Sherfaf) and Hawksbill (Al Zaytoon) and the other one called Leatherback (Al Niml) which is a visiting turtle. Most of the dead bodies found there were of young turtles, which points to the fact that they were killed due to the pollution of either



their food or habitat.

This is disheartening and it needs to be seriously considered. Turtles play an important role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem. It has added value to the Sultanate Oman as it plays an important role in tourism.

The Al Wusta Wetlands are one of the biodiversity hotspots in the Sultanate of Oman. This place is noted as the main stopover site for migratory shorebirds during

the winter in the Africa-Eurasian Flyway. Its complex ecosystems and unique biodiversity make it one of the most important and rare sites for the study of wetland ecology. This region which has been hidden from the tourist's eye is a relatively pristine coastal area of global importance.

According to the Ramson convention, 35 per cent of the wetlands are lost since 1970 and a quarter of its endemic species

risk extinction worldwide. By 2050, one-third of the world population is expected to struggle with excessive concentrations of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in wetlands and all other aquatic ecosystems.

Further investigations and necropsies of these dead bodies may be undertaken by the authorities concerned so that they could reveal the exact cause of the death of these turtles. Corrective measures if taken at the right time could prevent further loss of these endangered yet highly significant genetic resources of the Sultanate of Oman. Conserving the biodiversity of the land where we live in is the responsibility of every person.

The author is member, Royal Society of Biology, London and Asst. Professor of Biology & Researcher in Biodiversity, A'Sharqiyah University, Sultanate of Oman

Handicrafts House boosts prospects of small firms

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 24

Through Al Mouj Muscat's support of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), hundreds of entrepreneurs are now located at the Sultanate of Oman's premier lifestyle destination and benefitting from support which is helping them grow.

Handicrafts House (World of Handicrafts) is one Omani enterprise which has grown considerably since 2018 and it began with a kiosk at Al Mouj Muscat. This year it moved to a unit inside the Al Mouj Muscat's Community Hub, a new facility serving 7,000 residents as well as the millions of people who visit every year.

The handicrafts business, which sources and sells traditional Omani items and is passionate about preserving and promoting the nation's heritage, in turn supports around 800 artisans who live in the Sultanate of Oman and craft items by hand.

World of Handicrafts was founded by Zuwaina bint Sultan al Rashdi in 2012 when she saw a gap in the market for well-designed and packaged traditional products for tourists as well as corporate markets. Now CEO of the company which has four units and a packaging workshop, she was crowned Winner of the Best Female Entrepreneur Award for 2015-2016 and is a well-respected voice within the Omani business community. Zuwaina's vision for World of Handicrafts when it first started was to become a platform to showcase Omani products around the globe but she says it has become so much more: "We consider ourselves a development project and an independent crafters' forum rather than a business selling goods as we work closely with our designers to help them make best use of their skills."



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs hereby announces the following tender:

Tender Number	Name/Description	Grade	Closing Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Closing Date for Submitting Tender	Tender Document Cost
5/2021	Maintenance of Ministry Building	Excellent	1/12/2021	13/12/2021	25 R.O

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and condition of the tender from the ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

Offers must be submitted in ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website **before (12) twelve pm** on the closing date for submitting Tenders; Tenders submitted after that will not be considered regardless of the reasons for lateness, which is valid for ninety (90) days from the closing date for submitting tenders.

Each company wishing to participate in the Tender must enclose with their Tender a Tender Bond in the form of a Bank Guarantee from a bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of one percent (1%) of the tender value in accordance with the Form of Tender Bond as attached to the Tender Documents; any Tender which does not meet the requirement of Tender Bond will not be considered. Alongside the electronic copy to be submitted on ESNAD, the original Tender Bond must be submitted to the Ministry before the Closing Date for Submitting Tenders.

For clarifications, you may contact via ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website mentioned above.

*The Ministry is not obliged to accept the lowest or any Tender.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (55/2021)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tender:

Serial No.	Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Deadline for Inquires Submission	Deadline for Obtaining Tender Docs.	Deadline for Submission
1	89/2021/MM/PA-19	Hiring of Sewage Tanker (5000 GLN) for Labour Camp at Al-Mubailah - Seeb	25/- OMR	16/12/2021	30/12/2021	04/01/2022

1. Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.

2. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.

3. Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond which is equivalent to (1%) of the total value of the tender to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.

4. **Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.**

5. **Clarifications and support:**

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to (etenderhd@mtc.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).

Website: www.mm.gov.om

IAEA chief reports ‘no progress’ in talks with Iran

VIENNA: The UN nuclear watchdog’s head said on Wednesday there had been “no progress” in talks with Iran to resolve disputes over the monitoring of the country’s atomic programme, a day after returning from Tehran.

Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told a quarterly meeting of the agency’s board that his talks in Tehran were “inconclusive”, despite being “constructive”.

Grossi had sought to tackle constraints put on IAEA inspections earlier this year, outstanding questions over the

presence of undeclared nuclear material at sites in Iran, and the treatment of IAEA staff in the country.

“In terms of the substance... we were not able to make progress”, Grossi told reporters, saying that the lack of agreement had come “in spite of my best efforts”.

Among other officials in Tehran, he met Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

The talks came ahead of the scheduled resumption on Monday of negotiations between Tehran and world powers aimed at reviving the 2015 deal that gave Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.



Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian with the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi at the foreign ministry headquarters in Tehran. — AFP

Iran began moving away from its commitments under the deal in 2019, a year after then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the accord and began reimposing sanctions.

One of the steps away from the deal came earlier this year when Iran began restricting some IAEA inspections activity.

Iran and the agency currently have a temporary agreement which gives the IAEA access to monitoring equipment at Iran’s nuclear facilities.

However, the Agency has warned that the agreement is not a durable solution and Grossi said

he was “close to... the point where I would not be able to guarantee continuity of knowledge” of Iran’s nuclear programme if it continued.

Grossi also said he had raised concerns while in Tehran about security checks on IAEA inspectors which the agency has described as “excessively invasive”.

He noted that the IAEA and Iran had a legal agreement “which is intended to protect inspectors from intimidation, from seizure of their property”.

“Our Iranian colleagues have instituted a number of measures which are simply incompatible” with this, he said. — AFP

■ SAFE AGAINST THE VIRUS



A Palestinian ministry of health employee displays vials of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at a school in the village of Dura, west of Hebron. — AFP

UN envoy for Libya resigns weeks before key vote

UNITED NATIONS: The UN special envoy for Libya has quit just a month before crucial presidential elections in the war-torn nation without giving Security Council members a reason, a spokesman for the world body said on Tuesday.

Asked for a reason for Jan Kubis’s resignation, less than a year into his tenure, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric demurred, saying only: “It’s a question you’ll have to ask him.”

“Mr Kubis has made it clear that he is not slamming the door today”, Dujarric added, saying the envoy would deliver a monthly update on the situation in Libya, as scheduled, on Wednesday. No



Jan Kubis, former UN special envoy for Libya.

date has been set for his departure, while UN chief Antonio Guterres was looking for a replacement, the spokesman said.

Libya’s first ever direct presidential poll is due to take place on December 24, as the UN seeks to end a decade of violence in the oil-rich nation since a Nato-

backed uprising that toppled and killed strongman Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

A former UN envoy for Lebanon, the 69-year-old Kubis took up the Libya post in January.

The Security Council recently split over whether to reconfigure the leadership of the global body’s political mission in Libya, with several members calling for the envoy’s post to be transferred from Geneva to Tripoli. Diplomats said Kubis was reluctant to undertake such a move.

The renewal of the UN’s political mission to Libya, which should have been a formality, hit a major road bump in September over the issue. — AFP

Robot waiters take Iraq’s Mosulites to the future

MOSUL: From the rubble of Iraq’s war-ravaged city of Mosul arises the sight of androids gliding back and forth in a restaurant to serve their amused clientele.

“Welcome”, “We wish you a good time in our restaurant”, “We would be happy to have your opinion on the quality of the service”, chime the automated attendants, red eyes blinking out of their shiny blue and white exteriors.

“On television, you see robots and touch-screen tables in the UAE, Spain and Japan”, said Rami Chkib Abdelrahman, proud owner of the White Fox which opened in June.

“I’m trying to bring these ideas here to Mosul.” The futuristic servers are the result of technology

developed in the northern city, erstwhile stronghold of the IS group. “We saw the concept on social media in more than one restaurant”, said Abdelrahman, a dentist by profession.

Occupied by IS between 2014 and 2017, the northern metropolis of Mosul still bears the scars of war.

But at dinnertime, patrons of the restaurant that is packed every night can escape from the city on a voyage through space.

An astronaut floating across the muralled wall sets the scene and views of Earth and other planets as seen from space give customers the sense of peering out through the portholes of a spaceship.

The ceilings are speckled with glowing constellations.

A team from the University of Mosul’s department of mechatronics was in charge of programming and connected a network and server to the restaurant

But the star attractions remain the two androids, sporting a scarf and black beret, shuttling back and forth across the restaurant on rails to deliver orders.

As they approach, smartphones come out and children promptly line up next to them for a souvenir snapshot.

The robots are imported,



A robot waiter carries a payment bill to patrons at the ‘White Fox’ restaurant in the eastern part of Iraq’s northern city of Mosul. — AFP

Abdelrahman explained without giving the source, adding that everything in the restaurant is

digital, including the 15 touch-screen tables with built-in menus.

A team from the University

of Mosul’s department of mechatronics — integrating several fields of engineering as well as robotics — was in charge of programming and connected a network and server to the restaurant.

Humans have not been completely replaced by machines.

Four young waiters are busy picking up the dishes from the robots’ trays and placing them on the tables. Having dinner with his wife, Bashar Mahmud was won over. He took a selfie, smiling broadly. “I’ve travelled abroad and I’ve never seen anything like this, not in Turkey, Jordan or Saudi Arabia”, exclaimed the 50-year-old blacksmith with a salt-and-pepper beard. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KHARTOUM

Hamdok calls for halt to post-coup sackings

Sudan’s newly reinstated Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on Wednesday ordered a halt to sackings and a review of all appointments made after his detention in last month’s military coup. Top General Abdel Fattah al Burhan had grabbed power and detained Hamdok on October 25 but, following international condemnation and mass protests, reinstated the premier last Sunday.

After the coup Burhan had dissolved major institutions and dismissed the heads of state



media, public companies and banks as well as many provincial officials.

Ambassadors who had announced their defections were also relieved of their duties. Hamdok himself was placed under house arrest after the putsch. — AFP

BEIRUT

Four killed in Israel strikes on Syria

Two civilians were among four people killed by Israeli strikes on Wednesday that targeted a part of Syria where fighters loyal to Lebanon’s Hezbollah are based, a monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group that relies on sources on the ground, said the Israeli missiles struck an area near three villages in the west of Homs province.

The raid killed four people, including two civilians, said the



war monitor, although it was unable to determine whether the other two deaths were civilians or soldiers. The official Syrian news agency SANA, citing a military official, said two civilians had been killed and seven people wounded in the strikes that were conducted at dawn. — AFP

DUBAI

Warring parties urged to ‘de-escalate violence’

The United Nations urged Yemen’s warring sides to “de-escalate violence”, a day after one of its agencies warned the conflict will have claimed 377,000 lives by year’s end. The Yemeni government, supported by a military coalition, and the Ansar Allah fighters have been embroiled in conflict since 2014, resulting in what the UN calls the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

“There is no sustainable military solution to the conflict



in Yemen”, said UN special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg. “All warring parties need to de-escalate violence and prioritise the interests of civilians over scoring military wins”, he said after a regional tour which included visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt. — AFP

In brief

NEW DELHI



DELHI TO REOPEN SCHOOLS AS SMOG GOES FROM WORSE TO BAD

India's polluted capital will reopen schools on Monday, one week after it announced a partial shutdown over dangerous air pollution levels, authorities said. Gopal Rai, Delhi state's Environment Minister, told journalists that pollution levels in the city had "improved in the last three days" and some of the restrictions would be relaxed. The authorities had announced a shut down of some coal plants, a ban on entry of non-essential vehicles, construction work restrictions and urged people to stay indoors as some air pollutants reached more than 30 times the World Health Organization's recommended maximum. — AFP

BEIJING



CHINA'S BIRTHRATE PLUMMETS TO LOWEST FIGURE IN DECADES

China's birthrate plummeted to a record low last year, highlighting a looming demographic crisis for Beijing caused by a rapidly ageing workforce, a slowing economy and the weakest population growth in decades. China relaxed its "one-child policy" — one of the world's strictest family planning regulations — in 2016, allowing couples to have two children. Earlier this year that was extended to three children. But the changes have failed to result in the hoped-for baby boom, as the cost of living rises and women increasingly make their own family planning choices. — AFP

COLOMBO



LANKA LIFTS BAN ON WEEDKILLER LINKED TO CANCER CASES

Sri Lanka lifted its partial ban of a weedkiller subject to US lawsuits over claims it causes cancer, after abandoning a campaign to become the world's first completely organic farming nation. The island country has been in the grips of a severe economic crisis, with a lack of foreign exchange triggering shortages of food, crude oil and other essential goods. On the weekend, authorities lifted a ban on pesticides and other farming goods, after food shortages saw the price of vegetables double and supermarkets began rationing rice. Sri Lanka completely banned the use of glyphosate — classified as a "probable carcinogen" by the World Health Organization — in 2015. — AFP

VIETNAM, JAPAN HOLD TALKS



Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh (L) and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pose at the prime minister's official residence ahead of their meeting in Tokyo. — AFP

France to boost ties with Asian countries

JAKARTA: France pledged to boost ties with Asian countries by offering "concrete projects" after it was blindsided by the AUKUS defence pact, which saw Australia ditching a commitment to buy French submarines.

Speaking during a two-day visit to Indonesia, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said the Indo-Pacific region would be at the heart of France's priorities when it assumes the presidency of the European Union in January.

"France is now determined to continue to act to increase the commitment and engagement of Europeans in the Indo-Pacific through some very concrete cooperation projects with our partners in the region, of course with Indonesia", Le Drian told a news conference after talks with his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi.

Such cooperation covers sectors including security, environment, transportation and higher education, he said.



French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

"At the heart of this commitment is a vision of the Indo-Pacific which is free and open based on the rule of law and the respect for the sovereignty of every state and multilateralism", he said, alluding to China's growing assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea.

France lost a \$66 billion contract to sell submarines to Australia thanks to the AUKUS pact, which allows Canberra to build nuclear-powered submarines using technology provided by the United States.

Paris has since been trying to court Indo-Pacific powers, including India and Indonesia.



Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi

In July, Indonesia signed a defence cooperation agreement with France. Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto said his country was seeking to acquire France-made Rafale fighter jets and submarines.

Retno stressed the importance of technology transfers and joint production of defence hardware during talks with Le Drian.

"We discussed strengthening our bilateral meeting mechanism by involving the defence sector," Retno said, adding that the two countries' defence and foreign ministers would start regular meetings next year. — dpa

Sri Lanka to sign new container port deal with China

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will tap a state-run Chinese firm to build a deep-sea container port, the government said on Wednesday, in a move likely to reignite fears over Beijing's rising regional maritime power.

The island's capital Colombo is located in the Indian Ocean between the major hubs of Dubai and Singapore, meaning influence at its ports is highly sought after.

Sri Lanka's port authority signed a preliminary agreement to build the new Eastern Container Terminal (ECT) in Colombo with India and Japan in 2019.

But President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's administration scrapped the deal in February, with cabinet agreeing this week to award the project to the state-run China Harbour Engineering Company.

It did not say how much the deal was worth, but official sources had earlier estimated another \$500 million to develop the partially built terminal.

China has ploughed huge sums into Sri Lankan infrastructure projects over the last decade, becoming one of the country's biggest foreign financiers.

It has also enjoyed significant political influence on the island under the Rajapaksa clan, who have ruled the country for 11 of the last 16 years.

The ECT is the third port project to come into development around Colombo's harbour in the past decade.

Just two months ago, Sri Lanka awarded an Indian company another site to build a brand-new deep-sea jetty at an estimated \$700 million cost.

That project is next to the Chinese-run Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), in operation since 2013.

Two Chinese submarines berthed at the CICT in 2014, sparking anger in India, which considers its neighbour Sri Lanka to be within its sphere of influence.

Since then, Sri Lanka has refused permission for more Chinese submarines to be stationed there.

In 2017, unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, Sri Lanka allowed a Chinese company to take over its southern Hambantota port, which straddles the world's busiest east-west shipping route.

The deal, which gave the partially state-owned firm a 99-year lease, raised fears about Beijing's use of "debt traps" in exerting its influence abroad. India and the United States have also expressed concerns that a Chinese foothold at Hambantota could give Beijing a military advantage in the Indian Ocean. — AFP



Bangladesh begins moving Rohingya refugees

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladesh has resumed moving Rohingya refugees to a remote and flood-prone island, authorities said ON Wednesday, despite criticism from aid groups and claims some are being relocated against their will. Nearly 20,000 members of the stateless minority, who fled neighbouring Myanmar in 2017 after a brutal military crackdown, have already been sent to Bhashan Char island.

Bangladesh eventually wants to rehouse 100,000 of its approximately one million Rohingya refugees to the island, moving them from cramped relief camps on the mainland.

But hundreds already sent there have since been arrested in coastal towns after fleeing the island, and dozens died in August after a fishing boat carrying escapees capsized.

Another 2,000 Rohingya will nonetheless be transferred this week, the country's deputy refugee commissioner Moozzem Hossain said, more than six months after the last group was sent there.



Bangladesh had been planning since last year to relocate Rohingyas to the island.

"Navy ships will bring them to the island on Thursday", he added.

The UN refugee agency signed a deal with Bangladesh authorities to provide help and protection to refugees on the island last month.

Hossain said that all relocations were completely voluntary, but several refugees said they were being forced to move there.

"We don't want to go to Bhashan Char," a Rohingya woman said by

phone, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

She said a Rohingya community leader in the camps had added her name to a list of people seeking to relocate without her consent.

The UN refugee agency signed a deal with B'desh authorities to provide help and protection to refugees on the island last month

"If I go to Bhashan Char, I will not be able to go back to Myanmar. I will not go", she added.

One Rohingya community leader, who also asked to remain anonymous, said Bangladeshi authorities had told him and his peers to each provide lists of at least five families to be relocated.

About 850,000 Rohingya are packed into camps along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Most fled a Myanmar military clampdown in 2017 that the UN says could be genocide. Bangladesh has been praised for taking in the refugees who poured across the border but has had little success finding them permanent homes. — AFP

Sweden votes in first woman prime minister

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's parliament on Wednesday elected Social Democratic party leader and current Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson as the country's first woman prime minister, after she clinched a last-minute deal securing key support. Andersson will succeed outgoing Prime Minister Stefan Lofven after a total of 117 members of parliament voted for her, while 57 abstained, 174 voted against and one was absent.

Under Sweden's system, a prime ministerial candidate does not need the support of a majority in parliament, they just need to not have a majority — or 175 votes — against them.

The 54-year-old, who took over as leader of the Social Democrats earlier this month, reached a deal with the Left Party late on Tuesday to raise pensions in exchange for its backing in Wednesday's vote.

She had previously received the support of the Social Democrats' coalition partner the Greens, as well as the Centre Party.

However, Andersson faced her first setback even before her election on Wednesday.

The Centre Party announced that while it would not oppose Andersson in the vote for prime



Current Finance Minister and Social Democratic Party leader Magdalena Andersson reacts while she is voted as Sweden's first female prime minister at the Swedish parliament in Stockholm. — AFP

minister, it would withdraw its support for the government's budget to be voted later on Wednesday, due to the concessions made to the Left.

That means Andersson will in all likelihood have to govern with a

budget presented by the opposition conservative Moderates, Christian Democrats and far-right Sweden Democrats.

Andersson will formally take over her functions and present her government on Friday. Stefan

Lofven resigned on November 10 after seven years as prime minister in a widely expected move aimed at giving his successor time to prepare for the country's September 2022 general election.

Despite being a nation that has



Magdalena Andersson

long championed gender equality, Sweden has never had a woman as prime minister. All other Nordic countries — Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland — have seen women lead their governments.

The fact that Sweden, long a champion of gender equality, has had to wait until 2021 to have its first woman prime minister — 100 years after Swedish women were first allowed to vote — seems almost anachronistic.

But the job could yet prove a poisoned chalice. She faces the difficult task of maintaining her party in power in the September elections at a time when it is close

to record-low approval ratings.

The main opposition party, the Conservative Moderates, has meanwhile gradually inched closer to the once-ostracised anti-immigration Sweden Democrats (SD), and has said it is ready to head a right-wing government with SD's informal support in parliament, which would be a first.

Crime and immigration, two of the far-right's top issues, are expected to be among Swedes' main concerns in next year's election.

While Andersson worked closely at the side of predecessor Lofven for many years, she hails from a very different background to the former welder.

Born in the university town of Uppsala, she is the only daughter of a university professor and a teacher.

She first made a name for herself in the water, twice winning gold in the Swedish national junior championships.

In parallel with studies at the Stockholm School of Economics — and a spell at Harvard — she immersed herself in the Social Democratic party, having joined its youth league aged 16. In 1996, she became an aide to prime minister Goran Persson. — AFP

Europe urged to act 'urgently' amid dire Covid outlook

STOCKHOLM: The EU health agency on Wednesday appealed to member states to "urgently" introduce measures to counter surging Covid-19 cases, a day after the WHO Europe warned that 700,000 more may die on the continent this winter. With more than 2.5 million cases and almost 30,000 deaths reported in the past week, Europe is by far the region currently worst hit by the virus, according to AFP's tally.

The trend is increasing, especially in countries with the lowest vaccination rates.

Europe's return to the pandemic's epicentre has been blamed on sluggish vaccine uptake in some nations, the highly contagious Delta variant, colder weather moving people indoors again and the easing of restrictions.

In addition, evidence is growing that vaccine-induced protection against infection and mild disease is waning, prompting calls for booster shots.

Some countries in Europe have already reintroduced strict measures while others are poised



European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides during the debate 'EU's Role in Combatting the Covid-19 Pandemic and How to Vaccinate the World' at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. — AFP

to do so, sparking protests from people weary of having their lives restricted over the past year-and-a-half.

On Tuesday, the European branch of the World Health Organization warned that up to 700,000 more people could die from Covid-19 by March 2022 in Europe and Central Asia, in addition to the 1.5 million who have already succumbed to the virus.

The WHO said it expected "high or extreme stress" in intensive care units (ICUs) in 49 out of the 53 countries that comprise its European region this winter.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on Wednesday said its modelling predicted an equally grim outcome unless measures were taken "urgently".

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

THE HAGUE

Dutch government eyes new Covid curbs

The Netherlands could announce tougher Covid-19 restrictions this week, just days after four nights of riots against the existing partial lockdown, the country's health minister said. A "gloomy and worrisome" rise in cases meant a cabinet meeting over coronavirus measures scheduled for December 3 had been brought forward by a week, said Health Minister Hugo de Jonge.

Ministers will consider advice from the Dutch outbreak management team before Prime



Minister Mark Rutte announces the decisions in a press conference, de Jonge added. He said he would not "anticipate" what new curbs were under consideration. — AFP

SOFIA

Bulgaria, N Macedonia mourn after bus crash

Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Kosovo mourned over one of Europe's worst road crashes that killed 46 as harrowing testimony emerged of tourists trapped inside the burning bus. Officials believe the tourist bus crashed into the highway rails and caught fire near Sofia early on Tuesday while returning from Istanbul in Turkey to North Macedonia's Skopje. Only seven survived, managing to break a window and jump out, according to initial accounts.



Many of the passengers were ethnic Albanians aged 20-30 and included a dozen minors with the youngest fatality four-year-old twins, according to media reports. — AFP

WASHINGTON

Nasa launches asteroid-ramming probe

US space agency Nasa launched a satellite early on Wednesday that will be steered directly into an asteroid to alter its course, in the first mission of its kind.

The planetary defence probe, powered by a Falcon 9 rocket made by Elon Musk's SpaceX, took off at 10:21 pm Pacific time from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. "Asteroid Dimorphos: we're coming for you!" the US space agency tweeted. The satellite — which



Nasa says is the size of a vending machine — is due to smash into the Dimorphos asteroid in October next year, in what has been dubbed the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART). — dpa

Clearing Afghan landmines one step at a time

DAPHNE ROUSSEAU

Weeks after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, families who fled the fighting in one southern village returned home to find something strange: the cricket ground had been circled in rocks painted red and white.

White, it turned out, meant it was safe for children to play. But red signalled buried landmines and other ordnance — the explosive remnants of war that have killed or maimed tens of thousands of Afghans over the past four decades.

The village of Nad-e-Ali in Helmand province became a front line in the final days of the war between the Taliban and Western-backed government forces in Kabul. It was besieged for two months until the Taliban took control of the country in mid-August.

When its residents returned in September they found the village school riddled with gunfire, its roof blackened by smoke, and the children's swings reduced to just a metal frame.

They also found that the area had been “totally mined” in the fighting, according to Juma Khan, the local coordinator for the HALO Trust, the main mine-clearing NGO operating in Afghanistan.

Newly laid mines and other booby traps were buried beneath doors of buildings and beside windows.

“The rooms inside had mines and there were mines on the main street,” Khan said during a visit to Nad-e-Ali this month.

About 41,000 Afghan civilians have been killed or wounded by landmines and unexploded ordnance since 1988, according to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

More than two-thirds of the victims were children, many of whom spotted the deadly devices while playing and picked them up.

The HALO (Hazardous Area Life-Support Organisation) Trust was founded in 1988 specifically to tackle ordnance left behind during the Soviet occupation of the country. — AFP

Afghans found that the area had been totally mined in the fighting. Newly laid mines and other booby traps were buried beneath doors of buildings and beside windows. The rooms inside had mines and there were mines on the main street

JUMA KHAN
HALO Trust's coordinator



ON A MISSION

Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff, head of the European Union's mission to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, paints a wall along with Palestinian children during a visit to a desalination plant in Deir al Balah in central Gaza, on Wednesday. — AFP

A historic visit strengthens ties



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

THE ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN AND QATAR HAVE WITNESSED SHARP INCREASE IN RECENT YEARS

The state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Qatar shows the depth and the strength of the relationship between the two countries. The bonding has seen drastic expansion and consolidation at various levels in recent years. This shows the nature of connection between the two nations, their common interests and similarity in the political and economic vision for the region and the world. This convergence of views led to harnessing of mutual interests.

The commonality in their outlook triggered joint efforts at various levels and with mutual cooperation. This is also working as a step for gradual consolidation of relations in all the areas. This reflects the ambitions of the leaderships of the two brotherly countries which are focussed on serving the aspirations of the two peoples to achieve greater heights. This is the basic dimension of ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar and the relations of the people of the two countries.

This visit was His Majesty's first to Qatar and the second at the regional and international levels after his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This has resulted in lot of optimism and created confidence at all levels domestically and abroad. This shows the importance of his

official tours abroad, and that it means a lot for the government and the people of the country. These initiatives are seen as efforts to strengthen relations and embark on the path of further cooperation in as many areas.

There is no doubt that the brotherly State of Qatar and its people love the Sultanate of Oman because of its rational stances on the crises which the region has seen recently. They respect the policy of the Sultanate of Oman of non-interference in the internal affairs of others. The Sultanate of Oman urges for dialogue to resolve any crisis and conflicts between the countries in the region.

These are the positions which have saved the region from crisis and conflicts and prevented worsening of the situation. This permanent position of the Sultanate of Oman has made its impact and has led parties in some disputes and conflicts modify their stand and withdraw from positions which could have destabilised the region. This is what has been greatly appreciated by the State of Qatar as a major requirement for comprehensive sustainable development.

It is fortunate that economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar have witnessed sharp increase in recent years. The volume of trade exchange between the two countries increased

from 2013 to 2018 by 40 per cent, as recent statistics show. The trade exchange between the two in 2018 exceeded RO 1 billion. Omani exports accounted for a remarkable growth of 78 per cent. In fact, the trade exchange increased from RO 2 billion in 2016 to RO 3.8 billion in 2017 and reached RO 6.8 billion in 2018, which was a growth of 240 per cent. In addition to this, and around 350 Qatari companies are operating in the Sultanate of Oman in various areas of investment.

These are the economic relations which work as binding force between countries. This is the only path for prosperous and brighter future. This creates opportunities for work to achieve objectives for better future. The bilateral trade and economic relations are more important than anything else. This opens more horizons for cooperation and joint efforts as well as help in finding and creating more opportunities where two and more nations can work together.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman headed by His Majesty the Sultan reflected the nature of this visit. The relations between the two countries showed the common interests and visions. The mutual cooperation leads to brotherhood in relations and further strengthening of ties which are also sustainable.

The polarisation and fragmentation of public opinions



Sonia Ambrosio
soniambrosio@gmail.com

DIVERSITY IN MEDIA CAN PROVIDE MORE CHOICES FOR PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH INDIVIDUALS ONLY CHOOSE MEDIA WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THEIR HORIZONS

When groups of youth come together to discuss issues affecting society, the grown-ups would do well to listen. Many young people are well-informed and capable of analysing and evaluating everyday events using the values and understandings gained from extensive exposure to the digital world.

It is not to imply that they know better, but rather to underline that their point of view differs. The ways they interpret problems like gender, climate change, poverty, or contemporary slavery show their desire to participate in society — in some situations, they simply need to fine-tune their lines of thoughts and objectives. The way they approach worldly issues may escape the ears and eyes of those around them.

Language, like culture and technology, develops with time.

Precisely because of the evolution in all areas, the youth feel free to express their opinions openly. They feel empowered by social media opportunities. They became bold. When they are unable to communicate critical opinions, for example, they may use humorous or sarcastic language to express themselves.

Metaphors are a powerful tool for conveying information. Arab linguists have been studying metaphors since the eighth century. The usage of proverbs, maxims, and idioms to address worldly issues can be traced back to the poet Medan al Shweeir's works in Arabian Satire, which are closely related to the Arabian Peninsula. The difficulty with satire, whether it is hilarious or sarcastic, is that it might be misconstrued and shared as real news.

In the past, the media operated

as information flow controllers, with one source cascading to many recipients in a top-down manner. This structure has shifted as a result of the Internet and the arrival of smartphones. Individuals can publish and express their views to a wide range of audiences. The flow of information is no longer selected by its value but rather by popularity.

The social platforms contributed to this polarisation by allowing people to choose the content they want to see, resulting in clusters based on shared ideas and emotions. These interconnected processes fused together end up in the dynamics of public opinions — albeit a fragmented one — based on interests and advantages.

Due to the commercial objectives of social networks, the social platforms are always changing their processes and tactics that stimulate

participation and organisation. As a result, digital activism is a natural consequence, which, in turn, contributes to the market value of companies that have grown to be global giants of public opinion - with the understanding that investors are always looking for faster growth and higher returns. Now, governmental institutions and civil society organisations also use digital activism to promote their objectives, such as events, awareness campaigns, workshops, or publicity.

Diversity in media can provide more choices for people, although individuals only choose media within the bounds of their horizons. Within this thought, some will look into 'worldly matters' with an open mind while others belonging to the close-minded groups will construct their own opinions, and promote them

on social media. It is difficult to say whether public opinion within the spectrum of social media is indeed accurate in measuring collective sentiments - even within small groups. It is not because a group of people uses a certain hashtag on Twitter that they can have what they want or the way they want it. It is critical to recognise that hashtag social movement can be noisy and disruptive - particularly if the goal of the mobilisation has limited scope.

Institutional and youth-led polarisation of social media activism deserves some compromises. Listening to one another is part of the entire development process, which includes investing in people and bridging the gap between generations. In the end, everybody is looking for great returns, whether they are economic, intellectual, or social.

sport

Oman club thrash Nizwa, Seeb edge Sohar

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 24

Oman club registered their second successive win on Wednesday in the fifth week of Omantel league. Hosts Oman thrash Nizwa 7-0 in Seeb Stadium.

The league resumed following short break due to national team's attendance in AFC Asian qualifiers - Road to Qatar.

Oman's Mohsin Jawher opened the account in the 21st minute. In the second half, Yazeed al Rawahi netted another goal in the 54th minute.

The same player managed to add the third goal for the hosts in the 65th minute before Kusmos Daoda added two goals through scoring fourth and fifth goal in the 73rd and 78th minute.

Yazeed returned to score hat-trick in the 80th minute while Abdulwahed al Hinai ended the campaign by scoring a seventh goal in the dying minutes.

With the triumph, Oman reached the seventh point from five games while Nizwa is struggling in the bottom with two points only in the account.

Seeb's Mohsin al Ghassani netted the winner against Sohar to deliver a crucial victory for his team in the fifth week of the top-tier league.

The only goal in the fixture was scored in the dying minutes.

With the winner, Seeb moved to point 11 while Sohar remained at fourth point.

Al Rustaq returned back to the winning loop after two defeats in the previous rounds as they edged Muscat club 2-1 in Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Oman national football team player, Mohammed al Ghafri, scored the opening goal in the 22nd minute while Khalil al Alawi added the second



goal in the 59th minute. The consolation goal for the visitor came by Jaweed al Balushi in the 83rd minute. The win took Al

Rustaq to seventh point while Muscat freezed at the single point after the fifth round. Saham snatch essential draw

from Bahla as they played out 1-1 draw at the Nizwa Sports Complex. Bahla's Wali Adeer put his

team ahead in the 27th minute while Saham's Khalifa al Jahwari netted the equaliser in the 86th minute.

The draw added one point to the hosts to reach eighth point while Saham still in the bottom with three points only.

Title defender Dhofar to meet Al Oruba; Al Nasr to face Al Nahdha

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 24

Ten times winner, Dhofar, will meet Al Oruba in the round of 16 match of the 2021/2022 HM Football Cup Championship.

The draw of the coveted cup was held in Seeb Stadium on Wednesday in presence of

qualified team's representatives.

A tough clash between Al Nasr, league leader, and Al Nahdha will take place in this round while Nizwa will face Saham.

Southern derby match between Al Musannah and Al Rustaq will be another tight encounter in round of 16.

Nine times champion, Fanja, will meet Salalah while Bahla will clash against Sur. Three times winner, Seeb, will take on Ahli Sidab while Oman club will meet Al Suwaiq in a tight fixture.

The last 16 matches will take place on December 30-31, 2021 and all the fixtures will be played in the knockout format.



India-Oman blind football series starts today

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 24

Muscat Blind Football Challenge India-Oman Friendly Series will kick off today at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The five-a-side blind football

series will take place from November 24-28 at the outdoor stadium of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The event is being organised by Oman Paralympic Committee on the occasion of the 51st National Day. Shaikh Rashid al Shamsi,

Under-Secretary of Ministry of Social Development, will be gracing the occasion of the inauguration. The Indian team will be led by Klingson D Mark. Sunil J Mathew is the coach of the visiting side while MC Roy is the team manager.



100 days to go for 2022 World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships in Oman

MUSCAT: There are just 100 days to go until the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships Muscat 22 and to ensure preparations are in place, the Local Organising Committee (Oman Athletics Association, Oman Sail and Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre) recently hosted a delegation from World Athletics to finalise all technical and logistical elements.

To mark the milestone in the countdown, the organising committee has unveiled the exclusive brand identity for the event which features iconic Muscat landmarks the Al Alam Palace, the Riyam Park monument and the Al Sahwa Clock Tower above a traditional Omani tile pattern motif, all set within the frame of the World Athletics symbol used for all World Athletics Series events.

Shaikh Salim al Amri, President of the Oman Athletics Association, said, "Plans for the event are progressing rapidly. We have held work sessions together to narrow down the details and

deliver a highly-professional, well-coordinated event for athletes, coaches and international media. This is a unique opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to enhance athletics within the country and establish ourselves as a viable host nation for future events and we are determined to make sure the 2022 Race Walking Team Championships live long in the memory." Racing will centre around the pristine landscaped gardens of the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre in the heart of Muscat from 1 March to 6 March 2022. The venue offers a variety of elevations to challenge the racers and a viewing platform will be set up within the Spectators Village to offer a perfect vantage point for the live audience.

Eng Said al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), said, "This is a great achievement for Oman and we are incredibly proud to host the 2022 Race Walking Team Championships. OCEC has designed a challenging and inspiring course which



Shaikh Salim al Amri

will test the competitors while showcasing the beauty of our location to the live audience. To take such a leading role in Oman's sporting evolution is a responsibility we are delighted to have, and hopefully this will be the first of many World Athletics events to visit our nation." The week of racing in Muscat will be a celebration of athletics with a 1 km and 2 km Kids' Run and Park Run Festival event either side of the main competition with a health and fitness exhibition on site to inspire local athletes and visitors to become more active.

Participating squads for the

World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships Muscat 22 will be chosen by national athletics federations. The Championships will feature a male and female 20 km race, U20 male and female 10 km races and Masters categories, scheduled for Friday 4th March 2022. The following day there will also be a 35 km combined race.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "We have had success hosting a wide variety of high-profile sporting events over recent years and this is the next step forward for our development as an attractive venue for major events. Oman has built a strong reputation on its authenticity and hospitality, and the benefits of hosting the 2022 World Race Walking Team Championships will reach far and wide. Local SMEs will benefit, athletes of all ages can be inspired to realise their ambitions on home soil, and this is the ideal platform to showcase our capabilities to a new global sporting audience."

The World Athletics Race

Walking Team Championships Muscat 22 are expected to attract over 1,000 inbound visitors, including athletes, coaches, delegates, friends and family, which will provide a significant socio-economic boost for local businesses and suppliers.

Alongside the influx of visitors arriving on chartered flights through Muscat International Airport, training camps will be established at various resorts in Nizwa to allow the competitors to acclimatise before embarking on the race, adding to occupancy rates of each destination. This will be the first time the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships have been held in the Middle East and the first time outside of China that an Asian nation has hosted the event. The championships were originally due to be held in Minsk, Belarus, but the ongoing travel restrictions caused by Covid-19 forced the event to be rescheduled. Oman now has the opportunity to make history and usher in a new era for athletics in the Sultanate.

Shakib blow as Bangladesh face tough Test against Pakistan

DHAKA: Bangladesh's struggling cricket team are battling injuries ahead of the formidable challenge of hosting Pakistan for a two-Test series beginning on Friday in Chittagong.

Star players Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal are sidelined, added to a lack of confidence in the camp after losing eight straight Twenty20 internationals, meaning Pakistan will start as overwhelming favourites.

The visitors completed a clean sweep 3-0 in the preceding Twenty20 series but will be without leading spinner Yasir Shah, who has been nursing a thumb injury since September.

The leg-spinner has been a key bowler for Pakistan since 2014, taking 235 wickets in 46 Tests.

All-rounder Shakib suffered a hamstring injury against the West Indies in Sharjah last month that ended his T20 World Cup, but he had been included in the Test squad in the hope that he would regain his fitness. But Bangladesh's chief selector Minhajul Abedin said on Tuesday: "Shakib hasn't recovered from his injury yet. He needs further rehabilitation. Our physiotherapist is constantly taking care of him."

Tamim was left out of the Test squad as he recovers from a finger injury and is unlikely to resume training until next month, said a Bangladesh Cricket Board official. Minhajul was confident Bangladesh would be able to make up for the absence of Shakib. — AFP



Sailing Arabia returns with a strong multi-national fleet

MUSCAT: The 11th edition of Sailing Arabia – The Tour, Oman's premier offshore race, returns this week with teams representing the Sultanate of Oman and Europe racing at four venues along the nation's coastline in a combination of coastal raids and in-port races. Organised by Oman Sail, Sailing Arabia – The Tour has become a favourite for Omani sailors to gain vital experience and teams from colder climates to test themselves in warm conditions as the season comes to a close. Beginning on Wednesday at Barcelo Mussanah Resort, the route heads south to Sur then returns north to Marina Bandar Al Rowdha and then Muscat for the final leg. Each team poses a different challenge and the teams will have to contend with shifting sea breezes and a mix of short sprints and longer races to

become the 2021 champion.

This year's fleet features six teams representing five countries. The crews of Oman Investment Authority and Oman Sail will proudly fly the Omani flag, while a mixed all-Omani crew sailing on board D B Schenker will race under the German flag on behalf of the Tour's official logistics partner. The mixed Omani-Spanish crew of Barcelo Mussanah Resort, host venue for the opening ceremony and first two races, will represent a joint team representing the Sultanate of Oman and Spain, an all-Italian crew from Nastro Rosa will represent Italy and a mixed crew representing Team France will race under the French flag.

Saleh al Jabri, Project Manager and Acting Head of Sailing Events & Commercial at Oman Sail, said, "Sailing Arabia – The Tour



is one of the most beloved events in the Sultanate of Oman's sailing calendar. For more than a decade we have welcomed some of the best teams to our waters to take on Omani sailors, share their diverse experience and learn from each

other. This year's fleet is incredibly strong with both male and female sailors, competing together under a variety of flags. We're delighted to host The Tour once again this year and look forward to ten days of great sailing as we showcase the

beauty of the Sultanate of Oman's coastline and world class facilities at each venue." The opening ceremony takes place at Barcelo Mussanah Resort on 23 November, with the first coastal raid and in-port race at the same venue the following day. The second leg takes place in Sur, a city synonymous with boatbuilding and sailing, on 27 November, the third on 1 December at Marina Bandar Al Rowdha, and the final races will be held at Al Mouj Muscat on 3 December with the prize-giving and closing ceremonies on 5 December. Dermot Birchall, General Manager of Barcelo Mussanah Resort says, "We are proud to be partnering with Oman Sail for this year's sailing tour and take pride in promoting the rekindling of the Sultanate's maritime eminence as the premier

international sailing destination in the region. The event will showcase the impressive wonders and cultural heritage of Oman and we as Barcelo Hotel Group are honoured to be a part of such an exemplary display of comradery, sailing sportsmanship and the breathtaking treasures of Oman." Since its first edition in 2011, Sailing Arabia – The Tour has grown in stature to become the region's annual premier offshore race and a favourite winter destination for sailors around the globe. The 2018 event marked another milestone, with the introduction of DIAM24 as the official class, offering the race crews an exceptional experience.

Sailing Arabia – The Tour 2021 will be run in full adherence to the government of the Sultanate of Oman's latest Covid-19 safety protocols.



RONALDO SENDS MAN UNITED INTO LAST 16, CHELSEA THRASH JUVENTUS

PARIS: Manchester United booked their place in the Champions League last 16 as Cristiano Ronaldo scored in a 2-0 victory at Villarreal on Tuesday, while holders Chelsea also reached the knockout phase by thumping Juventus.

Three-time European champions United went into their first game since sacking Ole Gunnar Solskjaer at the weekend needing a win to confirm a top-two finish in Group F.

But they were under massive pressure as defeat would have left their fate out of their own hands.

David de Gea made two crucial saves and United, with Michael Carrick in caretaker charge, took advantage through Ronaldo's 78th-minute lob.

Jadon Sancho, so often a peripheral figure since his big-money move from Borussia Dortmund in the close-season, capped a fine individual display with his first goal for the club.

"It's not an important result for me personally. It's an important one for the players and the club", said Carrick.

Ronaldo's goal was the 799th of his career, his 140th in the Champions League and his sixth in the competition this season.

The other qualification spot in the group remains up for grabs after Young Boys and Atalanta played out a thrilling 3-3 draw in Bern. Late goals from Vincent Sierro and Silvan Hefti gave the Swiss champions a 3-2 lead, but Luis Muriel struck in the 88th minute for the visitors.

Atalanta face a winner-takes-all match against Villarreal in Bergamo next month.

CHELSEA THRASH JUVE

Chelsea romped into the last 16 and to the top of Group H with an impressive 4-0 thrashing of Juventus at Stamford Bridge.

Thomas Tuchel's men knew that qualification would be secured if they could avoid defeat or if Zenit Saint Petersburg failed

to beat Malmo.

The Blues dominated the early stages and took the lead through young defender Trevoh Chalobah's third goal of the season. Chelsea's defenders were consistently a menace from set-pieces, and Thiago Silva saw a header saved by Wojciech Szczesny early in the second period.

It was a defender who doubled Chelsea's lead in the 56th minute. England right-back Reece James hammered a fine volley into the bottom corner to net for the fifth time already this term.

Chelsea grabbed their third goal less than two minutes later, Ruben Loftus-Cheek prodding the ball to Hudson-Odoi, who smashed home from close range.

There was still time for Timo Werner, making his first appearance since an injury layoff, to come off the bench and score in added time.

"We did really well, it is so tough to score goals against

Juventus and we created so much", said Tuchel. "Full credit for an amazing performance and a fantastic result."

Zenit drew 1-1 with Malmo to secure a spot in the Europa League knockouts.

BARCELONA STUTTER

Barcelona were held to a goalless draw by Benfica at the Camp Nou in Xavi's second game as coach, but remain above the Portuguese side in Group E.

However, the Catalan club will have to beat Bayern Munich in Germany in their final group game to be sure of making the next round.

Benfica host already-eliminated Dynamo Kiev in their last match, trailing Barca by two points.

Barcelona endured a nervy first half which saw Gavi waste the only clear opportunity, blazing over from close range when Memphis Depay was waiting in the middle for a tap-in. — AFP



Fifa President Gianni Infantino (L) congratulates Hilal's midfielder Salman al Faraj as he is presented with the trophy after winning the AFC Champions League final football match against South Korea's Pohang Steelers on November 23, 2021, at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi capital Riyadh. — AFP

Al Dawsari's 16th-second goal spurs Al Hilal to record fourth AFC title

RIYADH: Nasser al Dawsari scored the fastest ever goal in an Asian Champions League final as Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal swept past South Korea's Pohang Steelers 2-0 to win the continental title for a record fourth time on Tuesday.

Both teams were aiming for an unprecedented fourth triumph but it was the hosts who made history with Al Dawsari and Moussa Marega on target at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi capital.

Al Hilal's victory came a year after they suffered the ignominy of being thrown out of the event following numerous cases of Covid-19 infections within their squad.

But on Tuesday night those bitter memories were banished as the Saudi giants dominated their opponents in front of 50,000 fans.

"I am proud of the team, they are a fantastic group of players", said Al Hilal coach Leonardo Jardim, the first Portuguese coach to win the Asian title.

"Winning the tournament was our target from the beginning and I'm happy we have achieved that."

Al Dawsari sent the crowd into raptures with a fantastic strike from over 25 yards out after just 16 seconds.

The Pohang midfield failed to clear the ball, allowing Al Dawsari space and the 22-year-old's thundering left-foot shot found the top corner of the net despite Pohang goalkeeper Lee Jun's despairing dive.

The previous fastest goal in an AFC Champions League final was scored by Saudi side Al Ittihad's Sierra Leonean star Mohammed Kallon in the second minute against the UAE's Al Ain in 2005.

"The early goal made the difference, the players didn't concentrate and that goal impacted us hugely", said Pohang coach Kim Gi-Dong.

"I had a strong feeling that we can turn it around but then they scored the second goal." — AFP

New-look European golf tour to host first tournament in Japan

TOKYO: The new-look European Tour will make its first foray into the lucrative Japan golf market in 2022 after adding the ISPS Handa Championship to next year's recently announced schedule.

The rebranded DP World Tour will make Japan the 51st country it has visited — with the tournament to be staged at Ishioka Golf Club in Omitama, north of Tokyo, from April 21-24.

"The DP World Tour is a global tour and, as a result, we relish opportunities such as this to break new ground", said Keith Pelley, European Tour CEO in a statement released late on Tuesday.

"Asia continues to be an important region for the DP World Tour and our first visit to Japan in April further underlines that", he added.

Two weeks ago the tour was renamed after investment from new title sponsors DP World, which will see total prize money for next year's 47 tournaments exceed \$200 million.

The ISPS Handa Championship, with a purse of \$2 million, will be co-sanctioned with the Japan Golf Tour (JGTO) and the inaugural event will be the first of a three-year deal.

Japan great Isao Aoki, chairman of the JGTO, said it had been a



"long-cherished desire" to host a European Tour event in the golf-mad country and "we can't wait to host it".

The only event on Japanese soil to feature previously on the European Tour schedule was this year's Olympic men's tournament at Kasumigaseki Country Club in July, won by American Xander Schauffele. Golf is massively popular in Japan, with the country seen as a growing market for the world's top players.

The US PGA Tour made its debut in Japan in 2019 with the inaugural \$9.75 million Zozo Championship, memorably won by Tiger Woods for a record-equalling 82nd win on the circuit.

After a year's absence from Japan because of the Covid-19 pandemic, home hero and US Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama last month won the 2021 Zozo Championship, which had its purse increased to \$9.95 million. — AFP

business

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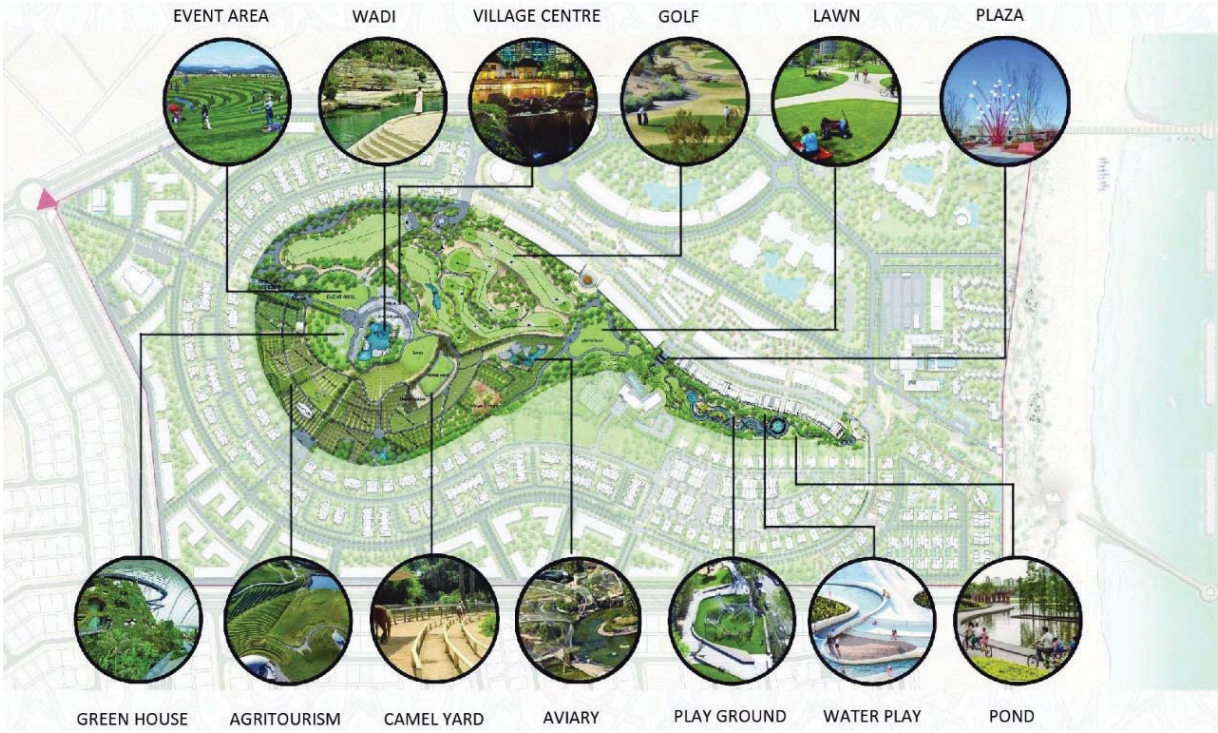
\$1bn mixed-use tourism development unveiled

Mega venture: 1.3 million sq metre Al Sahel project in Qurayat includes 3 hotels, backwater park, 4,000 housing units, boulevard walkway, an equestrian club and golf academy

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 24

To mark the 51st National Day of the Renaissance, Qurayat Development Company unveiled the commercial identity of the Al Sahel tourism project in Wilayat of Qurayat, Muscat Governorate. Al Sahel District, a mixed use development covering a total area of 1.3 million sq metres, is proposed to be implemented in three phase at a total cost of around \$1 billion.

Phase 1 to be developed at a cost of RO 40 million (\$100 million approx.) will cover the infrastructure of the entire project, as well as 400 housing units, a 4-star hotel of 2,20 rooms including 100 chalets, as well as a residential commercial neighbourhood on a boulevard on an area of 53,000 sq metres, green houses, a walkway for bicycles and halls.



The first phase also includes an air park, a number of restaurants with a stunning view of the components of the project, which aims at highlighting the heritage identity of Wilayat of Qurayat, in addition to an equestrian and camel riding club and recreational and commercial facilities.

These will be the main attraction of the project in terms of entertainment.

The second phase, which is the largest phase of the project, will include 1,600 housing units, a large

mosque on an area of approximately 10,000 square metres, and a 3-star hotel of 150 rooms.

Also in the second phase, an expansion of the first 4-star hotel will see the addition of 120 rooms and suites on the waterfront. The second phase also includes the development of a golf academy on a total area of approximately 250,000 sq metres, which will attract important global sports attractions.

In the third and final phase, an additional 3,000 housing units comprising a variety of apartments

and villas will be addition in addition to 36 luxury villas at the waterfront of the project.

A further 180 new rooms will be added to the 3-star hotel, with a new 5-star hotel with 200 rooms to be constructed as well.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Yahya bin Suleiman al Nadabi, Wali of Qurayat, in the presence of a number of officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Qurayat Development Company and from Al Madina Real Estate Company,



the main developer of the project. The Wali of Qurayat stressed on the importance of the project in reviving the tourism and economic potential of the wilayat in harmony with the growth of the Sultanate of Oman.

Shaikh Hilal bin Khalid al Mawali, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Qurayat Development Company, said Al Sahel District project will be the first integrated tourism project with comprehensive services and facilities the wilayat.

Eng Khamis bin Mubarak al Kiyumi, Chairman of Al Madina Real Estate Company, stated: "We at Al Madina Real Estate Company are proud to be the main developer of Al Sahel project, as the design of this pioneering

project combines of modernity and authentic Omani architecture, where the visitor and the tourist can touch the Omani features wherever they wander around the project, which extends over an area of 1.3 million square metres." The project also includes enhancing the use of the fishing port and developing a floating berth to receive ferries and yachts. Sami bin Said al Nabhani, Director of Business Development at Al Madina Real Estate Company, said the marketing of housing units to Omanis and non-Omanis will be outlined during the launch of the marketing strategy, with priority given to people of the Wilayat of Qurayat and its neighbouring areas.

Oman's second oldest private power firm to liquidate

Final chapter: Publicly traded Al Kamil Power to call EGM in Q1 2022 to approve liquidation at the end of 20 years of operations

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Al Kamil Power Company SAOG (AKPC), majority-owned by French-based, global energy giant Engie, has announced plans to wind up its business at the end of 20 years of operations as the Sultanate of Oman's second oldest, privately owned power generation company.

Established in 2000, publicly-listed Al Kamil Power — which owns and operates a 285 MW gas-fired electricity generation plant at Al Kamil in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate — said on Wednesday it was moving to liquidate the company.

It cited in this regard its failure to secure an extension of its Power Purchase Agreement



(PPA) with the Omani government, which expires at the end of this year, coupled with the unlikelihood that it could compete economically in the Electricity Spot Market that is expected to launch before the end of this year.

Announcing the liquidation plan in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Abdulla al Rawahi, CEO, Al Kamil Power Company, said: "As was stated in previous disclosures, the company will not be granted a PPA extension beyond the current PPA which expires by the end of 2021, and the Electricity Spot Market will

not be economically feasible for the company.

"Therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law, the Board of Directors will call for an Extraordinary General Meeting during the first quarter of 2022 to pass a resolution relating to the liquidation of the company."

Commencing operations in 2002, Al Kamil Power heralded a new wave of private-led investments in power generation that gained new momentum when the sector was unbundled and restructured in 2005.

The country's, and indeed the Middle East's, first privately developed power project was established by United Power Company (UPC) at Manah in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in 1995.

Following the expiry of its PPA last year, UPC handed over the project assets to state-owned Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company (GPDco), a subsidiary of Nama Group.

This handover was in line with the build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) model on which the PPA was based back in 1996. **TURN TO PAGE 15**

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Visit Oman, Sabre ink strategic partnership

MUSCAT: Sabre Corporation, the leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, has announced a new strategic technology partnership with Visit Oman, the Sultanate of Oman's online travel-trade gateway's that connects the country with international destinations.

The agreement will enable Visit Oman to leverage Sabre's world-class technology solutions to further its vision to be the country's extensive travel booking gateway that connects the global travel-trade to unlimited discovery in the Sultanate of Oman.

Furthermore, it will enhance Visit Oman's stated mission to build strong, strategic and commercial partnerships in all key source regions, and with Omani suppliers, to deliver one connected booking platform that is designed to enable the unlimited Omani traveller experience.

Speaking about the partnership agreement, Shabib al Maamari,



Managing Director — Visit Oman, explained: "This exciting new agreement with Sabre as Visit Oman's strategic technology partner is a highly beneficial addition to our operations. Sabre enjoys a world-wide reputation as a leader in delivering advanced software and innovative technology solutions to the global travel industry.

The partnership paves the way for Visit Oman to further advance

its objective to increase high-quality inbound traffic into the country.

Essentially, the agreement represents a win-win for all parties involved, but most importantly for Visit Oman, it will serve to help further boost the Omani travel and tourism sector over the short and long-term."

As part of Oman Tourism Vision 2040, and with the goal of growing its presence in the

international aviation and tourism sector, Visit Oman will use Sabre's marketplace to promote and sell Oman travel services and personalised travel packages from local travel providers to international markets.

Furthermore, Visit Oman will deploy Sabre's API to deliver intelligent and consultative services to travellers, create compelling shopping and booking experiences and provide an enhanced level of

customer service.

"We are proud to be working with Visit Oman to help them design this travel gateway that will shape the tourism experience in the Sultanate of Oman", said John Mathew, Oman Country Manager, Sabre Travel Network Middle East.

"We will leverage best-in-class products and technologies to help them achieve their goals and create compelling shopping and booking experiences through a seamless, fully digital process to deliver a personalised travel experience to customers and suppliers that meets global standards."

In the fourth quarter of 2021, Visit Oman will launch a dynamic, all-encompassing resource which connects the entire accredited Omani tourism supply chain to the travel-trade sector in key international destinations, which is expected to be an important step in the Sultanate of Oman's move to a more diversified and developed economy.

Sohar International joins 51st National Day celebrations at Oman Embassy in Saudi Arabia



MUSCAT: Celebrating the Sultanate of Oman's 51st National Day of the Renaissance, Sohar International joined the Reception organised by the Oman Embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The event which was held at the Cultural Palace in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter witnessed the presence of Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Oman's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Representing Sohar International, Abdul Wahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer of Sohar International, attended the event with members of the diplomatic individuals. During the ceremony, visual presentations were screened highlighting most prominent elements, capabilities and the scenic nature characterising the Sultanate of Oman.

Exhibiting the essence of the country, various photographs of the Sultanate of Oman's landscapes were displayed showcasing the beauty and culture capturing the unique historical and natural diversity of the Sultanate of Oman.

"The Omani National Day of the Renaissance is an important and a special occasion for all of us. It is a moment of great pride as it highlights the various unprecedented milestones this country has achieved across all industries and fields over decades. On behalf of Sohar International, I would like to extend our humblest greetings and wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Today, the Sultanate of Oman holds an eminent position at both regional as well as international levels and we are committed to contribute to the country's progress and further benefit the local community by bringing the best of International to Oman and taking the best of Oman globally", said Abdul Wahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer of Sohar International.

Owing to the strong bonds shared between the Sultanate of Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the bank's well-established reputation of excellence in the sector, Sohar International recently also acquired a licence to open a full-fledged branch in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The bank has also signed an agreement with Saudi Export-Import Bank to boost investment and trade opportunities. Through strategic alliances like these, Sohar International endeavours to contribute to enhancing the socio-economic relations between the two countries while opening up new opportunities for growth.

KR Group launches 'Jalsah' community engagement initiative



MUSCAT: Jalsah is an interactive knowledge-exchange programme initiated by the Government and Public Relations Department of Khimji Ramdas.

This platform enables talented individuals to present and exchange their innovative ideas with the KR's senior management.

The long-term objective of the 'Jalsah' programme is to invite industry experts, entrepreneurs, students and achievers, from all walks of life, engaging them with the wider community, and constructively debating the outcomes and solutions.

This perspective-focused

event will play out real-world scenarios and identify opportunities to improve the work-life balance.

The inaugural event hosted chief economist Dr Yousef al Balushi, who gave an insightful lecture on the Oman Vision 2040: Opportunities for Alignment and Sustainability.

The second edition of Jalsah invited Ahmed bin Hamood al Numani, Head of Insurance Inspection at the Public Authority for Social Insurance.

This virtual session allowed KR Omani employees to understand the various nuances of the social insurance laws, including their rights.

OOMCO opens OptimoSwift service centre at SQU

MUSCAT: Continuing to provide a delightful experience for its customers, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) celebrated the launch of a brand new OptimoSwift service centre at its Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) service station. During the opening event, members of the public were treated to a vintage car motor show courtesy of Classic Car Group Oman.

The new flagship centre offers a wide range of mechanical and electrical services including oil change, wheel alignment and balancing, air-conditioning and battery service, nano-ceramic coating as well as a state-of-the-art car wash, "Swift Wash", all delivered by highly trained technicians.

"As the latest addition to our SQU mega station, the OptimoSwift service centre complements our one-stop shop experience, which aims to create destinations of convenience for motorists that go "beyond the pump", said Mohamed bin Awadh al Shanfari Marketing and Digital Senior Manager at Oman



Oil Marketing Company.

"Catered towards SQU students, staff and residents of Al Khoudh area, customers are guaranteed fast and high-quality service without any prior appointments. Courtesy of our expert crews, their vehicle will receive all the best care possible to proceed on their way safely and confidently."

Once fully completed, the mega service station at SQU will be OOMCO's largest fully integrated service hub. The 10,000 m2 project includes a fuel service station, coffeeshops, convenience store, a shopping complex with global brands, a gym, a children's

play area, a pharmacy, a nursery, ATMs and a business centre for students.

Adding to this, the OptimoSwift service centre is OOMCO's fourth in the Sultanate of Oman, with other centres located at stations in Ruwi, Qurum and Al Ansab. OOMCO has also established more than 20 LubExpress centres all across the Sultanate of Oman and is expanding rapidly.

The launch is part OOMCO's commitment to provide more and better services while becoming among the most customer-centric marketer both locally and within GCC countries.

Own a Lincoln Corsair with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Lincoln Corsair redefines luxury with its range of advanced features, technology and luxury. Enthusiasts looking forward to own a Lincoln Corsair can benefit with service 5 years/ 100,000 kms, 1 year registration and 3M window tint. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Lincoln showroom.)

The campaign is valid until December 30, 2021. Expressively designed and effortlessly nimble, the Lincoln Corsair is a spacious two-row SUV that combines refined power and a wealth of purposeful technologies in a sanctuary from the outside world.

The Corsair is designed to give luxury customers technology to make their drive effortless, such as standard Lincoln Co-



Pilot360 driver-assist features. The horizontal interior design lends a visual calmness to the space, which is crafted with supple, hand-selected materials. Breaking up the elements, particularly the cantilevered console, emphasises volume and enhances practicality with additional front-row storage.

A specially tuned 14-speaker Revel premium audio system

is available for the Corsair. Placement, tuning, calibration and the number of Revel speakers are all unique to each Lincoln vehicle, designed to ensure audio quality and accuracy for each cabin size and acoustics. Multiple power outlets are located throughout.

Additional technologies are seamlessly integrated through SYNC 3 with AppLink; users

simply plug their mobile phone into their SYNC 3-equipped Corsair to access apps directly from an available 8-inch touch screen. Staying true to its Quiet Flight DNA, Corsair is engineered to deliver the effortless drive experience and sensation of gliding over the road.

Turbocharged four-cylinder engine options are available — a standard 2.0-litre with a targeted 250 horsepower and 275 lb.-ft. of torque.

Each is mated to a new 8-speed automatic transmission for agile performance. Corsair delivers a wealth of intuitive, customisable technologies that allow clients to personalise their driving experiences to exactly their liking.

Corsair, like all Lincoln

vehicles, comes standard with a suite of driver-assist features known as Lincoln Co-Pilot360. It provides Pre-Collision Assist with automatic emergency braking and Pedestrian Detection, Blind Spot Information System, a Lane-Keeping System, rear backup camera and auto high-beam lighting.

Those interested in experiencing the Lincoln Corsair can visit a Lincoln showroom. In the Sultanate of Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC.

Please log on to www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.



Indonesia to reduce excess liquidity in 2022



JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank plans to reduce the amount of excess liquidity in the banking system next year without disrupting lending, but will keep interest rates low until it sees signs of rising inflation, Governor Perry Warjiyo said.

Bank Indonesia cut its growth forecast for 2021, expecting the economy to expand between 3.2 per cent and 4 per cent, down from 3.5 per cent to 4.3 per cent previously, he said in an annual meeting with financial market stakeholders. But it slightly upgraded its forecast for economic growth in 2022 to between 4.7 per cent and 5.5 per cent, from a range of 4.6 per cent to 5.4 per cent previously, Warjiyo added.

Meanwhile, Indonesian authorities are assessing a draft bill that could compel tech giants like Facebook and Google to negotiate with media firms for fairer revenues. — Reuters

New report explores Oman's plans to revive non-oil growth

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 24

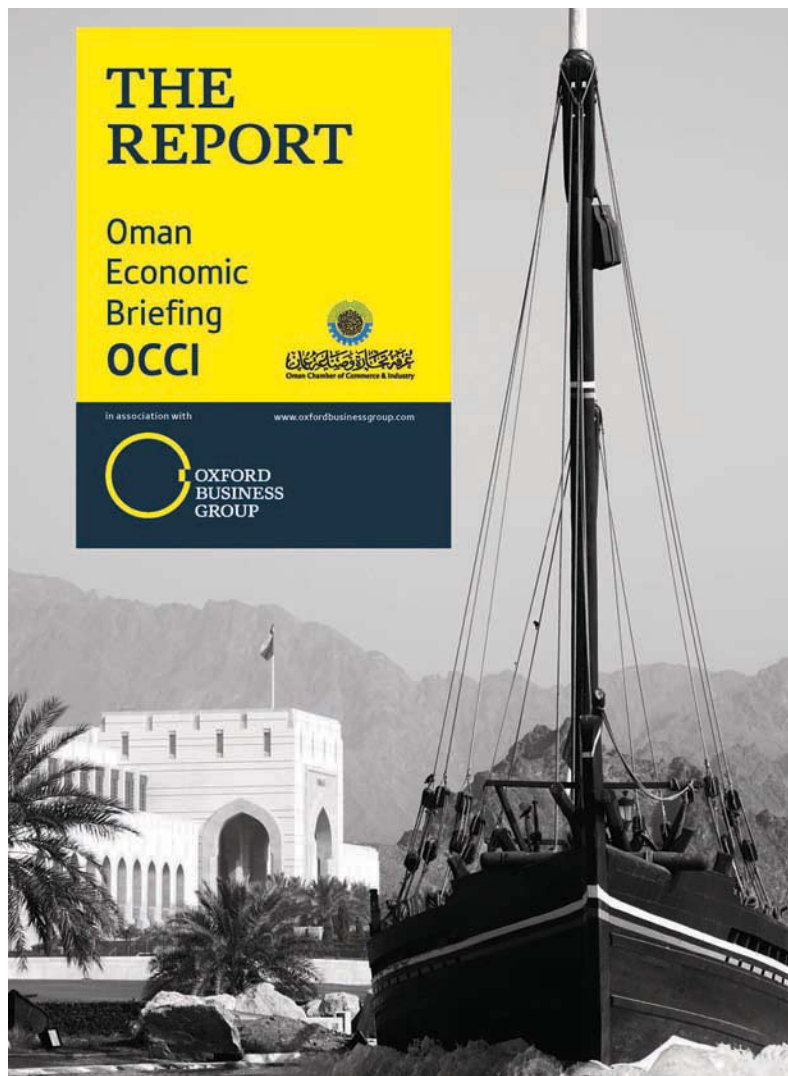
A new report by the global research and consultancy firm Oxford Business Group (OBG), produced in partnership with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), maps out the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to put privatisation and diversification at the heart of its strategy for sustainable economic growth.

The Oman Economic Briefing provides in-depth analysis of the recent challenges that the Sultanate faced due to depressed global oil prices, and its long-term targets for economic development, in an easy-to-navigate and accessible format, focusing on key data and infographics.

It highlights the segments of the economy that have been identified as ripe for development, such as mining, tourism and logistics, and which, will be key in helping the Sultanate of Oman achieve its Vision 2040 objectives.

In its coverage of the industrial sector, the report examines the country's bid to boost economic growth outside of Muscat by investing in special economic zones and encouraging the expansion of industrial estates.

The economic briefing puts the coastal city of Duqm, the Salalah Free Zone, Sohar Port and Freezone, and Khazaen Economic City under the microscope, highlighting the incentives and advantages they offer and the



government's plans for developing them further.

The Sultanate of Oman's plan to accelerate development through public-private partnerships (PPPs) is another focus.

In this section, the economic briefing looks at the country's plans to privatise \$1.8bn of state assets under the Tanfeedh initiative. Licence holders will also find details of the measures and

initiatives that are spearheading the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to improve its fiscal position after years of sustained growth were curtailed by lower global oil prices and fallout from the pandemic.

The report contains in-depth interviews with high-profile representatives from both the public and private sectors, in which topical issues are explored, including the country's

privatisation plans and the role of new legislation in enhancing its business environment.

Commenting before the report's launch, Riddha bin Jumal al Saleh, Chairman, OCCI, said the private sector had expanded its role in the Omani economy over the years, with investors today not only providing most of the funding for projects, but also assuming more of the risk, rather than being focused solely on the execution stage.

"Together with FDI and privatisation, PPPs will play a key part in enhancing the Sultanate's investment landscape," he said. "These shifts will put the private sector on track to become the primary driver of economic growth, in line with the Vision 2040 development strategy."

Jana Treeck, OBG's Managing Director for the Middle East, added that the Sultanate of Oman's natural assets and geographic location meant it was well placed to continue pursuing its diversification plans, which were already delivering results before the pandemic.

"While Oman's economy contracted by 6.4 per cent in 2020, we anticipate a steady recovery, led by a return to positive growth of 2.5 per cent this year, according to the IMF," she said.

"Looking ahead, Oman has shown prudence in remaining focused on its long-term target of increasing the contribution of non-oil industries to 90 per cent of GDP by 2040."

Oman's second oldest private power firm to liquidate

FROM PAGE 13

Since the handover, UPC has also gone into liquidation.

In contrast, Al Kamil Power will continue to own the plant assets at Al Kamil even after the expiry of its PPA with the government. Its first PPA, spanning a 15-year period, concluded in April 2017. This was later extended to December 31, 2021.

Last month, the company revealed that its hopes of participating in the upcoming Electricity Spot Market – an initiative of Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) to open up the sector to wholesale trading in electricity – were dashed when a study found that the returns would not be economical.

"The study concluded that the level of revenues that the company can expect to generate from the Spot Market will be negligible and will not be economically feasible for the company.

Accordingly, the company will be in a position to continue carrying out business only if the PPA is extended," the CEO stated in a filing last month.

In light of these setbacks, Al Kamil Power reported an impairment loss on its Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) of RO 17.396 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2021.

The company posted a net loss of RO 14.72 million during the period, compared to a net profit of RO 1.752 million during the same period in 2020.



Tea pickers work on a plantation in Ratnapura, Sri Lanka. — AFP

Sri Lanka removes ban on chemical fertilisers

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka rowed back on its goal to become the first country to fully adopt organic farming on Wednesday by removing the ban on use and importation of chemical fertilisers after months of mass protests by farmers and a surge in food price inflation.

The government had completely banned chemical fertilisers when it unveiled a new agricultural policy in April. Explaining the U-turn at a weekly Cabinet briefing, Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage said only the private sector would be allowed to resume imports, which would still be expensive as a subsidy for chemical fertilisers would not be reinstated.

"As a country that is sensitive to the people, because farmers

have asked us to do this, Cabinet decided to voluntarily rescind the gazette notification banning imports," he added.

The ban on all chemical fertiliser, pesticides, weedicides and fungicides was implemented on April 26, prompting thousands of furious farmers to join street protests, demanding the government adopt a hybrid policy, to allow both organic and chemical fertiliser.

The chemical fertiliser ban, combined with bad weather, contributed to inflation hitting a 47-month high of 8.3 per cent in October as food inflation rose to 11.7 per cent amid falling crop yields. Sri Lanka has more than 2 million farmers, and up to 70 per cent of its 22 million population is directly or indirectly dependant on agriculture. — Reuters

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 24

Attesting to its robust commitment to serve the nation, Oman LNG inked five key agreements with the Ministry of Social Development to finance a number of community projects and initiatives.

Key among these pacts is an agreement to fund the installation of solar panels at the buildings of 32 branches of Omani Women's Association (OWA) across the country. A number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will receive contracts to supply and install these solar panels.

In the second agreement, Oman LNG will fund a leadership and management training programme for various Omani Women's Associations. Such programmes will provide training opportunities for 195 women in various fields, including leadership, innovation, financial management, and in media and technology fields.

Highlighting the company's continuous efforts to support the health sector, the third agreement involves financing the "We are with you" campaign, which targets diabetic children from the low-income and social security.

Through this agreement, Oman LNG aims to provide blood glucose metres and scales



diabetics, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and General Directorates of Health Services in different governorates.

The objective of this agreement is not limited to raising awareness on the importance of regular checkups for diabetes but also finding suitable mechanisms to reduce the risks of neglecting observance of high blood sugar levels.

The fourth agreement commits Oman LNG to funding the purchase of modern equipment for the Al Noor Association for the Blind in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The equipment

includes financing modern audio devices and braille devices to facilitate a better learning environment for visually-impaired students in higher education institutions and simplify the storage of information and conversion of files in braille.

The fifth agreement pertains to the establishment of a pilot project to support livestock breeders in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate through the Omani Agricultural Association.

This project will enable the provision of latest innovative agricultural procedures, and thus supports the country's vision of achieving self-sufficiency and

reducing the increasing cost of fodder, as the initiative will produce green fodder with high nutritional value at low costs whilst maintaining sustainability.

Dr Amor al Matani, CEO of Oman LNG Development Foundation, said: "Since its inception, Oman LNG through its Development Foundation has placed great emphasis on supporting various social development programmes and initiatives for the benefit of the community. The agreements signed today confirm our consistent efforts to serve the community, and meet its expectations and aspirations."

Joe Biden constructs a club of oil guzzlers

BY ROBERT CYRAN

US President Joe Biden is tapping America's oil stockpile, along with China, India, South Korea, Japan and the United Kingdom in a coordinated effort to ease energy prices.

Releasing under 100 million barrels of oil probably will have a small and transitory affect. But a user cartel of sorts is a direct response to the one that exists for suppliers, and could have some important impact in the long run.

The total amount of oil that will be released from all of the countries could exceed 70 million barrels, according to research outfit Rystad Energy. BP said earlier this month that global oil demand is above 100 million barrels per day, so the effort cobbles together less than a day's worth of oil.

The global oil demand is above 100 million barrels per day, so the effort cobbles together less than a day's worth of oil

BP

And the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies have about 7 million barrels of spare capacity daily. Should oil-producing nations decide, they could counteract the released supply in less than two weeks.

Still the nations that unveiled the effort on Tuesday represent about 50% of world oil demand, according to the US Energy Information Administration. They cannot just stop using oil, or force their constituents to curtail it. So controlling demand over the short run is hard. But controlling supply has proven difficult, too. Though Opec sets limits, countries that are members often pump more oil than their allotted amount.

And over the longer term, economies are more flexible. Governments can encourage the growth of alternatives such as electric cars. Moreover, Opec predicts China and India to drive about 40% of increased global energy demand this decade, and American's love of gas guzzlers isn't going anywhere for now.

Ford Motor, Dodge, and Chevrolet pick-up trucks are still by far the most popular vehicles in the United States, according to Car and Driver.

— Reuters



COAL FOR HEAT

A day labourer pushes a wheelbarrow at a coal yard on the outskirts of Kabul. Even as prices rise, Afghans have few options but to burn coal for heat, creating some of the world's most dangerous air.

— AFP

Building a strong culture of savings



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

Financial problems faced by many individuals and small business owners in the region as a result of the losses and debts incurred during pandemic-induced closures are now evident.

Some of them are waiting to be rescued from their financial difficulties, lacking the resources themselves to help them out of their current challenges.

These crises faced by many people underscore the need for everyone embrace a savings culture, so that they do not need to into debt when they need to borrow money to finance their projects.

It is from this perspective that we see the world now working to establish savings banks to play an important role in promoting savings.

Savings banks have launched a number of campaigns and initiatives in cooperation with governmental and private agencies to double the number of savings accounts owned by people with limited income and owners of small enterprises who can

depend on these funds in their retirement or in contingencies.

This trend is evident in Gulf societies despite the extravagance and waste that is witnessed in the Gulf or other developing countries.

The world has dedicated a day to drive the culture of savings globally. World Savings Day sees banks and financial institutions building awareness about the concept of savings among members of society.

They enhance the savings of individuals and small enterprises, so they can be ready to face life's challenges.

World Savings Day also seeks to caution people about the dangers of lavish spending and irrational use of credit cards to purchase goods.

This day was first announced on October 31, 1924 by the Association of World Savings Banks in Milan, Italy.

Savings programmes were introduced in an attempt to enhance savings and provide support to school events, religious figures, cultural, sports, professional and women's

organisations, with the aim of promoting the concept of saving money to enjoy a better living and secure the economy.

Over the past years, developing countries have joined in this global initiative to encourage economically weaker sections of the population to save.

Saving has become today the key to the global economy through which the individuals contribute to the development of their own projects while also supporting local development.

Saving is an expression of the nation's maturity in this regard, and through it many initiatives and campaigns have been done to support savings programmes for individuals and families in order to educate children about the virtues of saving money.

For decades, the International Institute of Savings and Retail Banking has been celebrating this day by stressing the importance of financial stability through savings and retail banking services in the global financial system.

The Fed must think creatively again



STEPHEN S ROACH

The author is a faculty member at Yale University and former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia

THE FED IS WIDELY PRESUMED TO HAVE BOTH THE WISDOM AND THE FIREPOWER TO KEEP UNDERLYING INFLATION IN CHECK

The transitory inflation debate in the United States is over. The upsurge in US inflation has turned into something far worse than the Federal Reserve expected. Perpetually optimistic financial markets are taking this largely in stride.

The Fed is widely presumed to have both the wisdom and the firepower to keep underlying inflation in check.

That remains to be seen. For its part, the Fed counsels patience. It is so convinced that its bad forecast will eventually turn out to be correct that it is content to wait. No surprise there: The Fed telegraphed such a response with the "average inflation targeting" framework that it adopted in the summer of 2020.

In doing so, the Fed indicated that it was prepared to forgive above-target inflation to compensate for years of below-target inflation. Little did it know what it was getting into. In theory, average inflation

targeting seemed to make sense — an elegant arithmetic consistency of undershoots balanced by overshoots.

In practice, it was flawed from the start. It was an inherently backward-looking approach, heavily conditioned by a long experience with slow growth and low inflation.

The Fed believed, as did many, that the pandemic shock of early 2020 was cut from the same cloth as the 2008-09 global financial crisis, underscoring the possibility of yet another anemic, disinflationary recovery that could push already-low inflation dangerously toward deflation. Just like Japan.

Ever since the dot-com bubble burst in 2000, Fed policymakers have worried about a Japan-like endgame for a crisis-prone US economy — lost decades of economic stagnation coupled with persistent deflation.

Those concerns are understandable if a crisis hits when inflation is already dangerously

close to zero. But by fixating on the risks of a Japanese-style deflation, the Fed all but ignored the possibility of a major upside inflation surprise.

And that is exactly what has happened. Thanks to an explosive post-lockdown rebound in aggregate demand, which the Fed itself played a key role in fuelling, already-stressed global supply chains quickly snapped.

From food, semiconductors, and energy to shipping, homes, and wages, today's multiplicity of price and cost pressures are far too numerous to count. Transitory one-off price adjustments became pervasive, and a major inflation shock is now at hand.

But there is an added complication — the Fed's belief in the magical powers of its balance sheet. Like average inflation targeting, quantitative easing was also born of recent crises.

Ben Bernanke, first as Fed governor, then as chair, led the charge in cataloging the endless list of unconventional policy options

that a fiat monetary system has at its disposal when the nominal policy rate nears the zero bound.

Bernanke first couched this in terms of a thought exercise in 2002, stressing the Fed's unlimited capacity for liquidity injections via asset purchases should deflationary risks mount.

But when reality came close to the hypothetical in 2009, Bernanke's script became an action plan — as it did once again in the depths of the Covid-19 shock of 2020.

While out of basis points at the zero bound, the ever-creative Fed was never out of ammunition. The challenge comes with normalisation — restoring monetary policy to pre-crisis settings. And for both the conventional benchmark policy interest rate and the unconventional balance sheet, the Fed has yet to figure this out. The Fed faces two complications in policy normalisation.

First, unwinding ultra-accommodative monetary policies is a delicate operation that raises

the possibility of corrections in asset markets and in the asset-dependent real economy. Second, there is confusion over the timeframe of normalisation — how long it takes to return policy to its pre-crisis settings.

That is because, until now, there has never been an urgency to normalise. The persistence of low, and often below-target, inflation would give an inflation-targeting central bank plenty of leeway to feel its way gradually, step by step, down the road to normalisation.

Think again. Now the Fed must normalise in the face of an inflation shock. This calls into question the glacial process envisioned in a low-inflation normalisation scenario.

The Fed has failed to make this important distinction. It has telegraphed a mechanistic unwinding of the two-step approach it used in the depths of the crisis. The Fed views normalisation simply as a reverse operation — reining in its balance sheet first and then hiking the policy rate.

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features

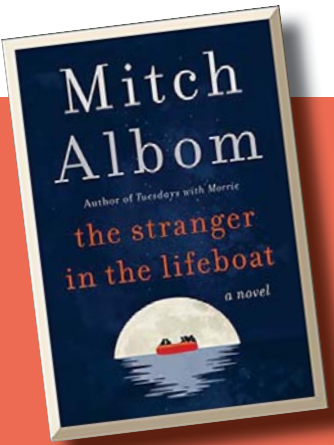
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Sarah Thompson and a fellow artist, Andrea Zarate Pardo, were attracted to the plight of stray animals. To help raise awareness about these animals' struggles, they turn to their tools of the trade to produce art and organise events with the goal of reaching out to more people to be more compassionate... **P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



THE STRANGER IN THE LIFEBOAT
BY MITCH ALBOM

After a ship explodes, 10 people struggling to survive pull a man who claims to be the Lord out of the sea.

'Blinding Lights' dethrones 'The Twist' as all-time No 1 Billboard single

THE WEEKEND'S HIT single "Blinding Lights" has ousted Chubby Checkers 1960s hit "The Twist" as the all-time No 1 song on the Billboard single charts. Billboard said on Tuesday that the Canadian artist's single had spent 90 weeks on its Hot 100 chart. It was also a top 5 hit for 43 weeks and a top 10 hit for

57 weeks. Billboard said the long chart run had earned "Blinding Lights" the title of No 1 song on its Greatest Songs of All Time Hot 100 Chart. Checker's "The Twist," which launched a new dance craze, was awarded the title in 2008 after separate chart runs in

1960 and again in 1962. The decision is reached by factoring in total weeks on the chart as well as exact chart positions. The American singer's website has for years highlighted the honour of "The Twist" being the No 1 song of all time. Checker, now 80, still performs around the United States. — Reuters





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19

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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

Pompeii online: Italy launches cultural streaming platform



ITALY'S TOP CULTURAL institutions are happily welcoming back visitors after months of online-only events, but digital skills learned during the pandemic are being repurposed into an innovative national streaming service.

The new "ITsART" (Italy is art) platform, launched on Tuesday in the spectacular surroundings of the Colosseum in Rome, will offer a mix of live and on demand events, from plays, concerts and films to virtual tours of museums and monuments.

Institutions from Milan's Scala theatre to the Pompeii archaeological park are among those involved in the scheme, backed by around 19 million euros (around \$21 million) from the Italian government.

"Our aim was to provide a common platform that can reach a growing audience of consumers of Italian art and culture around the world, while importantly, supporting the performing and visual arts sector," said the project's director general, Guido Casali.

A beta version of the service has been running in Italy and Britain since May, but is now open to all the countries in the European Union, accessible on the official site and an app.

Italy's cultural treasures, coast, lakes and mountains made it the world's fifth-most visited destination before the coronavirus pandemic hit in early 2020.

Deprived of their public, as elsewhere, many museums and institutions developed online offerings for visitors stuck at home, including the Uffizi galleries in Florence, and Pompeii.

"I made little videos, short videos just talking about the site or what we were doing, how it was being there without visitors... and it had such great feedback," said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of Pompeii.

He was not keen on using existing commercial platforms, "where you as a user are not really a client, you're a product, they're selling commercials... so I thought it would be great to develop our own platform".

ITsArt, which already has more than 100,000 registered users, is free to access although there is some pay-per-view content.

It is divided into three sections: "Stage", with concerts for example at the Scala; "Sites", with virtual visits including of iconic monuments and "Stories" with documentaries and films such as Bernardo Bertolucci's 1987 "The Last Emperor". — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD



Rare Einstein papers set record at Paris auction

ALBERT EINSTEIN'S handwritten notes for the theory of relativity fetched a record 11.6 million euros (\$13 million) at an auction in Paris on Tuesday.

The manuscript had been valued at around a quarter of the final sum, which is by far the highest ever paid for anything written by the genius scientist.

It contains preparatory work for the physicist's signature achievement, the theory of general relativity, which he published in 1915.

Calling the notes "without a doubt the most valuable Einstein manuscript ever to come to auction", Christie's — which handled the sale on behalf of the Aguttes auction house — had estimated prior to the auction that it would fetch two to three million euros.

Previous records for Einstein's works were \$2.8 million for the so-called "God letter" in 2018, and \$1.56 million in 2017 for a letter about the secret to happiness.

Bids on Tuesday opened at 1.5 million euros and quickly went past the auctioneers' estimate.

After a few minutes two bidders were left, battling it out over the telephone in increments of 200,000 euros.

There was no immediate information concerning the identity, or nationality, of the winner. Around 100 collectors and onlookers turned up for the sale, but all bids were made remotely.

'ALMOST LIKE A MIRACLE'

The 54-page document sold on Tuesday was handwritten in 1913 and 1914 in Zurich, Switzerland, by Einstein and his colleague and confidant, Swiss engineer Michele Besso.



Christie's said it was thanks to Besso that the manuscript was preserved for posterity.

This was "almost like a miracle" since the German-born genius himself would have been unlikely to hold on to what he considered to be a simple working document, Christie's said.

Today, the paper offers "a fascinating plunge into the mind of the 20th century's greatest scientist", it said.

It discusses his theory of general relativity, building on his theory of special relativity from 1905 that was encapsulated in the famous equation $E=mc^2$.

Einstein died in 1955 aged 76, lauded as one of the greatest theoretical physicists of all time.

His theories of relativity revolutionised his field by introducing new ways of looking at the movement of objects in space and time.

In 1913, Besso and Einstein "attacked one of the problems that had

been troubling the scientific community for decades: the anomaly of the planet Mercury's orbit," Christie's said.

This initial manuscript contains "a certain number of unnoticed errors", it added.

Once Einstein spotted them, he let the paper drop, and it was taken away by Besso.

"Scientific documents by Einstein in this period, and before 1919 generally, are extremely rare," Christie's added.

"Being one of only two working manuscripts documenting the genesis of the theory of general relativity that we know about, it is an extraordinary witness to Einstein's work."

Einstein also made major contributions to quantum mechanics theory and won the Nobel physics prize in 1921. He also became a pop culture icon thanks to his dry witticisms, and trademark unruly hair, moustache and bushy eyebrows. — **AFP**

ART

Italian street artist battles racism by turning swastikas into cupcakes



THE ITALIAN STREET artist Against racism turns nasty graffiti into food.

The 39-year-old artist calls on me to take care of my city by replacing hate with delicious things to eat — a symbol of hate that is popular in Italy. He says that like the name "Moresider" is his most famous artist, Pier Paolo Spinazze, and the name "I'm a nonstop food writer."

On the outskirts of Verona, after a sunny morning, he had been warned by one of his 363,000 Instagram followers that there were swastikas and racist slurs in the small tunnel.

He turned with his signature straw hat and sausage necklace. He took off his bag of spray



paints and began to work, tying cars in frenzied direction.

This was the turn that the artist created the art paintings in the tunnel, which each took around 15 minutes. One artist scanned the wall and waved at the murals, forming a large red tomato. The mural took a different look and felt what his work was like.

Human rights groups warned of widespread racism following the migration of Africa from France in recent years. Fascist culture and dictator Benito Mussolini have no skeletons.

Since he became a real-time celebrity in Verona, he made enemies and threatened: "Cibo sleep with the lights on!" Someone spray painted the wall and said that the threat would become the ingredients of a gnocchi recipe.

"The end of dealing with extremists is never good, because they are violent people and use violence, but they are very ignorant, Spinazze said. "It's important to rediscover values that we may've forgotten, particularly anti-fascism and fight against totalitarian regimes that originate from the Second World War," he said. "We must remind ourselves of these values."

Our standards are the following: Our standards: The good of ours: Ours. — **Reuters**



Passionate for stray tails

BY KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

If artists are beyond boundaries, they are beyond gender and even beyond species. They look at things from the perspective of art. They stop at a sight that ordinary people would ignore and start working on something which is beyond others' imagination.

Sarah Thompson and a fellow artist, Andrea Zarate Pardo, were attracted to the plight of stray animals. So they stopped and decided to raise awareness among common people. They work for the same goals under the banner of Stray Tails, an art collective passionately run and founded by international artists Sarah and Lupie Lup. Both are working together towards their shared goal of helping stray dogs and cats.

How would an artist raise awareness? Not by printing some pamphlets or writing an article on media platforms. Sarah and Andrea chose art to do their job. They lifted their paintbrush, drew some artwork and decided to showcase them at an exhibition. The expo ran from November 18 to 20.

Of course, they gave some thought before organising an event dedicated to the strays.

"We bonded over our passion for 'Art & Animals' and created an 'Art Collective' where the main objective is to put animals in the spotlight. Over the past few months, we have been working individually with groups of children, both in schools and out, creating and producing animal-inspired artworks to eventually be showcased and sold at our unique shows!" said Sarah about her expo.

"We reached out to local professional artists to also ask for donated work for this cause. The money generated from art workshops and art sales will be donated to the Strays of Oman. This is not a one-off show! We plan on running future workshops and exhibits to continue sharing this important message."

The expo that ran for three days, evoked a good response, particularly on the last day.

Commenting on future plans for the strays after the event, Sarah said: "We continue to build out art initiative and will run art workshops etc in future under the banner of Stray Tails. There is a dedicated website to sell the artworks, proceeds of which will go

to help the animals."

Andrea is passionate about animals. She found the idea exciting and close to her heart. "I became part of this collective and started working towards our shared goal because it meets three of my passions; art, teaching and dogs. But what I like the most about this project is that it involves the community. We want people to get

"We bonded over our passion for 'Art & Animals' and created an 'Art Collective' where the main objective is to put animals in the spotlight. Over the past few months, we have been working individually with groups of children, both in schools and out, creating and producing animal-inspired artworks to eventually be showcased and sold at our unique shows!"

— Sarah Thompson

involved in whichever way they can and understand that there are different ways of helping. We all have roles in our communities, and we all have strengths and talents that we can tap into."

She wants to do more for the strays and says, "This was our first event, and it filled our hearts to see people come together for this. As a collective, we are planning on having more opportunities for people to get involved. We are thinking about workshops, talks, more exhibitions etc."

