

Muscat Festival to make a comeback

Isam bin Saud al Zadjali, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, said that the Muscat Festival 2022 is expected to be held at the beginning of next year in a novel and developed manner. In exclusive comments to *Oman Arabic*, sister publication of the *Observer*, Al Zedjali said that they have agreed on new ideas with the relevant authorities to enrich the festival and introduce new events and activities to the festival.



P10

HM CUP ROUND OF 32 DRAW ON SUNDAY



P15

OMAN POST LAUNCHES POSTCARD IN SUPPORT OF CYCLONE SHAHEEN RELIEF



P20

THANAE TEASES NEW SINGLE PROMOTING MESSAGE OF POSITIVITY



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Prince Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience to bear the loss. — ONA

HM GREET'S PANAMA, DOMINICA LEADERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Laurentino Cortizo of the Republic of Panama on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Cortizo and the friendly people of his country. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Charles Angelo Savarin of the Commonwealth of Dominica on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Savarin and the friendly people of Dominica.

— ONA

ELECTRIC CAR 'MAYS' LAUNCH SOON



A model of the Omani electric car 'Mays' expected to be launched as a competitive project in the world of alternative energy. The final design and preparations of manufacturing are expected to be completed soon.

Registration for higher studies open

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, on Tuesday announced vacant study programmes and dates of registration and admission for the second sorting for the academic year 2021/2022.

The registration period began today (November 2) and concludes on November 8. The second sorting targets all students who did not obtain study programme offers previously, students who obtained a study programme, but did not complete the registration, or those who completed the procedures and then withdrew from the programme.

The vacant seats were announced in the programmes of engineering and related technologies, followed by management and commercial transactions.

TURN TO P2

Oman to plant 10 million trees

MEASURE TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND INCREASE GREEN AREA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

The initiative to plant 10 million trees comes within the framework of boosting protection from the effects of climate change in addition to biodiversity at the level of the fertile environment in many natural habitats and various micro-animals that live in such cultivated environments in the Sultanate of Oman.

This was revealed at the third national workshop for plantation of 10 million trees, organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and government authorities, was launched on Tuesday under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Deputy Governor of Muscat, and Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority.

The initiative aims to shed light on the importance of carbon yield and achieving added value from the Omani wild trees and plants and benefiting from the recycled wastewater.

Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Deputy Governor of Muscat, said that this national initiative, organised by the Environment Authority, is the fruit of cooperation between various parties representing the public and private sector and civil society organisations with a view to plant 10 million trees in a phased manner.

Dr Al Amri said that the authority is working side-by-side with various public and private institutions, individuals, societies, volunteering teams with the aim of planting 10 million trees in different environments in the Sultanate of Oman.

TURN TO P2



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Oman-Saudi technological forum kicks off

RIYADH: The Oman-Saudi technological forum kicked off in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The forum aims to boost communication between Omani and Saudi tech companies. It also aims to increase the commercial expansion of tech companies and to enhance fields of investment in innovation and technology in both countries.

The Omani delegation is headed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The agenda of the forum included presentations on strategies and programs related to digital economy in the two countries and supporting tech companies. In addition, it included seminars and workshops to exchange expertise and knowledge. Those events saw the



participation of nascent Omani and Saudi tech companies in the fields of digital transformation, Internet of Things (IoT), technological industries, artificial intelligence (AI) and drones. Moreover, through the National Digital Economy Programme (DEP), the Sultanate of Oman aims to actively contribute in establishing and developing a flourishing digital economy responding to the requirements of the future.

It also targets promoting the In-Country Value (ICV) of the digital economy, as well as creating sustainable income-generating opportunities that keep pace with technological developments. The DEP also aims to establish a strategic partnership with private sector establishments and to attract foreign technology investments in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



RAFO HONOURS TOP PERFORMERS

Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), honoured a number of affiliates of RAFO command and Adam Air Base, in recognition of their outstanding efforts and excellence in performing their duties and tasks, at Ghala Air Base and Sultan Qaboos Air Academy, on Tuesday.

The commander of RAFO gave away certificates of excellence and medals of long service and good conduct to a number of officers, commissioned officers and personnel from RAFO command and Adam Air Base for their sincere efforts in performing their national duties. The honouring comes within the framework of the annual programme organised by the RAFO command to take care of excelling affiliates of Rafo command and various air bases in appreciation of their contributions and efforts and also to encourage them to make more effort in serving the country and its leader. — ONA



Flour from 'grown in Oman' wheat soon to hit stands

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
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It has been common now that the Sultanate of Oman has well-diversified its growth in the non-oil sector from total dependence on oil. But very few know the country's inroads into agriculture, which has seen tremendous growth in recent years.

And the result is coming as a pleasant surprise in the form of 'made in Oman' flour from 'grown in Oman' wheat.

In a latest 'teaser' Oman Flour Mills announced the launch of flour made of wheat produced in the Sultanate of Oman. The flour mills' Dahabi range of products has already emerged as a popular brand in the Sultanate.

The question is where so much of wheat is coming from, that too, to the extent of commercial production?

A recent report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources indicated a 19 per cent growth in wheat production, with a total production of 2,649 tonnes during the 2020-2021 agricultural season.



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There was also a jump in acreage under wheat cultivation. It jumped 19.6 per cent to 2,449 acres, while the number of farmers engaged in the crop increased by 5.5 per cent, the ministry's report said.

Most of the wheat in the Sultanate of Oman comes from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate that accounted for 45 per cent (1,109 acres) of the total area under wheat cultivation and produced

55 per cent (1,465.6 tonnes) of the total output.

Al Dhahirah Governorate came next with 576.5 acres under cultivation and 650 tonnes of output. In third place is Dhofar Governorate with 360 tonnes of production. The combined output of governorates of North and South Al Batinah came at 83.6 tonnes.

Other governorates contributed 89.8 tonnes of wheat production.

The Oman Flour Mills is coming true to its commitment. A few months ago, Salah bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Board of Directors, had indicated the launch of a new product range based on Omani wheat.

Majorly a state-owned company, the Oman Flour Mills commands the status of the biggest flour miller in the Sultanate.

In his Q1 report, Al Maawali had assured support to the local wheat growers, which is coming true with the range of products in which Omani wheat will be used.

Oman to plant 10 million trees



PHOTO BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI

FROM P1

He added that plantation of trees is no longer considered an entertainment activity, but an urgent necessity to reduce emissions and absorb carbon dioxide in order to preserve the planet.

Dr Al Amri pointed to several global initiatives that followed our national initiative, some of them aimed to plant wild trees. Based on that, the Environment Authority is preparing nurseries in different governorates of the country to provide various types of wild trees.

The chairman of the Environment Authority said that everyone is a partner in

protecting the environment and preserving the sustainability system, stressing that the national initiative to plant 10 million trees aims to achieve a set of programmes, foremost of which is combating desertification, increasing the green area and absorbing carbon dioxide.

Registration for higher studies open

FROM P1

These seats remained vacant for several reasons, most important of which is students' failure to meet the minimum competition requirements, their failure to accept the offers they previously obtained, or their withdrawal from those offers. Therefore, the centre re-announces them annually in the second sorting. HEAC set November 15 for announcing results of the second sorting for the academic year 2021/2022. As for completing the registration procedures, it will be from November 15-21. The service of restoring an academic seat will be available after the second sorting stage, according to the service terms specified in the Student Guidebook. This step is considered the final registration and admission procedures for the current academic year. — ONA

10th

ANNIVERSARY

THE SEASON FEATURES TWENTY PRODUCTIONS AND A TOTAL OF THIRTY-FIVE PERFORMANCES WITH TWO OPERAS, TWO BALLETS, TWO ARAB STARS, TWO GALA CONCERTS, TWO SYMPHONIC CONCERTS ALONG WITH JAZZ, WORLD MUSIC AND FOUR STUNNING SHOWS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT SEASON BEGINS IN JANUARY

MUSCAT: To mark its 10th Anniversary, the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) will launch the new landmark season for 2022.

The classical season opens with the landmark red-carpet, world premiere of ROHM's production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, masterminded by Franco Zeffirelli. The Franco Zeffirelli direction is packed with his trademark vibrancy and grand vision for staging *The Orchestra and Choir of Fondazione Arena di Verona* perform, along with the Omani Opera Choir Group, under the baton of Jan Latham-Koenig on January 20, 21 and 22. The season includes an exhibition on the life and work of Zeffirelli from January 16 to March 20.

Saber Rebai will start the season with his best loved songs, accompanied by a small orchestra on January 6 and 7.

In *Die Lustige Witwe*, Hanna Glawari, the 'merry widow' of the title, fights to keep her inheritance from the state. The opera is directed by Marco Arturo Marelli and performed by Volksoper Wien on February 17,

18 and 19.

Performed by The National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Belarus, *Anastasia* is a magnificent classical work by Vyacheslav Kuznetsov portraying the cultural history of Belarus through a legendary love story with new choreography by Yuri Travanos on February 3, 4 and 5.

The Nutcracker, enduringly popular ballet of Tchaikovsky's, will be performed by the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet State Theatre, choreographed by Nina Ananiashvili and Alexey Fadeechey, conducted by Alevtina Ioffe on March 17, 18 and 19.

The award-winning composer, pianist and conductor Omar Khairat bridges contemporary Egyptian and Western music. In concert with the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, Khairat performs his original arrangements of supreme works by Mohamed Abdel Wahab and selections from among Umm Kulthum's most popular songs on February 24 and 25.

The Lebanese singer, Melhem Zain, known as the Chief of



Song, performs on May 19 and 20.

Stellar artists perform in a gala concert of Verdi's Masterpieces, performing arias and duets from across the repertoire. The Orchestra and Choir of Fondazione Arena di Verona, and star artists from *Rigoletto* production will perform under the baton of Jan Latham-Koenig on January 23.

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra will be performing *Donizetti Masterpieces* on March 10.

Alexander Malofeev, the world-famous piano virtuoso,

performs with the Tatarstan National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Sladkovsky, artistic director, and chief conductor of the TNSO, the orchestra will play a stirring programme of Liszt and Rachmaninoff on May 12.

The Royal Opera House Muscat's annual Pipe Organ Concert presents talented Muscat and international organists. The concert will feature Müncher Knabenchor and the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra on May 14.

Artists from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas join

Omani musicians in the World Folk Music Festival on February 11 and 12.

Following the success of *Kan Ya Ma Kan* and *Sailing Through Time*, the acclaimed Caracalla Dance Theatre returns to Muscat with *FINIQIA, The Legend Lives On*. Founded on myth and fable, this promises to be yet another fabulous performance with striking visuals, vibrancy, and colour on March 24, 25 and 26.

World-acclaimed jazz trumpeter and Grammy-Award winner, Chris Botti is America's best-selling American instrumental artist. This concert will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Muscat jazz fans on January 27 and 28.

Singing in the stunningly soulful Fado form originating from Portugal, Carminho will perform with her band on 26 February 26.

Teh Dar, meaning "go in circles around a fire," is an awe-inspiring acrobatic musical show from Vietnam inspired by the exotic traditions of tribes in Vietnam's remote highlands. Fifteen acrobats and five musicians enact a dance of pure

beauty on March 4 and 5.

With *Swan Lake*, China's Guangdong Acrobatic Troupe achieves a successful union of acrobatics with classical Western ballet. This adaptation of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* promises to be one of the most thrilling and awe-inspiring productions of the season on May 26, 27 and 28.

Sacred Sufi Praise and Inshaad are performed by different ensembles from Oman and across the region. For Ramadan, the Royal Opera House Muscat brings audiences the rich and diverse genre of Inshaad that is celebrated throughout the Arab world on April 7 and 21.

Other events include a full-scale presentation of an opera in *Donizetti's, L'Elisir d'Amore*, or *The Factory of Ideas*. Teatro Sociale di Como - As.Li.Co. has cleverly created a customised production for students. Directed by Manuel Renga and conducted by Azzurra Steri, the ROHM will present the opera for schools, in addition to the public performance on March 12.

— ONA

WHY FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IS CRUCIAL FOR OMAN

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The UN Climate Change Conference, currently held in Glasgow, is happening at a time when all countries, including the Sultanate of Oman, are facing the consequences of climate change.

The climate change consequences have been serious for the Sultanate of Oman, regularly facing one or two tropical storms, sometimes even a cyclone, every year, leading to floods and damages to houses and vehicles.

Summers have also been getting hotter, with temperatures consistently touching 45 degrees Celsius and above for days. With a vast coastline bordering both the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Sultanate has been regularly facing the wrath of tropical storms regularly since 2007.

Cyclone Gonu that hit the country in 2007 and inflicted damages, was the first in several decades.

According to Tropical Cyclone Research and Review, “Tropical cyclones are not uncommon over the Arabian Sea. However, many of these storms rarely reach the coastal areas of Sultanate of Oman with tropical cyclone intensity, and from historical data, they very rarely enter the Sea of Oman. Gonu was the first destructive tropical cyclone to affect Muscat after the 1890 cyclone.”

Since then, the governorates of South Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, and Dhofar have been on the frontline in the battle against the low-pressure systems, the cyclone Gonu and even the recent Cyclone Shaheen have shown that even the northern parts of the country are not spared from extreme weather conditions.

“Advancements made in weather forecasting

have helped to save human lives by activating the emergency or disaster management mechanisms, but how can we protect immovable properties like houses, offices or strategic infrastructure like roads,” said sources in the Sultanate of Oman Meteorology and the Ministry of Transport and Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT).

It may be noted that in the past decade, MoTCIT or the erstwhile Ministry of Transport (MoT) is forced to spend thousands of riyals in restoring the road connectivity after tropical storms often lead to floods and heavy rains.

Weather experts have warned that evacuation of people or shifting human habitation from the coastal areas may make sense under the circumstances due to increased frequencies of floods, but in the long term, it will create a demographic imbalance and pressure on infrastructure due to increased density.

Despite its dependence on revenues from oil, Sultanate of Oman has only to gain from the measures to reduce carbon emissions and minimise the consequences of climate change and global warming. The Sultanate of Oman delegation at the conference, led by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Water Resources and the Environment Authority (EA) supported the measures needed to reduce the adverse impact of climate change, especially limiting the annual temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century from current predictions of over 2.5 degrees Celsius. The Sultanate of Oman supported the view that human behaviour is one of the main causes of climate change and increased frequency and severity.

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Syrian delegation visits Al Dakhiliyah health facilities



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

The visiting Syrian health delegation on Tuesday visited Al Dakhiliyah Governorate to understand the Sultanate of Oman's developments in the health sector.

They visited Nizwa referral hospital. The delegation visited health facilities including the Accidents and Emergency Department and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

The delegation also saw the new expansions of the hospital and appreciated the hospital's modern techniques and capacities in providing quality health services to the governorate's and neighbouring governorate's



population. The delegation also visited the 'Nizwa healthy lifestyles project' (Health City in Nizwa), a community-based health-promoting project.

The project is led by the Ministry of Health with the

partnership of Sultanate of Oman's multi-stakeholders and WHO.

The delegation was briefed on the project's phases and facilities that contain various clinics including smoking cessation and weight control

clinics. Mechanism of training volunteers in the health cities was also explained to the delegation.

The delegation also visited Nizwa Fort, Nizwa Souq and was updated about the historical aspects of the two sites.

It is worth to mention that the delegation visited yesterday (Monday) the Covid-19 Immunisation Centre at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The delegation was briefed on the whole procedures of immunisation process for targeted groups within the National Immunisation Covid-19 Campaign with implementing the precautionary measures.



OMREN discusses e-campus

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

The Steering Committee of Oman Research and Education Network (OMREN) of MoHERI held its first meeting on Sunday chaired by Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary for Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

The meeting aimed to welcome the new members and introduce OMREN's achievements during the first phase of the project from 2016 to 2021. It also aimed to discuss the developments of the projects and services related to the network, which are provided to the members. The meeting discussed the second operational phase of the OMREN, which will determine the new strategic partner for this phase.

The new strategic partner will operate the network and provide

communications infrastructure and Internet lines locally and globally. The new services that will be provided to members were also discussed during the meeting. In addition, the meeting discussed the unified educational system project (e-campus), which is a national system that seeks to automate the educational process at higher education institutions and organises the admission, registration, training and logistics processes in these institutions.

OMREN also seeks to provide educational services in cooperation with Microsoft and High Performance Computing (HPC) services to its members during the next phase.

The meeting was also a chance to update the members on the latest progress achieved in the other existing projects such as, Oman Virtual Science Library 'Masader', Oman Research Repository 'Shuaa', educational roaming (eduroam) and Mirsal.

Workshop discusses implementation of VAT

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

SQU's College of Economics and Political Sciences organised a seminar on VAT. His Highness Dr Adham al Said, an assistance professor of economics, Dr Alan Carter, a lead adviser for tax programme in GCC, and Karima al Saadi, a director of planning for tax programme in the Sultanate of Oman, took part in the workshop.

Dr Yassir bin Ghulam, head of accounting department at SQU, hosted the seminar.



HH Dr Adham illustrated in depth the fiscal reforms and implementations of VAT in the Sultanate of Oman, focusing mainly on macroeconomic and fiscal performances, and policy

responses.

Dr Alan said getting VAT administration right is a big challenge when VAT is first introduced, and requires continual improvement.

The Sultanate of Oman launched VAT after the GCC VAT Treaty of 2016. Karima said GCC have already started the value added tax (UAE and Saudi Arabia in 2018, Bahrain in 2019) while the Sultanate of Oman has implemented this approach in 2021.

"The Tax Authority is responsible for administering VAT in Sultanate of Oman. This means an increase in processing VAT returns, inspections, and other operational procedures necessary to operate the VAT system," she said.

MTC to host seminar on water resources management

MUSCAT: The Military Technological College (MTC) is organising Oman International Conference on Water Resources Engineering and Management, (OICWE2020) from November 9 to 11 in Muscat. Local and international academics, researchers and specialists will discuss engineering and management of water resources and the challenges they face locally and globally.

This international event aims to contribute to the development and improvement of the water sector in the Sultanate of



Oman specially and the region in general. It is also aimed at studying and discussing a wide range of challenges in this field to ensure a sustainable water future around the world. The conference will discuss more than 30 important research papers with contributions presented by international

keynote speakers, who are known for their various contributions to scientific research.

The conference will cover the following main topics: drinking water and wastewater treatment, rational management of water resources, water

distribution systems and water losses, sustainability and rationalisation of energy use, recycling and water reuse, design and construction of water infrastructure and its costs, decision-making and modelling and mathematical simulation.

The MTC organises many scientific conferences and training workshops with the aim of sustaining scientific and academic levels and exchanging ideas in the fields of scientific research, innovations and development to benefit from regional and international scientific experiences in this regard.



**SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Financial Affairs at Ministry Of Health announces to all companies and institutions dealing with (MOH Headquarters) and (Directorates General of Health Services and its affiliated departments at all the Governorates) to submit their invoices to the concerned authorities not later than **15.11.2021**, to settle all their claims before the end of current year 2021.



Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation

Re-issue The Local Tender Electronically

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announced the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of Tenders
08/2021 Recall(1)	Providing Cleaning Services for Shinas Vocational College Building	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade First, Second, Third	25 /= RO	12/11/2021	22/11/2021

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Wednesday 03/11/2021 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

**Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation**

www.moh.gov.om





Yemeni police officers control traffic in the capital Sanaa on Tuesday. – AFP

Coalition says 115 fighters killed around Marib

SANAA: The military coalition backing the government in Yemen said on Tuesday that 115 Ansar Allah fighters were killed in air strikes around the strategic city of Marib as the insurgents advanced.

The Ansar Allah rarely comment on losses, and AFP could not independently verify the toll.

“Fourteen military vehicles were destroyed and more than 115” fighters were killed, the coalition said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. Marib, capital of the oil-rich province of the same name, is the internationally recognised government’s last bastion in northern Yemen.

The strikes were carried out in the past 24 hours in Al Jawba, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Marib, and Al Kassara, 30 kilometres northwest.

The coalition has since

October 11 issued near daily reports of bombing around Marib, saying it has since then killed around 2,300 fighters in the area.

The Ansar Allah began a major push to seize the city in February and, after a lull, they renewed their offensive in recent weeks.

A pro-government military official said on Tuesday that the rebels have made “new advances amid ongoing clashes with pro-government troops”. Another loyalist official confirmed that the fighters were edging closer to the city.

Ansar Allah spokesman Yahya Saree said on Tuesday the fighters were on the “outskirts of Marib on several fronts”, according to the Al Masirah TV channel.

“We will not hesitate to move forward, until we liberate all that is left,” he added. — AFP

Sudan’s military exercised ‘restraint’ at protests: US envoy

OUSTED PM SAYS SOLUTION HINGES ON RETURN OF GOVERNMENT

WASHINGTON: The United States’ special envoy for the Horn of Africa said on Tuesday that the Sudanese military had shown “restraint” in its response to demonstrations on Saturday, which he said was a sign of potential for a return to power sharing with civilians.

Jeffrey Feltman briefed reporters on the fallout from the October 25 military takeover in Sudan by phone from Washington, contradicting an earlier report that he had travelled to Sudan.

A medical group had said three protesters were shot dead by security forces as opponents of military rule took to the streets of Khartoum’s twin city of Omdurman on Saturday.

Feltman said the toll was “far too many” but that “by and large... security services exercised restraint”, and demonstrators also stayed away from sensitive military locations, which reduced the potential for violence.

“I think that demonstrated an understanding by the Sudanese people themselves that they have to be careful and find a way back to the civilian-military partnership this transition requires,” Feltman said, repeating a US call for military chief General Abdel Fattah al Burhan to restore the civilian-led government.

Washington was “supportive of Sudanese solutions”, was calling for all detainees to be released, and for Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to be freed from house arrest and allowed to continue his work, Feltman said.

Burhan ousted Hamdok’s cabinet on October 25 and put him under house arrest, prompting



Protesters shout slogans as they demonstrate against the recent seizure of power and ousting of the civilian government, in Khartoum. – Reuters

Western states to cut off hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Sudan.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken last Thursday condemned the military takeover and the arrest of Sudan’s civilian leaders. The coup has derailed a transition meant to steer Sudan to democracy, with elections in 2023, after long-serving ruler Omar al Bashir was toppled in 2019.

RESTORE GOVERNMENT

Meanwhile, ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said the reinstatement of his government, dissolved in a military coup, could pave the way to a solution in the country, the information ministry said. Hamdok spoke during a meeting at his home, where he is

under effective house arrest, with the ambassadors of the United States, Britain and Norway, the ministry which remains loyal to the prime minister said.

On October 25, Sudan’s top general Abdel Fattah al Burhan dissolved the cabinet as well as the ruling joint military-civilian Sovereign Council which had been heading Sudan’s transition towards full civilian rule in 2019.

In a move widely condemned internationally, Burhan declared a state of emergency and detained Sudan’s civilian leadership, including Hamdok and members of his government. Hamdok, an international economist, was later released and placed effectively under house arrest.

The ousted prime minister

“insisted on the legitimacy of his government and transitional institutions”, the information ministry said on its Facebook page.

He added that “the release of the cabinet ministers and the full reinstatement of the government could pave the way to a solution,” the ministry said.

Hamdok, according to the statement, demanded that the situation in Sudan return to what it was before the coup, refusing to negotiate with the military rulers. The statement added that the three ambassadors also informed Hamdok that the US special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, would arrive at dawn on Tuesday in Khartoum “to pursue efforts to ease the crisis”.

— Agencies

First few tourists visit Libya but security threats remain

TRIPOLI: Italian student Edoardo Arione felt “a little afraid” when he joined a rare tourist group trip to Libya this month but he said he soon enjoyed the visit to desert cities and Roman ruins in a country unsettled by years of chaos.

Libya has had little peace and few tourists since the 2011 Nato-backed uprising against Muammar Gaddafi that unleashed a decade of violent unrest as armed groups seized control of territory and battles raged in its cities.

“My impression is the country is amazing. The landscape is just

beautiful and so different from place to another,” said Farina Del Francia, 64, another of the tourists.

Libya has a rich heritage, including desert architecture in the south, some of the Mediterranean region’s finest ancient remains along its coastline. The tour group visited the southern city of Ghadames and the Acacus mountains, site of ancient rock art. Half the group also visited the Roman city of Sebratha. A trip to Leptis Magna, the best-known of Libya’s Roman sites, may feature on a future visit, the organisers said.



An empty passageway is pictured outside a mud-brick house, within the enclosed Libyan desert oasis town of Ghadames. – Reuters

Despite a UN-backed peace plan, and a ceasefire since last year between the main eastern and western factions, however, any more widescale return of tourism seems unlikely.

Before Libya fell apart in 2011, difficult visa regimens meant only up to 25,000 tourists visited a year. Since the revolution, hardly any have risked a trip.

Fighting between the myriad armed forces sporadically erupts in various cities and the wider prospects of a political agreement to underpin stability remain highly fragile. An election planned for

December is still the subject of wrangling, and any major delay to the vote or dispute over its validity could plunge Libya back into full-blown civil war.

For Arione and the other tourists in his group, however, the visit was a success.

“Tourists can come to Libya and stay comfortable and not be afraid,” said Arione, 25, who was one of 70 mostly French and Italian visitors on the arranged trip.

Libya is home to five Unesco World Heritage sites, but in 2016 it said they were endangered due to instability and conflict. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

TEHRAN

Iran FM tests positive for Covid ahead of N-talks

Iran’s foreign minister has tested positive for Covid, local media reported, at a key moment in diplomatic efforts to revive a nuclear agreement with major powers.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian “tested positive today for coronavirus,” the Tasnim news agency reported late on Monday.

The 57-year-old career diplomat, who was named foreign minister in August by ultraconservative President



Ebrahim Raisi, was a close confidant of military strategist General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated in a US drone strike early last year.

BEIRUT

Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star* closes

The English-language Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star* has told its staff they will all be laid off, joining a list of Lebanese media outlets that have been forced to close or scale back due to financial pressures.

In a message to staff, *The Daily Star* management said the decision to lay them off had been taken “with a heavy heart”. It said arrangements were being finalised for compensation, and wished them luck “during these difficult times”.



Lebanon is in the throes of a depression described by the World Bank as one of the sharpest of modern times.

BAGHDAD

Iraq president skips COP26 citing security issues

Iraqi President Barham Saleh abruptly cancelled his planned attendance at the UN climate summit in Glasgow on Tuesday citing the security situation at home, a close aide said.

With its already searingly hot summers, Iraq is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change and Saleh had been due to address the summit on Tuesday. But the Kurdish politician, whose office is largely ceremonial, decided to cancel “at the last minute in light of



security developments in Diyala and Kirkuk, and the political crisis linked to the recent parliamentary election,” the aide said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In brief

■ BANGKOK



ASTRAZENECA INCREASES VACCINE SUPPLY TO THAILAND

AstraZeneca Plc provided Thailand 10.5 million doses of its Covid-19 vaccine last month, the firm said on Tuesday, months after an official said the government was considering curbing exports from its local plant because of lower supplies. Thailand had been pushing for 10 million doses each month to be able to fight back against coronavirus infections in the country of about 66 million people. James Teague, managing director of AstraZeneca Thailand, said that the company had increased batchwise vaccine production by a fifth at its plant, from 580,000 doses to on average 700,000.

■ MANILA



RIGHTS BODY'S DRUG WAR PROBE BOLSTERS ABUSE CHARGES

An investigation by the Philippines' rights commission into the killings in President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs has found that dozens of people were shot in the head, chest and abdomen, suggesting an intent to kill, it said on Tuesday. The Commission on Human Rights' (CHR) report, which bolsters findings by the justice ministry that pointed to foul play in dozens of deadly police operations, is the latest to challenge the government's narrative of the war on drugs. The commission said it reviewed 579 incidents of "drug-related extrajudicial killings" and violence from 2016 to February 2020, 451 of which were allegedly linked to police operations and involved 705 victims.

■ BEIJING



CHINA WON'T GIVE UP ON ZERO-TOLERANCE COVID POLICY

China will not give up on its zero-tolerance policy towards local Covid-19 cases any time soon, some experts said, as the policy has allowed it to quickly quell local outbreaks, while the virus continues to spread outside its borders. To stop local cases from turning into wider outbreaks, China has developed and continually refined its Covid-fighting arsenal — including mass testing, targeted lockdowns and travel restrictions — even when those anti-Covid measures occasionally disrupted local economies.

19 dead, 50 injured in attack on Kabul military hospital

UN airlifts shelters for displaced Afghans ahead of winter

KABUL: At least 19 people were killed and 50 others wounded in an attack on a military hospital in Kabul on Tuesday, the latest assault to rock Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power.

The attack got under way when a bomber detonated his explosives near the entrance of the sprawling site.

Gunmen then broke into the hospital grounds, firing their weapons there, the Taliban said.

"Nineteen dead bodies and about 50 wounded people have been taken to hospitals in Kabul," a health ministry official who asked not to be named said. The Taliban spent 20 years waging an insurgency against the ousted US-backed government.

Now they face the struggle of bringing stability to Afghanistan, which has been hit in recent weeks by a series of bloody assaults claimed by the IS group's local chapter. Tuesday's attack has not yet been claimed by any group.

"All the attackers are dead. The attack was initiated by a bomber on a motorcycle who blew himself up at the entrance of the hospital," a Taliban official from the media team said.

"Some attackers entered the hospital compound."

Two explosions targeted the hospital area, he had earlier said in a statement.

AFP staff in the city heard a second explosion some 30 minutes after the first was reported.

"I heard a big explosion coming from the first checkpoint. We were told to go to safe rooms. I also hear guns firing," a doctor at the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan hospital in Kabul said while the attack was being carried out.

"I can still hear gun firing inside the hospital building. I think the attackers are going from room to room... like the first time it was attacked," the doctor added.

The hospital, which treats wounded soldiers from both



Smoke billows near the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan National Military Hospital after an explosion in central Kabul, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. — Reuters

the Taliban and former Afghan security forces, was previously attacked in 2017, when gunmen disguised as medical personnel killed at least 30 people in an hours-long siege.

IS have claimed four mass casualty attacks since the Taliban takeover on August 15, including bomb blasts targeting mosques. In the 2017 attack on the military

hospital, militants went room to room killing people, switching to knives when they ran out of ammunition. That attack was claimed by the IS group, and the Taliban denied responsibility.

However, survivors said that the attackers chanted "Long live Taliban" in Pashto and attacked all but two wards on the hospital's first floor where Taliban patients

were admitted.

An Italian NGO which runs a separate hospital in the capital tweeted on Tuesday that it has received nine patients with injuries from the blast site. Pictures shared on social media showed black smoke billowing into the air after the explosions, the first of which went off at around 1:00 pm (0830 GMT). — Agencies



Japan's new Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi

Japan's FM Motegi to take key ruling party post

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has tapped Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi for the No 2 post in the ruling party, a powerful role that includes shaping policy and financing election campaigns.

Motegi will replace Akira Amari who said he would vacate the position of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) secretary-general following his defeat in Sunday's lower house election. Known for being well-versed in policy matters and on good terms with party elders such as former prime ministers Shinzo Abe and Taro Aso, Motegi will likely help Kishida maintain his grip on power within the party.

His appointment is expected to be formally announced on Thursday.

The job of ruling party secretary-general offers huge sway over lawmakers because the holder is in charge of financing campaigns and pulling fractious members into line. Motegi told reporters on Monday one of his key tasks as new secretary general was preparing for an upper house election due around the middle of next year.

Kishida led the LDP to better-than-expected election results on Sunday, as the party kept its strong majority in the lower house. Amari's loss was a notable setback for the party, although he retains a parliament seat thanks to Japan's system of proportional representation. — Reuters

Buzkashi season begins, with Taliban at the reins

QARA SHABAGH, AFGHANISTAN: Haji Mohammad Pahlawan waves his whip in the air, pulling his grey stallion away from the calf carcass he has just dumped in a goal to claim victory in a tournament of buzkashi, Afghanistan's national sport.

A cloud of dust swirls around the heaving scrum of three dozen horses competing in the final contest on a vast plain in the northern province of Samangan, where buzkashi riders known as "chapandazan" are revered as heroes.

About 3,000 spectators — all men and boys — cheer, whoop and ululate as a beaming Mohammad canters over to tournament officials to collect his \$500 prize, gathering his mounted teammates for their lap of victory.

Buzkashi — from the Persian



Horsemen competing during buzkashi at Qara Shabagh on the outskirts of Aybak in Samangan Province. — AFP

words for goat ("buz") and drag ("kashi") — has been played in Central Asia for centuries, with Afghanistan's neighbours Uzbekistan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan having their own variations.

Banned under the Taliban's brutal regime of 1996 to 2001 for

being "immoral", there were fears the ancient game would again be barred after the Taliban seized power in August.

BUZKASHI TOURNAMENT But not only have Taliban fighters gathered in the crowd after Friday prayers to watch this showpiece buzkashi tournament — a local commander is taking part, and Mohammad's club is captained by a district governor.

"I'm walking away with the glory," 29-year-old Mohammad said on the sidelines, still wearing his Soviet-era tank helmet, his face layered in the fine powder kicked up during the two-hour competition.

Flanked by mountains, the early-season tournament takes place at Qara Shabagh, just outside Samangan's capital Aybak, where

the Hindu Kush mountains meet the Central Asian steppe.

The objective is for the horsemen to haul the decapitated and disembowelled goat or calf carcass around a rock, before throwing it on a chalked central scoring circle called a "jor", also known as the "circle of justice".

Although buzkashi no longer draws the huge cash prizes dished out by warlords like Abdul Rashid Dostum, for these hardened chapandazan, winning is a matter of honour.

When Mohammad and his five brothers who play buzkashi are not competing, they take care of the horses — including Khanjar (Dagger), Qara Bator (Brave Black), and Tyson — feeding them on grain, melons and grapes, and training themselves for the winter tournaments. — AFP

COP26 leaders vow new drive to save forests

GLASGOW: World leaders on Tuesday issued a multibillion-dollar pledge to end deforestation by 2030, a promise met with scepticism by environmental groups who say more urgent action is needed to save the planet's lungs.

According to summit hosts the British government, the pledge is backed by almost \$20 billion in public and private funding and is endorsed by more than 100 leaders representing over 85 per cent of the world's forests, including the Amazon rainforest, Canada's northern boreal forest and the Congo Basin rainforest.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the agreement on deforestation was pivotal to the overarching goal of limiting temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius — the most ambitious Paris Agreement target.

"Climate change and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin," Johnson said on Tuesday.

"We can't deal with the devastating loss of habitat and species without tackling climate change and we can't tackle climate change without protecting our natural environment and respecting the rights of indigenous people."

"So protecting our forests is not only the right course of action to tackle climate change, but the right course for a more prosperous future for us all," he said.

Signatories include Brazil and Russia, which have been singled out for accelerating deforestation in their territories, as well as the United States, China, Australia and France.

The forests pact was the first of two anticipated announcements in Glasgow on Tuesday, with governments set to unveil a global agreement to



World leaders pose at a reception to mark the opening day of COP26 on the sidelines of the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. — AFP

COP26 IN GLASGOW

LEADERS LINK TACKLING WATER AND CLIMATE

GENEVA: Governments and UN agencies meeting at COP26 in Glasgow formed a water and climate coalition on Tuesday to address growing hazards and shrinking reserves. Led by the presidents of Tajikistan and Hungary, the coalition will seek to implement reforms which the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization says are needed in the global management of water resources. Data over the past 20 years shows that the amount of water stored on or near the land surface such as soil moisture as well as snow and ice has dropped at a rate of 1 centimetre a year, the WMO said, with huge ramifications for water security. Melting glaciers are also set to increase the risk of landslides and avalanches and deprive the many millions of people living downstream of a key resource, it added. The coalition will aim to boost data sharing and create a more integrated approach to water-climate management to support more effective adaptation and resilience, the WMO said. "Water and climate tend to be dealt with separately. We are now saying water is the canary in the coal mine of climate. You have got to tackle them together," Clare Nullis, WMO spokesperson, said.

BEZOS PLEDGES \$2 BILLION FOR AFRICAN LAND RESTORATION

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has pledged \$2 billion for land restoration in Africa. The billionaire announced the funding, paid as part of the Bezos Earth Fund, at a COP26 event hosted by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Bezos previously indicated the investment would be \$1 billion at an event with Prince Charles on Monday. "We must conserve what we still have, we must restore what we've lost and we must grow what we need to live without degrading the planet for future generations to come," Bezos said.



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos speaks during the COP26 in Glasgow. — Reuters

BIDEN COMMITS TO FOREST CONSERVATION

Speaking at the COP26 event on forests and land use, US President Joe Biden said forests had the potential to reduce carbon globally by more than a third. "So we need to approach this issue with the same seriousness of process as decarbonising our economy," he said, pointing to work in the US, where he had set the goal to conserve at least 30 per cent of all US land and waters by 2030. He announced a new plan to conserve global forests "which will bring together the full range of US government tools, diplomatic, financial and policy to halt forest loss, restore critical carbon sinks and improve land management." Biden said the "first of its kind" plan would work with Congress to mobilise up to \$9 billion through to 2030 to conserve and restore forests and mobilise more through partners. "We're going to work to ensure markets recognise the true economic value of natural carbon sinks and motivate governments, landowners and stakeholders to prioritise conservation," adding there would be work to ensure sustainable supply chains. "The US is going to lead by our example at home and support other forested nations and developing countries in setting and achieving ambitious action to conserve and restore these carbon sinks." — Agencies

reduce emissions of methane by 30 per cent this decade.

A senior US administration official said that 90 countries including "half of the top 30 major methane emitters" had signed up to the pledge.

The summit pact to "halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030" encompasses promises to secure the rights of indigenous peoples, and recognise "their role as forest guardians".

While Johnson described the pledge as "unprecedented", a UN climate gathering in New York issued a similar declaration.

The agreement on deforestation was pivotal to the overarching goal of limiting temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius

BORIS JOHNSON
British Prime Minister

That deal saw more than 200 countries, companies and indigenous groups promise to halve the rate of deforestation by 2020, and end it by 2030.

However, an assessment earlier this year found that seven years on from the pact, virtually no government was on course to fulfil their responsibilities.

Trees continue to be cut down on an industrial scale, not least in the Amazon under the far-right government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. Deforestation in Brazil surged in 2020, leading to a 9.5-per cent increase in its emissions. — AFP

France defers reprisals in post-Brexit fishing rights

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday refrained from implementing a threat to disrupt trade with Britain in a standoff over post-Brexit fishing rights as talks to defuse the latest row continued in Brussels.

France had threatened to ban British boats from unloading their catches at French ports and to subject all British imports to inspections, effectively holding them up, from midnight on Monday.

But on Monday evening Macron

said France would allow more time for negotiations over the exclusion of dozens of French fishing boats from the territorial waters of the UK and Channel Islands.

"It's not while we're negotiating that we're going to impose sanctions," the French leader said on the sidelines of the COP26 summit in Glasgow, in remarks welcomed by the British government.

The talks between France, Britain and the EU are set to continue through the week, with



A British trawler *Cornelis Gert Jan* is seen moored in the port of Le Havre, after being seized last week fishing in the French territorial waters without licence, in Le Havre, France. — Reuters

Brexit minister David Frost due to meet France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune in Paris.

A spokeswoman for the European Commission said Monday's talks in Brussels had allowed to chart "the way forward on several aspects" and that the discussions would resume on Tuesday and continue "later in the week".

In France, where campaigning has begun for next year's presidential election, politicians from both the right and the left

urged Macron to take a stern line with Britain.

"I'm all for giving it an extra 48 hours but we'll have to be very tough indeed with the British at that point," conservative presidential hopeful Xavier Bertrand, who is hoping to challenge Macron in the election, told France 2 television.

His sentiments were echoed by a leading Socialist, Patrick Kanner. "France is right to flex its muscles but when you do so sometimes you have to go all the way," the senator told France Info radio. — AFP

ABUJA

6 dead in Nigeria after collapse of high-rise building

At least six people have died in Nigeria's commercial capital of Lagos after the collapse of a luxurious high-rise building that was under construction, the state emergency services chief said. Rescuers were racing against the clock to find survivors at the site in the affluent neighbourhood of Ikoyi after torrential rains pounded Lagos overnight and briefly stopped the search. Large trailers were brought in to help move debris, blocking one of Ikoyi's main roads.



Building collapses are frequent in Africa's most populous country, where regulations are poorly enforced and construction materials often substandard. — Reuters

FRANKFURT

Strikes hit Amazon in Germany for Christmas

Around 2,500 Amazon employees at seven sites across Germany were on strike and unions warned stoppages could continue up to Christmas.

The strikes at so-called 'fulfilment' centres, where Amazon prepares packages before delivery, began in two locations on Monday.

The Verdi union is calling on Amazon for an 'immediate' salary increase of three per cent this year, followed by a further 1.7 per cent next year, in line



with a collective agreement for the retail sector. Amazon could not continue to "refuse wage increases that other companies in the sector pay", Verdi retail head Orhan Akman said. — AFP

VIENNA

Austria set to tighten coronavirus rules

More than 300 intensive care beds are being used by Covid-19 patients in Austria as of Tuesday, meaning the country is days away from a series of automatic restrictions designed to stop the disease from spreading. According to laws put in place since the pandemic struck, once health authorities record 300 beds occupied by Covid-19 patients, a one-week clock starts ticking.

Tuesday's count stood at 317, a 25-person increase in one day.



The number of patients in non-intensive care beds also jumped by 145, to 1,600.

At the end of the seven days, the country will go on the second level of a five-level system. — dpa

Britons caught in cost-of-living squeeze

HUGO GREENHALGH

Rising mortgage rates, fuel and grocery prices soaring, national insurance contributions going up and queues growing at charity food banks across Britain. Add fallout from Covid-19 and Brexit, and economic and policy analysts say the world's fifth-biggest economy faces a deepening cost-of-living crisis, despite measures in the government's new budget aimed at softening the blow.

"Everybody across the income spectrum in the UK is going to see increasing costs," said Garry Lemon, policy and research director at the Trussell Trust, which supports more than 1,300 food bank centres across Britain.

"But if your income is extremely low, then these inflationary pressures ... are particularly worrying and are going to have a huge, disproportionate impact on those at the bottom," he said.

Inflation looks set to rise to 5 per cent - more than double the Bank of England's 2 per cent target. Rising living costs have been exacerbated by an increase in personal tax rates, driven by the government's attempts to claw back the costs of Covid-19 and fund long-term social care.

"We've hit a perfect storm for many people," said Sue Weightman, project manager of the Trussell Trust food bank in the town of Taunton, in western England. "(There are) just too many points of pressure financially for people on benefits and also low-income families."

Covid has hugely exacerbated the situation. Another manager of a London-based food bank, who asked not to be identified, said before the pandemic her centre saw between 80 and 120 families a month.

"Now we're feeding up to 2,000 people a month, probably up to 2,500," she said.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

“Everybody across the income spectrum in the UK is going to see increasing costs. But if your income is extremely low, then these inflationary pressures ... are particularly worrying and are going to have a huge, disproportionate impact on those at the bottom

GARRY LEMON
Trussell Trust



RED REBEL BRIGADE

A member of the Red Rebel Brigade – an international performance activist troupe – join climate activists from the Extinction Rebellion group as they demonstrate in Glasgow, during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference, on Tuesday. – AFP

Of Glasgow pleas and pledges



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

WHAT IS
ENCOURAGING
IS THAT MANY
GOVERNMENTS,
INDUSTRIES
AND OTHER
BUSINESSES
ARE SETTING
TARGETS TO
REACH NET-ZERO
EMISSIONS
FOR 2030

The Scottish city of Glasgow was at the centre of pleas by world leaders, environmental experts and activists for action to halt the global warming which threatens the future of the planet. It was also witness to a major deal struck by a group of 100 world leaders including UK, US, and China promising to stop deforestation by 2030. If reports are to be believed the two-day summit at the COP26 ended with big polluters making new commitments but with substantial caveats. And the pledges are expected to allow the planet's average surface temperature to rise 2.7C this century.

US President Joe Biden restated an earlier pledge to halve emissions by 2030. Britain, the EU and New Zealand have all set a target date of 2050 to reach net-zero. Brazil said it would cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, upping a previous pledge, and would end illegal deforestation by 2028.

India has set 2070 as a target to reach net-zero carbon emissions, but that's 20 years beyond the UN's global recommendation.

At its meeting in Rome, the G20 nations, responsible for around 80 per cent of global greenhouse gases, earlier failed to agree to halt net carbon emissions by 2050, undermining one of the summit's main goals. But what is encouraging is that many governments, industries and

other businesses are setting targets to reach net-zero emissions for 2030. They are also aiming to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's land and oceans by the same period.

But the question asked by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley that whether there will be peace and prosperity if one-third of the world lives in prosperity and two-third lives under seas and face calamitous threats to our wellbeing cannot be ignored by the leaders of developed nations.

Similarly, what Elizabeth Wathuti, a climate activist from Kenya, said is heart-rending, "I need to tell you what is happening in my home country. Right now, as you sit comfortably in this conference center Glasgow, over two million of my fellow Kenyans are facing climate-related starvation. Please open your hearts. If you allow yourself to feel it, the heartbreak and the injustice is hard to bear".

As experts point out, the rapidly warming climate is the greatest threat to global public health. Repeatedly they have been calling on world leaders to cut heat-trapping emissions to avoid "catastrophic harm to health that will be impossible to reverse."

The most vulnerable populations are at highest risk from climate change, including the oldest and youngest, as well as those

already facing economic and health challenges. Young children are falling sick and are seeking admissions in hospitals breathing problems due to poor air quality. We are witness to more heat exhaustion and heat-related illnesses. With climate change happening, the number of these cases will continue to rise.

Repeated disasters, such as hurricanes and fires, can lead to mental health problems and instability as people are displaced. Infectious diseases are also expected to rise.

Our clean air, clean water, temperate climate, mountain snowpack, and general way of life are at risk, and humans have the capacity to work together in a concerted effort to preserve our climate.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres points out, "the carbon announcements might give the impression that we are on track to turn things around. This is an illusion."

These promises are not enough. Targets are easy to set and hard to achieve. They are yet to be matched with credible short and longer term plans to accelerate cleaner technologies and transform societies.

But to have any chance of capping global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world needs to almost halve greenhouse gas emissions in the next eight years and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

What South Africa must do...



NOURIEL ROUBINI

The author is a Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University's Stern School of Business, is Chief Economist at Atlas Capital Team, CEO of Roubini Macro Associates, and Co-Founder of TheBoomBust.com

South Africa is at a crossroads. To save its democratic project, it needs to put itself on a path to inclusive, dynamic growth, creating a virtuous cycle that delivers on Nelson Mandela's promise of "a better life for all."

For the past decade, the country has been locked in a low-growth trap, with falling per capita income, rising inequality, and skyrocketing unemployment, which is now at a record-high 34 per cent. In a world beset by economic vulnerabilities, South Africa still manages to stand out for its poor performance and racially skewed outcomes – a tragic legacy of centuries of colonialism and apartheid.

The combination of low growth, high unemployment, large deficits and debt ratios, and a lack of effective structural

reforms has created an unstable disequilibrium. After being skillfully managed by Mandela and then by Thabo Mbeki, the country was torn asunder by Jacob Zuma's decade-long reign of state capture and corruption. Zuma's successor, Cyril Ramaphosa, is now trying to turn things around, but the challenge is enormous.

The economy could go one of two ways. In one direction, weak growth leads to a fiscal crisis, further reducing incomes and employment, and inviting more civil unrest like that in July, when riots and looting swept the country.

There is good reason to worry that South Africa is already on this path, given its troubled medium-term debt outlook. When a country runs a flat or negative primary budget balance

(excluding interest payments), real (inflation-adjusted) growth must exceed the real rate of interest on its debt stock. Otherwise, its debt-to-GDP ratio will grow continuously. That is what is now happening in South Africa. To avoid a debt crisis, real yields must decrease and/or real growth must increase.

Austerity alone cannot fix the problem. To put itself on a firmer economic footing, South Africa needs a programme to expand social welfare and recapitalise businesses while also undertaking structural reforms and pursuing fiscal consolidation.

Social welfare can be expanded with a \$55 monthly Unemployed Relief Grant. Costing 2 per cent of GDP, this should be a multi-year, if not permanent, replacement for the \$24 monthly Social Relief of

Distress Grant that expires in April 2022. That programme has been highly effective and thus merits being doubled. It would put more money into the hands of the 12 million unemployed, who would then spend it (unlike wealthy savers), stimulating economic activity and job creation.

The new grant could be financed in part by government saving measures and tax reforms to remove deductions targeted at higher-income taxpayers. In the short term, however, it will require around \$7 billion of additional debt on the government's balance sheet. Fortunately, that is roughly equal to the anticipated incremental corporate-tax revenues this year, following the recent commodity boom.

Grants are not a panacea; but they have an integral role to play

in attacking the unemployment and growth crisis, as do other interventions such as wage subsidisation, when properly applied. There is ample evidence to show that grants alleviate poverty and hunger, and help recipients start new businesses. Expanding this form of support is a no-brainer.

South African businesses also need support in the form of recapitalisation. Here, a sizable hybrid equity funding scheme for small and medium-size enterprises could go a long way, as would grants funded by the national treasury, in partnership with financial institutions. An injection of risk-sharing equity into eligible businesses would help to stimulate both investment and job creation.

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sport



HM CUP ROUND OF 32 DRAW ON SUNDAY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

The Oman Football Association (OFA) announced that the His Majesty's Football Cup 2021-2022 draw for last 32 will take place in Muscat's Sheraton Hotel on Monday.

As many as 32 clubs will be in the draw including 14 clubs from Omantel League and 18 clubs from the first division league.

The confirmed clubs in the last 32 draw will include: Defending champion Dhofar, the runner-up Al Suwaiq, Al Nasr, Saham, Al Ittihad, Al Musannah, Sohar, Nizwa, Al Nahdha, Nizwa, Bahla, Seeb, Muscat, Al Rustaq, Al Oruba, Masirah, Samayil, Sur, Jaalan, Fanja, Salalah, Qurayat, Bausher, Ibri, Majees, Ahli Sidab, Al Khabourah, Al Ittifaq, Al Mudhaibi, Al Bashaer, Al Shabab and winner of Al Kamil W'al Wafi and Yanqul game.

Qurayat club recently secured a spot in the last 32 round of the coveted Cup after edging Bidiya 2-1 on Saturday in the qualifiers fixture to round 32.

At Seeb Stadium, the Syrian Mohammed Fadi was the star of the match as he netted the winner for Qurayat in the dying minutes to deliver a crucial triumph for his team. The first half ended in a 1-1 draw after Mohammed Fadi put his team in the lead while Abu Sei scored the equaliser.

In another match, nine times winner Fanja faced difficulty to



register victory against Al Wahda in a tough encounter that ended in a 5-4 penalty.

The match finished in a 1-1 draw in the regulation time. Saif al Omairi put Fanja ahead while Dhiyab al Shehi managed to score the equaliser. Fanja's Bassam al Rawahi missed a penalty in the second half. Al Wahda was very close to register the first surprise but Fanja's players managed to win in the penalties.

The draw ceremony of the prestigious football championship will be held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik al Said in presence of Shaikh Salim al Wahaibi, OFA Chairman, top dignitaries and representatives of participating clubs.

Dhofar is the title holder as they trashed Suwaiq 5-1 in the concluding game of HM Football Cup 2020-2021 final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex last March. Khalid al Hajri's hat-trick and goals from Bekai Lawsen and Yaseen al Siyabi sealed a historic tenth HM Cup crown for Dhofar.



Muscat to host regional karting championship from Nov 16

MUSCAT: The Oman Automobile Association (OAA) is in the final preparations for the second Mena Nations Cup Karting Championship to be hosted in Muscat from November 16 to 20.

The competitors are the defending overall champions. Over 200 racers from 19 countries, including hosts the Sultanate of Oman, Libya, Lebanon, Cyprus, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Palestine, Morocco and Turkey, will showcase their talent in the five-day karting races.

Events will be held in 8 categories at the OAA's Muscat Speedway Circuit for Mena Rotax Max Challenge (RMC) 6 classes and Mena RD1 Elite Endurance, Mena RD1 Elite Sprint 2 classes.

Brigadier (R) Salim bin Ali al Maskari, Chairman of Oman Automobile Association, said this is a grand occasion for the Sultanate of Oman and the OAA as it is hosting the second edition of the Mena Karting Championship



in a row.

"We at the OAA are committed to promote grassroot of motor sports and the Mena Karting Championship is a major event for the motor sports young generation in the region. It is a great achievement that our dedicated team at the OAA have managed to make arrangements for another edition of the regional

championship in Muscat during the difficult period due to the Covid-19."

"This event is an important fixture for the future motor sports champions of the region and the OAA are determined to provide the best facilities to all the participants and the visiting delegations during their stay in the Sultanate of Oman," Al Maskari said.

The OAA chief thanked the FIA sport grand and the participating Mena national motor sports federations for their support and cooperation.

The first day, Tuesday, November 16, will be the registration and kart raffle draw for the championship. The drivers will collect their equipment on the same day. Two practice race

days will follow (Wednesday and Thursday) with the official welcome ceremony taking place on Thursday, November 18 at 6 pm.

The timed qualifying and three qualifying heat races will be held on Friday (November 19). The pre-final and final are scheduled for the last day on Saturday (November 20) ahead of the awards presentation.

In RMC, competitions will be held in Micro Max, Mini Max, Junior Max, Senior Max, DD2 and DD2 Master, covering all age ranges from eight years and above. RD1 Elite Endurance will be a team event for the two-hour endurance race for the drivers with the minimum age of 15 years.

The number of drivers per team can be 2 or 3.

RD1 Elite Sprint is an individual event for the drivers having a minimum age of 15 years. The longest final race will determine the overall RD1 Elite Sprint rankings with the top 3 drivers receiving the trophies.

The Mena drivers in all

categories will contribute to their 'Nations Cup' or country ranking points based on their performance.

Points scored in each discipline will be accumulated to decide the top three nations and the overall winners crowned as Mena Nations Cup 2021 champions.

FIA President Jean Todt and FIA Vice-President for Middle East Mohammed bin Sulayem have pledged full support for the popular karting event.

The Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region karting championship is a major karting series for the young and upcoming drivers under the International Automobile Federation (FIA), the world body for motor sports.

The inaugural edition of Mena Nations Cup was also hosted by Muscat during February 10 to 14, 2020.

The event comes under the FIA Sport Grant Programme that enables any Mena country with suitable facilities and minimal annual investment to host the regional karting contest.

SA boost semis hope after 6-wicket victory over Bangladesh

ABU DHABI: South Africa boosted their chances of reaching the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals with a six-wicket rout of Bangladesh, who dropped out of the last-four race after their fourth consecutive defeat in the Super 12 stage on Tuesday.

Fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje set up South Africa's comprehensive win, claiming three wickets apiece to bundle out Bangladesh for 84 in 18.2 overs.

South Africa suffered a mini-collapse but skipper Temba Bavuma made 31 not out to guide his team home with 39 balls to spare.

South Africa are second in Group I, ahead of Australia, after their third win in four matches and face table-toppers England in their final group match on Saturday.

"Quite a lot in the wicket early on," Bavuma told reporters.

"Our fast bowlers KG (Rabada) and Nortje were able to exploit that, so good effort with the ball and clinical with the bat.

"We are blessed to have those type of guys running in with a new ball."

The South African bowlers vindicated Bavuma's decision to field against a Bangladesh side without all-rounder Shakib Al

Hasan, who has been ruled out of the tournament with a hamstring injury.

Rabada rocked them early, dismissing Mohammad Naim and Soumya Sarkar off successive deliveries in the fourth over.

Although the bowler could not complete a hat-trick in his next over, Rabada dismissed Mushfiqur Rahim to leave Bangladesh in disarray.

Nortje bounced out rival captain Mahmudullah as Bangladesh crawled to 40-5 at the midway stage of their innings and Tabraiz Shamsi was yet to be pressed into service.

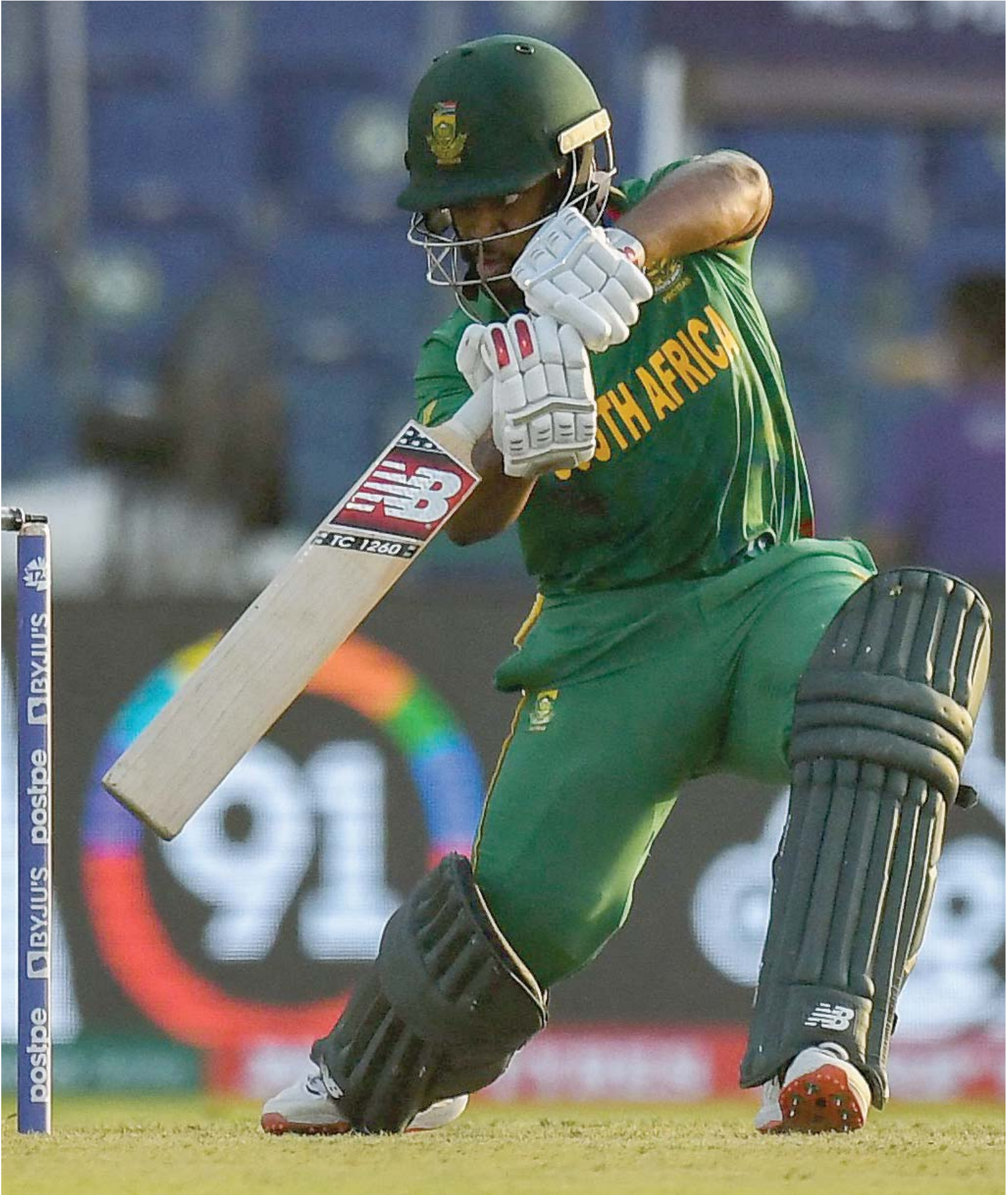
Leg-spinner Shamsi, the top-ranked T20 bowler, struck in his first over by dismissing Liton Das for 24 and Nortje returned to polish off the tail.

South Africa also started poorly as Taskin Ahmed sent back Reeza Hendricks and Aiden Markram and Mahedi bowled Quinton de Kock to reduce them to 33-3.

Bavuma combined with Rassie van der Dussen (22), however, to ease the South Africans to their target.

"Obviously frustrated," Mahmudullah said. "We were very close to win two games. If we could have won those two games, it could have been a different story."

— Reuters



South Africa's captain Temba Bavuma (R) plays a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between South Africa and Bangladesh at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. — AFP



Pakistan's Mohammad Hafeez (R) with Mohammad Rizwan in the match against Namibia and Pakistan in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. — AFP

Rizwan, Babar power Pakistan into semifinals

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 2

A brilliant opening partnership between Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam helped Pakistan outplay Namibia and confirm their spot in the semifinals of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Rizwan and Babar put on an excellent 113-run partnership that negated the plans of the Namibian bowlers and set the launchpad for Rizwan to go big in the final overs.

The target proved too much for the Namibian batsmen as they fell short by 45 runs to hand Pakistan a handsome fourth consecutive victory.

NAMIBIA SLUGGISH
Namibia as was expected started sluggishly and went at about five runs an over losing

the early wicket of Michael van Lingen who was bowled by Hasan Ali. Stephan Baard who was going well and had kept the scoreboard ticking was run out for 29 in the ninth over as Namibia lost their second wicket.

Namibia were really up against it as they were going at a run rate of over 6 when the required rate was over 13 at the 11-over mark.

Gerhard Erasmus was out after playing a little cameo of 15 runs holing out to Shadab Khan off Imad Wasim as Namibia slipped to 83/3.

Shadab then claimed the wicket of Craig Williams as the Namibians were in deep trouble at 93/4.

Haris Rauf then snuffed out JJ Smit in the last ball of the 17th over as Namibia were staring down the barrel at 111/5.

RIZWAN, BABAR HEROICS
Earlier, Rizwan and Babar took the game away from Namibia with their supremely well-constructed knocks. They started off really slowly scoring at around 5 runs an over inside the powerplay.

But the duo really took off after that going after the Namibian bowlers at will. Rizwan's 79 included eight boundaries and four sixes in the 50-ball innings while Babar's 70 off 49 balls comprised seven fours.

The highlight of the Pakistan innings was the 20th over where Rizwan smashed 24 runs off the last over that included a six, four boundaries and a two.

Namibia were left with a herculean task of chasing 190 against a potent Pakistan bowling line-up.



‘I did not deserve to win,’ says Murray after wasting seven match points

PARIS: Former world number one Andy Murray failed to convert seven match points but said he did not “deserve to win the match as I did not play well enough” after losing a three-hour thriller to lucky loser Dominik Koepfer of Germany in the Paris Masters first round on Monday.

Murray, ranked 144, had been given a wild card but while the 34-year-old lacked killer instinct, he did show steely determination to battle back from a set and a break down to take the match to a third set before Koepfer won 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (11/9).

Koepfer — a late replacement when American qualifier Jenson Brooksby withdrew with abdominal pains hours before the match — had served for the match in the second set.

However, Murray, roared on by the crowd, roused himself and broke his 55th-ranked opponent before going on to take the set.

The third set was a cracking duel with Murray saving three break points at 0-40 at 3-3.

Murray, though, could not quite complete a remarkable comeback as he let so many match points slip — two when Koepfer served to stay in the match at 4-5 and then five more in the epic tie-breaker.

It was Koepfer, though, who showed how to take

chances when they come along as he converted his first match point.

Murray gave a brutal assessment of his performance.

“The thing I’m most disappointed with, was the way that I played tonight, to be honest,” said Murray, who will play the Stockholm event before bringing the curtain down on his season.

“I did really well to get myself in the position to win the match, but I don’t think I deserved to win.

“Obviously I had a ton of opportunities at the end to do it, but the way that I was playing tonight was not good enough.”

Earlier, Cameron Norrie, who occupies a role Murray once did in his pomp as British number one, celebrated his 100th ATP tour match win, outclassing Argentinian Federico Delbonis 6-2, 6-1.

The 26-year-old British number one has risen to 13th in the rankings having begun the year 71st in the world.

The South Africa-born left hander’s best moment came when he won the prestigious Indian Wells title last month.

Norrie was blissfully unaware of having secured a landmark win.

“I didn’t know about it,” he said.

“Yeah, it’s obviously a great milestone.” — AFP

PSG’s Messi to miss match against Leipzig, Mbappe included in squad

PARIS: Lionel Messi was not included in the Paris St-Germain squad that will face RB Leipzig in the Champions League on Wednesday but forward Kylian Mbappe made the team.

Messi had limped off during their 2-1 win over Lille in Ligue 1 on Friday and was not included in the 21-member squad named on Tuesday for their Champions League Group A game in Germany.

The Argentine had been replaced by Mauro Icardi in Friday’s match after having missed training a day earlier with a muscle problem.

Team-mate Mbappe, however, who had to sit out the Lille game with an infection, was included.

The French club are top of Group A with seven points from three games, with Manchester City second on six. Club Brugge are on four while Leipzig have yet to earn a point after losing all three games so far.

— Reuters



Hungary fans banned after Wembley clashes

BUDAPEST: Hungary fans will be barred from attending their team’s final World Cup qualifier away to Poland following clashes with police during last month’s group game against England at Wembley Stadium, world soccer’s governing body (Fifa) said on Monday.

Britain’s Metropolitan Police said the violence broke out after the alleged racial abuse of a steward in the Group I qualifier on October 12 that ended in a 1-1 draw.

Fifa on Monday listed the “lighting of fireworks and lack of order in the stadium

— improper conduct by spectators” as the reasons for banning Hungary fans for the Warsaw game on November 15. They also fined the Hungarian Football Federation 75,000 Swiss Francs (\$82,309.04).

In September, Fifa had asked Hungary to play two games behind closed doors following the racism faced by England players in their clash in Budapest.

Hungary are fourth in Group I with 11 points from eight games, nine points adrift of leaders England and six behind Poland. — Reuters



Djokovic makes winning return in Paris doubles

PARIS: Novak Djokovic, making his return to the court at the Paris Masters, seven weeks after losing the US Open final, picked up a doubles win on Monday, on the eve of his singles debut.

Djokovic and Serbian compatriot Filip Krajinovic needed a super tie-break to beat Australians Alex de Minaur and Luke Saville 4-6, 6-4, 10/7, in front of a packed Bercy arena.

“I’ve never played in front of so many people for a doubles match, it’s incredible,” said the world No 1, whose last doubles match was in Mallorca in June when he and Carlos Gomez-Herrera won their semifinal. They then withdrew from the final because the Spaniard had injured an ankle.

In his first singles match on Tuesday, Djokovic will face Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who beat Italian Fabio Fognini 6-1, 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/5) on Monday.

Djokovic had not played since



his dream of winning a calendar Grand Slam was shattered in the US Open final in mid-September by Russian Daniil Medvedev.

“It’s been a very trying season, but it’s not over,” he said.

“I’m very proud of the way I played in the Grand Slams this year, I didn’t end up with the trophy in New York, but there are a lot of things I can be happy about.”

Djokovic lost his first service game on a double fault, and surprisingly allowed Krajinovic to defend when the Australians had a set point, which they won.

The 34-year-old Djokovic, who sought support from the crowd on several occasions, began to find some intensity early in the second set and improved as the match went on and he reacted with a roar of joy when he and Krajinovic clinched the second set.

“It’s a privilege to play with Novak”, Krajinovic said. “A very good friend and my idol.” — AFP

business

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EXCHANGE

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CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude **\$83.58**

Brent Crude **\$84.28**

Light Crude **\$83.41**

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Right time for revival of Saudi-Oman oil pipeline proposal: Minister

BURGEONING TIES: Long-stalled pipeline initiative is of 'strategic importance' to the goal of boosting bilateral relations between the two countries

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu



Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy

A top official of the Sultanate of Oman has called for the revival of a proposal envisioning an overland oil pipeline connecting Saudi oilfields with an export terminal on Oman's Arabian Sea coast.

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, underscored the significance of the pipeline initiative in an interview published in the latest edition of *Asharq Al-Awsat*, an Arabic international newspaper headquartered in London.

The wide-ranging interview underlined the importance of a strategic crude oil pipeline link between Sultanate of Oman and Saudi in the context of recent efforts by the leaderships of the two countries to impart new momentum to bilateral and economic ties.

The idea of an oil pipeline providing an outlet for Saudi crude directly on the Arabian Sea coast, thus bypassing the contentious Hormuz Strait, has languished since it was first proposed in the early 1970s.

However, following the historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Saudi Arabia in July this year, the proposal has gain traction among commentators on both sides.

The long-stalled initiative

centres on a proposal for a large-capacity pipeline traversing The Empty Quarter as it travels diagonally across the breadth of the Sultanate of Oman before reaching the coast, possibly at Duqm, on the Arabian Sea. Given Saudi Arabia's prodigious natural gas reserves, it would also make sense to include a gas pipeline as well.

While the Strait of Hormuz will remain the main gateway for the maritime transportation of the bulk of oil and gas exports from the Arabian Gulf region, the establishment of oil and gas pipelines cutting across the Sultanate of Oman en route to the Arabian Sea has become a subject of "paramount strategic importance", said Dr Al Saqri in the interview.

The proposal to build an oil pipeline through the Sultanate of Oman en route to the Arabian Sea has existed since the 1970s, the Minister noted, adding that with recent commitments by the two sides to boost bilateral investment and trade relations, the revival and implementation of this initiative has become "strategically important".

Bilateral trade between the two countries has soared to

reach a value of \$2.5 billion at the end of 2020, up from \$1.4 billion in 2020, Dr Al Saqri said. The number of Saudi companies investing and operating in the Sultanate has also more than doubled to around 1,235 to date, up from 467 in 2010, he stated.

Commenting on the imminent opening of a new road linking Sultanate of Oman with Saudi Arabia, Dr Al Saqri said the carriageway will help unleash an array of trade and economic spin-offs for both countries.

"Without a doubt, the road will contribute to facilitating trade and the movement of goods in a shorter time and at a lower cost, as it cuts the distance between the countries by about 800 kilometres while also bypassing other neighbouring countries. It will also pave the way for Saudi goods to enter the Sultanate for distribution not only within the different governorates of the country but also onward to other countries through Omani ports — and vice versa," he explained.

Additionally, the new road will facilitate the easy and convenient overland movement of pilgrims headed to the holy places of Saudi Arabia, without the need to travel through third countries, he said.

"It is also hoped that the road will provide new opportunities for the emergence and growth of Omani and Saudi projects, such as those normally built alongside the road, as well as the possibility of benefiting from facilities currently available in both countries, such as industrial and free zones. It also opens up the possibility of establishing new areas along the border between the two countries, and the possibility of connecting the City of Duqm with the City of Neom in the Kingdom," he added.

Sohar Freezone investments total RO 353m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

Investments in Sohar Freezone, adjoining the industrial port at Sohar, have now climbed to a total of RO 353 million (approx. \$918 million), according to Omar bin Mahmoud al Mahrizi (**pictured**), CEO.

Al Mahrizi said in an interview published in *Manatq*, a supplement issued along with *Duqm Economist* (newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones), said the figure does not include investments towards infrastructure and services provides within the free zone. As many as 44 industrial are now in operation at the free zone related to minerals, petrochemicals and food industries, logistics, clean energy, iron and steel, chemicals and textiles among other sectors.

The Zone is also home to a number of companies leasing warehouse space and offices. Projects under construction include cold stage capacity by Al Hosn Investment, Sohar Qabas's solar power plant, restrooms



for truck drivers, a quartz and minerals processing plant and the Sanvira Carbon project. These new investments under implementation are valued at around RO 76.5 million, he said.

This year, the Zone signed a leasing agreement with Eagle Ceramics to establish an advanced factory for producing ceramics over an area of 20,000 sqm at a cost of \$1.2 million, said Al Mahrizi.

"We recently signed an agreement to establish a factory for producing titanium dioxide, covering over 120,000 sqm, offering a production capacity of 150,000 tonnes annually, at a cost of RO 43 million. Our facilities, services and infrastructure will contribute to meeting the requirements of the

project by providing raw materials and export of the final product due to the port's proximity to the target markets. There are also more projects in the minerals sector that will be developed in the near future", Al Mahrizi explained.

The second phase, currently under development, covers an area of 516 hectares," said the CEO.

"The Zone was designed based on the system of specialised and integrated industrial complexes, where companies and factories are distributed in a manner that ensures highest level of flexibility in business. These complexes provide infrastructure and modern network of roads, water and electricity supply in the developed phases. Work has also been done to provide ideal warehouses and offices for businesses, industries and logistics service providers."

Sohar Port and Free Zone, he stated, will contribute about 2.7 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In terms of its In-Country Value (ICV) contribution, the port and free zone has awarded 13 per cent of contracts to local companies, most of them SMEs.

البنك الوطني العماني
لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجي
National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

ملادوقا

National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

Investment Manager Report

For the 9M- 2021 ending 30th of September 2021

The third quarter of 2021 marked the continuation of a global rally as optimism was backed by confirmation of higher corporate profits. After peaking at level of 1.74% at the end of the first quarter, the 10 year US government yield was range bound and ended the third quarter at 1.48%. During the famous Jackson Hole meeting fed official pledged to an orderly tapering of monetary stimuli and committed to a long lasting regime of lower rates. The transitory inflation narrative is being seriously tested as elevated energy prices are pressuring a wide range of inflation measures globally. While many indices seemed richly valued on a trailing basis, most companies positively surprised on the earnings and sales fronts and revised their guidance upwards for the remaining of 2021.

Vaccine roll out was broad based and various sectors of the economy including services are almost back to pre-pandemic levels. Monetary policy remains a focal point given the ample amount of liquidity provided by central banks across the globe. Fiscal policies are also playing an increasing role as social inclusiveness and aggressive environmental targets need serious financial backing in order to be achieved. While debt levels are elevated by historical standards, the combination of elevated debt levels and increasing government yields highlights the necessity of continual monetary support in order to avoid a liquidity squeeze.

On the commodity front, Brent ended the quarter at USD 78 a barrel. Strong demand for transport fuels along with electricity natural gas shortages in Europe and the US contributed to oil's strong third quarter. Surprising supply side discipline from OPEC+ members continues to contribute to oil's firm pricing.

During the first quarter, the Fund gained 6.31% to bring the year to date tally to 20.66%, trailing the benchmark's quarterly return of 7.61%. Materials and Industrials were the best performing sectors, on the back of higher energy prices and a strong global backdrop. Bahrain was the best performing GCC country, posting a 10.51% return, followed by Saudi Arabia (8.71%), Kuwait (8.43%), Qatar (7.58%), UAE (7.42%) and Oman (-0.65%).

As the economy both global and regional continues to be resilient, many risks remain. Change continues to be the only constant. For our region, a robust global backdrop bodes well for energy demand, while the economic upswing relieves businesses who have suffered in the recent past, it is corporations that take full advantage of government reforms and a structural change that are better equipped to outperform in the future. We plan on continuing to adopt a cautious approach while taking advantage of a mutating environment to deliver results to our unit holders.

UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2021			
	30 September 2021 RO	30 September 2020 RO	31 December 2020 RO
Assets			
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	10,992,553	7,354,381	8,158,406
Cash and cash equivalents	350,865	1,551,024	1,347,752
Dividend receivable	2,520	12,112	-
Interest receivable	-	-	5,802
Total assets	11,345,938	8,917,517	9,511,960
Liabilities			
Amount due to related parties	33,063	24,962	26,759
Accruals and other payables	8,364	12,361	10,000
Total liabilities	41,427	37,323	36,759
Total net assets attributable to the unitholders	11,304,511	8,880,194	9,475,201
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to the unitholders	11,345,938	8,917,517	9,511,960
Net asset per unit attributable to the unitholders	0.882	0.682	0.732
UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2021			
	30 September 2021 RO (9 months)	30 September 2020 RO (9 months)	31 December 2020 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	241,030	151,503	151,503
Interest income	6,971	26,202	25,140
Foreign exchange gain	-	-	5,165
Other income	-	-	7,537
Total income	248,001	177,705	189,345
Net realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	209,296	(1,328,910)	(928,099)
Net unrealised gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	1,644,682	446,260	727,029
Net investment income/(loss)	2,101,979	(704,945)	(11,725)
EXPENSES			
Brokerage commission expenses (transaction cost)	32,402	44,417	55,760
Management fees	84,754	71,475	96,960
Administration fee	11,695	11,280	15,061
Custodian fees	7,180	7,206	9,626
Fund Management Body's fee	28,000	28,000	35,000
General and administration	11,180	9,147	10,088
Foreign exchange loss	2,350	7,698	-
Total expenses	177,561	179,223	222,495
Profit/(loss) and total comprehensive income/(loss) and increase/(decrease) in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the period/ year	1,924,418	(884,168)	(234,220)
Profit/(loss) per unit	0.150	(0.068)	(0.018)

Investment Manager & Administrator

البنك الوطني العماني
NBO

Note: The complete accounts, in Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of a written request addressed to the Administrator, Investment Banking Operations, National Bank of Oman, P.O.Box:751, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24778864, Fax: 24778993 Email: GCCFund@nbo.co.om

Bank Muscat’s Najahi helps OTaxi expand its services across Oman

MUSCAT: A World Bank report on SME finance points out how Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are playing an important role in many economies around the world. MSMEs account for a vast majority of businesses and are major job creators worldwide representing about 90 per cent of businesses and more than 50 per cent of employment opportunities. Their long-term success, however, is dependent on having ready access to financing so as to be able to focus on running their business.

Having long recognised this vital ingredient for success, Bank Muscat has been steadily launching a number of new products and services through its Retail Enterprises (Najahi) department over the past many years. The bank’s financial and non-financial support has been crucial in the emergence and success of several MSMEs in the Sultanate.

Omani ride-hailing app OTaxi has been one of the success stories in the Sultanate’s MSME sector. Banking support facilitates business growth, which in turn create more jobs for the local



community. Thanks to the PoS Receivables Financing support from Najahi, OTaxi continues to steadily expand its services in the Sultanate of Oman catering to different customer segments. The app has more than 1,800 drivers registered with it.

Notably, the ride-hailing app has been witnessing a steady growth of over 5 per cent every month even during the challenges thrown up by the pandemic, with growth expected to climb to over 12 per cent in 2022. Through its expansion into newer categories like luxury transport and women-only cabs, the start-up

hopes to create many more new jobs in the future. The foray into luxury transport is expected to create 10 new jobs immediately with more jobs expected in the future. OTaxi is a great example of how business can flourish with the encouragement of a supportive banking partner like Bank Muscat Najahi.

Bank Muscat’s Najahi is the only financial product from any bank in the Sultanate to offer loans without any collateral.

The Najahi suite of products include the value-added Najahi Current Account, Najahi Flexi Loan to support working capital,

business expansion and other business needs; the Najahi Business Credit Card; and Najahi PoS Receivables financing for customers who use PoS machines for sales.

All financing options are available to the Bank’s customers ‘collateral free’. Bank Muscat has launched a series of initiatives covering all segments of the SME sector in the Sultanate of Oman. Serving as building blocks for entrepreneurs, these initiatives assume importance in the backdrop of the priority accorded by the government to develop the MSME sector.

NBO launches new Merchant App



MUSCAT: Continuing to transform the country’s payments landscape, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its new Merchant App. An easy solution for businesses moving away from cash, the app allows merchants to receive payments simply by scanning a QR Code on the customer’s mobile phone or by requesting payment from their customer. As the first such service in the Sultanate, it is part of NBO’s efforts to empower businesses and promote nationwide digitalisation, a key objective of the Oman Vision 2040.

“At NBO, we always aim to bring the most innovative and technologically advanced products and services to the market. Our new Merchant App falls in line with the government’s requirement for micro businesses

commercial outlets to switch to electronic channels as part of its cashless payment scheme. Easy to use and with no set-up fee, no monthly rental, it frees up more time for businesses to focus on their growth,” said Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO.

A bank of firsts since inception, NBO invests heavily in digital innovations including the constantly-enhanced mobile app, the pay+ mobile wallet, and its prepaid card Badeel, which, for the first time in the Sultanate, is available to both NBO and non-NBO customers.

Meanwhile, it continues to build on its portfolio of user-friendly solutions and make the banking experience seamless, inclusive, and altogether more enjoyable.

Modern Oman Bakery to open new branch in Al Khoud



MUSCAT: Modern Oman Bakery, the nation’s popular home-grown bakery that has been serving happy customers since 1982, announces the official opening of its new branch in Al Khoud. To celebrate the opening, a ceremony will be held on November 4

This launch celebrates the 18th branch of Modern Oman Bakery with a renewed fresh look. Located in one of the busiest spots of Al Khoud, Modern Oman Bakery is opening their very first coffee bar with in-house baristas.

Having found overwhelming support in desserts, the new store concept introduces an all new coffee selection to complement the delicious bakery products available in the store.

Made with some of the finest ingredients in town, this renowned bakery continues to spread joy through their cakes and snacks throughout the years.

To further celebrate the expansion, Modern Oman Bakery will be inviting guests for a freshly brewed cup and a handcrafted Mamouls.

BankDhofar announces launch of free credit card offer with no annual fees

MUSCAT: Aiming to enhance its customers’ experience through innovative services, products and attractive offers, BankDhofar announced the launch of its credit card offer “Get your free credit card”. The offer which is valid till December 30, 2021 adds to the wide array of exclusive services and special offers available to its customers. Customers applying for various credit cards during the offer period may avail of several exclusive benefits.

Commenting on the offer, Yousuf bin Ahmed al Balushi, Executive Manager Payment Hub at BankDhofar, said: “BankDhofar strives to offer a broad range of best-in-class services and products. This offer, which is available for various credit cards, allows our customers to enjoy the exclusive benefits with no annual fees for the first year. We encourage our customers to apply for the cards



before the end of the year and benefit from the exclusive offers for credit cardholders.”

BankDhofar credit card holders may avail of the cards with no annual fees for the first year.

Customers will also enjoy a number of exclusive benefits including: access to airport lounges, special discounts on hotels, restaurants, shopping outlets, spas, wellness outlets, boutiques, cinema, leisure and entertainment and others. The



benefits also include travel insurance, in addition to earning points with BankDhofar rewards programme, which enables them to benefit from free coupons with hotels, airlines and shopping outlets among other benefits.

Additionally, customers can earn points with the Rewards Programme when they use their credit cards.

These points can then be redeemed, allowing customers to choose from more than 300 airlines and destinations

worldwide. They also have the choice of over 180,000 hotels across the globe to use the points.

Additionally, the rewards programme allows customers to redeem points at various shopping outlets, restaurants, cafes, health clubs and spas. Customers may view their points through BankDhofar’s Mobile Banking App, or they may visit the website to redeem their points.

More information is available on (www.bankdhofarrewards.com) as well as BankDhofar’s official website (www.BankDhofar.com). Customers can also learn more about the bank’s exclusive products and services via social media channels: Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter (@BankDhofar), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar). For further information contact the uptime BankDhofar Call Centre on (+968) 24791111.

OAB announces Hasaad Savings Scheme winners for Sept

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently announced the names of the winners of its Hasaad Savings Scheme for September. The draw witnessed 101 customers winning prizes of RO 500 each and two winners of RO 10,000 as part of the Big Prize Draw. As for the Elite account holders, one customer was the winner of the Elite Grand Prize of RO 25,000 from the Qurayat branch.

Commenting on the winners of the recent scheme, Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said,

“As we come to the end of the third quarter of this year, we are delighted to see a huge increase in the number of savings across all our valuable customer accounts. Keeping in mind the need to encourage saving especially in the cases of unforeseen circumstances, we ensure that all our customers are well rewarded for their efforts. We believe that it is our responsibility to motivate our customers to have a savings culture and help them maintain sound financial management practices.”

The Hasaad Savings Scheme



2021 will see 101 lucky winners from 52 branches win RO 500 each per month, as well as five

winners of RO 1,000 each. This is in addition to a Big Prize Draw, which will see two winners of

RO 10,000 each every quarter.

The Elite Draws will see two winners every month of RO 10,000 each. This is replaced by an Elite grand prize draw conducted every three months with one lucky winner of RO 25,000.

“On behalf of Oman Arab Bank, I extend my warmest congratulations to all the winners of this month’s draw. I encourage all our customers to continue saving to increase their chances of winning for the remaining draws for 2021,” Rashad added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate. Today, the Bank operates a nationwide network of 52 branches and representative offices with 150 ATMs spread across the Sultanate of Oman.

OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.



In brief

■ COPENHAGEN

**MAERSK LIFTS PROFITS ON GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN CRUNCH**

Danish shipping giant, AP Moeller-Maersk, said that profits were up sixfold in the third quarter as the coronavirus pandemic and global supply chain problems caused container prices to soar. "Maersk delivered record earnings" in the third quarter, chief executive Soren Skou said.

"In the ongoing exceptional market situation, with high demand in the US and global disruptions to the supply chains, we continued to increase capacity and expand our offerings to keep cargo moving for our customers."

— AFP

■ FRANKFURT

**CHIP SHORTAGE PUTS THE BRAKES ON VOLKSWAGEN**

Volkswagen cut its outlook for deliveries, toned down sales expectations and warned of job cuts as a shortage of computer chips caused Europe's largest carmaker to report lower-than-expected operating profit for the third quarter. The earnings showed the pressure that Volkswagen is facing as it tries to switch more of its production to electric vehicles and as Tesla prepares to move on its home territory with a new plant close to Berlin.

At the same time, a lack of automotive semiconductors has plagued the industry for most of the year and also ate into quarterly results of key rivals Stellantis and General Motors.

■ SEOUL

**S KOREA FIRMS PLAN \$5.4 BN INVESTMENT TO CREATE VACCINE HUB**

South Korea's private sector plans to invest 6.3 trillion won (\$5.4 billion) in vaccine production and distribution by 2024, as the country seeks to become a global vaccine powerhouse, Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum said. South Korea already has deals to produce three coronavirus vaccines developed by. It also has a vaccine bottling and packaging agreement with Moderna. The investment plan includes 4.24 trillion won spending by Samsung BioLogics and 1.5 trillion won by drugmaker Celltrion, the government data showed.

Kim said the government had selected 14 companies in the vaccine supply chain eligible for 18 billion won of state financial support, as the government develops the industry to become a major pillar. — Reuters

Omani entrepreneurs graduate from Shell Intilaaqah programme

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 2

Oman Shell has celebrated the conclusion of the revamped the Shell Intilaaqah training programme, for the year 2021, which included the participation of 22 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The programme, which was launched in August, also celebrated the winner of the Shell LiveWIRE global Top Ten Innovators competition.

The month-long, intensive training programme included certified courses in the fields of sustainability, solar panel installation, health, safety, and environment, as well as topics on entrepreneurship, marketing,



branding management, change management, quality management, work ethics and various other topics related

to financial management and procurement. The programme also focused on advocating best business practices in the energy

sector.

Commenting on the programme, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell Country Chairman, said,

"Acknowledging the role of SMEs in acting as a catalyst to economic growth, the Shell Intilaaqah programme is in line with Oman Shell's vision to support entrepreneurs and SMEs, and empower them to achieve sustainable growth. As part of Oman Shell's social investment programme, we remain committed to adapting our initiatives to suit the needs of the dynamically changing energy sector locally, and internationally."

Participants who have completed the programme received a Solar Electric Design and Installation certificate (PV101) which is considered one of the pre-requisites laid down by the Oman Authority for Public Services Regulation.

OFA fetes three inspiring women



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 2

The Omani French Friendship Association hosted the third edition of "Inspirational Women of Oman" conference on Monday.

The panel discussion started with outstanding testimonies of three exemplary women. The audience discovered how Nutaila al Kharousi, Managing Director and Psychotherapist at Al Harub Medical Center, took the challenge to start her experience in the field of psychology while it is not a very well-known and accepted field.

They learned how Dr Zayana Aisri, Team Lead for the Regional Geology Team at PDO, became a

specialist in a male sector activity in the Sultanate of Oman and also listened to Nadia Sultan, Educational Psychologist at Inspire Educational Consultancy on how she managed the transition from studying then practicing in the UK and moving back to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sara al Lamki, Communications Consultant, wonderfully moderated the panel discussion. She asked interesting questions such as why do women not support other women? What can women do to support each other? What are the challenges that working women face in the workforce? How to balance work and personal life? Nadia expressed her thoughts on the

kind of support is necessary to break taboos subject and make mental health more acceptable.

Dr Zayana explained how she is balancing her career and life with her family and maintain her well-being all together. Nutaila presented how is it to be a woman in the work force and highlight what kind of support do women need in the work place, women supporting women. OFA is a non-profit organisation registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and fully supported by the French Embassy. OFA aims at strengthening the bilateral relations between French and Omani business and social communities active in the Sultanate.

Oman Post launches postcard in support of Cyclone Shaheen relief

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 2

In the aftermath of Cyclone Shaheen, Oman Post issued a new postcard depicting the national and civil society relief efforts in South and North Al Batinah governorates..

The company will allocate the profits received from selling the postcard to the affected communities in collaboration with Al Ithar Voluntary Group, which operates under the umbrella of the Committee for Social Development in the Ministry of Social Development in the wilayat of Seeb. The Group is also known for their Ramadhan and orphans' related support activities. In addition to providing a wide range of competitive postal services, Oman Post is committed to delivering stamps that reflect on key domestic and international topics and causes. The Cyclone Shaheen postcard will be available starting November 3.



Asian shares mixed as investors await crucial Fed decision

SYDNEY: Global shares idled just below record highs on Tuesday and currencies held tight ranges as nervous investors awaited the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, one of several central bank decisions this week that could set the tone for risk appetite.

The Reserve Bank of Australia was the main focus on Tuesday, as it took a step toward unwinding extraordinary pandemic stimulus policies by abandoning an ultra-low target for bond yields. The spotlight now swings to the Fed and then the Bank of England, which also have meetings this week.

Asian shares were mixed with the MSCI's gauge of Asia-Pacific stocks outside Japan holding steady at 04:35 GMT,



The Federal Reserve building is set against a blue sky in Washington. — Reuters

Japan's Nikkei edging 0.4 per cent lower and futures pointed to a weaker European and US open. The MSCI's world equities index was down a marginal 0.02 per cent, with Pan-region Euro Stoxx 50 futures 0.25 per cent

lower and E-mini futures for the S&P 500 index down 0.21 per cent.

In Asia, the RBA defied investor expectations for a more hawkish pivot, pushing the Aussie and kiwi dollars

lower and drove short-term bonds higher. "The market was pricing way more," said GSFM investment strategist Stephen Miller. "They thought that the RBA would take bigger steps to remove monetary accommodation given the upside risks to inflation and I think the RBA have made the minimum adjustment possible."

The Aussie was 0.25 per cent lower to be within its two-week range at \$0.75 while the kiwi moved 0.1 per cent lower to \$0.7172. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was down 0.5 per cent.

Australian 3-year benchmark bond yields were 6 basis points lower at 0.98 per cent, compared with their recent 1.267 per cent high on October 29, while 10-year bonds pared earlier losses

to push yields to 1.958 per cent. US 10-year yields held steady and 2-year treasury yields were one basis point lower to 0.491 per cent.

Chinese shares fell 0.6 per cent, dragged by financials and consumer firms even as the country's cabinet pledged more support for the consumer services sector, while tech stocks drove Hong Kong's Hang Seng index 0.6 per cent higher. South Korea's KOSPI index gained 1.50 per cent. Overnight, Wall Street advanced to record highs helped by gains for energy shares and Tesla.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.26 per cent, after eclipsing 36,000 points for the first time during intraday trading. — Reuters

Whistleblower
blasts Facebook’s
Meta rebrand

Whistleblower Frances Haugen issued a stinging rebuke of Facebook’s “Meta” rebrand, accusing the company of yet again prioritising expansion over people’s safety. The former Facebook engineer, who leaked a trove of internal documents that have sparked weeks of criticism of the social media giant, also called on its chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg to step down.

Speaking at the Web Summit tech conference in Lisbon, Haugen said it was “unconscionable” that Facebook was trumpeting its ambitions to develop the “metaverse” — a virtual reality version of the Internet — rather than focusing on fixing existing problems.

“Over and over again Facebook chooses expansion in new areas over sticking the landing on what they’ve already done,” she told an audience of tens of thousands in the Portuguese capital.

“Instead of investing in making sure their platforms are a minimum level of safe, they’re about to invest 10,000 engineers in video games.”

Facebook last month announced that it will hire 10,000 new staff in Europe over the next five years in its bid to build the metaverse, which would use virtual reality to make online experiences — like chatting to a friend, or attending a concert — feel face-to-face.

The company last week announced it was changing the name of Facebook’s parent company to “Meta” to signal the change in focus.

Critics have derided the rebrand as an attempted distraction from the avalanche of damaging revelations from Haugen’s leaked documents.

The “Facebook Papers” show that company executives knew of their sites’ potential for harm on numerous fronts, including the uncontrolled spread of hate speech in developing countries as well as Instagram’s impact on teens’ mental health. Haugen has accused Facebook of ignoring concerns raised by its own employees in the pursuit of profit.

Asked if Zuckerberg should step down, she said: “I think Facebook would be stronger with someone who’s willing to focus on safety, so yes.”

She went on: “It doesn’t make him a bad person to have made mistakes, but it is unacceptable to continue to make the same bad mistakes after you know that those are mistakes.”

Haugen has testified before US and UK lawmakers in recent weeks, but the Web Summit — which she officially opened, with an explosion of confetti raining down from the ceiling — marked her first appearance before a wider public.

She said it was “overwhelming” to speak in front of so many people, telling the crowd: “Right now my heart is beating about as fast as I can imagine.” — AFP

Over and over again Facebook chooses expansion in new areas over sticking the landing on what they’ve already done

FRANCES HAUGEN
Whistleblower



TECHIES
GATHER IN
LISBON

Lisbon City Mayor Carlos Moedas delivers a speech on the opening day of the Web Summit in Lisbon. Europe’s largest tech event Web Summit is held at Parque das Nações in Lisbon from November 1 to November 4. — AFP

More jobs may shift to EU as
Brexit exodus restarts



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

AROUND 7,600
JOBS HAD
MOVED OUT
OF THE UK TO
CONTINENTAL
EUROPE IN
COMPLIANCE
WITH BREXIT

Around half of senior finance executives polled by Big Four accountancy firm EY expected Brexit to drive more jobs out of London, despite Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s claims that London’s financial district (known as the ‘City’) remains an attractive destination for bankers to continue doing business.

EY asked 23 bosses at London’s banks, asset managers and insurance firms in mid-October if they expected their firms to shift more people or assets to the EU as a result of the UK’s split from the bloc. Just under half — 48 per cent — said such moves were likely, including 8 per cent who said they expected their firms to shift “a large extent” of people or assets soon.

This is a matter of some concern at a time when the UK is facing staff shortage.

It comes just days after Johnson said the “time zone, the language, the rule of law, the deep pools of liquidity in the City of London, the attractions of having some of the best universities in the world” were keeping banks focused on investing in their UK operations.

That followed Johnson’s efforts to quell business back lash against his ruling Conservative Party amid a mounting labour shortage and rising coronavirus cases, by praising bankers “unique pools of liquidity”

in helping the UK to develop vaccines, which in turn bolstered its economic recovery after a series of lockdowns.

However, the UK remains locked in negotiations with the EU over the regulatory frameworks within which its financial centres will operate post Brexit, a delay that has forced banks to increase hiring on the continent.

In June, compliance industry insiders said that navigating the regulatory minefield of Brexit was contributing to mounting levels of stress in the sector, and threatening to change the make up of City’s giants’ compliance functions.

EY’s October poll showed that not much has changed. More than two thirds, or 68 per cent, said that “the cost and burden of evolving UK/EU regulation” was “the single biggest cross-border challenge” facing their firm currently.

Around 7,600 jobs had moved out of the UK to continental Europe in compliance with Brexit, EY said in March, as City firms sought to meet European regulators’ requirements for companies doing business in the EU after Brexit to have a substantial presence in the region.

The European Securities and Markets Authority, the EU’s top markets watchdog, has issued several notes since the 2016 Brexit

vote warning against “brass plating” — where an EU individual or address is involved in communications to a client to give the impression that it is the firm’s authorised European branch that is conducting the business, not one from outside the bloc that would not be allowed to.

EU regulators also put pressure on UK-based banks in mid-2020 to relocate staff to their European Brexit hub before the spread of the coronavirus derailed such planning.

Regardless, 25 per cent of 36 senior finance executives polled by EY said that planned Brexit-related movement from the UK to the EU had been postponed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

UK financial services government leader at EY, Andrew Pilgrim, said that “the main bulk of people and operational moves to the continent was achieved well in advance of the 2020 Brexit deal” but “the market expects momentum around the movement of people and business to pick back up” as countries across Europe emerge from the pandemic.”

He added: “Although we have come a long way since 2016, for many large financial services firms, Brexit is not yet a word to be confined to the history books.”

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

How companies should leverage digitisation



DAMBISA MOYO

The author is an international economist and author of four New York Times bestselling books

It is no secret that rapid digitisation is upending firms’ operations, systems, and entire business models. Whether companies can both manage the risks and also reap the massive rewards that digital technologies can deliver depends significantly on the actions they take in five key areas.

First, digitisation should enable managers to allocate the company’s capital and labour better — in real time.

Efficient companies regularly review and upgrade their operations in at least three ways: streamlining existing processes, adopting best practices from outside their organisations, and

identifying the most productive use of their assets. Digital technology can enhance all of these activities.

Movie-theatre companies, for example, already deploy human capital based on real-time demand trends: in the United States, information about ticket sales and social-media reviews following releases on the East Coast will shape staffing decisions on the West Coast. Similar approaches can be implemented (or enhanced) in a wide range of sectors, boosting efficiency and productivity. The benefits will grow progressively, as companies adjust their hiring practices to target candidates with the relevant expertise.

But, just as fast-growing stores of data can aid management teams, they also risk complicating the picture.

Fortunately, digitisation can help managers to organise and collate data to enhance decision-making. This is the second key area.

Traditionally, management teams worked with far less information. Businesses tended to operate within one or few jurisdictions. And company decision-makers would hear the perspectives of a sub-set of stakeholders, such as shareowners (at annual general meetings or in smaller-group conversations)

and employees (through internal surveys).

Today, businesses increasingly operate across multiple jurisdictions, and hear from a much broader set of stakeholders — including customers and community members — especially through social media. Public pressure is already forcing corporations to divulge more details about their products’ provenance, including working conditions, average wages, and environmental metrics, such as the amount of water used and carbon dioxide emitted. With employees able to air their grievances on digital platforms outside the

company’s purview — such as Glassdoor, Blind, and TheLayoff.com — there is nowhere for firms to hide.

In such an environment, managers must be able to organise and interpret data for themselves, identify broad economic, geopolitical, and social trends, and use the insights they glean to adapt their strategies quickly.

To this end, they should foster productive engagement with all stakeholders and leverage digital technologies — and the data they provide — to root out inefficiencies, eliminate redundancies, and simplify burdensome processes.

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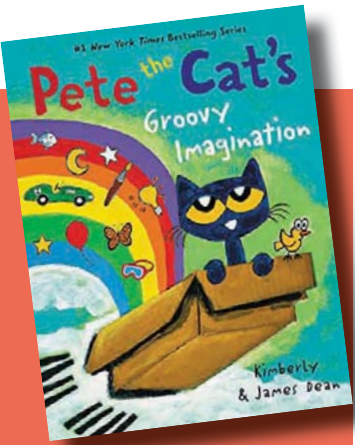


Thanae teases new single promoting message of positivity

With major changes happening in the last two years, Omani-Greek singer Thanae Pachiyannaki is back with a new single that can easily become an anthem for people trying to win over the pandemic. Thanae shared the inspiration behind the song and shared some updates about her personal growth and music... **P20**

MUSIC

READ



PETE THE CAT'S GROOVY IMAGINATION

BY JAMES AND KIMBERLY DEAN.
ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES DEAN

Pete uses a box and his imagination on a rainy day.

Iconic Syrian singer Sabah Fakhri dies in Damascus

SYRIAN SINGER Sabah Fakhri, considered one of the most famous in the Arab world, died in Damascus on Tuesday at the age of 88, his son said. "He died a natural death in Damascus. His heart stopped beating," said Anas Fakhri,

lamenting his father's passing as a "huge loss for Syrian art." Born in the northern province of Aleppo and hailed as one of Syria's greats, Fakhri was known for his masterful delivery of traditional Syrian songs that combined Arabic

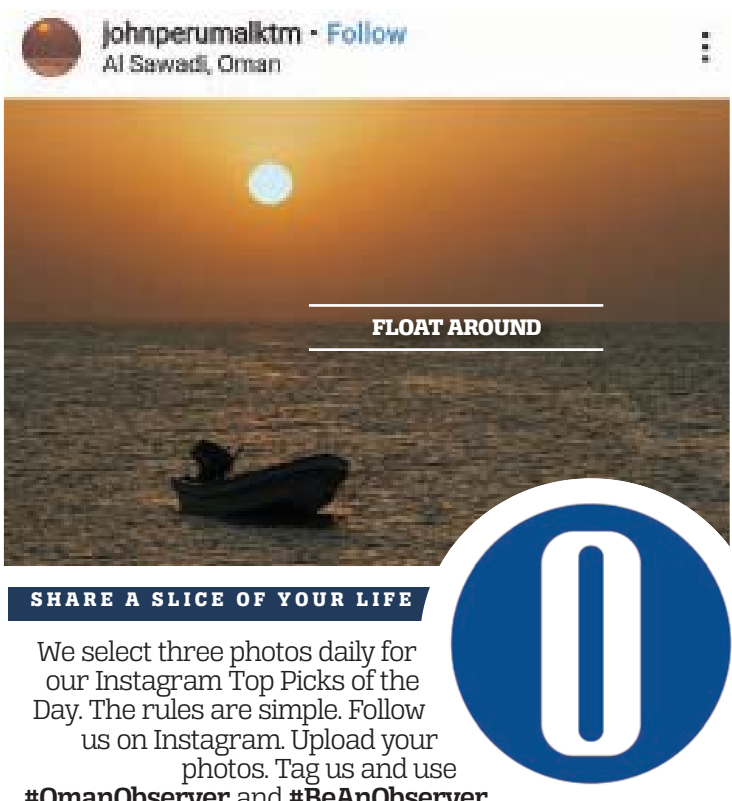
poetry with music. The short stout man modified and popularised the Qudud Halabiya — a traditional form of Aleppine music that combines lyrics based on the poetry of Al Andalus with old religious melodies collected mostly by musicians from the northern Syrian city. "He was a living legend and legends do not die," his son said. "He will continue to be the legend of Syria and Aleppo." A symbol of the golden age of Arabic song, Fakhri was able to keep his audience in suspense for hours by tirelessly repeating the verses of classical or contemporary Arabic poems. In 1968, he broke a record singing for 10 straight hours on tour in the Venezuelan capital Caracas. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

In Chile's Atacama desert, stargazers search for alien life and 'dark energy'



IN CHILE'S DRY Atacama desert, stargazers are scanning the clear night time skies to detect the existence of life on different planets and research so-called 'dark energy,' a mysterious cosmic power considered driving the accelerating growth of the universe.

Central to the race to look into distant worlds is the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT), a \$1.8 billion complicated being constructed on the Las Campanas observatory and which could have a decision 10 instances greater than the Hubble house telescope. The telescope, anticipated to start operation by the tip of the last decade, will compete with the European Southern Observatory's Extremely Large Telescope — positioned additional north in the identical desert — in addition to



the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) being inbuilt Hawaii.

"This new generation of giant telescopes is aimed precisely at detecting life on other planets and to determine the origin of dark energy," mentioned Leopoldo Infante, director of the Las Campanas observatory. "It's a race by these three groups for who makes it first and who makes the first discovery."

Infante mentioned the brand new large telescope would be capable to detect natural molecules within the environment of distant planets. "That is the expectation," he mentioned. "And whoever detects life on another planet will win the Nobel Prize, I assure you."

The different prize is learning darkish power — separate from the equally enigmatic darkish matter — which is taken into account to be a property of house and is driving the universe's accelerated growth. It makes up an enormous quantity of the universe, however stays largely an unsolved thriller.

"There is an energy that is causing the universe to expand, but also to accelerate that expansion," mentioned Infante, including scientists knew that this power should exist, although they didn't perceive its origin. "So this telescope is designed to be able to study precisely what is called the dark energy of the universe, to be able to understand physically what that energy is and where that energy comes from." — Reuters

DISCOVERY

Archaeologists in Saudi Arabia excavate forgotten kingdoms



AMID THE ARID desert and mountains of Al Ula in northwest Saudi Arabia, archaeologists are working to excavate the remnants of the ancient and long-forgotten kingdoms of Dadan and Lihyan.

Al Ula, a flagship tourist destination since it opened in 2019, is known chiefly for the majestic tombs of Madain Saleh, a 2,000-year-old city carved into rocks by the Nabateans, the pre-Islamic Arab people who also built Petra in neighbouring Jordan.

A team of French and Saudi archaeologists is now focused on excavating five nearby sites related to the Dadanite and Lihyanite civilisations, important regional powers that flourished 2,000 years ago.

"It's a project that really tries to unlock the mysteries of (these) civilisations," said Abdulrahman al Sohaibani, who is co-directing the Dadan archaeological mission.

Dadan is mentioned in the Old Testament and the Lihyanite kingdom was one of the largest of its time, stretching from Medina in the south to Aqaba in the north in modern-day Jordan, according to the Royal Commission for the project.

Spanning roughly 900 years until 100 CE, the kingdoms controlled vital trade routes but very little is known about them. The team is hoping to learn



more about their worship rituals, social life and economy.

Previous excavations had been limited to the main sanctuary area, said Jerome Rohmer, a researcher with the French National Center for Scientific Research.

"We would just like have a comprehensive overview of the chronology of the site, the layout of the site, its material culture, its economy," Rohmer added.

"It's a comprehensive project where we're basically trying to answer all of these questions."

In Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's push to transform Saudi Arabia's economy and society, Al-Ula has gained prominence. The kingdom is banking on tourism as it tries to open up to the world and diversify its economy away from oil.

Al-Ula's development is part of a move to preserve pre-Islamic heritage sites in order to attract non-Muslim tourists and strengthen national identity. — Reuters

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

The mask we wear everyday!

DURING THE CORONA pandemic (Covid-19), putting on layers of masks during that long period seems like a pain for some people. But figuratively speaking, many of us do this everyday when we hide our true identities or feelings by suppressing our thoughts or behaving in certain ways. Some of these masks we like and some we don't. Some we have to wear in order to live with life, and others - if I may say so - we wear them voluntarily and are afraid to take them off.

Of course, hiding your true self can be healthy, in some instance but when hiding is an essential and permanent part of your work or life, something is

In fact, I firmly believe, that one of the best ways is to remove your mask around those you love most, because they are the closest to you and those who truly love you, especially as we realise that your most important relationships require — the ones in which you invest the lion's share of your time and energy, whether personal or professional — Being able to be yourself. So imagine with me that you are in that mask for 24 hours a day. Something must be changed here..... or is it not?

And so this brings us to a very important point, which is to make sure you love what's behind your mask — if you know what I

Of course, hiding your true self can be healthy, in some instance but when hiding is an essential and permanent part of your work or life, something is seriously wrong

seriously wrong. Just as a surgical mask cannot be worn 24/7, metaphorical masks must eventually be removed.

Some people here might think that hiding your face protects you from other people's judgments. But it doesn't have to be. Think about how it feels to be in a place where you don't know anyone at all. It is true that in many cases we feel compelled to hide our true feelings, especially when they are negative. So if we realised how comfortable it would be to get rid of the masks or those masks associated with the Corona pandemic once and for all. However, our emotional masks are another matter.

From here, we must realise that we can all hide and reveal that mask in healthier ways than we are used to, through several rules, including for example by taking a break from yourself, so you see that good vacations make our responsibilities and our unrelenting schedules stop for a short time until we can rest without being disturbed by our obligations.

mean - as stressful as keeping a mask on can be, letting it fall can be a terrifying prospect if you don't particularly like what it's hiding. Perhaps you are ashamed to bear the anger and hostility, or the sadness that you hide inside. Indeed, in such cases, staying masked or wearing that mask means that we lose the opportunity to face reality and make some positive changes. In a way, self-acceptance can reduce anxiety and protect your mood against setbacks.

Finally, you can get rid of that mask and change the personality traits that you don't like in yourself, but doing so requires honesty and conscious intervention. Don't let your metaphorical mask separate you from yourself, and from the love that exists between you and others because it is undoubtedly what you need and deserve.

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer.



Thanae teases new single promoting message of positivity

By Yeru Ebuen

After the successful launch of her album, "Between 2 Doors" in 2018, Omani-Greek singer Thanae Pachiyannaki is back with a new single in a style that she was always in love with.

With major changing events happening in the last two years, from getting married and giving birth to a baby girl she named "Aristea" which became her world, to facing the pandemic, Thanae said that her new music is timely because of its overall positive theme.

"Facing the pandemic was tough not only for me but for people around the world. This whole ordeal had made me think of what is important in life and it has inspired me to dedicate more time for my family and close friends," she said.

"There had been so many big changes. I got married and had my baby girl Aristea which means 'the best kind'. She was the inspiration behind the song and this new single, You and Me is an expression of how I feel," she said.

As events and performances are now reopened in the Sultanate of Oman, we reached out to Thanae to learn more about her single and what's keeping her busy.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS NEW SINGLE?

My new single is more Pop/Soul I would say. Embracing neo-soul I think made me realise that it fitted my style perfectly. It came naturally therefore for this single to follow that route. The album I released in 2018 was a mix of everything which could have been slightly confusing for some of my listeners. But this song reflects more on my personality and style of music.

HAVING BEEN THROUGH THE WORST OF THE PANDEMIC, THIS SONG SOUNDS LIKE AN ANTHEM SPREADING POSITIVITY. WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS TO COMPLETE IT?

This song came at the perfect time. I actually wrote it when I was on a peaceful trip to Mallorca. I guess I write best when my mind is at ease and relaxed. I was in such a happy space. I literally checked into a hotel

room and watched the beautiful view and in 10 minutes I had my new song!

Being an anthem, I'd like to think so — a way of spreading positivity after the ordeals we faced because of the pandemic. Some lines of the songs say, there's no need to cry no more, I'm by your side. The dark days, when you were alone, have passed you by. The chorus also keeps reminding that you and me, we're gonna make it, definitely. So yes, I hope it is something that people can relate to well.

THE MUSIC SCENE IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAD ITS OWN FAIR SHARE OF CHALLENGES? WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM IN THE LAST TWO YEARS? HOW DID YOU COPE UP?

Music generally here is challenging. However, I am so lucky as I have our company "Tunes" which has always supported my career when the season is down! I also have a very strong team surrounding me, so we managed to make it through such challenging times! "Pulse and Soul" is still strong and we just keep on fighting and growing! Claudia our band manager has kept us solid and Rene of course after working together for 8 years, make our team even stronger!

WHERE CAN PEOPLE LISTEN TO THIS NEW SINGLE?

It will be launched on all social media platforms by November 26. We will be uploading it to Deezer, Spotify and iTunes. I really hope people would love it the same way we enjoyed the recording process and making it.

EVERYONE MISSES THE FULL MUSIC AND PARTY SCENE IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN. WHAT IS YOUR HOPE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS?

I'd been invited to perform at the Dubai Expo 2020 representing the Sultanate of Oman as a singer-songwriter. I will be performing my original music with "Pulse and Soul" on Friday, November 26. After we return from the Dubai Expo 2020, we will be performing at our own concert in January in Muscat! So stay tuned for an evening with great live music!

