

P11

TRANS-TASMAN SUPREMACY AT STAKE IN DUBAI



P15

BRITISH EMBASSY PLEDGES FUNDING SUPPORT FOR GREEN INITIATIVES IN OMAN



P18

ISOLATING IN A TIME OF GADGET DEPENDENCY



MUSCAT

BUS CATCHES FIRE IN SUR, NO CASUALTIES

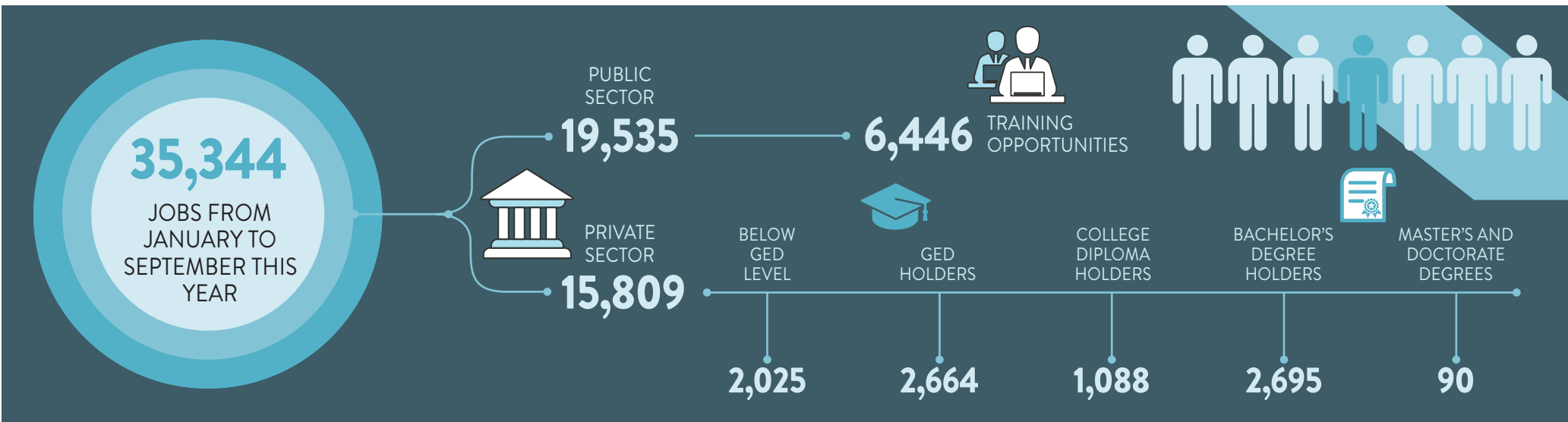
A Mwasalat inter-city bus was engulfed by fire at Sur on Friday evening. The Omani National Transport Company (Mwasalat) issued a statement confirming that all passengers were immediately evacuated from the bus, without any injuries. “The specialised teams immediately went to the site to conduct preliminary investigations, in partnership with the competent authorities, upon receiving the news of the accident.

WASHINGTON

BIDEN, XI TO HOLD VIRTUAL SUMMIT

US President Joe Biden will hold a hotly anticipated virtual summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Monday, the White House and China announced, as tensions mount over several issues. Relations between the world’s two largest economies have recently deteriorated. Despite differences, the United States and China reached a surprise agreement on climate at a summit in Glasgow.

Now get news on the go



HIRING OF OMANIS GETS A FILLIP

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The Ministry of Labour issued a performance indicator report on the absorption of the Omani workforce in the labour market between January and September 2021. According to the report, a total of 35,344 young Omanis were employed in the public and private sectors during the period.

The report also indicated a decrease in the non-Omani workforce by 7.6 per cent between September 2020 and 2021.

The state apparatus offered 19,535 jobs, while 15,809 were accommodated in the private sector establishments.

A total of 12,626 jobs were

9,556 COVERED UNDER JOB SAFETY PROGRAMME

The job safety programme of the Ministry of Labour covered 9,556 citizens, of which 6,953 were men and 2,603 women, said the ministry’s performance indicator report. The report

stated that the ministry followed up with the companies after receiving requests from 83 private institutions that wanted to terminate the national workforce and 128 others that wanted to reduce the

national workforce’s wages. The ministry dealt with them and was successful in maintaining job stability so that 45,708 Omani workers in the private sector did not have to end services or get reduced wages.

created through training and rehabilitation, in which 6,446 were absorbed in the government sector while the private sector accommodated 6,180 individuals.

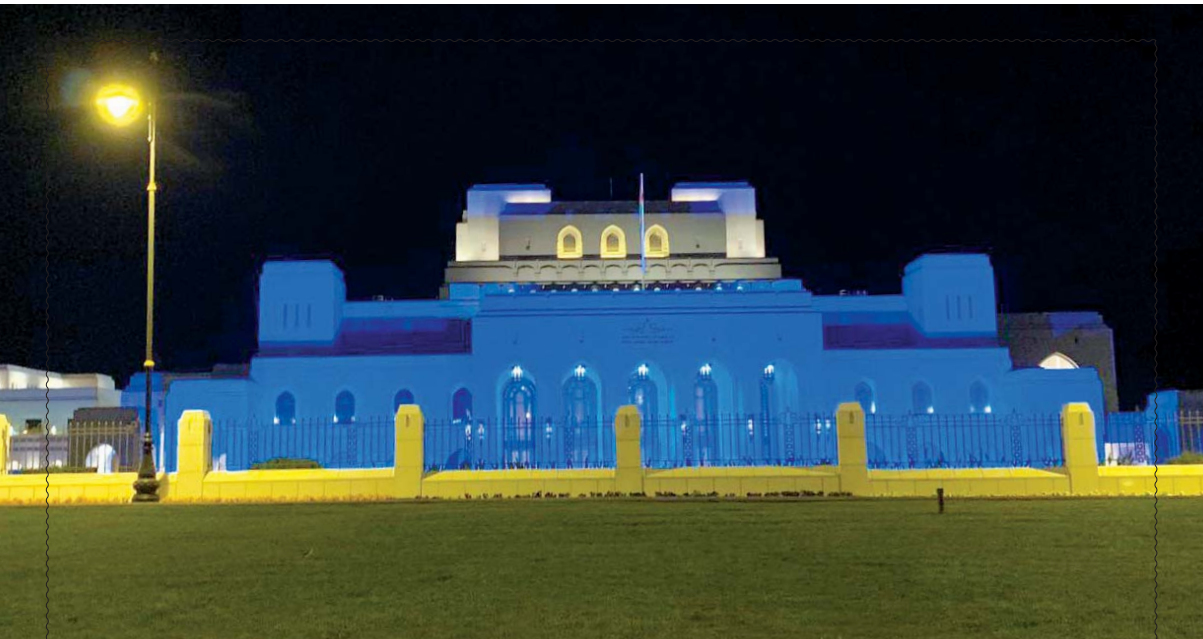
The performance indicator

report gave clear heads under which the Omanis were provided with the jobs, and appreciably, the private sector did direct recruitment of 8,562 freshers who did not have any job experience.

In the report, the Ministry of Labour admitted to having taken many steps to increase the competencies of Omanis and their absorption in the labour market. The ministry’s executive plan that started at

the beginning of 2021 came out with positive results. Due to the direct initiative of the Ministry of Labour, a total of 1,067 jobs were created.

For absorption of Omanis in the private sector, the educational levels of the candidates were strictly considered. As per the performance indicator report, among the absorbed Omanis in the private sector, 2,025 were without a general education diploma, 2,664 from the general education diploma and its equivalent, 1,088 from the university diploma, 2,695 university certificate holders and 90 with master’s and doctoral degrees.



SUGAR ALERT

Royal Opera House Muscat is lit in blue light to mark the World Diabetes Day on November 14. **REPORT ON P5**

Covid-19 cases are down, but maintain vigil

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman may be recording an average of less than 15 Covid-19 cases a day but the country is still not out of the pandemic. The nation is reporting cases despite the fact that a large percentage of the population is fully vaccinated. Health experts

have told the *Observer* that the situation is under control in the Sultanate of Oman, but it should be not taken for granted.

While the rule regarding the mandatory use of wearing masks and social distancing is still in force, a good number of visitors to parks, malls and beaches tend to flout rules even if it is for a brief

moment too.

“It looks like we are done with the Covid-19 here in Oman and even the business entities are not too worried about the virus or its resurgence”, said Maya Krishnan, an expat, who felt that masks must be worn at all times, especially in public places.

TURN TO P5

You will never know when this silent killer comes

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnassri

When we think of strokes, we often think of symptoms such as slurred speech, numbness, or loss of movement in the face or body. But, silent strokes do not show any such symptoms. In fact, silent strokes show no symptoms at all.

Dr Saleh bin Saif al Hinai, Senior Consultant, Family Medicine, clarified that silent strokes occur when the blood supply to a part of the brain is suddenly cut off, depriving it of oxygen and damaging its cells.

“Silent stroke is difficult to recognise, because it disrupts the blood supply to a part of the brain that does not control any visual functions such as speaking or movement, so you may never know that a stroke has occurred”, he said, noting that the way most people discover they have had a silent stroke is when they undergo an MRI or CT scan for another condition where doctors notice that small areas of the brain have been damaged.

Does it mean it is less dangerous?



Silent stroke is difficult to recognise, because it disrupts the blood supply to a part of the brain that does not control any visual functions such as speaking or movement

DR SALEH BIN SAIF AL HINAI

Senior Consultant

Dr Al Hinai mentioned that silent strokes generally only affect a small area of the brain, but the damage is cumulative. He said, “If the patient has several silent strokes, he may begin to notice neurological symptoms. For example, he may begin to have difficulty remembering things, or he may have difficulty concentrating.”

However, silent stroke may be caused due to blood clots, high blood pressure, narrowing of the arteries, high fat and diabetes. Because the effects are cumulative, the damage result is permanent.

TURN TO P5

Oman, UAE seek to boost cooperation

DUBAI: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Saturday met with Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

During the meeting the two sides reviewed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and discussed ways of enhancing cooperation in various fields to realise the interests of both countries and their peoples. They affirmed the keenness of the leadership of both countries to boost joint cooperation in various arenas.

Sayyid Badr referred to the depth and strength of the relationship binding the two countries and extended congratulations to the UAE foreign minister on his country being selected to host the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework



Convention on Climate Change (COP28) scheduled to be held in 2023. He said that this selection constitutes a new international achievement for the region, wishing the UAE more progress and flourishing under the leadership of Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the UAE.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan affirmed the depth of the firm fraternal relationship between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman and their leaderships, wishing the Sultanate of Oman more progress and development under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. — ONA



Foreign Minister visits Sultanate's pavilion at Dubai expo

DUBAI: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, visited the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020 on Saturday.

During the visit the minister reviewed the exhibits at the pavilion which illustrate the civilisational and historical aspects through the ages and highlights various stages of development

besides the renewed renaissance and the future visions of the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr was briefed by the youths in charge of the pavilion about the sections of the pavilion which include three historic periods as well as the present and future visions through audio and visual means.

The pavilion of the Sultan-

ate of Oman held under the title 'Opportunities Through Time', is distinguished by its unique architectural design inspired by the frankincense tree and its link to the Sultanate of Oman's history and people and communication among nations. Sayyid Badr also visited the pavilions of the GCC countries and the GCC Secretariat-General. — ONA

GOOD TIDAL CONDITION HELPS COLLECT SHELLFISH, MOLLUSKS AND OYSTERS

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

People, especially those living near the coasts, were waiting for the temperature to get moderate and watch the tides.

The low levels of sea tidal condition contribute to the emergence of large rocky areas and wet lands in which shellfish live. Among the places frequented by those interested in marine environment are the beaches overlooking the sea where the levels of the sea reach less than half a metre during the evenings.

The beaches in the Governorate of Muscat are one of the sites that attract fishing and shellfish enthusiasts.

The case of the sea tidal condition provides an opportunity for oysters and marine mollusks, given that the Sultanate of Oman is rich with many invertebrate marine organisms such as crustaceans and mollusks, which are among the species of high economic value.

According to environmental studies, shellfish are divided into three sections according to the number of their shells.

There are uni-shell oysters, such as snails, and bivalve oysters, which contain two shells connected to each other. Others are pearl oysters, and multi-shell oysters. Their bodies contain segmented shells such as chitons.

Shellfish is one of the tributaries of economic diversification. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, implemented a project for an exploratory field survey of shellfish resources in coastal areas to include 30 sites within 6 governorates.



The studies indicate that the field survey of oyster resources aimed to provide basic data on the types of oysters and their environments in the Omani coastal waters and their predominant distribution in each region, and to know the geographical distribution of the important commercial types of

oysters, and to issue a field guide that includes all types classified in the Sultanate of Oman, and to be a reference source for researchers and those interested in oysters. Additionally to create a reference group for different samples of oysters, preserving and storing them.

Field surveys have



documented 252 species of shellfish at survey sites in the seas of the Sultanate of Oman, and studies have confirmed that "sea snails are the most common and are present with a number of 156 species, and there are 92 species of bi-shell clams and 4 types of multi-shell clams."

It should be noted that the

oysters scattered in the sandy coasts of the Sultanate of Oman, such as the "duke", are invested, especially in the governorates of Muscat and Al Batinah, and are used in preparing some popular dishes. And it is known worldwide as the Oyster.

Al Wusta Governorate is characterised by fishing for "Al-

Rahas" oysters, which are several types of sea snails spread between rocks and sand and have a very high nutritional value. Omanis give it different names. In Muscat it is locally called (Al-At), and in Dhofar it is called (Harshef).

Environmental studies confirm that "Omanis have been associated with eating shellfish/oysters for thousands of years. The remains of archaeological teeth that were discovered in the Ras Al Hamra area proved, after analysis, that they are related to eating mollusks, which include shellfish, after comparing them with other archaeological teeth in the Arab world and East Africa."

Archaeologists at the erstwhile Ministry of National Heritage and Culture discovered in 1977 in the natural mangrove swamps of empty shells after eating its content of mollusks, and found dumped and prepared for use in making a fishing rod, dating back to 6,000 years.

It is obvious that there are flocks of sea birds in a striking way, as they seize the opportunity to obtain the largest amount of food more easily. Experts in the field of marine environment say that the presence of birds in such abundance during this period suggests an ecological balance, which is a natural task that birds perform in such seasons. But what worries experts is that the population exaggerates the investment of these marine life in a way that may lead to their depletion, threatening their reproduction during the coming period. Hence, the process of investing this national wealth must be regulated by the competent authorities in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the environmental requirements in force in this field.

A children's book with backdrop of dinosaurs



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Jane Jaffer, an author based in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched her third children's book titled *Raifi's Amazing Dinosaur Adventure* at Let's Read bookstore, Avenues Mall. The bilingual book has the story translated into Arabic by Maitha al Mandhari.

Her series of children's books are related to Omani wildlife such as *Saria and the Turtles* as well as *Dana and the Dolphins*. *Raifi's Amazing Dinosaur Adventure* also has a link to the Sultanate of Oman as dinosaur's bones were discovered in 1997 in Al Khoudh.

"I visited the Natural Museum of Oman, and I got to see the discovered bones of dinosaurs and was able to take pictures. The staff were very helpful," said Jane.

Jane came to the Sultanate of Oman as a primary teacher 41 years ago. "I started with a nursery school and education. I realised there were not enough books for children in the Sultanate of Oman or books that were written for Omani children. I think children relate better when they can understand the characters, motivating them to read those books. I thought I will write a book based on the Sultanate of Oman, and I had the Omani children to illustrate the story," she said.

This was in 2006, and it was the book *Dana and the Dolphins*.

"When Saria was born, we had gone to Ras al Had and saw the turtle hatchlings. We just loved it, and it was so magical to watch the turtles.

"That is when I felt it would be nice to write a book, and the turtles came out of the experience. And now I have a grandson called Raifi, and he is absolutely obsessed with dinosaurs. I did a bit of research if dinosaur's bones had been found in the Sultanate of Oman and they had. I went to the Natural Museum and spoke to the staff, and they showed me all the bones," she explained. The story is for the young children about dinosaurs, but towards the back of the book, there is in-depth profiling of the dinosaurs appealing to older children. The book is bilingual and this time Jane decided to do the illustrations on her own.

In the story, a young boy goes for a walk in the mountains, and he comes across a cave. As he goes inside to explore, he finds eggs, and one of them is hatched and thus begins the story, and soon they are on an adventure.

During the launch, the story was read out in English by Jane Jaffer and in Arabic by Maitha al Mandhari, who translated the story into Arabic and is also a puppeteer as well as a storyteller. In addition, there were many activities conducted for children, including making finger puppets.

Jane is the founder of Let's Read, now part of Dar al Atta'a, an initiative to encourage children to explore reading and thus the world of books. She has also authored novels, *Love in the Time of Zanzibar* and *Scent of a Rose*.

INTERIOR MINISTER MEETS KUWAITI COUNTERPART



MANAMA: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, on Saturday met with Shaikh Thamer Ali Sabah al Sabah, Minister of Interior of Kuwait, in the Kingdom of Bahrain which will host the meeting of the GCC ministers of interior on Sunday. During the meeting they discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries in addition to matters of common concern. — ONA

BUS CATCHES FIRE IN SUR, NO CASUALTIES

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 13

A Mwasalat inter-city bus was engulfed by fire at Sur on Friday evening.

The Omani National Transport Company (Mwasalat) issued a statement confirming that all passengers were immediately evacuated from the bus, without any injuries.

"The specialised teams immediately went to the site to conduct preliminary investigations, in partnership with the competent authorities, upon receiving the news of the accident.

"We pay utmost attention to health and safety procedures onboard its fleet and thanked the competent authorities that dealt with the accident with high professionalism that led to the control of the fire as soon as possible," the statement said.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said that the firefighters from South Al Sharqiyah Governorate were able to control a fire that broke out in a bus in the Wilayat of Sur.

INAUGURATION TODAY LULU HYPERMARKET

Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Sultanate of Oman
Sunday, 14th November 2021

Lulu HYPERMARKET



Open for shopping from 1:00pm

World-class shopping experience
now closer to you.

Scan for Location



Latitude : 22.0457370
Longitude : 59.3172100

Super Deals • Super Savings

Enjoy a wide variety of high-quality products at most affordable prices.

Proudly Grown in Oman	ORGANIC	GLUTEN FREE	Salad Bar Mix Your Own	Healthy & Diet Food	Sugar Free	SEAFOOD Always Fresh!
Baked Fresh Every Day	PREMIUM Meats Finest Quality TOP GRADE	SUPERFOOD	World cuisine Made Instore	Health & Beauty	LULU FASHION STORE MEN • WOMEN • KIDS	LULU CONNECT DIGITAL & ELECTRONICS MEGASTORE
HYPERMARKETS. SUPERMARKETS. DEPARTMENT STORES.				Lulu Where the world comes to shop, safely!		
www.luluhypermarket.com www.facebook.com/LuLuHypermarketOM www.twitter.com/luluhyperom www.instagram.com/luluhyperom						



Rekindling the memories of a brilliant past and aspiring for a better future, the people are certain to realise their new dreams and renewed hopes armed with a strong spirit of patriotism and a success story that lasted for 51 years of the Omani Renaissance



SHOW OF LOYALTY AND GRATITUDE

SUHAIL AL NAHDI

The Sultanate of Oman will celebrate the 51st National Day of the Renaissance on November 18 with great joy and jubilation.

Also, Omanis are looking forward to a flourishing period and a more prosperous future under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, a period of fresh aspirations for a more

developed nation.

Rekindling the memories of a brilliant past and aspiring for a better future, the people are certain to realise their new dreams and renewed hopes armed with a strong spirit of patriotism and a success story that lasted for 51 years of the Omani Renaissance.

Next Thursday, November 18, patriotic feelings of the loyal citizens, young and old, will be at a high level while the preparations for the celebrations are in full

swing. Motivated by a true love for their inspiring leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq who is guiding the country to new horizons of development and prosperity, the united loyal people of the Sultanate of Oman are moving steadily towards further progress and prosperity for the nation and the future generations.

In these days of November and while the country is witnessing a festive mood, citizens are fervently preparing for the auspicious

occasion by raising the flag of the Sultanate of Oman, decorating their houses with the pictures of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq along with those of the late Sultan Qaboos, may Allah Almighty have mercy on his soul, to whom they are greatly grateful for the countless achievements he had made over 50 years, while renewing their pledge of allegiance and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Shoppers can be seen in markets buying the national flags and

pictures of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in a symbolic indicator that embodies their love for the country and the leader and expressing their jubilation on the glorious National Day of the Renaissance.

While celebrating the National Day, Omanis are determined to move to a period of renewed achievements armed by a strong faith in their ability to give more and more to consolidate their past achievements.



You will never know when this silent killer comes

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Al Hinai explained there are other types of strokes like temporary strokes. They may occur due to the same reasons, yet, they are symptomatic. The one may have trouble walking, blindness in one eye, sudden and severe headache, dizziness, and confusion. The symptoms appear within 24 hours, and such strokes lead to severe ones in future.

The permanent stroke's symptoms last for more than 24 hours, and they include weakness in the arms, legs, or face, speech difficulties, trouble walking, blindness in one eye or field of vision, sudden severe headache, and dizziness.

Dr Al Hinai elaborated that "other signs of strokes are so

subtle that they are similar to signs of ageing, such as balance problems, frequent falls, urinary incontinence, mood changes, decreased ability to think".

Regarding the possibility of the treatment of cognitive problems, Dr Al Hinai confirmed that rehabilitation therapy could help people who have lost some of their abilities due to a stroke. Among the professionals who can help restore function include natural therapy, speech pathologists, sociologists, psychologists.

To help prevent silent strokes, the doctor advised controlling blood pressure, regular exercise, reducing salt, controlling cholesterol level and diabetes, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating vegetables and fruits.

Access to care in focus as Oman marks World Diabetes Day today

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

The blue light is lit up throughout the Sultanate of Oman with the wali offices, Royal Opera House Muscat, Royal Hospital and Oman Diabetes Centre sporting the colour from Saturday night marking World Diabetes Day observed on November 14 every year.

The theme this year is Access to Diabetes Care. In the Sultanate of Oman, the government provides extensive and free care for the citizens.

"As diabetes is prevalent, the awareness message we are sending out is that we now need to focus on prevention, management and education for the public and health professionals to provide a comprehensive healthcare for diabetics to prevent complications and provide the patient a better quality of life," said Dr Noor al Busaidy, chairperson of Oman Diabetes Association.

She said that diabetes care is for the patient, but in order to give the care to the patient we need to work together as a team so we are aware that diabetes management is not just one prescription. Instead, it is a multidisciplinary care approach as the need of the patient is beyond just medicine.

"Patients have a lot of questions. Diabetes is a lifelong disease. So if you are happy or sad or emotional the blood sugar level can fluctuate. It is the same if you are stressed or have a lack of sleep. They need someone from healthcare to answer their questions and support them. In the Sultanate of Oman, we want to provide comprehensive care and we need to focus on the three directions



— prevention, management and delaying complications. We cannot just focus on prevention anymore we have to focus also on the management of diabetes," pointed out Dr Noor.

So how do we lead a healthy life? And how can one move towards the transformation?

"You can lead a very healthy life when you decide that health is your top most priority. Then, managing diabetes is as simple as ABC. A nutritious diet, putting aside time for physical activity, being compliant to the treatment your doctor advises, equipping yourself with ample information related to diabetes are the necessary arrows in your quiver that will keep you fit as a fiddle," said Dr Praveen Jayapathy, Specialist Diabetologist, IMC Sugar Apollo.

However there are challenges in staying committed to lifestyle changes.

Dr Praveen lists out:

1) There are many challenges to diabetes care today. Firstly, in today's busy world people find it very difficult to find time to incorporate exercise into their daily life. Secondly, healthy eating also seems very challenging to many when access to unhealthy food is not hard. Thirdly, as news is available at a touch of a button unscientific and false information also easily finds its way, which can often be misleading. Fourthly, when we discuss diabetes across the world access to proper care either due to unavailability of healthcare resources or due to financial reasons where tests and medications are unaffordable, there are millions who don't get the care they need.

2) It's true that many people with diabetes find it difficult to be engaged and committed to lifestyle changes. What inspires each of us to stay motivated may

be different. It could be a person you know, a character you have read about, an event that struck you or simply your own decision. So the first thing to do is to find your inspiration. The next is being "FIRM" about it. So what's "FIRM"? It is to have a few (F) selected goals, that are individualised (I) to your personality, realistic (R) in nature so there is a chance that you can achieve them and finally measurable (M) in terms of what you want to do. For example, for someone who is very busy in the office and has no time for exercise he/she can decide "I will get out of my work desk and walk for 5 minutes every hour I am at work". By doing this they would have clocked 40 minutes in an 8 hour shift. That is progress, isn't it? They can build on that achievement. Small incremental changes are fine. Remember, these changes should become a part of who you are for life.

Covid-19 cases are down

FROM PAGE 1

"Those who did not receive the vaccine should take it as a priority and when the vaccination is available for children it must be given to them," said a consultant at a private hospital.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammad al Saeedi, Minister of Health, has expressed concern over the lack of seriousness in applying

precautionary measures in the community.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Thursday reported seven new cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours and zero deaths. There are currently 487 active cases in the country.

The total number of inpatients was 10, including three in intensive care units.

2 held for hunting Arabian gazelle

MUSCAT: Wildlife rangers from the Environment Authority in Dhofar Governorate arrested two persons for hunting Arabian gazelle.

The arrests were made by the Al Najd unit at the Directorate-General of Environment in the governorate in coordination with the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The authorities also seized the tools used by the culprits. Legal measures have since been initiated against them.

The Environment Authority has urged all citizens, residents and tourists to refrain from violating the environment laws in order to avoid legal action. — ONA

42% people with disabilities are married

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

As much as 42 per cent of the people with disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman are married and majority of them are males.

"The married in the age group of 60 years and above constitute 34.7 per cent of all married persons with disabilities," reveals a report by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) using the 2020 e-census data.

About 25 per cent of people with disabilities were registered in North Al Batinah Governorate, followed by Muscat Governorate with 15.9 per cent. The lowest percentage is registered in Al Wusta Governorate.

According to NCSI figures, 36.6 per cent of the people with disabilities live in the wilayats of Al Seeb, Suhar, Al Suwaiq, Ibri, Saham, Al Rustaq and Salalah.

"Hearing disability was the highest in all age groups except for the category of below 10 years and the age group between 40 and 44 years, as the physical disability constituted the largest number in the two categories," the report says.

Out of 42,304 people with disabilities, who form 1.55



The married in the age group of 60 years and above constitute 34.7 per cent of all married persons with disabilities

NCSI

per cent of the total Omani population, 10,880 are children. While 66.9 per cent of them were diagnosed as congenital, 23.8 per cent developed

complications during birth that led to disability.

A total 4.7 per cent of the disabilities resulted from illness, while two per cent were due to hereditary reasons.

For disabled children too, North Al Batinah tops with 1,154 girls and 1,493 boys followed by Muscat Governorate with 726 girls and 1,169 boys. There are 1,421 disabled children in South Al Batinah, 747 in South Al Sharqiyah, 801 in North Al Sharqiyah, and 720 in Al Dhahirah.

While Dhofar has about

733 disabled children, Al Dakhiliyah has another 1,471, and Al Buraimi 290. Musandam and Al Wusta have 114 and 41, respectively.

According to the data, 16.1 per cent in the age group of six years and above are currently enrolled in education, and that 52 per cent have previously enrolled in education. A whopping 84.9 per cent currently enrolled are in the age group between 6-9 years.

As for the total number of people with disabilities who have never enrolled in education, points out the report, "they were concentrated in the elderly category aged 60 and above. This group constituted 61.4 per cent of the total number".

The report reveals that 97.5 per cent of those with disabilities who hold bachelor's degree and above have hearing, physical, and visual disabilities, and 34.5 per cent have qualifications below the general diploma.

"Those with disabilities and have never enrolled in education were elderly people in the age above 60 years. This group constituted 61.4 per cent of the total number of people with disabilities," adds the report.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (51/2021)

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/20/017	2021/MM/HQ-33	Construction of Storm Water Drainage Channel in AL Ghubrah North - Phase 1C (E- Tender)	Rial 245	09/12/2021	13/01/2022	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Internal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before **10:00 am** as per the date mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

Protester killed in Sudan anti-coup rallies

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces shot dead at least one protester on Saturday in a crackdown on anti-coup demonstrations, medics said, after the military tightened its grip by forming a new ruling council.

The pro-democracy protests come nearly three weeks after top general Abdel Fattah al Burhan ousted the government, detained the civilian leadership and declared a state of emergency.

“One protester was killed in Omdurman by the bullets of the putschist military council,” the Central Committee for Sudanese Doctors said in a statement referring to security forces.

Other demonstrators in Khartoum’s twin city were wounded by “live rounds”, it said.

An AFP correspondent reported hearing the sound of gunfire as well at a protest in east Khartoum.

Tear gas was also fired at many protests in Khartoum and neighbouring cities as security forces sought to disperse the demonstrations, witnesses and an AFP correspondent there said.

“No, no to military rule”, “Civilian (rule) is the people’s choice”, and “Down with the entire council”, the protesters in southern Khartoum shouted.

Thousands rallied nationwide, with protests taking place in the cities of Atbara, Wad Madani as well as in the central state of North Kordofan and in Port Sudan city



Anti-coup protesters take part in a demonstration in the capital Khartoum on Saturday, two days after the military sought to tighten its grip by forming a new ruling council. – AFP

and Kassala state, witnesses said.

The military’s October 25 takeover drew widespread international condemnation, as did a deadly crackdown on street demonstrations by people demanding it restore the country’s democratic transition.

Any hopes the demonstrators had that the military would back down were dashed on Thursday, when Burhan named himself as the head of a new ruling Sovereign Council that excludes the country’s main civilian bloc, triggering more condemnation

from the West.

The protests occurred despite the heavy presence of military, police and paramilitary forces in Khartoum, where bridges connecting the capital to neighbouring cities were sealed off, AFP correspondents reported.

The security forces also blocked roads in Khartoum leading to the army headquarters, the site of a 2019 mass sit-in that led to the ouster of autocratic president Omar al Bashir.

The United Nations has called on the security forces to refrain

from violence, which since the coup has already left dead at least 16 people, according to an independent union of medics.

“I once again call upon the security forces to exercise utmost restraint and respect the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression,” said UN Special Representative for Sudan Volker Perthes.

Saturday’s demonstrations have largely been organised by informal groups known as “resistance committees”, which emerged during the 2019 anti-Bashir demonstrations.

The committees have called for multiple protests since the coup and mobilised crowds via text messages as Sudan has largely remained under a rigorous Internet outage with phone lines intermittently disrupted.

Demonstrators also blocked roads with brick as they have done at previous rallies.

But despite the efforts, “civilian opposition to the coup has been diffuse and fragmented”, International Crisis Group analyst Jonas Horner has said.

The coup has led to punitive measures by the international community disturbed by the turn away from a transition to full civilian rule.

On Friday, military figures and new civilian members of a new ruling council were sworn in before Burhan.

— AFP

Turkey rebuffs Macron call for Libya troop withdrawal

ISTANBUL: Turkey on Saturday rebuffed French President Emmanuel Macron’s call on foreign powers to remove their forces from Libya as part of efforts turn on a page on a decade of strife.

The North African country has been mired in civil war since the overthrow of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a 2011 uprising. The bloodshed has drawn in competing Libyan factions and extremist groups as well as foreign powers.

Turkey sent troops as well as pro-Ankara militia units from Syria to shore up the UN-recognised government in Tripoli while Russia and other countries supported the eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Macron told an international conference on Libya in Paris on Friday that

“Russia and Turkey must withdraw their mercenaries without delay”.

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s top foreign policy adviser said on Saturday that putting the emphasis on a quick troop withdrawal was “wrong”.

“If you single out the pulling out of foreign forces... from Libya, as the most important, as the top issue, we believe that is wrong,” Ibrahim Kalin said in an exclusive interview.

“Libya needs support for its political process, the elections, economic issues,” he said in reference to presidential polls that world leaders would like to go ahead on December 24.

France itself has faced accusations of backing Haftar but has always insisted it has been fully objective in the conflict. — AFP

US raps Eritrea with sanctions in push to end Ethiopia conflict

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday slapped new sanctions on Eritrea over the deadly conflict in neighbouring Ethiopia, which it warned was at danger of “implosion” without a negotiated settlement.

Ahead of a three-nation trip to Africa next week, Secretary of State Antony Blinken also threatened to impose sanctions against the Ethiopian government and rebels unless they move forward on talks.

Failure to reach a settlement “would lead to the implosion of Ethiopia and spill over into other countries in the region, and that would be disastrous for the Ethiopian people and also for countries in the region,” Blinken told reporters.

“The other path is to halt all



Children stand under a tree on the site of a future camp for Eritrean refugees, in a rural area near the village of Dabat, 70 kilometres northeast from the city of Gondar, Ethiopia.

of the military actions that are currently underway, sit down to negotiate a real ceasefire to make sure that humanitarian assistance can get in to all of the regions where people are in need,” he said.

“I believe that is still not only possible, but necessary.”

The United States has condemned both the rebel Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy

Ahmed, a onetime ally and Nobel Peace Prize winner, over a year of bloodshed that has left hundreds of thousands in famine-like conditions. President Joe Biden in September signed an executive order paving the way for sanctions on Ethiopia and earlier this month decided to remove Ethiopia from a key trade agreement.

But measures imposed on Friday over the conflict instead focused on Eritrea, one of the world’s most closed states. “We are not imposing sanctions at this time on elements aligned with the government of Ethiopia and TPLF to allow time and space to see if these talks can make progress,” Blinken said in a statement, warning that the United States would not hesitate to pursue the two sides if diplomacy fails. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIRUT

Lebanon minister in Gulf row says could resign

A Lebanese minister whose remarks on Yemen’s war sparked a row with Gulf Arab states said on Friday he would consider resigning if diplomatic measures taken against his country are dropped.

Information Minister George Kordahi criticised the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen during a pre-recorded interview that was aired on Lebanese television last month. His remarks angered Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, which responded by



recalling their ambassadors from Beirut. “I am not holding on to a ministerial position... I am not in a position to challenge anyone,” Kordahi said after meeting Lebanon’s parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri.

ISTANBUL

Wife of jailed politician over medical report

The wife of prominent jailed Kurdish opposition figure Selahattin Demirtas has been sentenced in Turkey to two and a half years in jail after being found to have provided inaccurate information over a date in a medical report, her lawyers said.

Lawyers for Basak Demirtas, 44, said she was sentenced by a court over an incorrect date on a medical report issued by a doctor in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir in 2015, which she passed to her employer while



taking sick leave. Her husband Selahattin Demirtas, the former pro-Kurdish party leader and one of Turkey’s best-known politicians, has been in jail for nearly five years on terrorism-related charges that he denies.

DUBAI

Ansar Allah seize area by key port

Yemen’s Ansar Allah have taken control of a large area south of Hodeida, a lifeline port where the warring sides agreed a ceasefire in 2018, government military sources said on Friday.

The rebels advanced after forces loyal to the internationally recognised government retreated from positions south of the Red Sea port city, the sources said, without giving reasons.

The Hodeida ceasefire was



agreed at Yemen’s last peace talks in Sweden in 2018, but clashes have since broken out between the rebels and pro-government troops around the city.

In brief

■ TOKYO



'BLINKEN GAVE US COMMITMENT TO DEFEND JAPAN

Japan's new foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi (pictured), said on Saturday US Secretary of State Antony Blinken assured him in a phone call that the US commitment to defending Japan, including southern islets claimed by China, was unwavering.

Japan's ties with China have been plagued by a territorial dispute over a group of Japanese-administered islands in the East China Sea, called the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China, as well as the legacy of Japan's past military aggression.

"Secretary Blinken stated that US commitment to defending Japan, including the application of Article 5 of the Japan-US Security Treaty for the Senkaku islands, was unwavering," Hayashi told reporters.

■ YANGON



US JOURNALIST IN MYANMAR JAILED FOR 11 YEARS

A Myanmar junta court on Friday sentenced an American journalist to 11 years in prison on charges of unlawful association, incitement against the military and breaching visa rules, his employer and lawyer said — a ruling slammed by Washington as "unjust".

The military has squeezed the press since taking power in a February coup, arresting dozens of journalists critical of its crackdown on dissent, which has killed more than 1,200 people according to a local monitoring group. Danny Fenster, who had been working for local outlet Frontier Myanmar for around a year, was arrested in May as he tried to leave the country to see his family.

■ SYDNEY



FLOODING LEAVES FAMILY STRANDED IN AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK

Torrential rain has left a family stranded in the Australian Outback, with authorities warning the rescue could take days.

The family of two adults and two children was travelling through the remote Simpson Desert in the centre of Australia when their campervan became bogged down on Friday.

Responding to an emergency beacon, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) had to airdrop a satellite phone to communicate with the family due to flooding and the isolation of the area, about 150 kilometres (93 miles) northwest of the small town Oodnadatta.

Duterte's aide to run for presidency; daughter vice president candidate

MANILA: The Philippines' presidential race got more crowded with the last-minute entry of Rodrigo Duterte's long-time aide, in another twist to an election likely to be dominated by powerful family dynasties rather than reforms.

Duterte loyalist, Senator Christopher "Bong" Go, registered to run for president after withdrawing his application to run for the No 2 post, pitting himself against several rivals, including the son of late Philippine strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

Go admitted he didn't want to run against Duterte's daughter, Sara Duterte-Carpio, who made a surprise move earlier on Saturday by filing her candidacy for the vice presidency, ending months-long speculation about her 2022 election plans.

But with the deadline to switch candidates for the May 2022 polls two days away, political analysts suspect there could be more surprises and even changes in alliances in what is becoming an unpredictable election.

Duterte's communication secretary, Martin Andanar confirmed media reports that the 76-year-old leader, who last month promised to retire from politics, would officially throw his hat in the vice presidential ring on Monday and run against his daughter.

"That is his plan, we don't know if that is going to change," Andanar said.

Duterte is barred by the Constitution from seeking a second six-year term, but nothing is stopping him from vying for another post.

In the Philippines, the president



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (L) raises the hand of senator Christopher 'Bong' Go after he filed his candidacy for president in the 2022 elections in Manila on Thursday. — AFP

and the largely ceremonial position of vice president are elected separately.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the only son of the late dictator who ruled the Philippines for almost two

decades until his 1986 overthrow, has adopted Duterte-Carpio, eldest daughter of the autocratic and capricious Duterte, to be his running mate.

Duterte-Carpio, 43, who

belongs to a political party controlled by former president Gloria Arroyo, another dominant force in Philippine politics, will release a statement soon, her spokesperson, Mayor Christina Garcia-Frasco said.

"The rivalries of the political families have really been dramatised in this case," said political analyst Temario Rivera. "It looks like they are the only ones deciding on the country's fate. It is infuriating because they are making a fool of the Filipino people."

The Southeast Asian nation of 110 million people holds elections in May 2022 for positions from president down to governors, mayors and local officials. The next government faces the uphill task of reviving a pandemic-battered economy.

■ SHOW OF STRENGTH



Afghan men wrestle as spectators watch in the background during a weekly spectacle of wrestling held in a makeshift arena at Chaman-e-Hozori park, in Kabul City, on Friday. — AFP

Vietnam welcomes first foreign tourists in nearly 20 months

HANOI: The first international tourists touched down in Vietnam almost 20 months after the Southeast Asian nation closed its borders to contain the coronavirus.

Two charter flights brought more than 400 South Korean and Japanese fully vaccinated passengers from Seoul and Tokyo on Thursday to the southern resort city of Nha Trang, state media reported.

The area is popular with golfers, beach lovers and scuba divers, and boasts luxury hotels.

The flights came ahead of Vietnam's plans to reopen the resort island of Phu Quoc to vaccinated foreign visitors on November 20 — with hopes to welcome at least 5,000 travellers in coming months.

Foreign tourists seeking to enter Vietnam must show Covid-19 vaccination certificates and negative pre-departure coronavirus test results.

The communist country is desperate to revive its badly hit economy after months of lockdowns.

Its borders have been shut to international visitors since March last year and there are almost no commercial flights entering the country.

Vietnam was widely praised for its handling of the pandemic last year, with only dozens of known coronavirus cases.

But from April, the highly transmissible Delta variant took hold.

Vietnam has since clocked more than a million infections and almost 23,000 deaths, as it scrambles to secure enough vaccines for its 100 million population.

So far, around 32 per cent of people have been fully vaccinated. — AFP

Delhi shuts schools, government offices as pollution levels soar

NEW DELHI: Authorities in New Delhi on Saturday shut schools, asked government employees to work from home and banned construction activity as the Indian capital fights a toxic smog which has blanketed the city for over a week.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said schools will completely shift to online classes for a week starting on Monday so children are not exposed to polluted air.

Government officials and employees will also work from home for the week while private offices were also issued a similar advisory.

Construction work, which contributes to dust pollution, will be banned from Monday to Wednesday, he added.

The city government's decisions came after the Supreme Court excoriated the federal and state



A woman carrying a child walks across a footbridge under heavy smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Friday. — AFP

governments for hazardous pollution and demanded emergency measures, suggesting a two-day lockdown.

Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai said crop stubble burning by farmers in neighbouring states had

worsened the air quality, which started deteriorating from Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, on November 4, when people burst fire-crackers on a large scale.

The Air Quality Index in Delhi worsened to "severe" or "hazardous" levels since Friday, with fine particulate matter (PM2.5) levels hovering between 430 and 500, that is six to eight times the limit deemed safe by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Delhi, with 25 million inhabitants, has been ranked among the world's most polluted cities in recent years.

Seasonal crop stubble burning by farmers, along with climatic factors like lack of surface winds, add to emissions from heavy traffic, industry and the burning of garbage and fuel, to spike air pollution in the city every October and November. — dpa

Biden, Xi to hold virtual summit tomorrow



Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden.

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will hold a hotly anticipated virtual summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Monday, the White House and China announced, as tensions mount over several issues.

Relations between the world's two largest economies have recently deteriorated. Despite differences, the United States and China reached a surprise agreement on climate at a summit in Glasgow.

"The two leaders will discuss ways to responsibly manage the competition" between the two countries "as well as ways to work together where our interests align", White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement on Friday.

"Throughout, President

Biden will make clear US intentions and priorities and be clear and candid about our concerns with the PRC", Psaki said, referring to Beijing by the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

The virtual talks will take place "in the evening" on Monday in Washington — meaning early Tuesday in Beijing, she announced.

In China, the official Xinhua news agency confirmed the meeting in a one-line dispatch.

Biden and Xi have talked by phone twice since the veteran Democrat moved into the White House. The pair also met extensively when Biden was serving as vice president to Barack Obama, and Xi was vice president to Hu Jintao.

— AFP

Russia has ‘nothing to do’ with Belarus-Poland border crisis

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday denied claims Moscow is helping to orchestrate a crisis that has left hundreds of migrants from the Middle East trapped on the Belarus-Poland border.

Blaming Western policies in the Middle East for the crisis, Putin hit back at claims from Poland and others that Russia is working with Belarus to send migrants to the border of the European Union.

"I want everyone to know. We have nothing to do with it", he said in an interview with state television broadcast on Saturday.

Putin said European leaders needed to talk to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to resolve the crisis and that "as I understand it" German Chancellor Angela Merkel was ready to do so.

"We should not forget where these crises associated with migrants came from... Western countries themselves, including European countries", he said.

The migrants, mainly Kurds, have been stuck for days in a no-man's land on the border in near-freezing temperatures, setting up a tent camp and burning wood to keep warm.

Belarus says there are about 2,000 people in the camp, including pregnant women and children. Poland says there are



Polish soldiers and police watch migrants at the Poland-Belarus border near Kuznica, Poland, in this photograph released by the Territorial Defence Forces, on Friday. — Reuters

between 3,000 to 4,000 migrants on the border, with more arriving every day.

GROWING CONCERN

There is growing concern for their plight as temperatures continue to fall, with Poland refusing to allow them to cross and accusing Belarus of preventing them from leaving the area.

Belarusian authorities said on

Putin said European leaders needed to talk to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to resolve the crisis and that "as I understand it" German Chancellor Angela Merkel was ready to do so

Saturday they were delivering aid including tents and heaters to the migrant camp — a move that could make it a semi-permanent presence on the borders of the EU.

State news agency Belta reported that government bodies were erecting tents at the camp and that a generator had been delivered.

— AFP

Los Angeles judge dissolves Britney Spears guardianship

LOS ANGELES: A Los Angeles judge on Friday terminated the controversial guardianship that has controlled pop star Britney Spears' life for the past 13 years, handing back her freedom along with control of a multi-million dollar estate.

The ruling, greeted with raucous cheers and showers of pink confetti by Spears' fans outside the downtown courthouse, ends a conservatorship long overseen by her father, and which the "Toxic" singer has described as abusive.

"Best day ever... praise the Lord... can I get an Amen", wrote Spears on Instagram, using the hashtag "#FreedBritney."

"I can't freaking believe it!" she added.

The formal end to the guardianship comes after the pop princess's father Jamie Spears was removed from his position in charge of her finances and estate at a hearing in September.

Both sides reiterated their support for swiftly ending the

guardianship at the start of Friday's brief hearing.

"Effective today... the conservatorship of the person and estate of Britney Jean Spears is hereby terminated. And that is the order of the court", said Judge Brenda Penny.

Friday's hearing capped a long campaign by Spears and her legion of global fans to end a conservatorship that began after her highly public 2007 breakdown, when the star attacked a paparazzo's car at a gas station.

Judge Penny agreed with Spears' request for the arrangement to end without need for a mental evaluation — on the basis that "this was a voluntary conservatorship" and that "all parties agree."

"The court finds and determines that the conservatorship of the person and estate of Britney Jean Spears is no longer required", she ruled.

'PERFECTLY CAPABLE'

Fans outside the courthouse



Supporters of the FreeBritney movement rally in support of musician Britney Spears for a conservatorship court hearing, outside the Stanley Mosk courthouse in Los Angeles, California on Friday. — AFP

who had been campaigning for the conservatorship to end for years could hardly contain their joy and relief.

"She thought nobody would believe her... she's just a perfectly capable human being", said Danielle Kushner, 30.

"We all feel like she's our friend, we wanted to talk to her but couldn't talk to her!"

Spears, who publicly spoke out

via phone to the court this summer, had said through her lawyers that her father was "never fit to serve."

She cited in one petition allegations of his "reported alcoholism" and "trauma he caused his daughter since her childhood."

As momentum mounted, Spears said in a September filing that she wanted to end the guardianship as soon as possible so that she can marry her fiancé Sam Asghari with a prenuptial agreement.

Spears, who has two children with her former husband, the rapper Kevin Federline, has previously alleged in court that she was prevented by her father from having a contraceptive IUD removed, despite wanting more children. Jamie Spears denied the allegation.

"I really want what she wants, what Britney wants... she wants to have kids, she wants to get married. Whatever she wants to do, 100 per cent support", said fan Gloria Amaya after the ruling.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

Merkel urges unvaccinated to reconsider

German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged unvaccinated people to reconsider their decision in a video message on Saturday, as the country's seven-day coronavirus incidence rate rose to the highest level since the pandemic began.

"Difficult weeks lie ahead of us, and you can see that I am very worried", Merkel said, speaking in her weekly video podcast. "I urgently ask everyone who has not yet been vaccinated: Please reconsider."



The German army is preparing to mobilise 12,000 soldiers by Christmas to assist overrun healthcare services, *Spiegel* newspaper reported, and will provide booster vaccinations and tests in care homes and hospitals.

NAIROBI

Tigray rebels killed scores of civilians: Watchdog

Tigrayan rebels killed scores of civilians in the Amhara region on suspicion of being informants or offering aid to federal forces, the government-affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said in a report published on Saturday.

The investigation, which draws on 128 interviews, focuses on parts of Amhara which saw heavy fighting in July and August between fighters from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and Ethiopian soldiers as the country's brutal conflict enters its



second year.

At least 184 civilians died as a result of the bloodshed, the EHRC said, accusing TPLF fighters of "willfully (killing) scores of civilians in towns and rural areas they captured".

WASHINGTON

Block on jab mandate for businesses to stay

A US federal court on Friday maintained a suspension of the Biden administration's mandate requiring large businesses to vaccinate employees for Covid-19.

The three-judge panel for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans affirmed its initial order from last week, which blocked the mandate from going into effect.

The court said on Friday that the mandate "grossly exceeds" the administration's authority.

If upheld, the suspension



would represent a major setback to one of Biden's most far-reaching and high-impact efforts to secure the widespread immunisation of American workers ahead of a winter when a resurgence of Covid-19 is expected.

Tunisian town revolts over trash crisis

AYMEN JAMLI

As tear gas and protest cries filled the air in the Tunisian town of Agareb, Mabrouka Ben Ibrahim vowed to demonstrate for her daughter, whose death she blames on a nearby rubbish dump. Yousra, 21, died in 2019 after being bitten by a mosquito that came from the toxic trash site, Ben Ibrahim said.

“I lost my daughter and I don’t want other families to lose their children because of the filth in this landfill,” the 59-year-old said.

Residents say rubbish dumped at the site, including dangerous industrial and medical refuse, has caused a string of diseases from cancer to vision problems and infertility.

Authorities decided to close the site in September after declaring it full but reversed course on Monday, prompting angry street demonstrations that degenerated into clashes with security forces.

In the early hours of Tuesday, a protester died of what relatives said was tear gas inhalation, although authorities have blamed his death on an unrelated health condition.

The protests come amid a garbage crisis across Sfax province that has seen refuse piling up on pavements after the closure of the Agareb site, the province’s main dump.

Residents say the site, around three kilometres (two miles) from the town centre and stretching over 35 hectares (85 acres), has become a public health disaster since it opened in 2008.

“Two years after it was opened, we started seeing an increase in allergies, respiratory diseases and miscarriages as a direct result of burning of trash and the release of toxic gases” from the site, said Bassem Ben Ammar, a doctor who has worked in the town for two decades.

“The number of cancer cases has shot up.”

Even as the smell of tear gas dissipates, the stench of refuse still hangs over the town of 40,000.

“During the summer and throughout the year, the mosquitos and the disgusting smell never leave us. We can’t even open our windows,” demonstrator Adel Ben Faraj said. The dump, situated in the middle of a nature reserve, receives more than 620 tonnes of waste every day, according to Ines Labiadh of the FTDES rights group.

— AFP



ROYAL SPECTACLE

The Lord Mayor’s State Coach is pictured outside the Royal Courts of Justice during the annual Lord Mayor’s Show through the streets of the City of London on Saturday. The annual Lord Mayor’s Show is a hugely diverse event featuring a 7,000-strong, three-mile-long procession of over 125 floats.

– AFP

Woke: Slapped With the Truth, Or Kissed With a Lie?



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

IT ARRIVED AT A TIME OF CHAOS AND UNCERTAINTY, IN A PANDEMIC VACUUM, AND HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY ACADEMIA AND THE INTELLECTUAL HIERARCHY AS A NEVER-TO-BE-MISSED OPPORTUNITY, A CRUSADE, AND MAY BE IN THE END, A VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS.

How many times this week have you read, or heard, the word ‘woke?’ So often and so liberally applied, in so many contexts and so many settings, it is, by stealth it appears, impacting every society in so many ways. As a pure philosophy, woke, or wokeness should be appreciated, even embraced, however, the executive machine, the ‘movement,’ appears to be taking much of what has been hard fought and hard won in the past, and cast it all aside, good and bad, the baby with the bath water!

“Wake up Africa,” wrote Marcus Garvey in 1923, urging the freedom of Africa, then folk singer, Hud Ledbetter sang of needing to “stay woke, and keep your eyes open.” Novelist William Melvin Kelley, wrote, “If you are woke you dig it,” playwright Barry Beckham wrote, “I been sleeping all my life. And now that Mr Garvey (yes, the same Marcus Garvey) done woke me up, I’m gonna stay woke,” while soul artist Erykah Badu tweeted, “Truth requires no belief, stay woke.”

It has links to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement which was enraged by the deaths, in 2012, of Trayvon Williams in Florida, in 2014, of Michael Brown Jnr, and then last year, of George Floyd Jnr, all at the hands of over-zealous police, the latter touching off riots such as America

had not seen in decades. BLM divided a nation, and offered an opportunity through its hashtag, #staywoke, to a new wave of discontent, which is now labelled ‘woke.’

Though defined, for the first time as an adjective, in the Oxford Dictionary in 2017 as, “well-informed, up-to-date.” It is now defined as, “alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice.” That is an absolutely jaw-dropping etymological evolution within four short years, evolving from passive to aggressive in the blink of an eye. Though looking at the impact of woke-ness on our lives, it is a fair description of how far woke has come, from the obtuse, obscure, narrative use of a word we all know as the past participle of ‘wake,’ to something that could have been a resilient, sustainable, movement for social change, liberation and acceptance, but instead appears to have morphed into a much more sinister, corrupted, vision of the future.

‘Woke,’ an awakening, was, and is needed, but its many elements cry out for informed discussion and debate, otherwise we are in danger of being bitten by the very same dystopian beast it seeks to protect us from. Isaac Asimov was of the opinion that the greatest danger to society is the erosion

of intellect, “nurtured by the false notion that one man’s ignorance and another’s knowledge are equal.” Yet ignorance in this age is a choice, a lazy choice, the refuge of miserable, bitter, lost souls, because it is the denial of an opportunity, the rejection of society, and the ultimate in self-ness.

George Orwell, wrote, “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history,” and that, I fear, is the danger of the woke culture, as it clearly advocates resistance to bigotry, by creating its own, rejecting labels by creating its own, denying difference, and celebration of culture and tradition, in favour of gender. It is virtue-signaling at its worst, and in its indecent haste, its gratuitous appetite for acceptance, woke has, in its naivety, become a tool for political expediency, not social awareness. It arrived at a time of chaos and uncertainty, in a pandemic vacuum, and has been adopted by academia and the intellectual hierarchy as a never-to-be-missed opportunity, a crusade, and may be in the end, a victim of its own success. Woke speaks so eloquently that we don’t know if we are being, as the ancient Russian proverb says, “slapped with the truth, or kissed with a lie.” What do you think?

A strategic compass for Europe to boost its role as regional, global actor



JOSEP BORRELL

THE EUROPEAN UNION IS AT RISK OF “STRATEGIC SHRINKAGE,” OWING TO GEOPOLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND IDEOLOGICAL PRESSURES FROM ALL SIDES.

A compass helps one find one’s way, and the “Strategic Compass” that I have drafted at the behest of the European Council will serve as an operational guide for the European Union’s development and decision-making on security and defence. It is now heading to EU foreign affairs and defence ministers for discussions next week.

The compass is designed to answer three questions: Which challenges and threats do we face? How can we better pool our assets and manage them effectively? And what is the best way to project Europe’s influence as both a regional and global actor?

Our overall threat analysis shows clearly that Europe is in danger. The EU risks what I have called a “strategic shrinkage.” This can be perceived from three

points of view. First, our economic reach is becoming increasingly circumscribed. Thirty years ago, the EU represented one-quarter of the world’s wealth; in 20 years, it will account for just over 10 per cent. Our demographic shrinkage develops similarly: By the end of this century, Europe will account for less than 5 per cent of the world’s population.

More fundamentally, some of our economic competitors hold values that are very different from ours, thus posing a threat to our normative power. The EU must integrate this fact into its policymaking, recognising that the competition for global standards is already playing out in the race for mastery over artificial intelligence, cloud computing, semiconductors, and biotechnology.

Second, the EU’s strategic

theatre is increasingly contested, owing to challenges by new ambitious actors, demonstrations of military force, and destabilisation strategies featuring cyber warfare and disinformation. Gone are the days when peace and war constituted two clearly distinct states. We are and will increasingly be confronted with hybrid situations that require a broad range of defensive assets.

Finally, the EU’s political sphere is being squeezed, and our liberal values increasingly contested. In the “battle of narratives,” the idea that universal values are really just Western constructs has been gaining traction. The old assumption that economic prosperity would always lead to democratic development has been refuted.

In navigating this increasingly

competitive strategic environment, the EU must become a provider of security for its citizens, protecting our values and interests. But to do that, it will need to act faster and more decisively when managing crises. That means anticipating fast-changing threats and safeguarding its citizens against them; investing in the necessary capabilities and technologies; and cooperating with partners to achieve common goals.

Such measures will increase our capacity to deter attacks, and to react to one if it comes. The main value of military force is not that it allows us to solve problems, but that it can help to prevent problems being solved to our detriment. That is why the Strategic Compass proposes an EU capacity for rapid force deployment across the entire spectrum of actions envisaged by

EU treaties.

Past attempts to deploy EU forces swiftly have met with only limited success. But the Strategic Compass aims to make such deployments more readily operational and effective in three ways. First, it would follow a modular approach, with its composition defined by concrete scenarios and reinforced by joint training, rather than being pre-positioned as a permanent force.

Second, there would be clear guidelines stating that it is the mission that determines the type and size of the force, not vice versa. And, third, we could step up our efforts to overcome various shortcomings that have long hampered our operational capabilities, with clear actions that should receive priority.

Copyright: Project Syndicate

sport

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om
follow us: @observersportz



The ultimate **70KM-CHALLENGE** is the most technical, presenting athletes with a daunting elevation of **2,210m**. The race then covers relatively flat ground to **Wadi Al Mauydaen** towards the middle point, **Wadi Bani Habib**, before starting the descent back to **Birkat Al Mouz** through **Sayq** and **Sallut**.

OVER 420 RUNNERS PREPARE TO TAKE ON HIMAM TRAIL RUN RACE

MUSCAT: The countdown to the 2nd edition of the Himam Trail Run Race is on with over 420 runners from 30 countries preparing for a challenge that will put their trail running and endurance skills to the test. Taking centre stage in Nizwa on December 3, the race is set to start in front of the Bait Al Rudaydah Castle in Birkat Al Mouz, where trail running enthusiasts and professionals will run one of three distances, 70km, 35km or 20km in a route across Jabal Akhdhar.

The ultimate 70km-challenge is the most technical, presenting athletes with a daunting elevation of 2,210m. The race then covers relatively flat ground to Wadi Al Mauydaen towards the middle point, Wadi Bani Habib, before starting the descent back to Birkat Al Mouz through Sayq and Sallut. The distance is certified by the International Trail Running Association (ITRA), and is worth three ITRA points to each finisher. The first runner to finish the course will receive a prize of RO 500, RO 300 for second and RO 150 for third. The first female finisher will receive

RO 150 and all runners completing the course within 18 hours will receive a medal.

The 2nd distance is an intermediate course that offers a carefully-considered route of 35km offering a variety of terrains and a comfortable descent to the finish line. The race follows the same route as the beginners' race to the village of Al Muaydaen and then climbs to reach Masirat Al Rawajih, a total elevation of 1,050m before turning back and finishing in Birkat Al Mouz. All runners finishing within the eight-hour time limit will receive a medal. The third distance is beginners' race which has been designed for newcomers to trail running and runners aged 16 and over. The course covers 20km and an elevation of 350m through the old town of Birkat Al Mouz and lush date plantations nearby before following a wide wadi towards the mountains and passing through Tawi Saddah and the village of Al Muaydaen before turning back towards Birkat Al Mouz.

All races begin at 6.15 am on Friday, December 3, 2021. It is recommended that runners seek accommodation

within the area. A number of options are available and the organisers have negotiated preferential rates for registered Himam Trail Run Race runners.

The Himam Trail Run Race is organised by Al Sahwa Team, under the umbrella of Nizwa Club. The event is also supported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) as main partner, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and the Authority for SME Development (Riyada). The event will operate in accordance to the latest safety procedures as per guidance from the Ministry of Health and Supreme Committee. Masks are mandatory for spectators while in the start/finish areas and during the closing ceremony.

For more information, to receive the Runner's Guide and to register, please contact the organising committee using WhatsApp on 9540 9757 or 9244 8742, on Instagram at @himam_adventure, Twitter @Hikinghimam or by email at hikinghimam@gmail.com.



Hamilton and Verstappen risk penalties in Brazil



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton (also, right) powers his car during the qualifying session at the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace, or Interlagos racetrack, in Sao Paulo. – AFP



Red Bull's Max Verstappen (also, left) gets out of his cockpit after taking the second place in the qualifying session for Brazil's Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix. – AFP

SAO PAULO: Formula One title rivals Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton both faced possible sanctions on Saturday after being accused of breaking the rules ahead of the Sao Paulo Grand Prix.

On a day of drama in Brazil after qualifying for a Saturday sprint race that determines Sunday's starting grid, Mercedes driver Hamilton and then Red Bull's championship leader Verstappen caught the stewards' attention.

Seven times world champion Hamilton dominated qualifying at the Interlagos circuit but his car then failed a technical check, with the risk of

demotion to the back of the sprint field.

Stewards ordered the rear wing assembly to be impounded and the car stored overnight.

A spokesman for the governing FIA said the officials were awaiting further evidence that would not be available until morning.

A statement then delivered another bombshell by summoning Verstappen and a team representative to a meeting at 0930 local time (1230 GMT) for an alleged breach of the international sporting code.

Video footage posted by a fan on social media showed Verstappen seemingly

Seven times world champion Hamilton dominated qualifying at the Interlagos circuit but his car then failed a technical check, with the risk of demotion to the back of the sprint field

checking with his hands the rear wings of his Red Bull and Hamilton's Mercedes after they had parked up post-qualifying.

Article 2.5.1 of the sporting code states that "no operation, checking, tuning or repair is allowed" in that secure area unless authorised by officials.

NEW ENGINE

Hamilton, 19 points adrift of Verstappen with four races remaining, already has a five-place grid penalty for Sunday's race after Mercedes changed the engine in his car.

The Briton had clocked a fastest time of one minute 07.934 seconds with

Verstappen 0.438 slower, a considerable margin around one of the shortest laps on the calendar.

"Let's go," exclaimed Hamilton over the team radio.

Three points are to be won in the sprint but Hamilton's chances of taking them were thrown into doubt by a measurement of millimetres.

Formula One technical delegate Jo Bauer reported the uppermost rear wing adjustable positions did not comply with the rules for a maximum distance of 85mm when the drag reduction system was deployed.

— Reuters



TRANS-TASMAN SUPREMACY AT STAKE IN DUBAI

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 13

When Trans-Tasman rivals Australia and New Zealand lock horns for the title of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 in Dubai on Sunday, the summit clash will be a measure of how far the latter have developed over the years.

Australia have been the traditional giants of world cricket for the better part of the last two and a half decades and the Kiwis their supremely talented but less celebrated neighbours.

Australia's victory against New Zealand in the 2015 ODI World Cup final was a body blow to the psyche of the New Zealand players including their great skipper of the time, Brendon McCullum.

However, this New Zealand side under the captaincy of Kane Williamson is probably cut from a different cloth.

Ever since their heartbreaking 2019 ODI World Cup final defeat to England by boundary count,



Australia's Glenn Maxwell (R) gestures during a practice session in Dubai. – AFP

this New Zealand team has been a totally different beast.

Minus the superstars that some of the other big teams possess, this New Zealand team is a unit of high-performing individuals who contribute immensely in a cohesive team-environment.

Their power-packed batting line-up comprising the likes of Devon Conway, who will miss the final and replaced by Tim Seifert, Kane Williamson, James Neesham, Martin

MINUS THE SUPERSTARS THAT SOME OF THE OTHER BIG TEAMS POSSESS, THIS NEW ZEALAND TEAM IS A UNIT OF HIGH-PERFORMING INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTRIBUTE IMMENSELY IN A COHESIVE TEAM-ENVIRONMENT

Guptill, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips etc have transformed the hitting ability and depth of the team.

The bowling might of Trent



(L-R) Australia's Steven Smith, Matthew Wade and Ashton Agar talk during a practice session at the ICC Academy in Dubai. – AFP

Boult, Tim Southee coupled with the spin of Ish Sodhi pose a potent threat to any opposition anywhere.

New Zealand is on the cusp

of a renaissance moment in their cricketing history as they take on Australia and a title here would cap off their greatest ever season.

AUSTRALIA PEAKING RIGHT

The Australians were not exactly favourites coming into the tournament and have been playing second fiddle to the much-fancied England side.

However, come the knockout stages of the

tournament and they have turned into a completely different team. The semifinal against Pakistan showed a glimpse of just how dangerous an outfit the Aussies can be.

Their legendary fighting abilities and imperious demeanour could play a crucial factor in a high-pressure World Cup final.

CHASE WILL BE THE WAY

Irrespective of whether dew will be a factor or not, Aaron Finch and Kane Williamson will be looking to chase down as has been the successful trend this World Cup.

With the bevy of power-hitters on both sides, it could well be another run-feast that could make for heart-stopping action in the death overs of the second innings.

If there is any team that truly deserves a white-ball World Cup title, it is New Zealand. The Aussies could just make it that much more harder for them given the added Trans-Tasman spice.



England's Harry Kane shoots at goal. – Reuters

ENGLAND IN THUMPING WIN OVER ALBANIA

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, NOV 12

A resounding 5-0 win by England over Albania has put them within one point of qualifying for the World Cup in Qatar next year. They play away to San Marino on Monday and achieving a point seems merely a formality against the weakest team who have lost all their nine matches so far in the group.

This was a highly impressive goal-scoring display by England who top Group 1 with seven wins and two draws. Leading them in a goal spree was captain Harry

Kane with a hat-trick in a space of 27 minutes which took his tally of international goals to 44 with all five England goals coming in the first half. Kane, who had been somewhat off his goal-scoring form in recent days, roared back emphatically on this occasion.

Albania did miss an opportunity early in the first half to score, in the 14th minute, when a poorly judged back-pass from Kyle Walker sent Myrto Uzuni through but Jordan Pickford executed an excellent save.

By that point England had opened the scoring — in the ninth minute — with a goal from Harry Maguire from a free-kick taken by

This was a highly impressive goal-scoring display by England who top Group 1 with seven wins and two draws. Leading them in a goal spree was captain Harry Kane with a hat-trick in a space of 27 minutes which took his tally of international goals to 44 with all five England goals coming in the first half

Reece James. It was a lovely, curling ball from the right and Maguire beat his marker to head powerfully in for his fifth England goal in a year.

England doubled the lead in the 18th minute with Jordan Henderson taking a return pass from Phil Foden on the right and lifting the ball into the box where an unmarked Kane helped himself to a header at the far post.

Henderson kept himself strongly in the action and ten minutes later in the same combination, it was Kane who passed to Henderson in the penalty area, after beating two defenders and Henderson found the far corner of the goal with a

left-footed shot.

The next two goals, both by Kane, completed England's tally of five. Shortly after he had a 20-yard shot pushed wide by Thomas Strakosha, Raheem Sterling intercepted a bad pass and made a run through the middle of the field to pass to Kane, who despite a difficult angle took a left-footed shot inside the far post.

In 34 minutes, England were 4-0 up. It was an extraordinary performance by them considering that Albania are not a particularly weak side. They lie third in a group of six and have beaten Hungary twice, home and away, during this

qualifying stage. However, England had not finished yet and kept the pressure on their opponents with relentless attack.

It was in added time of the first half that Kane completed his hat-trick with the most spectacular of his goals. It came following a corner taken by Ben Chilwell. An in-swinging ball towards Kane, who with his back to the goal, volleyed a scissors-kick that found the net with a slight deflection. Albania tightened their defence in the second half but it was all too late for them to make any impression at all. In any case, their attack had lacked penetration throughout.

Kontaveit crushes Pliskova to advance at WTA Finals

GUADALAJARA, Mexico: Anett Kontaveit powered past third-seeded Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 6-0 to lead the way into the semifinals of the season-ending WTA Finals at Guadalajara on Friday.

The eighth-seeded Estonian continued her late-season surge, notching her 12th straight WTA match win as she assured herself of finishing in the top two of her group in the round-robin phase.

Spain's Garbine Muguruza kept her hopes of advancing from the same group alive with a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over reigning French Open champion Barbora Krejickova.

Kontaveit, whose win streak included titles at Moscow and Cluj-Napoca, had beaten Krejickova in her tournament opener.

"Of course, very thrilled to be in the semifinals," said Kontaveit, who needed just 57 minutes to roar past Pliskova, winning 24 of her 29 first-service points and claiming the last eight games for her first career victory over the Czech in four meetings.

"I wasn't thinking about the fact that I was three-love down in previous matches," Kontaveit said. "Every time you step on the

Every time you step on the court you have a new opportunity. The previous matches don't really matter. It's a new day and you have to beat the player you're playing against

ANETT KONTAVEIT
Estonian player

court you have a new opportunity. The previous matches don't really matter. It's a new day and you have to beat the player you're playing against."

But Kontaveit is riding a wave of confidence, having won 28 of her past 30 matches. "I've really been enjoying being on court, just having a good time," she said.

"I think that's been the main thing why I've been doing so well. I do feel like I can take on everyone. I never expect an easy match, I always expect it to be tough. I just try my best when I go out there."

Muguruza's gutsy victory over

Krejickova means that she along with Krejickova and Pliskova remain in the hunt for a semifinal spot heading into their final round-robin matches on Sunday.

After holding serve just once in the opening set the Spaniard raised her level, breaking Krejickova for 3-1 in the second and stretching her lead to 4-1 with a superb service effort that featured two aces in the fifth game.

Krejickova managed to regain the break in a hard-fought seventh game, finally converting her sixth break of the game.

But Muguruza broke back and served out the set with an ace up the middle.

Muguruza battled to a break for a 2-1 lead in the third set — taking the 12-minute game on her sixth break point — and made the advantage stand up.

It was the fourth meeting of the season between the two. Muguruza had beaten the Czech in the Dubai final but lost to her at Cincinnati and the US Open.

The elite tournament was moved to Guadalajara this year from its usual home in Shenzhen, China, due to the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



Estonia's Anett Kontaveit celebrates after beating the Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova. – AFP

#MAISARAHWORLD

Now is the best time to finance your dreams.

Offer valid until 31 December 2021

For more information visit: <https://www.maisarah-oman.com/Default/Finance.aspx>

2477 5777 | www.maisarah-oman.com | [/MaisarahOman](#) | [@MaisarahIslamic](#) | [@MaisarahIslamic](#)

PERSONAL FINANCE
PROFIT RATE
4.5%

HOUSING FINANCE
PROFIT RATE
4.9%

MAISARAH
making life easy

Direct debit facility set for launch in Oman: CBO

STRENGTHENING E-PAYMENTS:
The Central Bank is currently working on the “e-mandate” – an e-authorisation effectively authorising, for example, a utility to deduct the monthly bills for mobile subscription or other utility bills

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Building on the rollout of e-payment services in the Sultanate of Oman, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is gearing up to launch Direct Debit services — a facility that enables customers to authorise service providers, such as utilities, telecom companies, and others, to directly debit their accounts at monthly or other agreed intervals.

The service, likely to be launched before the end of this year, will be the latest in a string of initiatives spearheaded by the country’s apex bank to enable transactions to be conducted electronically.

The rollout of these initiatives, which include the digital



Direct debit is a service where the payer will give authority to the beneficiary to draw money from his account, and this is done through a mandate. When operational, the customer can issue an e-mandate from the website of service provider with an e-authorisation form

ALI BIN HAMID AL JABRI
Manager – Payment Systems, CBO



processing of salary payment, inclusion of micro-businesses in the e-payment system, and the mandating of the private sector to use e-payments, has been made possible by upgrades to the National Payments infrastructure, as well as the National Payment Systems (NPS) Law, a high-level official said.

“Direct debit is a service where the payer will give authority to the beneficiary to draw money from his account, and this is

done through a mandate,” said Ali bin Hamid al Jabri (pictured), Manager – Payment Systems, CBO. “Its (rollout) was delayed because the legal framework did not support the direct debit facility. However, we have now included it in the NPS Law, which now gives the Central Bank the power to regulate direct debit.”

The official made the announcement during a recent conference on new banking developments held in the city.

The apex bank, Al Jabri noted, is currently working on the “e-mandate” for direct debit — an e-authorisation effectively authorising, for example, a utility to deduct the monthly bills for mobile subscription or other utility payments.

“When operational, the customer can issue an e-mandate from the website of service provider with an e-authorisation form. The customer gives their consent to the utility to deduct the

billed amount from their account. We are working right now on the e-authorisation, using the Public Key Infrastructure PKI (which is under the remit of the Royal Oman Police) and utilise current services offered by banks such as mobile banking and Internet banking.”

Significantly, once legalised, direct debit mandates will have legal power similar to cheques. Also on the anvil for imminent launch by the Central Bank is the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) system — a globally accepted format for numbering overseas bank accounts.

The new system will help enhance the safety and security of banking transactions between customers across national borders. It will complement the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) system currently in place in the Sultanate of Oman for identifying banks. While SWIFT is a code that is primarily used to pinpoint a specific bank during an international transaction, the IBAN system is used to identify an individual account involved in an overseas transaction.

WE ARE GOING HYBRID!

Now you can attend the Summit in person at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

GREEN HYDROGEN SUMMIT OMAN

NOV 29 - DEC 1, 2021
MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN

“ Given the robust interest garnered from key industry players around the world, the Green Hydrogen Oman event will deliver the critical mass necessary for us in the Sultanate to chart a credible pathway to produce this zero-carbon fuel for our own domestic consumption and for global markets. I am delighted to see that we are working closely with international investors, partners, technology providers and academia in the realization of this important vision for Oman. ”

H.E Eng. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi
Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals
Sultanate of Oman

TOWARDS A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

Register now: www.greenhydrogensummitoman.com
Contact number: 98 92 82 00

Bank Muscat extends support to visually-impaired students

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has extended strong support to students with special needs studying in different educational institutions in Oman. The bank provided BrailleSense devices and laptops to a number of visually impaired students at Sohar University to support and motivate them.

The devices were given away in the presence of Dr Hamdan bin Sulaiman al Fazari, Acting President, Sohar University, and Yousuf bin Khalfan al Nadabi, Regional Manager North Al Batinah, Bank Muscat. These devices will help the students both in their studies and also in their day-to-day lives by enhancing their skills and capabilities and their potential to contribute to society.

On this occasion, Talib bin Saifal Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: “We are happy with our constant partnership with Sohar University in extending support to students. Continuing our strong partnership with higher education institutions is one of the top most priorities at Bank Muscat.

Such initiatives are of great importance because they are designed to contribute in enhancing the day-to-day life of visually-impaired students and extend a helping hand to improving their success rate in higher education and help them get suitable job opportunities in the future. This is a key part of



Bank Muscat’s efforts in social responsibility in different fields.”

Talib al Makhmari added: “We are proud to partner with higher education institutions and we will continue supporting our students and offer them the best possible opportunities in their journey.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Sohar University for their cooperation and partnership in making this initiative a success.”

The students expressed their happiness to receive these special-ised devices which will help them have an easier learning experience.

Huriya bint Khalfan al Subhi, an Arabic language and literature student at Sohar University, said: “I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Bank Muscat for

this thoughtful initiative.

It was a pleasant surprise for us, as we were hoping to get BrailleSense devices and the bank made our dreams come true. These devices will offer us a helping hand and will help us in terms of taking notes and browsing the Internet quickly. We also hope that it will help us later in our jobs in the future.”

Nasser bin Hamood al Sawafi, who is also studying Arabic language and literature at Sohar University, said: “I am very thrilled to get a BrailleSense device. This is a great initiative from a leading institution like Bank Muscat.

I was waiting to get this device since it can positively help me in both my personal life and in my studies. This device is well known

for helping visually impaired students follow up on their classes since they offer various supporting features. It will for sure open new horizons for us in the future.”

As a forward looking financial institution, Bank Muscat has always tried to set an example for the corporate sector to develop social responsibility as part of its corporate culture.

The bank runs over 10 long term projects aimed at supporting different segments of society. The bank has previously supported a number of non-governmental organisations working for the welfare of disabled people in the Sultanate of Oman including the Oman Association for the Disabled and the Al Noor Association for the Blind.

More than 58,000 SMEs registered with Riyada

MUSCAT: The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) registered with the SME Development Authority (Riyada) as of September-end 2021 was 58,683, compared to 46,577 at the September-end 2020, entailing an increase of 26 per cent increase, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Muscat Governorate accounted for the largest share of SMEs (19,899 enterprises), followed by North Al Batinah (9,288), Al Dakhiliyah (7,176), Dhofar (4,889), South Al Batinah (4,482), North Al Sharqiyah (3,877), South Al Sharqiyah (3,522), Al Dhahirah (3,252), Al Buraimi (246), Al Wusta (779), and Musandam (273). — ONA

Al Khoud Water ramps up delivery fleet with 2022 model Isuzu trucks



MUSCAT: Al Khoud Water has taken delivery of a fleet of Isuzu Trucks to help strengthen the reach of its increasingly popular product range in the Sultanate of Oman.

Global Pioneer LLC, which produces and distributes the reputable water brand, has bolstered its delivery fleet with a set of five all-new, 2022 model Isuzu trucks that represent the transportation vehicle of choice for the FMCG industry in Oman and the wider world.

The deal, based on a long-term lease agreement, was made possible by VLC, the vehicle leasing arm of OTE Group — the exclusive distributor of Isuzu Trucks in the Sultanate of Oman.

At a handover ceremony held recently in the presence of Mohamed Ali, General Manager, Global Pioneer LLC, the brand new Isuzu fleet made for a colourful sight. Featuring closed metal bodies customised for mineral water distribution, all five trucks were emblazoned with the brand colours of Al Khoud Water combined with other striking graphics.

Global Pioneer LLC’s model of choice was the Isuzu NPR 85 — a work-horse well-known across the world for its durability and strength. Drawn from Isuzu’s acclaimed N-Series of trucks, the NPR 85 is equipped with powertrains that maximise performance with high torque output and fuel efficient engines.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the NPR range is an enduring favourite with transporters of consumer goods given the challenges of accessing many remote villages and towns that are connected only via unpaved roads. A powerful 3-lt turbo engine offers 130 HP at 2,800 rpm, enabling a fully-loaded truck to perform commendably even with a maximum gross vehicle weight of 6.5 tonnes.

“It was a pleasure to have Global Pioneer LLC reach out to OTE for its fleet expansion. Isuzu prides on providing unmatched value along with significant benefits when leased from VLC, our in-house leasing agency,” commented Malay Saha, Vice President — OTE Group.

ahli islamic holds 2021 Qitaf Q3 draw

MUSCAT: ahli islamic held its 2021 Qitaf third quarter draw, which saw the top winner walk away with a whopping RO 100,000.

The streamed live virtual event also announced the lucky winner of its RO 20,000 October draw, and presented winners of its weekly prize scheme: children’s draw of RO 50 — for three winners, and RO 250 — for two winners, from each branch, respectively.

Reiterating ahli islamic’s pledge to fulfil its customers’ dreams by creating opportunities that help financially stabilise their future, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of the ahli islamic, said, “On behalf of ahli islamic, it gives me great pleasure to felicitate (Ahmed Mohammed), the winner of Qitaf third quarter draw from Ghubra



branch. We hope that the prize money will help him achieve his dreams. I would also like to take this opportunity to call on our customers to continue saving and improve their prospect of winning through our Qitaf prize scheme. At ahli islamic, we believe in growth that is attained by

delivering a portfolio of innovative products and services, which not only meets the customers’ needs, but also enables them to benefit in far-reaching ways. This is in addition to our unstinted support in helping our customers maintain their financial stability, secure their future, and fulfil their aspirations.”

Drawing attention to the virtues of Qitaf, he added: “Qitaf reflects our efforts to provide unique savings opportunities that are in line with the needs of customers. Our larger objective is to instill a culture of prudent savings among them and reward them for their commitment through quarterly, monthly and weekly and children weekly prize draws, in addition to special event draws. In our new 2021 Qitaf prize scheme, we have added new categories to increase our customers’ chances of winning.

“As has been established, ahli islamic continues to offer innovative and attractive schemes to reward customers, while encouraging them to adopt productive financial habits to achieve their long-term goals.”

Sohar International, Vodafone enter into strategic alliance

MUSCAT: Sohar International recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vodafone.

The signing ceremony which was held at Vodafone head office witnessed the presence of key officials from both parties with the partnership agreement being signed between Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer of Sohar International and Sayyid Fahd bin Abdulaziz al Busaidy, Chief Support Service Officer at Vodafone.

“Sohar International has demonstrated

dedication in aligning itself to the diversification goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040 and has played a vital role in boosting various sectors through strategic alliances with key players.

Through this agreement, Sohar International has partnered with Vodafone on strategic alliance, and potential future collaboration between the two companies, seeking opportunities to boost modernisation, enhance customer satisfaction and expand the communication networks in the country,” said Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking



Officer at Sohar International.

“Vodafone has been recognised as an international leader in

telecom and we are indeed proud partner with the brand. With a strong track record attesting to

its business excellence, we are certain that this partnership will be mutually beneficial.

Meanwhile, our expert team of professionals will offer their unconditional support and assistance to Vodafone as they establish their presence in the country.”

“We are proud to support partnerships that provides opportunities for mutually beneficial business ventures. Signing the Memorandum of Understanding with Sohar International marks the beginning of a long-term

collaboration, and we will continue to encourage future projects with Sohar International who have industry-proven ability to provide innovative solutions to customers” said Sayyid Fahd al Busaidy, Chief Support Services Officer at Vodafone.

Sharing a common vision to deliver exceptional customer service, innovative products and services, and contribute to the economic growth of the country, the signing of the MoU is a significant milestone for both Sohar International and Vodafone.



In brief

NEW YORK

**US WORKERS QUITTING REACHES RECORD HIGH, JOB OPENINGS UP**

The number of Americans voluntarily quitting their jobs rose to a record high in September while job openings stayed stubbornly above pre-pandemic levels, a sign that businesses may have to continue to raise wages in order to attract workers.

The Labour Department's monthly Job Openings and Labour Turnover Survey, or JOLTS report reflects an uneven economy with strong demand grinding against labour and goods shortages, driving overall inflation to its biggest annual gain in 31 years. Wage inflation shows few signs of abating even as the daily case rate of coronavirus infections ebbs, with employers in almost every industry competing to lure workers and three million fewer people in the labour force compared to pre-pandemic levels. — Reuters

WASHINGTON

**US TO OPEN TALKS WITH JAPAN ON IMPORT STEEL, ALUMINIUM TARIFFS**

The United States said on Friday it will open talks with Japan that could lead to an easing of tariffs on steel and aluminium imports, a longstanding irritant in trade relations between the two allies.

The US Commerce Department and the United States Trade Representative's Office said the talks were aimed at addressing "global steel and aluminium excess capacity", restoring market-oriented conditions and preserving critical industries. — Reuters

CALIFORNIA

**ELON MUSK SELLS \$6.9 BN IN TESLA SHARES AFTER TWITTER POLL**

Tesla CEO Elon Musk sold more than \$6.9 billion worth of shares in the electric carmaker this week, according to regulatory filings released on Friday. The 50-year-old South African billionaire sold more than 5.1 million Tesla shares, of which about 4.2 million were held in a trust.

His massive disposal hit Tesla's share price, which slumped 15.4 per cent over the week. Tesla last month became the latest US tech giant to hit \$1 trillion in market value.

Musk's sell-off came days after he created a Twitter poll — in which millions voted — asking whether he should sell 10 percent of his huge stake in the electric carmaker. — AFP

British Embassy pledges funding support for green initiatives in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA

@JmObserver

The British Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman is offering funding support for proposals that deliver in-country projects focusing on green initiatives. An announcement to this effect came on Thursday, against the backdrop of the COP26 Climate Conference that concluded in Glasgow over the weekend.

The UK, alongside Italy, hosted the Summit, which was attended by world leaders seeking to deliver on the Paris Agreement and secure global net zero by 2050. "Climate change affects us all and we must all take steps to tackle it. Oman Vision 2040 has outlined the Sultanate of Oman's ambition for climate protection and sustainable development.

The British Embassy wants to support these aims by working with



a number of partners to deliver in-country projects focusing on green initiatives which will have demonstrable effect and long-term

sustainable impact in the Sultanate of Oman", the Embassy said in a statement.

The objective, it noted, is to

support as many local projects that demonstrate positive effect on green initiatives within the Sultanate of Oman.

Preference will be given to proposals from partners who have an ability to deliver projects locally within the Sultanate of Oman that, among other things, educate and increase awareness of climate issues and promote positive action, as well as support research initiatives focused on the environment and effects in the country, it said.

Consideration will also be given to projects focusing on environmental protection, long term preservation and recycling.

Initiatives that promote accelerator programmes or other initiatives which are focused on offering green solutions, as well as those that support women and youth engagement will be welcomed, it added. "We are inviting bids of up to £500,000 (approx. RO 250,000), the Embassy said, adding that project proposals must be submitted by Wednesday, November 24, 2021.

Roundtable discussion identifies business opportunities for Indian firms in Oman

**BUSINESS REPORTER**

MUSCAT, NOV 13

The Embassy of India, Muscat organised a forum on the theme, 'Ambassador's CEO Roundtable: Indian Businesses in Oman — A promising future', last week. The event was attended by CEOs and heads of prominent Indian business houses and Indian public sector undertakings in the Sultanate of Oman.

In opening remarks, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, spoke about the significance of India-Oman trade and investment relations and the contribution of the Indian diaspora and Indian companies to further enhance these relations. He mentioned that there is a huge potential for Indian companies in the Sultanate of Oman in the post-Covid period, noting that this is the right time to tap the Omani market.

Ambassador Narang underlined the importance of aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and work together with the Sultanate of Oman to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

This would be beneficial for the growth of Indian companies in the Sultanate of Oman, he stated.

Additionally, Indian companies can play a crucial role of connecting and guiding Indian companies and their counterparts in the Sultanate of Oman on the basis of their experience and knowledge about the country, he said.

Narang also encouraged participants and all Indian companies in the Sultanate of Oman to explore possibilities to bring Omani investment to India to realize the Indian government's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Indian companies here should try to import more products made in India.

Participants were unanimously positive about the Omani economic growth and investment opportunity in the post-pandemic period. To this end, they shared their constructive ideas and views for stronger cooperation between India and the Sultanate of Oman.

There was unanimity among the participants that Oman Vision 2040 presents new opportunities for further growth of Indian business and committed to better aligning their respective strategies to Vision 2040. It was agreed that potential major sectors for Indian companies in the Sultanate of Oman are IT including digital services & education, agriculture and food products, pharmaceuticals, mining, new energy, transportation and tourism.

The need for more visits of business delegations from India to the Sultanate of Oman and vice-versa, organising sector-specific buyer-seller meets, investment related seminars and a GAP analysis to assess the potentials of Indian companies in the Sultanate of Oman in different sectors was also discussed.

MSX 30 index retreats as sub-indices decline

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.94 per cent. All sub-indices ended lower. The Services Index fell 0.85 per cent, followed by the Financial Index that fell by 0.45 per cent and industrial Index that dropped by 0.09 per cent. MSX Shariah Index closed lower by 0.88 per cent. During the week, Oman National Engineering & Investment Co announced that it has been awarded a contract from Al Hadeetha Resources LLC valued at RO 1.138 million.

A Royal Directive was issued to stabilise vehicle fuel prices in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the rates of October 2021 as a maximum ceiling. The government will bear the loss from the differences in oil prices till the end of 2022, the directive said.

The fuel prices for the month of October were 229 baisas/litre for M91; 239 baisas/litre for M95; and 258 baisas/litre for diesel.

Oman Chlorine announced that it has commenced commercial production of its Caustic Soda Plant Expansion project, which will contribute additional 30 metric tonnes per day to its daily production. With this expansion the capacity of the plant will be 75 metric tonnes per day.

Oman chlorine announced signing a non-binding letter with Basic Chemical Industries KSA. A regional alliance and a commercial strategic partnership including investment into one of the subsidiaries Union Chlorine LLC based in the UAE.

Oman Chlorine also didn't reach a deal on divestiture of 9 per cent stake in Union Chlorine (as disclosed on July 14, 2021 about a non-binding letter of intent signed with



Basic Chemical Industries Company) Oman Cement Company (OCC) launched an oil-well cement strength testing equipment, which is considered the most advanced instrument in the Sultanate of Oman used for measuring the quality of cement.

The testing equipment simulates the high pressure and heat conditions prevalent in oil wells to test quality.

Through this move, OCC aims to develop the quality measurement of oilfield cement produced by the company to fulfil the demand in the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate totalled 1.547m in September 2021, representing a small decline over the December 2020 registered vehicles at 1.557m, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Private vehicles topped the list of vehicles registered at 1.226m, followed by 0.232m commercial vehicles and 28,758 taxis.

The number of vehicles with temporary registration reached 10,664 compared to 15,351 vehicles in December 2020. Latest CBO data for conventional banks indicates that the weighted average Omani rial interest rate spread (calculated as lending rate

minus deposit rate) contracted by 11.6bps on year-on year basis (YoY), at 3.423 per cent during the month of Aug 2021, as the deposit rate grew by 3.4bps YoY and lending rate contracted by 8.2 bps YoY.

On month-on-month (MoM) basis, the spread dropped by 16.8bps as deposit rate increased by 5.6bps while lending rate dropped by 11.2bps.

The weighted average deposit rate on Omani rial deposits at 1.977 per cent is still below the local peak of 2.011 per cent witnessed in Feb 2021. The Omani rial spread is down about 7.4bps on year-to-date (YTD) basis. Weighted average FCY spread remained flat on month-on-month (MoM) basis during Aug 2021 at 1.98 per cent. The FCY spread is lower by about 16bps when compared to that recorded in August 2020. The spread is up 10.8bps since Dec'20.

Weighted average interest rate on private sector Omani rial time deposits dropped by 2.6bps MoM and 3.2bps YoY, somewhat steady at 4.0 per cent (down 3.6bps on YTD basis). Weighted average interest rate on all private sector deposits (Omani rial) was 1.46 per cent (flat MoM and YoY), but down 3.7bps on YTD basis.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Elon Musk can afford Biden’s EV snub

Elon Musk can glide past Joe Biden’s electric-vehicle speed bump. Tesla models wouldn’t qualify for an additional tax credit in the president’s \$1.8 trillion spending plan because the vehicles are made by non-unionised employees. But Musk has other drivers for success, mainly China.

Biden’s electric-vehicle push picks clear winners and losers. A proposal being considered in Congress would add an extra \$5,000 tax credit for vehicles and batteries made in the United States and with organised labour, on top of the \$7,500 that’s currently available. So far, General Motors’ Chevrolet Bolt is the only model that qualifies though future versions of Ford Motor’s F-150 pick-up truck, GM’s Cadillac Lyriq and Hummer would also be eligible.

That is a disadvantage for \$1 trillion Tesla, the biggest American maker of electric vehicles. While it manufactures cars in California and soon Texas, workers aren’t unionised. It’s among the automakers, along with Toyota Motor, Honda Motor and other foreign companies, that have slammed the tax credits.

Still, it’s only a tiny shock for Tesla. Musk’s firm dominates the US market with about 73 per cent share in the third quarter, according to Experian.

Teslas are already pricier, and its sales haven’t been dented despite that tax credits already favour other cars. The \$7,500 consumer incentive maxed out for the firm in 2019 when it surpassed 200,000 qualifying vehicle sales. But Tesla sales surged more than 70 per cent in the third quarter.

Musk also has another sales track: China. The People’s Republic is Tesla’s main export hub, and last year, revenue more than doubled to \$6.7 billion while it grew by 20 per cent in the United States to \$15.2 billion. China accounted for about half of overall global electric-vehicle sales in September, according to Rystad Energy, and Beijing has set a goal of EVs making up 40 per cent of all vehicle sales by 2025.

Cheaper Chevrolet has made some inroads into the United States, but a battery recall cut its market share by more than half from the second quarter to the third to 4 per cent, according to Experian. Tesla already plans to go down in price point, with a \$25,000 model possibly launching in 2023. That will keep sales humming, even without the extra Biden boost. — Reuters

Musk’s firm dominates the US market with about 73 per cent share in the third quarter

EXPERIAN



SIMPLICE A ASONGU
The author is Lead Economist and Director of the African Governance and Development Institute

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THESE SUMMITS BEGAN IN 1973, NO AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE WERE INVITED

An unprecedented Africa-France summit took place at the beginning of October in Montpellier, France.

For the first time since these summits began in 1973, no African heads of state were invited. Instead, French President Emmanuel Macron held discussions with students, entrepreneurs, artists and athletes.

The purpose of the gathering was to find ways to “rebuild” the relationship between France and Africa, especially in light of growing anti-French sentiment in many Francophone countries across the continent.

But there are reasons to question the sincerity of France’s initiative to reset relations with its former African colonies, particularly given Macron’s intervention in the creation of a new shared currency for West Africa.

In June 2019, after nearly 30 years of discussion and multiple missed deadlines, the 15 members

of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced that their planned new currency, dubbed the eco, would be introduced in 2020.

But at a joint news conference that December with President Alassane Ouattara of Ivory Coast, Macron declared that in 2020, the eight French-speaking West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) would retire their shared currency, the West African CFA franc, and replace it with a new currency — also called the eco.

This statement surprised the other seven ECOWAS countries, which are primarily Anglophone, since it directly contradicted the roadmap for a new currency set out only six months before.

On the surface, there is some logic to this course of events. The eight Francophone countries already share a currency, so theoretically they would be more prepared to be part of a currency union. After

Macron’s statement, there was some discussion that the remaining seven countries should first form a monetary union on their own.

Once this union proved functional, it would be much easier for these countries to join the eco. But in practice, the creation of the separate West African eco serves to tie these countries more closely to France than to their African neighbours.

In addition to changing the name of the West African currency, the statement by Macron and Ouattara stipulated that countries using the new eco would no longer be required to keep half their reserves in France, and France would not be involved in managing the new currency.

But, whereas the plan for the ECOWAS eco called for a flexible exchange rate, the new eco, like the CFA franc, would be pegged to the euro, and France would remain the guarantor of its convertibility.

Macron and Ouattara’s announcement created an uproar in the region. Soon after the

announcement, the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, affirmed his country’s readiness to join a new currency union — but not on the terms laid out by Macron and Ouattara. I

In January 2020, six mainly Anglophone West African countries — Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone — issued a joint statement denouncing Macron and Ouattara’s programme.

In June 2020, Nigerian President Muhammadu Bahari tweeted that the French-speaking countries’ decision to create a new common currency unilaterally implied a lack of trust in the other ECOWAS partners and indicated that his country, which accounts for 70 per cent of the ECOWAS gross domestic product, would not join.

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to rage in West Africa, many economists argue that the region needs to focus on economic recovery rather than projects like a new currency.

Nevertheless, at the end of May

2021, a West African currency symposium, Les États Généraux de l’Eco, was held in Lomé, Togo, to discuss the end of the CFA franc and the introduction of the eco.

The declaration issued at the end of the symposium affirmed the plan first introduced by Macron and Ouattara in December 2019 and the intention of the West African Francophone states to move forward.

Then, in June 2021, the ECOWAS countries held a summit in Accra, Ghana, where they announced a new timetable for their eco. It is now scheduled to be implemented in 2027. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission, blamed the pandemic for the delay.

How the ECOWAS eco will interact with the eco used in Francophone West Africa is an open question. And the answer may depend on how sincere France is about rebalancing its relationship with its former colonies.

Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2021



OUTDOOR SHOPPING

Delivery workers sort parcels at a makeshift logistics station near the Central Business District (CBD) during Singles’ Day shopping festival in Beijing, China. — Reuters

Three trends for China tech in 2022



STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

MANY LISTED CHINESE TECH-COMPANIES HAVE EXPERIENCED A MASSIVE STOCK SELL-OFF, LOSING OVER 1 TRILLION US DOLLARS OF MARKET CAP SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2021

The South China Morning Post has recently released a report that highlights how the China tech space has changed since last year, and how it will likely evolve.

On the one hand the underlying market continued to grow as the country added another 85 million Internet users in 2020, but on the other hand many listed Chinese tech-companies have experienced a massive stock sell-off, losing over 1 trillion US dollars of market cap since the beginning of 2021.

To put it in context, that is more than all of the GCC stock exchanges market caps combined.

There is a multitude of reasons behind this downfall. Following a period of rapid growth and innovation, the Chinese tech sector has entered a new phase that is forcing Internet companies to evolve. Let us discuss the 3 most obvious trends for the future.

1. Stricter regulation

China’s tech industry has been hit by sweeping regulatory crackdowns since the second half of 2020. The abrupt suspension of Ant group’s IPO made it into the world’s headlines. The record \$2.8 billion anti-trust fine on Alibaba was another unexpected news.

Finally, China’s ban on bitcoin mining. By the end of July 2021, the share prices of China’s largest Internet companies had dropped between 30 to 50 per cent from their peaks.

According to the South China Morning Post: “The regulatory tightening is driven by Beijing’s desire to better align the country’s technology development with national strategic goals and public interests.” The increased regulation has 4 main areas of focus: antitrust, fintech, data protection, and cryptocurrencies.

2. Challenging IPO routes

Chinese tech firms have been choosing the US exchanges for their listing since the early 2000s. Sina Corporation listed in 2000. Followed by 51job, and Baidu in 2004 and 2005 respectively. More recently, in 2014 Alibaba, Weibo and Momo all listed in the US.

But the strained relationship between the two countries resulted into some forced delisting from the US markets. Some of the most well-know victims were China Unicom, China Mobile and China Telecom. So, Chinese tech firms are now facing increasingly difficult decisions on where to list their shares.

Consequently, more businesses hedged against the risk of delisting through secondary listings in Hong Kong. In turn

benefiting from the relaxation of listing rules at the Hong Kong stock exchange. Highly anticipated IPOs such as LalaMove, ByteDance and LinkDoc are now left suspended.

3. Heterogenous demographics

The landscape of China’s Internet users is constantly evolving creating new niche customer segments for internet companies. Given the huge population, a niche in China could turn into a gigantic market.

First, the elderly, known as the Silver Economy. China has 260 million citizens age 60 or above, but only 40 per cent of them are now using the internet.

This means an untapped population of approximately 150 million available for grab. That is nearly 3 times the population of the entire GCC.

Secondly, a generation of well-educated, financially independent, and confident female consumers in China is providing traction to the so-called She-economy.

They are bringing changes in consumption preferences with an increasing emphasis on personal characteristics and quality life. In a sectors like food and beverages, female consumers are pursuing healthier eating habits, increasing the demand for low carb, and low fat foods, as well as high proteins snacks. [The columnist is a member of the International Press Association]

Will France derail West Africa’s common currency?

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: TallyGuru +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@rtsgroup.com
Roudh Lotas Group LLC

TallyPrime

<http://www.rltsgroup.com/tally-accounting-software/>

SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

RABEE AL THANI 9, 1443 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer

Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Get **Tally** on Cloud

FREE Offer ends 30th Nov 2021

Think TALLY
977 TALLY (977 82559)
976 TALLY (976 82559)
www.TallySolutionsOman.com

TallyPrime

SIT. WANTED

HND (UK) Cum Eng, Sri Lankan, young dynamic boy with 3 years experience with autoCAD, full experience on building construction, take off measurement, estimation etc, looking for a suitable placement in Oman, Email: tmsafnas@gmail.com, +96878149384

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER 10 years GCC experience, Projects installation, Maintenance and Operation, NOC available. Contact: 71938188.

MECHANICAL Engineer graduate, Indian male, 2 years experience, currently in Muscat on visit visa, knowledge in Primavera, PDMS, AutoCad, Solidworks, Microsoft Excel etc, seeks suitable placement. Contact 78375996. Email: vishnutp999@gmail.com

SRILANKAN, male Quantity Surveyor (BSc QS (Hons) reading) with 4 years of civil & ID experience in Oman. Looking for a job. Contact: 92187572 Email: sifathhasan1995@gmail.com

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR
Indian male: Having 8 years experience handling Retail F&B Operations, inventory, purchase, Sales & Accounting with various other skills, NOC available Contact: 96219904 Email: khanshah98@gmail.com

FOR SALE

The Wave flat for sale
Flat for sale only 3 years old, 2 bedrooms + 1 study room, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, family hall. Contact: 99233359.

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

BUYING

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

SIT. VACANT

WANTED an experienced Graphic Designer for an advertising agency. Whatsapp CV to 91764576

SERVICES

WE are specialists in painting, plumbing, interlock, ceramics and buildings maintenance. 96191837, 98937266

AUTOCAD/REVIT ARCH MEP, part/full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers.** Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup

Rent A Car

AMAZING OFFERS

- Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
- Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. 972494490.

LUXURIOUS

Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

GCL GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

Location: Rex Road, Behind Modern Oman Bakery
GSM : +968 99635330 / 93569551
Email : gcloman@hotmail.com
Website : gcloman.com

Airport to Airport
Port to Port
Door to Door
FCL Services
LCL Services
Consolidation
GCC Road Transport
Professional Packing
Moving Local & International

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUM: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo 800 Bz/Kg Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR & SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking
TOLL FREE NUMBER 80066766

0.800 BAIZA PER KG

INDIA | BANGLADESH | INDONESIA | PHILIPPINES | SRI LANKA | ETHIOPIA | ALL GCC SERVICE AVAILABLE
22 YEARS OF EXCELLENT SERVICE IN OMAN
HO: RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR

EURO CHOICE FOODS L.L.C
(Importers of Frozen, Chilled, Fresh & Dry Food Products)

Food Service
Catering Supply
Ship Chandling
Re-export
Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Fresh & Chilled Meat and Chicken
Dairy Product & Grocery Items

Tel: +968 24435211 / 24435177
foodservice@eurochoicefoodsllc.com
www.eurochoicefoodsllc.com

GCCA VAT / TAX
GULF CENTER CONSULTANCY & AUDIT

- Vat Registrations
- Quarterly VAT Return filing
- Taxation Services
- Book keeping & Accounting

97239696, 95850405
kumar@gccaoman.com
www.gccaglobal.com

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O.Box 545, P.C. 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhooory@omantel.net.om • www.alkhoooryoman.com

OMAN OBSERVER

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp <your name> to 96473232

www.omanobserver.com @omanobserver

Al Eman Dental Clinic

Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

+968 24834113
+968 97454854
+968 96438854

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

FOR RENT

Substantial Villa in Hay Al Shatti near Grand Hayatt.
3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms
which is suitable for Embassy / Clinic / School / Multipurpose Office / Residential Premises.
TEL : 99643760 / 24704994

ZEN POLYNE

"TARPAULIN WAREHOUSE IN OMAN"
INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LDPPE TARPAULINE
CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPAULIN

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE
U.V.STABILIZED
100% WATER PROOF
LIGHT WEIGHT
THERMO - WELDED JOINTS.
FLEXIBLE & CUSTOMISED SIZES.
STRONGEST TARPAULIN EVER
SUPERIOR DART IMPACT STRENGTH

RAVIRA INTERNATIONAL

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9329 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5030 58676
Mail Id: raviranomansales@gmail.com Visit: www.raviranl.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

- ♦ CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE
- ♦ DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK
- ♦ PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS
- ♦ MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi 99851366 92495068
Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
93260956
vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

Labor Accommodation Services

We Offer Standard Accommodation Services to Labor & Junior Staff (Capacity to accommodate 1200 Labors). Accommodations near Rusayl Industrial Area next to National Gas Facility.

- Newly build, clean and municipality approved accommodation
- Easy access and customized accommodation facility
- Spacious and ventilated rooms
- 24hrs Security and Monitoring
- Optional paid food & Laundry Facilities etc.

Shaksy
Engineering Services

Kindly Contact:
Mr Hamza – 93200365
Mr Praveen 93201534

Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri 92998577
bakhit.omanidaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abiri 99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
Musalam Al Saidi 99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

#Living_with_COVID19

features

OMAN OBSERVER f t i y o s www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om

Isolating in a time of gadget dependency



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A PERFECT ESCAPADE from the bombarding e-mails, messages and chats, spending some quality times all by oneself and for himself seems to be a perfect idea these days which is marked by social media revolution.

But the fact is, the tentacles of mobile phone, the hallucination of social media and the tempting messages, likes, shares, short videos, etc are something that is difficult to resist.

Waheed al Balushi, a senior official in one of the airline operators in the MENA region, broke all the notions and the comfort zone of social media and came out explor-

ing the nuances of a life that reminded him of the days prior to the invention of mobile phones.

"I always used think how life would be if we are not 'addicted' to social media and wanted to experience the life all by myself and seek inner peace," says Waheed who is a motivational speaker as well.

He didn't delay the call of his inner self and embarked on a 3-day isolation journey cramped up in a hotel in Salalah recently.

But before taking off, he made sure he had disconnected his smart phone and activated an ordinary phone just made for receiving any emergency calls.

"That was a strong decision for me who is so carried away by the smart phones. But I was so deter-

mined to take this 'extreme' step and isolate myself from all the chaos of outside world that deter you from enjoying life."

All he carried with him, besides the age-old phone, were three books by renowned authors, a bunch of plain papers and some dreams of achieving something at the end of the three-day self-imposed isolation.

Before embarking on the flight to detachment, all his social media handles bore the status: "Disconnect to connect".

"Basically, I had three targets to achieve before the isolation. They are, regain the lost energy and vitality, re-prioritise things to do in life and re-engage myself in reading," Al Balushi, who seemed so pleasant after the hiatus, said.

From day 1, the door of his room wore a sticker saying "Unlock your Safest Space" and the 'do not disturb' signage whenever he was inside the room, and during the times he visited the seashore or swimming pool.

During the three days, he remained all by himself as food was served at the door, he read books, jotted down points to ponder and immersed himself in a total seclusion.

He found time for walks, he found ample time for prayers, to do exercise and was able to realise how precious the time was which most of us wasting on silly social media posts, and engaging in useless things in life.

"I couldn't simply believe the amount of time I had for myself. I

would say these three days were the most useful times that I ever had," Waheed says.

He read 273 pages of different authors and wrote nearly 27 pages long plans and priorities in life which helped him in his lectures.

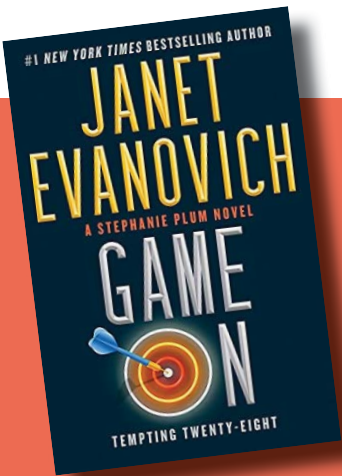
"I returned from the hotel all afresh and with lots of ideas for my job and for pursuing a happy and peaceful personal life."

He feels that anyone can achieve anything if he has three basic things in him.

"One should have a strong desire to achieve something, a solid plan, and an urge to continuously challenge oneself and if you have these three, it's just a matter of time that you achieve your goals in life," Waheed al Balushi adds.

ART

READ



GAME ON
BY JANET EVANOVICH

The 28th book in the Stephanie Plum series, Diesel and Stephanie track the international computer hacker Oswald Wednesday.

Venezuelan artist brings new value to discarded banknotes

VENEZUELAN ARTIST and medical student Elianni Di Gregorio is using old bolivar notes as canvas for her paintings as she strives to give them new value after rampant hyper inflation and successive overhauls saw them discarded.

Di Gregorio, 24, decided to paint on bolivar notes thrown away in the trash to restore some

of the currency's former glory.

Three monetary overhauls since 2008 have cut up to 14 zeros from the currency, pushing vast quantities of notes out of circulation. The most recent overhaul took place in October, when Venezuela's central bank wiped six zeros from the bolivar.

"I could see how they were throwing incredible amounts of

paper money in the trash, which affected me greatly, which is why I decided to reuse them for a different purpose and began to paint on them," said Di Gregorio, who has used the banknotes as her main canvas since 2017.

In one of her paintings, Di Gregorio used a pink 20-bolivar note to reproduce La Fornarina, which depicts a semi-nude woman in one of renaissance artist Raphael's most important works.

The replica painting will go on show in a virtual exhibition in New York this December after Di Gregorio entered it in a competition, where it was selected alongside nine other works.

"I surprised myself when I managed to do it on something so small," she said, adding that the Italian Raphael is one of her favourite artists because of his extreme precision.

The paintings let people see



the banknotes more positively, instead of the negatives of the economic crisis that has destroyed their value and leading to de facto dollarisation, she said.

"This is my way of building the

Venezuela I want in the future, restoring value to banknotes that are no longer useful," Di Gregorio, who also plans to paint on banknotes from other countries, said. — Reuters



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



cass_foodandtravel • Follow
Salalah, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman



ON THE ROAD



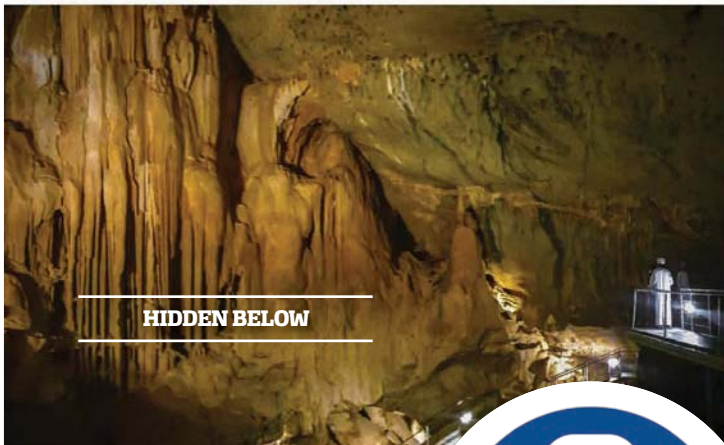
khalidalmawali • Follow



STAND UP



roy.subhajit9 • Follow
Al Hoota Cave



HIDDEN BELOW

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Marvel gives 'Hawkeye' a holiday season makeover



MARVEL STUDIOS GETS festive with its new show "Hawkeye".

The six-part series sees Jeremy Renner return to the role of Clint Barton/Hawkeye, introduced in the 2011 movie "Thor", for his first solo show.

"It's always exciting any time I can fit into a suit," joked Renner, who makes his sixth Marvel outing with the series, as he premiered the show's first two episodes in London.

"Always very excited to get back in the MCU and help tell some stories. This time it's very, very different because you're telling a six-hour story and not a two-hour film."

"Hawkeye" is set in the aftermath of "Avengers: Endgame", with Barton getting ready to spend Christmas with his family. A threat from his past forces him to leave his loved ones behind and team up with Kate Bishop, a talented young archer — and big Hawkeye fan.

American actor Hailee Steinfeld brings Bishop, a popular comic book character, to life for her Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) debut in "Hawkeye".

"I feel just so lucky to be playing a character that so many people love and so many people have been so excited for such a long time to see her brought to life," the 24-year-old said.

The series' co-director Rhys Thomas described introducing Kate Bishop to the MCU as "thrilling" and "scary".

"Kate Bishop's such an exciting and energetic and a different voice, I think a type of voice that we haven't seen in the MCU. You feel a responsibility, but I think Hailee more than delivers," he said.

The self-confessed Christmas movie fan said he believed the setting added warmth and joy to the series' storyline.

"It's a Christmas show, which we haven't seen from Marvel before. It's about a man trying to get home to his family for Christmas, ultimately."

"Hawkeye" starts streaming on Disney+ on November 24. — **Reuters**

CHANGING WORLD

Congo's self-taught guitarmaker caters to the stars



IN A TIN SHED IN THE backstreets of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo's capital, a barefoot 61-year old Jean-Luther Misoko Nzalayala, aka Socklo, hacks with a machete at a lump of wood that is starting to resemble the neck of a guitar.

Later, he hammers bits of white plastic chair into it as inlay to help guide players around the fret board, and fixes threads of motorbike brake cable as strings.

"First it was a chair that you were happy to sit on. After it died, I gave it a second life, and it will be resurrected," he said, surrounded by jumble of broken and half-built guitars, and a fading picture of Congo's late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

For over 40 years the self-taught luthier has used a variety recycled materials and local hardwoods to create guitars that sing with the raw intensity of one of Africa's musical meccas.

Socklo's passion began in his village in Kikwit, southwestern Congo, in 1975, when he dismantled and copied a guitar a friend had given him.

"I didn't measure anything... and when I played it, it began to



collapse," he said. "I was really disappointed by the result, but I kept trying."

Three years later, he moved to Kinshasa, where he sold his first guitar to his cousin. "I couldn't imagine that people in a city like Kinshasa could like a guitar like this. It gave me courage."

He used negative feedback to improve his craft and finesse his designs. Soon there were fewer complaints, and local and international musicians were flocking to his tin shed.

Congolese music star Jupiter Bokondji loved Socklo's sound, and asked him to go electric. The result, Jupiter said, is far more

authentic than top guitar brands, which cost upwards of 20 times more.

"I have played it all over the world; everyone is amazed. To see that guitar doing what it does, the way it plays, it's like a tornado," Jupiter said.

Yarol Poupaud, a French guitarist who toured with rock-and-roll singer Johnny Hallyday for years, has bought four of Socklo's creations.

"It has little imperfections; it's not perfect, but that really makes the magic," Poupaud said, strumming on a blue starburst guitar emblazoned with Congo's flag. — **Reuters**

COLUMN



Rasha Al Raisi
rashabooks@yahoo.com

Following Orwell's footsteps down the poverty-stricken streets of London and Paris

'DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON' is the book that saw the birth of the famous alias George Orwell, who didn't want to use his own name Eric Blair when publishing the book in 1933.

It starts in 1928 with him moving to Paris and living in the Latin Quarter, working as an English tutor and sending his articles to different journals. The hotel he stays in gets robbed by an Italian resident thief, which makes Orwell experience poverty for the first time.

He describes pawning his clothes for cash, having the minimum to eat and drink, even starving for two days in a row when he had no money left. That's the time when he finds a job as a dishwasher in Hotel X. The job turns out to be a nightmare: long hours with a few weekends off and low pay, extremely hot and suffocating conditions as the work is done in the basement and a solid hierarchy system where cooks are on the top and dishwashers are in the bottom and treated like dirt.

Despite that, everyone has to collaborate to serve almost 300 residents dining at different times, which makes Orwell's description of this daily routine astonishing. Later, he quits his job at the hotel and works with his Russian friend in a restaurant called the Auberge de Jehan Cottard.

The working conditions in the restaurant proved to be worse than the hotel; no hot water to wash the pots and plates, no space to fit the bin so leftovers are thrown on the floor where rats start infesting. Worse still, workers are not paid on time and are expected to work for longer hours. That's the time when Orwell has enough and asks his friend to send him money to buy a return ticket to London a year later. Unfortunately, the job that Orwell is promised back home is delayed and he finds himself facing poverty again.

This time due to the English laws that prohibit using shelters twice in a month - or else be confined - Orwell has to tramp along with others moving from one hostel to another. His description of different hostels and the bad living conditions of many as well as clothes worn by tramps, illnesses they die from and how money is gained and spent, is vivid and heartbreaking. At the time, the only food that shelters served was two toasts, butter and watered-down tea. Even worst, some shelters made the tramps work for this meagre meal. The funny parts occur at Christian shelters where beggars are given a sermon while eating and expected to join a service afterwards, which many escape stealthily. The characters that Orwell describes in both cities are remarkable, especially the London ones.

Paddy, the Irish tramp who Orwell travels with for two weeks, has experienced almost all shelters in England. As well as his street artist friend Bozo with which Orwell enjoys conversing and is surprised by his vast knowledge that remarkably contrasts with his rough street life. This part is not only a documentation of the street life of London in the 1930s with a whole chapter on the slang used, but also challenges the preconception that people have of tramps. At the end of each part, Orwell suggests ways to improve the lives of lowly paid employees and tramps to stop them from becoming victims of the socially unjust system. It's an exciting read that leaves you wondering how little things had changed for both parties, though it was written almost ninety years back. Recommended for George Orwell and non-fiction fans.

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja. rashabooks@yahoo.com



Models pose in historic vestments for Belgian catwalk show

CIAD IN ELABORATE priestly garments, volunteer models strode down the runway to organ music in the Cathedral of the Belgian city of Tournai.

The unusual show on Wednesday organised by the cathedral, is part of an effort to promote its collection of religious textiles it says are Belgium's richest. It featured around 30 garments including liturgical capes known as chasubles embroidered with gold and silver thread.

This was the first time in 50 years the garments were shown to the public, cathedral historian Michel-Amand Jacques said.

Rudy Opsomer, the president of the Friends of the Tournai Cathedral, said the garments were usually kept in the church's chambers, far from the public eye.

"It was a shame that they were no longer visible to the general public," Opsomer said. "It's an opportunity to see things beyond the religious side of these clothes."

During the show, models presented the garments, which showed the evolution of priestly attire from the 17th to the 21st century, to an audience of around 100 people. Ornaments dating back to the 15th century that are stored at the cathedral were too fragile to be shown.

Opsomer said that since the clothes are considered sacred, they could not be donned by people other than religious officials. Church tradition obliges cathedral staff to burn the garments once they are worn out.

So, he said they were lucky to have the permission of Tournai's Bishop Guy Harpigny to hold the show.

The way priests dress has evolved through time, Jacques said, with the more detailed and extravagant garments worn in the Baroque period being replaced by simpler ones that follow guidelines set by the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

In the 18th century, Jacques said, a set of priest's clothes cost 15,000 to 18,000 French livres, which today amounts to around 250,000 to 300,000 euros (\$286,000 to \$343,000) — the same price as a medium-sized church at that time.

"Times have changed, the church has changed," Jacques said. "We have to put ourselves in the shoes of people at that time, in the 17th or 18th century, when these ornaments were an offering to God."

Harpigny, who attended the show, said the event was not a way for the church to brag about its past riches, but rather to show how the institution accompanies cultural and artistic movements throughout time.

"The fact that we're showing the national heritage of the church to society is a wonderful thing," he said.

— Reuters



Marie Antoinette's bracelets dazzle at auction

TWO DIAMOND bracelets once belonging to Marie Antoinette and imbued with her "glamour, glory and drama" according to Christie's auction house, sold for more than \$8 million on Tuesday.

It was the first time that the bracelets, made up of 112 old-cut diamonds, had ever gone under the hammer.

Marie Antoinette, the last queen of France before the French Revolution, was guillotined in Paris aged 37 in October 1793.

"Her style defines the unique aesthetics of Versailles:

timetres long and each weighs 97 grammes.

They sold for 7,459,000 Swiss francs (\$8.19 million), including premiums, at the auction in Geneva.

They had been estimated to go for 2-4 million Swiss francs.

"The first bid was five million francs — that's how excited collectors were to try to acquire a real piece of history that has remained in the same family for 200 years," Rahul Kadakia, international head of jewellery at Christie's, told AFP.

"In the end, the bracelets achieved \$8 million; really an



opulent and regal, yet youthful and romantic. A tastemaker extraordinaire, then and now," said Christie's Europe chairman Francois Curiel.

"Their royal provenance is impeccable; not only is their line of heritage unbroken and traceable from 1776 onwards, but the bracelets have been featured in two famous historic paintings," said Curiel.

"These bracelets travelled through time to recount a most important era of French history, with its glamour, glory and drama."

The bracelets are 18.7 cen-

astonishing price for a really, really great jewel."

When king Louis XVI, his wife Marie Antoinette and their children tried to flee the French Revolution in March 1791, the royal jewels were smuggled out of the country into the trust of a confidant in Brussels.

They were then sent on to relatives in the queen's Austrian homeland and passed down through the generations. The bracelets were auctioned as part of Christie's Geneva Magnificent Jewels sale. — AFP