

Oman, Saudi ink MoUs on cooperation

The Sultanate of Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed two memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of land and air transportation. The MoUs were signed on Monday on the sidelines of the Omani delegation's visit to Saudi. The MoU on land transport was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Saleh Nasser al Jaser, Minister of Transport and Logistic Services in Saudi Arabia. **DETAILS ON P3**



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IRANIAN SHAHRBABAKI NAMED AS HEAD COACH OF NATIONAL TABLE TENNIS TEAM



P15

EMIRATES TO HOLD TALKS WITH BOEING OVER 777X DELAYS



P20

SUR'S HERITAGE VILLAGE TOUR IS A PLUNGE INTO A UNESCO SITE



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY NEPAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Bidhya Devi Bhandari of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on her country's National Day. President Bhandari expressed her utmost thanks for His Majesty the Sultan's sentiments and his best wishes to her and the friendly people of Nepal. She wished His Majesty permanent health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. — ONA

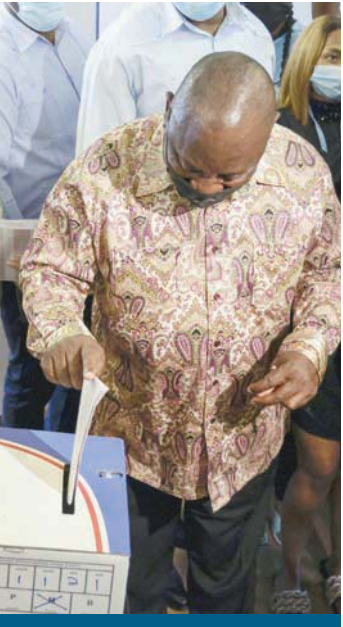
MAJLIS PANEL REVIEWS 2022 DRAFT BUDGET

The Economic and Financial Committee of Majlis Ash-Shura hosted Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, and a number of officials from the ministries of finance and economy, on Monday. The meeting comes within the framework of the committee's discussions of the draft state general budget for the fiscal year 2022 referred by the government recently. The under-secretaries presented a visual display reviewing the developments of the global economy and the developments of the local economy for 2021. **DETAILS ON P3**

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FOOTBALL BRINGS HOPE TO IRAQI GIRLS IN EX-IS TOWN | **P6**



ANC HOPES TO AVERT WORST POST-APARTHEID RESULT | **P8**

CAMEL RACE FESTIVAL CONCLUDES



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday presided over the closing ceremony of the Camel Race Festival for 2021. The event was organised by Oman Camel Racing Federation, in cooperation with the Royal Camel Corps. The closing ceremony of the festival included four rounds, which saw exciting and thrilling moments among fans and camel caretakers. Fierce competition was present during the closing ceremony of the festival. At the end of the race, HH Sayyid Theyazin honoured top winners of each round. **DETAILS ON P12**

CPA warns against unauthorised pricing based on VAT

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
[@patkaushal](#)

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) on Monday issued a notification as a mark of warning against unauthorised pricing based on Value Added Tax (VAT), to protect the consumers from being charged extra by commercial establishments.

The circular No 1/2021 has been issued as a mark of repeated reminder to commercial establishments and to regulate the pricing of goods and services in all kinds of commercial establishments.

“It has been observed that many licensed sellers and suppliers in commercial complexes and shopping units are forcing consumers to promote their goods and services. Such practices contradict the consumers’ rights of free choice while selecting the commodity or receiving the services stipulated in Article 14 of the Consumer

It has been observed that many licensed sellers and suppliers in commercial complexes and shopping units are forcing consumers to promote their goods and services. Such practices violate the rights of consumers

CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Protection Law”, read the circular. The CPA called upon suppliers to refrain from such practices. “Violators will have legal accountability”, it said.

The CPA has been issuing warnings and alerts as and when any issue related to consumers’ rights come to its notice. **TURN TO P5**

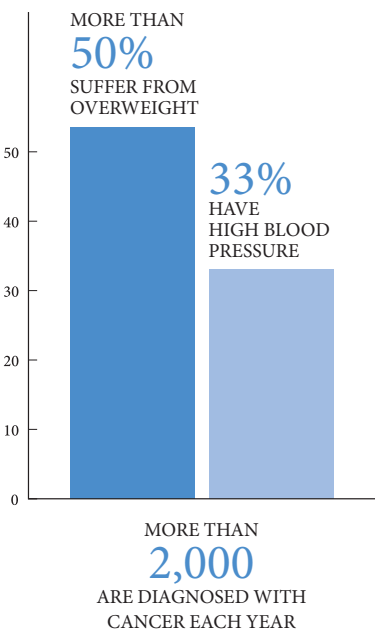
33% suffer from high blood pressure: Study

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Studies indicate that more than half of the population in the Sultanate of Oman suffers from overweight and obesity, and 33 per cent suffer from high blood pressure. More than 2,000 are diagnosed with cancer each year.

This was revealed by Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, during the launch of the ‘National Monitoring Framework for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases on Monday. The programme was launched by the Directorate General of Primary of Healthcare at the Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases, and in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO Representative to the Sultanate of Oman, and Dr Fatima al Ajmiyah, MoH’s Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs, was also present on the occasion. In addition, a team



capacities and supporting efforts to develop effective prevention mechanisms, which includes strengthening monitoring systems to provide key data to develop appropriate interventions.

MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The health minister hoped that the national monitoring framework for preventing and controlling non-communicable diseases would ensure organised and effective multi-sectoral cooperation to achieve the goals set in the national and global agendas, thus ensuring further progress towards universal health coverage and sustainable development.

The event included the WHO-Sultanate of Oman office address. Dr Jabbour affirmed that close monitoring remains an integrated approach to treating non-communicable diseases.

Tracking progress, providing required information in a timely manner, and enabling appropriate planning at the national level are among the most important ways to coexist with these diseases. **TURN TO P2**

‘Day of Oman’ expo in Damascus showcases rich history

DAMASCUS: The National Museum inaugurated the ‘Day of Oman’ Exhibition and its associating events at the National Museum in Damascus on Monday.

The exhibition comes within the context of a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which was signed in 2019 in Muscat between the National Museum of Oman and the General Directorate of

Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic. The National Museum of Syria manages five national museums. The exhibition was inaugurated under the auspices of Dr Lubanah Mshaweh, Syrian Minister of Culture.

Present at the opening ceremony of the exhibition were Bouthaina Shaaban, Special Adviser at the Syrian Republic



Presidency, Dr Faisal Mekdad, Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Dr Boutros al Hallaq, Minister of Information, Muhammad Rami Martini, Minister of Tourism and Hussein Makhoul, Minister of Local Administration.

The ‘Day of Oman’ initiative launched by the National Museum in implementation of the National

Museum’s objectives according to the Royal Decree No 62/2013, issued on November 20, 2013. The objectives include regional and international participation highlighting the civilisational, historical, cultural and scientific heritage of the Sultanate of Oman at all levels, with the aim of reaching a wider segment of public. **TURN TO P4**



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INDIAN ENVOY'S CREDENTIALS RECEIVED



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Monday a copy of credentials of Amit Narang, Ambassador of the Republic of India appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties. He also wished the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries further progress and growth. — ONA

Oman and Palestine explore ways to enhance cooperation

MUSCAT: An official session of talks between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Palestine was held at the Foreign Ministry here on Monday.

The Omani side was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, while the Palestine side was headed by Dr Amal Jadou, Under-Secretary of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the talks, the two sides discussed aspects of bilateral cooperation. Oman's stance backing the Palestinian cause was also reiterated.

The two sides also exchanged views on the peace process and on



issues of common interest.

The session was attended by Tayseer Ali Farhat, Palestine's Ambassador to the Sultanate of

Oman, Salim bin Habib al Amri, Charge d'affaires of the Sultanate's Embassy to Palestine and officials of both countries. — ONA



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Directors' Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present to you the financial results of the Company for the nine month period ended September 30, 2021.

Over the last year, we have continuously engaged with our customers and partners to overcome COVID-19 related challenges. Driven by a customer-centric strategy, we continued providing our services while ensuring that all necessary health and safety measures are in place for our employees, customers and partners. We continue to improve our technological capabilities to be aligned with the digital transformation happening across the world, in order to provide solutions that deliver best in class customer experience. To support the economy and our customers, we provided payment deferrals to our eligible clients and an option to reschedule their finances. With a well-diversified geographical presence across Oman (20 branches), coupled with a broad product profile, your company is well positioned to provide innovative and financial solutions for both Retail and SME. National Finance recently won 4 awards at the Oman Banking and Finance Awards 2021. The company was honored with coveted titles including 'Best Non-banking Financial Corporation', 'Excellence in Customer Experience in Finance and Leasing', 'Excellence in Mobile App Finance and Leasing Services' and 'Excellence in Fintech'.

National Finance continues to adopt a conservative approach to credit approvals keeping in view the overall macroeconomic scenario and perceived increase in credit risk. Within this policy, our approach has been to target customers who satisfy our credit risk appetite. We anticipate a cautious outlook to our credit offtake in the medium term and overall, our reading is that the economic climate will continue to remain challenging.

Our total regulatory capital of RO 109.7 million is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) which gives us a strong base on which to build our business. Our company remains the largest finance and leasing company in the Sultanate in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit.

The operating profit (profit before provision and tax) was at RO 10.6 million (RO 11.1 million in September 2020) while total earning assets was at RO 406.5 million (RO 402.3 million in December 2020). Profit after tax was RO 5.7 million as compared to RO 5.6 million in September 2020.

The company is fully compliant with the provisioning norms prescribed by the Central Bank of Oman and the International Financial Reporting Standards. We have added to our credit reserves through additional overlay over the IFRS9 requirement in order to be prepared for future challenges given the incremental risk in the portfolio due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The company remains committed to Omanisation and as of September 30, 2021, the number of Omani employees was 268 out of the total workforce of 301. With 89.04% Omanisation, which is higher than the given target of 80%, your Company continues to remain committed to providing career growth and development of Omani nationals through ongoing training programs in line with their job requirement. We will continue to maintain momentum on employee engagement initiatives, development of future skills, managerial and leadership capabilities for their professional development.

The company's strategy is to develop the leadership of young Omani staff and nurture appointments of nationals at senior levels. As a part of this strategy, we welcome Mr. Tariq Sulaiman Al Farsi as the Chief Executive Officer of the Company. Mr. Tariq has many years of experience at senior levels across banking and Government organizations. The Board of Directors has promoted Mr. Ali Saif Al Mani as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Company. The Board of Directors wishes all the success and are confident that they would lead the Company to greater heights. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority, Muscat Securities Market, our bankers, depositors, vehicle and equipment dealers, customers and shareholders for the support extended towards the growth of the Company. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we also thank the management and staff for their dedication and hard work which has enabled us to establish ourselves as the most trusted company in the sector.

Taya Jandal Ali
Chairman

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English with 7 days of receipt of the request. The full set of financials are available in the website of Muscat Stock Exchange.

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE

	Nine months ended 30 September 2021 RO '000	Nine months ended 30 September 2020 RO '000
Income		
Income from financing activities	30,621	31,347
Finance costs	(12,681)	(13,642)
Net finance income	17,940	17,705
Other operating income	1,770	1,854
	19,710	19,559
Expenses		
Operating expenses	(8,397)	(7,804)
Depreciation	(495)	(440)
Amortization	(250)	(192)
Net impairment loss on lease receivables	(3,461)	(4,609)
Bad debts written back	155	83
Total expenses	(12,448)	(12,962)
Profit before tax	7,262	6,597
Income tax expense	(1,536)	(990)
Profit after tax	5,726	5,607
Other comprehensive income		
Items that will be classified to profit or loss	7	20
Movement in revaluation reserve – net of tax		
Total comprehensive income	5,733	5,627
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.009	0.008

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT

	30 September 2021 RO '000	30 September 2020 RO '000	31 December 2020 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2,872	6,710	5,407
Net investment in finance leases	349,199	357,062	348,954
Working capital and factoring receivables	57,331	45,887	53,390
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	3,129	7,895	2,452
Assets held for sale	1,500	1,500	1,500
Goodwill	5,950	5,950	5,950
Intangible assets	898	1,088	1,134
Property and equipment	6,817	6,620	7,095
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	427,946	432,962	426,132
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors and accruals	9,146	5,798	8,303
Tax liabilities	2,075	1,555	1,687
Bank borrowings	273,896	295,215	281,793
Fixed deposits	32,242	23,062	24,834
Deferred tax liabilities	328	272	190
End of service benefits	573	798	666
Total liabilities	318,260	326,700	317,473
EQUITY			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	54,123	54,123	54,123
Share premium	5,786	5,786	5,786
Revaluation reserve	1,033	763	1,040
Foreign currency reserve	4,321	4,321	4,321
Voluntary reserve	3,000	3,000	3,000
Cash flow hedge reserve	(295)	-	(298)
Legal reserve	8,501	7,699	8,501
Retained earnings	15,148	12,501	14,117
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the company	91,617	88,193	90,590
Perpetual bonds	18,069	18,069	18,069
Total equity	109,686	106,262	108,659
Total liabilities and equity	427,946	432,962	426,132
Net assets per share (RO)	0.169	0.163	0.167

Smart meters factory in Rusayl next year

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnassri

The first quarter of 2022 will witness the inauguration of the smart meter factory in Rusayl at the cost of RO 4 million. The factory's production capacity would be 150,000 meters annually, as the factory is projected to replace 1.2 million meters during the next five years.

The importance of this project lies in providing accurate data on consumption, cost reduction against the use of traditional meters, monitoring and reducing leaks, besides determining their locations and ability to control users' consumption.

The National Energy Center has successfully implemented two pilot projects: One installing more than 300,000 smart water meters in 2019 in the Governorate of Muscat and another in Musandam with more than 10,000 smart electricity meters in 2016.

The Nama Group, through its affiliated distribution companies, introduced smart measurement technologies in the Sultanate of Oman in 2017. It implemented the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project within the requirements of the APSR in the country.

Smart meters (AMR) will be implemented with subscribers of high electricity consumption who consume more than 150 megawatt-hours of electricity annually.

Nama explained that the AMR project is expected to create a higher level of interdependence, participation, and sustainability to enhance the quality and speed of processing meter reading data.

Moreover, it will improve the billing process, mitigate losses, reduce related costs and reduce debtor days. In addition, the implementation of the cost-reflective tariff system legislated by the Authority will allow and promote better electricity consumption behaviours, especially during peak periods.

Last April, Hilal bin Muhammad al Ghaithi, Director General of



Subscribers Affairs at the Public Services Regulatory Authority, told Oman News Agency that the project to switch to smart meters for electricity subscribers in the Sultanate of Oman aims to install more than 1.2 million smart meters in all governorates of the Sultanate, in five years.

He stressed that the project was in alignment with the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040, which focused on keeping pace with global developments and employing technology in providing electricity-related services with greater effectiveness and efficiency. "It will support the development of sustainable smart cities that are characterised by the availability of advanced basic services."

The factory comes as a pioneering national project towards digital transformation to replace electrical mechanical meters with advanced smart meters, keeping abreast of recent developments, to facilitate the process of meter reading and ease of communication with subscribers throughout the Sultanate of Oman and to providing a radical solution to the accuracy of meter reading and avoiding discretionary readings.

The smart meters allow subscribers to monitor consumption periodically and thus control its pattern, provide opportunities to the owners of small and medium enterprises to carry out activities and businesses related to replacing and installing smart meters, reducing commercial losses in the network in the long term, alerting licensed companies in the event of a defect with the subscriber as well as reducing the service period in the event of a power cut.

■ SHURA HOLDS MEETING WITH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES



MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura held a meeting with the representatives of the public and private media institutions on Monday. The meeting was aimed at acquainting the journalists with the purview of Majlis Ash'shura in accordance with the Law of the Council of Oman as well as the council's activities and efforts for dealing with the national issues. The journalists presented their points of view and suggestions to enhance partnership with the media and the legislative council in a manner that contributes towards delivering the true message of the council's role and jurisdictions.

Oman, Saudi ink MoUs on land and air transport



RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Monday signed two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of land and air transportation. The MoUs were signed as part of the Omani delegation's visit to the KSA.

The MoU on land transport was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of

Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Eng Saleh Nasser al Jaser, Minister of Transport and Logistic Services in the KSA.

Moreover, the MoU on air transport was signed by Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and Eng Abdulaziz al Duailej, President of the General Authority

of Civil Aviation (GACA) in the KSA.

The two MoUs agreed on sharing scientific and professional information between the two countries in order to enhance technical spheres and to boost logistic cooperation. The MoUs will also increase mutual visits between engineers, experts and professional technicians in

the fields of land roads and air navigation.

Moreover, the MoUs also agreed on conducting seminars and joint meetings, as well as training engineers, experts and professionals.

The MoUs also agreed on utilising the geographical areas of the two countries to serve the joint logistical interests. — ONA

33% suffer from high blood pressure

FROM PAGE 1

In addition, evidence-based planning is key to activating the required political will to intensify efforts to prevent and control non-communicable diseases as a major health priority.

Who representative in the Sultanate of Oman highlighted the country's leading role in NCDs control and its keenness to prevent premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, applauding meanwhile the efforts of MoH and all parties involved in developing this significant framework.

This national framework, which is an

integral part of the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, was prepared to reinforce the accountability and commitment of different sectors in implementing the various recommended interventions for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

The structure of this framework is based on various local, regional and global high priority indicators related to the control of the most common non-communicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental

health), in addition to the indicators related to reducing the exposure to risk factors associated with these diseases (e.g., tobacco use, alcohol use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and air pollution).

This work is considered one of the pioneering achievements in the region and a mainstay of the NCD surveillance system in the Sultanate of Oman. Besides the operational definition of each indicator, all indicators are arranged in a logical order to help assess the progress in achieving the desired targets and identify the gaps in implementing the various interventions.

Shura panel reviews 2022 draft budget

MUSCAT: The Economic and Financial Committee of Majlis Ash'shura hosted Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Finance, Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Economy and a number of officials from the ministries of finance and economy, on Monday.

The meeting comes within the framework of the committee's discussions of the draft state general budget for the fiscal year 2022 referred by the government recently.

The under-secretaries of the ministries of finance and economy presented a visual display reviewing the developments of the global economy and the developments of the local economy for the year 2021. They also reviewed the growth indicators of the economic diversification sectors during the current year, including the manufacturing, industrial, agricultural, fisheries, mining and tourism sectors.

The presentation also

reviewed the total revenues, total expenditures, inflation rates, deficit and public debt, in addition to the credit rating indicators of the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting, chaired by Ahmed bin Said al Sharqi, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee, also discussed general observations on the draft state general budget for the fiscal year 2022 and its most important aspects, especially with regard to the financial, economic and social aspects as well as the government's priorities regarding vital projects in various services and tourism fields and the reality of investment funds in the Sultanate of Oman.

The members of the Economic and Financial Committee raised queries on the importance of unifying efforts, policies and strategies of the economic developments and boosting fiscal stability, stressing the importance of providing an attractive environment for foreign investments.

Syrian minister visits Royal Hospital, Crisis Management Centre



MUSCAT: Dr Hassan Mohammed al Ghabbash, Health Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, visited the Crisis Management and Emergency Centre on Monday as part of his several-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The visit aims to learn and benefit from the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the field of emergency operations and management, as well as mechanisms developed for the public health response.

The Syrian Minister was familiarised with the emergency plan and preparedness mechanism, in addition to the

centre's facilities and the work plan in the health operation room during emergencies, as well as means of communication and coordination among operation rooms in the governorates and the authorities concerned.

Dr Hassan al Ghabbash visited the National Oncology Centre at the Royal Hospital (RH) during which he was briefed on the latest therapies in molecular and cellular Oncology, as well as targeted therapies and immunotherapies.

He also visited Covid-19 Immunisation Centre at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. — ONA

Royal Guard of Oman celebrates Annual Day



MUSCAT: The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) celebrated its Annual Day, which falls on November 1 every year. The event was held under the patronage of Maj Gen Salim bin Ali al Hosni, RGO Commander.

The ceremony, which was held at the Parade Field of the RGO Command on Monday, included diverse programmes reflecting the development and modernisation under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander.

The ceremony included a film highlighting RGO history, its periods of development and the royal attention and generous care enjoyed by RGO from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander, as well as the qualitative leap witnessed



by various RGO military, administrative and technical fields.

The RGO Commander then pinned RGO distinguished personnel with the special service medal in recognition of their

faithfulness in serving the country and His Majesty the Supreme Commander.

The ceremony was attended by senior officers, officers and personnel at RGO. — ONA



NATURE WILL CHANGE IF WE DON'T

IT IS FOR EVERYONE TO DECIDE HOW TO CUT THE CONSUMPTION
OF GASES THAT ARE WARMING THE ENVIRONMENT

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The Sultanate of Oman celebrated Tree Day on Sunday (October 31), with events and announcements marking the day. As an environment-friendly country, it has taken many measures to protect and conserve the environment — be it the turtle reserve or protected areas in terms of sensitivity towards wildlife and flora and fauna, the country's records are very high.

There is a decent limit to high-rise buildings in the country, and people generally don't mess with the environment. Still, it is a task for policymakers to strike a balance between development and conservation of the environment.

National and international days in the name of Tree Day, Earth

Day, Water Day, or even days in the names of animals and plants are great reminders for those sitting over the fence and waiting for their turn to be the victims.

The current generation has witnessed all kinds of environmental disorders in the forms of cyclone, sudden rain, forest fire, earthquake and many other maladies, but still not ready to do corrective measures thinking their boundaries are safe without realising that nature does not have any boundaries. It is anywhere and everywhere.

SPECIAL REPORT

The World Health Organization (WHO) came out with a 'COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health' months before the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), which

There is a decent limit to high-rise buildings in the country, and people generally don't mess with the environment. Still, it is a task for policymakers to strike a balance between development and conservation of the environment

began in Glasgow on Sunday. The conference has attracted world leaders as a mark of their commitment towards the environment.

The WHO report highlighted priorities for safeguarding the health of people and the planet that sustains us. "The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the intimate and delicate links between humans, animals and our environment," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

"The same unsustainable choices that are killing our planet are killing people. WHO calls on all countries to commit to decisive action at COP26 to limit global warming to 1.5°C — not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's in our own interests," he said.

Climate change is an issue that can be addressed collectively. Despite having the best environmental practices, a country cannot sit satisfied that it is doing enough to protect the environment. It has to be proactive in convincing others, even its neighbours, to adopt the best practices because the bad environmental practices are not only to harm the country in question but also to its neighbours and others. This is the time for everyone to understand that the countries have their boundaries, but nature does not.

It is for everyone to decide how to cut the consumption of gases that are warming the environment. The governments have a huge responsibility to draw policies and make their people aware about the environmental disorders.

■ SHURA CHAIRMAN RECEIVES NDC COMMANDANT



MUSCAT: Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, on Monday received Air Vice Marshal Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), and the participants of the 9th national defence course, to acquaint them with the works, activities and jurisdictions of Majlis Ash'shura. Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura, presented a visual display explaining the purview of the council and the roles of the secretariat-general. The electronic voting system and the modern electronic systems at the meeting hall were also introduced to the participants of the national defence course.

CPA warns against unauthorised pricing based on VAT

FROM PAGE 1

Ali Muqbali, a resident of Al Amerat, appreciated the CPA's step and called for people's awareness on VAT, as it is a new thing for most of them.

"I am a consumer who seriously goes through the bills after payment, even for small purchases. I have seen most outlets follow VAT norms, but some lapses are seen, may be due to a new mechanism. I appreciate the CPA for constantly keeping an eye over the practice so that the consumers are not harassed and get their due."

He suggested the consumers not to hesitate in calling the CPA when they find any issue with any commercial establishment or shopping outlets.

Ali cited his own experience with the CPA as "excellent" when he approached it over the issue of pricing of some furniture. "When I went to inquire, they quoted low price. But when went to buy them, the price was different. I approached the CPA and got it resolved," he said.

'Day of Oman' exhibition showcases rich history

FROM PAGE 1

The initiative is organised annually in one of the world's prestigious museums. Damascus is the third stop of the initiative, as the first initiative was launched at the ancient Hermitage Museum in the Russian Federation in 2018.

Crowning such cooperation, a hall specially dedicated to Sultanate of Oman was inaugurated in the Tsar Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 2020. The second stop of this initiative was at the National Museum of Fine Arts in the Republic of Belarus in 2019, where the Sultanate of Oman was a Guest of Honour on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the mentioned museum. Negotiations are currently under way to host this initiative at the National Museum of Fine Arts in the city of Lyon, France, and National Historical Museum in Uzbekistan. Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, said that the 'Day of Oman' Exhibition is held under the theme "Illuminations of Oman",

He said that the exhibition sheds light on prominent stations

in the history of Sultanate of Oman through the ages, since the dawn of the Magan civilisation in the third millennium BC until the modern days.

This exhibition also takes us on a journey full of cultural diversity, as Omani craft industries are a tangible embodiment of the past and present, and a documentation of various lifestyles. It also expresses the cultural values for which they are famous for, such as hospitality and generosity.

This exhibition contains a selection of traditional costumes, jewels, and other handicrafts; that meet the basic needs for survival, in addition to being one of the individual and collective priorities that reflect the manifestations of adornment and identity.

Emphasising the importance of the frankincense trade in the past in shaping human civilisation throughout history, four archaeological sites have been included in the Unesco World Heritage List, namely Al Baled City, Khor Rori (Sumhuram), Shisr (Ubar), and Wadi Doukah.

The exhibition also highlights the features of beauty of the Arabic language. — ONA

Centre showcases Sur's rich maritime heritage

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 1

In line with the Sultanate of Oman's celebrations of its 51st National Day, the Fatah Al Khair Centre project was inaugurated on Monday under the auspices of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Mawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by dignitaries including Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, and Dr Amor bin Nasser al Matani, Oman LNG Development Foundation's CEO.

"This ceremony comes in response to an agreement signed earlier between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Oman LNG Development Foundation; covering a budget of RO 450,000. The centre aims to provide an insight into Sur's rich maritime history and sailing heritage, aside from providing a cultural experience for visitors. Sur has always been a vital trading and commercial hub and played an essential role in the maritime trade in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman. "In addition, it sits at a strategic location linking the Arabian Peninsula with the Indian subcontinent, Africa and Southeast Asia. It goes without saying that Sur was the best base for this project," a press release from Oman LNG said.

The inauguration ceremony was marked with a welcoming remark followed by a word from Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi. He shed light on the project's



compliance with the Oman 2040 Vision's goal of preserving the Sultanate of Oman's ancient heritage and traditions.

He highlighted the ministry's efforts in establishing museums to testify the country's ancient civilisation.

Moreover, establishing such projects in Sur and South Al Sharqiyah will achieve the ministry's goals of building cultural centres and museums throughout the Sultanate of Oman. It is also an investment within the community as it facilitates an indirect mechanism towards generating job opportunities and boosting tourism.

Al Kharousi also added that the centre's main ship — *Fatah al Khair* — sailed to various destinations in the world and is a living proof of the Sultanate of Oman's trade, brilliance and creativity. The ship decked on different ports to deliver goods, knowledge and exchange cultures. This helped to shape Sur's identity

of accepting different cultures and civilisations.

He thanked all the parties taking part in enabling the project's success, including the Oman LNG Development Foundation for its continuous support of this project in its different stages.

Dr Al Matani expressed his gratitude to be able to work again alongside the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to launch this cultural institute that expresses the successful collaboration between the two institutions to sustain the unique legacy of Sur. This also reflects the continuous support Oman LNG provides to the promising tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman, and to nourish tourism in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

This museum will highlight Sur and its capabilities to be a tourist attraction, it will also record the region's rich history and legacy, and to create an educational environment for generations to come.

OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVESTMENT COMPANY SAOG

Directors Report

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Directors of Oman Education & Training Investments Co. S.A.O.G., it is my pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Company for the financial year ending August 31, 2020.

The Orientations and lines of Action for the current stage:

- On the instructions of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, as of the academic year 2021/2022, the study will be in attendance at a rate of 70% and 30% remotely with the introduction of precautionary measures and the physical spacing of the CORONA virus epidemic.
- The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation has approved the distribution of seats in the internal missions of private higher education institutions for the academic year 2021/2022. A total of 608 study missions were allocated to Sohar University.
- On 23 September 2021, the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation adopted the following programmes:

Master of Common Law
Ph.D. in Education

- On July 7, 2021, Sohar University Management organized the graduation 19th group ceremony virtually over the Internet under the patronage of His Excellency Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al-Murshidi, CEO of the Omani Investment Service, and the graduation ceremony was broadcast on the university's official YouTube channel. The number of graduates of this regiment was 1,440.

Financial Statement:

The Financial Statement for the year ended August 31, 2021, shows the following:

- The group's results were achieved - / 2,457,966 OMR for the period ended August 31, 2021, compared to 1,132,113 OMR for the period ended August 31, 2020, an increase of / 1,325,853 OMR due to a 13% increase in tuition fee revenues, 1,587,050 OMR and an 80% decrease in other revenues and a decrease of 475,098 OMR due to the decrease in housing revenues and rents due to the Corona pandemic.

- Salaries and wages decreased by 3% by 290,028 OMR.
- No change in administrative and general expenses.

- A reduction in the consumption of fixed assets by 19% and by 268,865 OMR.

- Write-off was recorded in the buildings under construction RO 239,302 in accordance with IAS 36

- A decrease in financing expenses by 35% and by 51,498 OMR.

- Registration of the government grant to calculate deferred government grants, reflecting the value of its extinguishment on the company's profits equivalent to the consumption of property and equipment financed by that grant, which was valued during the current fiscal year at - / 472,332 OMR.

- During the period, the company paid 428,000 OMR from the loan financed by Sohar Bank.

- Purchase of fixed assets and assets of the group (computers, laboratory devices, furniture, equipment and projects under completion) during the period for - / 158,399 OMR.

Finally, on the occasion of the 51st National Day, I would extend my overwhelming thanks and respect to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said, may Allah protect him and guide his Government with care and wisdom, I would also like to extend my profound thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education, Board of Directors, as well as to the University Executives, Academic and Administrative staff for their great effort for the current year and for a successful future.

Hassan bin Hsain bin Nasseb Al-Nasseb
Chairman

Consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at 31 August 2021

	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO	Group 2020 RO	Parent Company 2020 RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property and equipment	32,447,024	1,314	33,689,226	26,766
Right-of-use asset	152,805	-	166,074	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	6,398,050	-	6,399,050
Total non-current assets	32,599,829	6,400,364	33,855,300	6,425,816
Current assets				
Inventories	18,682	5,513,190	74,773	3,841,472
Due from subsidiaries	1,637,498	2,109	4,936,199	2,298
Trade and other receivables	6,455,860	4,520	3,074,152	5,208
Cash and bank balances	-	-	-	-
Total current assets	8,112,040	5,519,819	8,085,124	3,848,978
Total assets	40,711,869	11,920,183	41,940,424	10,274,794
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
EQUITY				
Share capital	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000
Legal reserve	3,829,355	1,890,786	3,281,615	1,667,333
Property revaluation reserve	5,301,623	-	5,301,623	-
Retained earnings	2,434,233	2,553,048	1,364,008	1,381,976
Total equity	18,565,211	11,443,834	16,947,246	10,049,309
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Deferred grant related to assets	14,484,325	-	14,956,657	-
Deferred tax liability	1,177,904	-	1,141,083	-
Lease liabilities	144,570	-	154,556	-
End-of-service benefits	1,118,985	27,203	1,372,104	22,588
Students' deposits	205,035	-	211,754	-
Total non-current liabilities	17,131,819	27,203	17,836,154	22,588
Current liabilities				
Deferred grant related to assets	472,332	-	472,332	-
Bank borrowings	-	-	3,428,341	-
Lease liabilities	9,889	-	9,238	-
Due to subsidiaries	-	95,193	-	172,297
Trade and other payables	3,607,425	353,953	2,586,624	30,600
Income tax payable	925,193	-	660,498	-
Total current liabilities	5,014,839	449,146	7,157,024	202,897
Total liabilities	22,146,658	476,349	24,993,178	225,485
Total equity and liabilities	40,711,869	11,920,183	41,940,424	10,274,794
Net assets per share	0.268	0.163	0.242	0.144

Consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 August 2021

	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO	Group 2020 RO	Parent Company 2020 RO
Income				
Tuition fees	14,134,039	-	12,555,044	-
Dividend income from subsidiaries	-	2,933,000	-	1,380,276
Other income	115,046	700	582,089	-
Total income	14,249,085	2,933,700	13,137,133	1,380,276
Expenses				
Salaries and other related	(8,563,907)	(271,889)	(8,853,935)	(295,125)
Administrative and other operating expenses	(1,594,031)	(401,656)	(1,593,375)	(92,428)
Depreciation of property and equipment	(1,160,531)	(1,264)	(1,429,395)	(1,435)
Impairment of property and equipment	(239,302)	(24,366)	-	-
Release of deferred grant related to assets	472,332	-	469,704	-
Reversal of expected credit losses of trade on receivables	-	-	113,054	-
Amortisation of right-of-use asset	(13,269)	-	(13,269)	-
Total expenses	(11,088,708)	(699,175)	(11,307,216)	(388,988)
Profit for the year from operations	3,150,377	2,234,525	1,829,917	991,288
Finance costs	(66,837)	-	(148,334)	-
Finance income	2,335	-	9,658	-
Profit before tax for the year	3,075,935	2,234,525	1,691,241	991,288
Income tax	(618,870)	-	(559,128)	-
Net profit after tax and total comprehensive income for the year	2,457,965	2,234,525	1,132,113	991,288
Earnings per share	0.038	0.032	0.016	0.014

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them.
The request to be made at P.O. Box 44, P.C. 311, Tel: 26850120, Fax: 26721258

SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the International Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-163/2021 (International)	Provision of Maintenance Services for various Medical Equipment at The Royal Hospital	07/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 01/December/2021	International Companies & Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 75.000 Per set

- International companies not yet registered may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document and shall provide an undertaking that, if awarded, the Supplier shall complete the registration formalities with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and other concerned government bodies within thirty (30) working days from the date of award of Tender.
- The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Purchase and Tenders one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24166670
Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

BASHIR-ERA RULING PARTY HEAD GHANDOUR RE-ARRESTED

Port Sudan blockade being lifted for one month

KHARTOUM: A tribal group announced on Monday it would temporarily lift a six-week blockade on Sudan's main seaport, a week after the military took power in a coup.

Opponents of last week's military takeover had accused the army of engineering the blockade of Port Sudan to put pressure on civilian leaders and ultimately justify plans to end civilian rule. The army has denied being behind the blockade and declined to get involved, saying it was based on legitimate demands.

Barricades at the port and on the main road to Khartoum were being lifted from Monday morning for a month, said Abdallah Abushar, secretary for the High Beja Council, which imposed the blockade in September.

Members of the Beja tribal group had shut the Red Sea port in September, calling for a range of demands including the replacement of the civilian-led government.

The Port Sudan blockade, which shut down Red Sea terminals and the main road linking to the capital, had resulted in wheat and fuel shortages and the re-routing



Protesters chant slogans as they march on the streets of capital Khartoum, Sudan. – Reuters

of shipments through Egypt.

The group had demanded the civilian government be replaced with technocrats, and that parts of

an October 2020 peace agreement with rebel groups across Sudan be renegotiated.

Last week, Sudan's military

took power in a coup, detaining civilian officials and politicians, and promising to establish a new government of technocrats. The

coup has been met with opposition and street demonstrations over the last week.

Abushar said the blockade

was being lifted to allow for the establishment of the new government, but would be re-instated in one month until the rest of the Beja demands are met.

RE-ARRESTED

Ibrahim Ghandour, head of Sudan's disbanded former ruling National Congress Party and a former foreign minister under deposed president Omar al Bashir, was re-arrested on Monday less than a day after he had been released from jail, according to a source from his family.

The release of Ghandour and several other Bashir allies in recent days, following a military coup last week, had come under criticism from opponents of military rule.

Ghandour had previously been detained under orders of a taskforce intended to dismantle and prevent the return of Bashir's three-decade rule, which ended in 2019.

He had been released on Sunday night, along with two former intelligence officials under Bashir. Two other Bashir allies, including businessman Abdelbasit Hamza, had also been released on Saturday, judiciary sources said. — Agencies

Football brings hope to Iraqi girls in ex-IS town

BARTALLA, Iraq: Spurred on by their coach, girls kick the ball around a field in Iraq's Bartalla, a former IS stronghold where football is helping them dream of a better future.

In 2014, the IS group seized control of the town in its sweep through the northern province of Nineveh, before subjecting women and girls to a harsh interpretation of law.

Four years on from IS's defeat the roughly 1,500 families who returned have been trying to restore a semblance of normality to Bartalla, about 12 km east of Mosul, once the IS de facto capital in Iraq.

A football academy opened its doors to girls six months ago equipped with artificial turf, thanks to funding from Lara, an Iraqi non-governmental organisation.

"Here we do everything to teach young girls the basics of football," said coach Joanne Yusef Chaba.

The coach, a 22-year-old



Iraqi girls take part in a training session at the Bartalla sports club in Bartalla town. – AFP

physical education graduate, said her dream was "to start a women's team that will compete in the future" in one of two already established women's leagues in Iraq.

Dressed in brightly coloured bibs, the girls do stretching exercises on the freshly laid pitch before Yusef Chaba blows a whistle

for the start of practice. After an exchange of passes, one of the players brings a ball under control before dribbling the length of the 40-metre pitch and unleashing a shot that rattles the post.

"Being here allows us to forget hard times," said Yusef Chaba, who fled to Arbil with her family two hours before the IS arrived in

her hometown.

"Today when people see us, it raises their hopes and gives them confidence," added the recent graduate who is looking for a job. "Here we forget about our daily worries."

About 50 girls aged between 10 and 15 are enrolled at the academy where they attend two-hour training sessions twice a week.

Miral Jamal was six years old when she fled Bartalla with her family to escape the militants. Now aged 13, she is passionate about football. "The players here feel good," said the schoolgirl.

"Football relieves us... there's nothing else to do in the city. I look forward to the training sessions."

The families' modest monthly contributions — between 5,000 and 10,000 Iraqi dinars (\$3 and \$7) — go towards renting the field on land owned by a church. For other expenses, the four founders from local families dip into their own pockets.

— AFP

Coping with stress of war

After dawn prayers Hatim Ali Hadi dons his tracksuit and heads to a park in the Yemeni capital Sanaa for group exercise sessions which help take people's minds off the problems caused by the war going on around them. "These exercises, this running and weight loss brought back my life and health," said the retired engineer, who has shed 40 kg in weight.

It is mostly men in their sixties and seventies who use the walkways and low walls of Sanaa's public park daily to do the light fitness drills selected by retiree Naji Abu Hatim, who started the movement he now calls the "Best Team". Women in Yemen do not generally exercise in public. Abu

Hatim said the sessions were comforting.

"(Life) outside this park is full of anguish. We look forward to this morning hour because it is far from all worries, far from all sad news," he said.

Seven years of conflict in Yemen have split the country in two, disrupted healthcare systems and plunged millions into poverty. Yemenis must also deal with the psychological stress of living through conflict.

With no fees and no dress code for the exercise sessions, the idea is to encourage wide participation and groups have popped up in other parts of the city. — Reuters



ISTANBUL

Erdogan skips Glasgow climate summit

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he had cancelled his planned attendance at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow because of a dispute over the security protocol.

Erdogan had been due to travel to Scotland after holding a crunch meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome. But he told reporters on board his flight back to Turkey that the Glasgow event organisers had failed to address his delegation's security



concerns.

"When our demands were not met, we gave up on going to Glasgow," the Anadolu state news agency quoted Erdogan as saying.

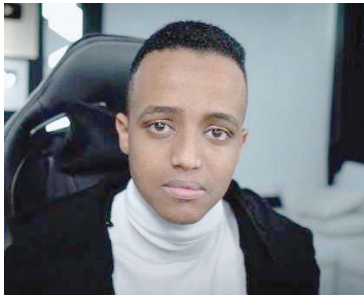
CAIRO

Kuwaiti YouTuber raises \$1m for ME refugees

A Kuwaiti social media influencer has collected \$1million in donations via his YouTube channel to support thousands of refugees during the harsh Middle East winter, a United Nations agency said on Sunday.

Abo Flah, a young gaming content creator, launched his fund-raising campaign on Friday in partnership with the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, to mark reaching a milestone of 20 million subscribers.

The drive was livestreamed



on his channel to reach the \$1-million goal, which will provide around 5,715 refugee families, or more than 17,000 people, with urgent winter needs.

TEHRAN

Iran rejects Western 'concerns' over N-compliance

Iran repeated on Monday its insistence its nuclear programme was peaceful, two days after the US, Britain, France and Germany expressed their "grave" concern on the sidelines of a G20 meeting.

Foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters in Tehran that Western positions were "incompatible with reality and will not bring constructive results".

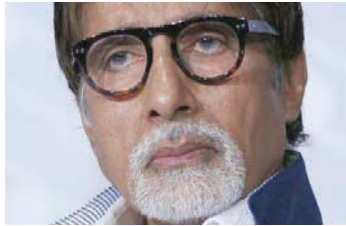
The Western statement on Saturday, a joint declaration



after bilateral meetings by leaders on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Rome, followed their discussions of Iran's offer to resume discussions on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

In brief

■ MUMBAI



INDIA JUMPS ON NFT CRAZE WITH BACHCHAN'S AUCTION

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan became the first Indian celebrity to join the global NFT craze by launching an auction of his digital memorabilia on Monday. Non-fungible tokens — unique digital objects such as drawings or animations — have soared in popularity in recent months.

Investors and wealthy collectors have clamoured to get involved in the latest digital craze, which relies on the same blockchain technology that powers cryptocurrencies and cannot be forged or otherwise manipulated. On Bachchan's virtual auction block will be audio and art by the star including poetry recitals, movie posters and digital portraits.

■ HONG KONG



HONG KONG TO TIGHTEN QUARANTINE RULES

Hong Kong is dropping a provision for most consular staff to serve quarantine at home, opting for hotel stays instead, as it doubles down on some of the world's toughest coronavirus curbs, hoping to sway mainland China to open the border with the city. The global financial hub is following Beijing's lead in retaining draconian travel curbs, in contrast to a global trend of opening up and living with the coronavirus. "We are doing this to ensure the risk is reduced to the minimum, because we can see that the cases in Hong Kong are imported cases," Chief Secretary John Lee told reporters on Monday, adding that the new rules take effect on November 12.

■ SEOUL



SOUTH KOREA EASES CURBS, IMPOSES VACCINE PASSPORTS

New rules aimed at moving South Koreans towards "living with Covid-19" came into effect on Monday, with the easing of a range of curbs and the introduction of vaccine passports at high-risk venues such as gyms, saunas and bars. The switch of focus comes as more than 75 per cent of the country's population has been fully vaccinated. The first phase of the revised rules is due to last for a month, with plans to scrap all restrictions by February. "The return path to everyday life, to which we're taking the first step today, is a path we've never been on," Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol told an intra-agency Covid-19 meeting.

Japan PM strengthened by election win

To address climate change and accelerate pandemic recovery

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, invigorated by a surprisingly strong election victory, signalled on Monday he would pursue defence policies aimed at deterring others, address climate change and accelerate recovery from the pandemic.

Kishida's conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) defied predictions and held onto its single party majority in Sunday's election, solidifying his position as head of the fractious party and giving him a freer hand in parliament, with recovery from the coronavirus pandemic — including an extra budget — taking priority.

Some had feared that Kishida, only in power for a month, could become another one of Japan's short-term prime ministers, but the election results — which set stocks surging in relief — will allow him to put his own stamp on policies ahead of an upper house election next summer.

The LDP's solid victory in the parliamentary election also eased market fears of massive bond issuance because it will likely take pressure off Kishida to inflate the



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks during a news conference at the party headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, on Monday. — Reuters

size of a pandemic-relief stimulus package.

"We will speedily implement policies to respond to the voices of the people we have received nationwide that strongly desire political stability and policy

implementation," the prime minister said at a news conference on Monday.

Key among those will be recovery from the pandemic, with Kishida pledging to work for an extra budget by the end of the

We will speedily implement policies to respond to the voices of the people we have received nationwide that strongly desire political stability and policy implementation

FUMIO KISHIDA
Japanese Prime Minister

year, look into restarting a travel subsidy programme to revive domestic tourism and compile a "large-scale" stimulus package around mid-November.

But he also placed emphasis on defence in a nod to the more hawkish views of those in the LDP who supported him in his run for leader, which could become trickier given the electoral gains made by the dovish junior coalition partner Komeito.

The LDP included an unprecedented pledge to double defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP in its party platform.

"When we think about protecting people's lives and livelihood, a budget should not come first," Kishida said.

"We need to think about what is really needed for that end. I'd

like to proceed with this debate carefully so that I can gain Komeito's understanding."

Kishida added that Japan needed to consider the capability to strike enemy bases as an option to counter growing defence technology in other nations. "What's important is making checks constantly if a system is in place to protect people's lives and livelihood amid a changing international situation and advancing technologies," he said.

The prime minister, who spoke of "personal diplomacy" during the campaign, wasted no time kicking that off by announcing he would leave for Glasgow and the COP26 climate summit on Tuesday for his face-to-face debut at an international conference.

Saying his stimulus package would include investment on clean energy and funding aid to Asia, he also hoped Japan would take a leadership role on zero emissions in Asia. Japan has set a target of 2050 for becoming carbon-neutral, and Kishida believes — despite considerable public opposition — that nuclear energy should remain an option.

While initial exit polls on Sunday suggested the LDP would have to rely on Komeito to keep a majority, the conservative party — in power for all but a few years since its founding in 1955 — instead won a solid majority of 261 seats on its own. — Reuters



Children hold balloons as they enter their school in New Delhi on Monday. — AFP

As Delhi schools reopen, learning loss, adverse impact on kids seen

NEW DELHI: Many schools in the Indian capital New Delhi reopened on Monday after remaining shut for 19 months due to the pandemic, with research showing the closures have led to learning loss and widening inequities for children in the region.

Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia said classes in schools resumed with 50 per cent seating capacity amid other government guidelines on masking, thermal scanning and staggered entry and exit for students.

Several private schools have however chosen to defer the reopening after Diwali, the festival of lights, which falls on Thursday.

Following a marked

improvement in the Covid-19 situation in the city, the local government restarted in-person learning for Grade 9 onwards from September 1.

Monday is the first time since March 2020 that all schools in Delhi are reopening for classes up to Grade 8.

With the 50 per cent attendance curbs, teaching will continue in a hybrid mode, meaning online classes will continue.

Indian states like Kerala and West Bengal were also resuming classes, following the cue of other Indian provinces reopening schools in recent weeks.

School closures in South Asia have interrupted the learning of 424 million children, the United Nations Children's Fund says,

with its research showing that a substantial proportion of students and their parents reported that students learned significantly less compared to the pre-pandemic levels.

In India, 80 per cent of children aged 14-18 years reported lower levels of learning than when physically at school, the research showed. Underprivileged children — who do not have access to computers and smartphones for online classes and also did not have adults at home to help them with their studies — have been especially impacted. Girls, children from the most disadvantaged households and children with disabilities faced the biggest challenges while learning remotely, the Unicef study said. — dpa

Thai capital welcomes first tourists for quarantine-free holiday

BANGKOK: More than a thousand foreign tourists arrived in Bangkok on Monday, the first wave of travellers to the Thai capital in 18 months, as part of a quarantine waiver for visitors vaccinated against Covid-19.

There were 1,534 foreign arrivals and 890 Thais on 40 international flights on the opening day on Monday, senior health official Kiattiphum Wongrajit said.

The waiver covers more than 60 countries, including the United States and China, plus several places in Europe, from where some were escaping the winter blues.

"Right now, in Europe as you know it's quite cold, so we decided to go come here," said German tourist, Simon Raithel, among the first arrivals.

Thailand, one of the Asia-Pacific's most popular tourist destinations, has enforced strict entry curbs that were criticised in the travel industry for being too onerous and economically damaging.

More than 3 million Thai

tourism-dependent jobs and an estimated \$50 billion a year in revenue have been lost.

Before the pandemic, tourism accounted for about 12 per cent of Thai GDP, with one survey ranking Bangkok as the world's most visited city.

Thailand tested the waters with the reopening of the island of Phuket, but the pilot scheme had mixed results, drawing just 1 per cent of its monthly pre-pandemic level when it started in July.

Under the new national programme, visitors must await a negative Covid-19 test on arrival then can travel freely the following day. "It is much easier," said Marguerite Jeason from France. "Before at first it was 14 nights."

Airlines have rushed to ready the country for the hoped influx of visitors, bringing jets back from hibernation.

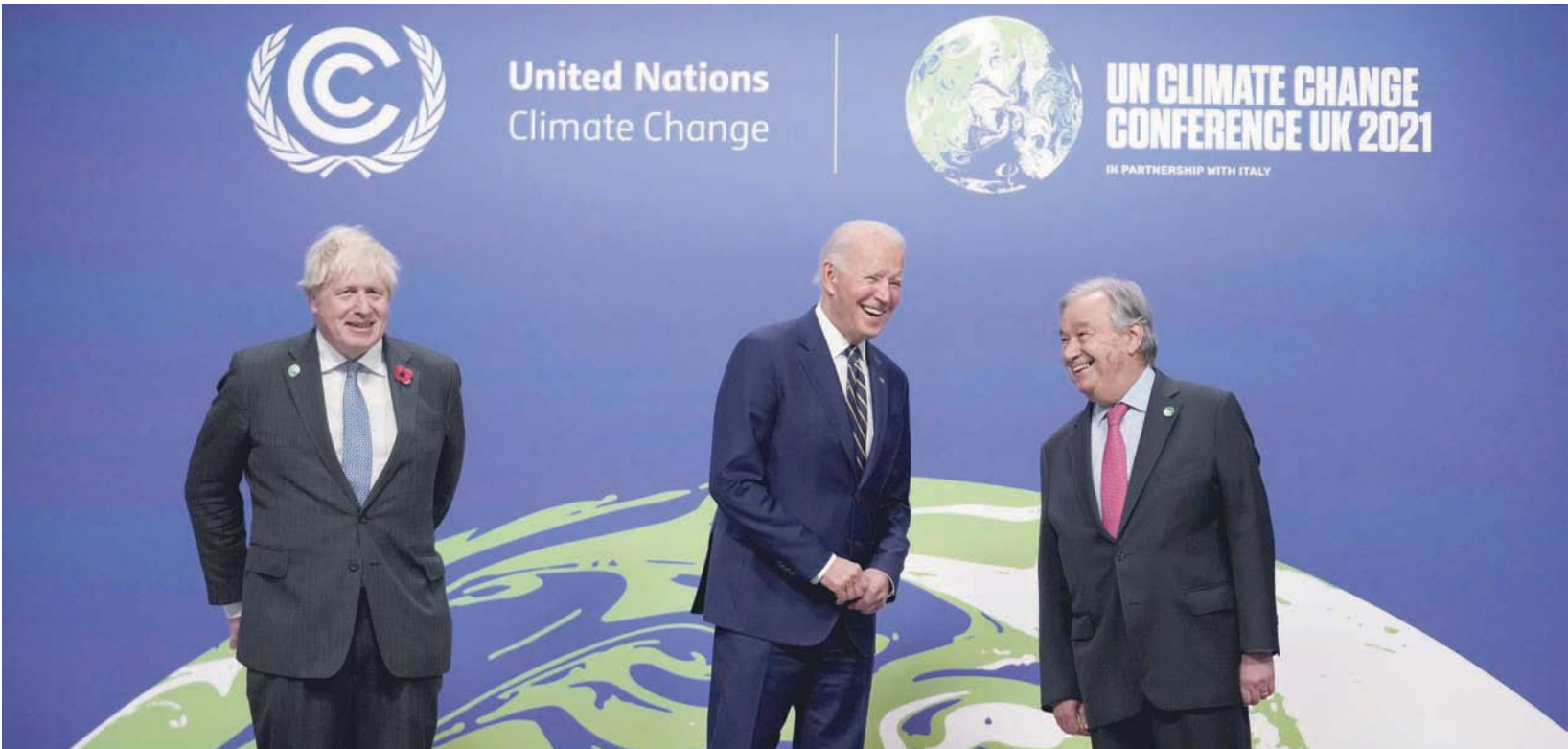
Still, the pickup is expected to be relatively slow, with 180,000 foreign arrivals anticipated this year and 7 million next year, compared with some 40 million in 2019. — Reuters



Chinese tourists wearing protective suits arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, on Monday. — Reuters

GLOBAL CLIMATE CONFERENCE BEGINS

COP26 aims to secure tougher measures to cut CO2 emissions



Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres greet US President Joe Biden at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. – Reuters

GLASGOW: A UN conference critical to averting the most disastrous effects of climate change was set to start on Monday, its task made even more daunting by the failure of major industrial nations to agree ambitious new commitments.

The COP26 conference in the Scottish city of Glasgow opens a day after the G20 economies failed to commit to a 2050 target to halt net carbon emissions — a deadline widely cited as necessary to prevent the most extreme global warming. Instead, their talks in Rome only recognised “the key relevance” of halting net emissions “by or around mid-century”, set no timetable for phasing out coal at home and watered down promises to cut emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas many times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

Thunberg urges leaders: ‘Face up to climate emergency now’

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg asked her millions of supporters to sign an open letter accusing leaders of betrayal.

“This is not a drill. It’s code red for the Earth”, it read. “Millions will suffer as our planet is devastated — a terrifying future that will be created, or avoided, by the decisions you make. You have the power to decide.”

Many of those leaders take to the stage in Glasgow at the start of two weeks of negotiations that conference host Britain is billing as make-or-break.

“Humanity has long since run down the clock on climate change. It’s one minute to midnight and we need to act now”, British Prime

Minister Boris Johnson was to tell the opening ceremony, according to advance excerpts of his speech.

“If we don’t get serious about climate change today, it will be too late for our children to do so tomorrow.”

Discord among some of the world’s biggest emitters about how to cut back on coal, oil and gas, and help poorer countries to adapt to global warming, will not make the task easier.

At the G20, US President Joe Biden singled out China and Russia, neither of which is sending its leader to Glasgow, for not bringing proposals to the table.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose country is by far the biggest

emitter of greenhouse gases, ahead of the United States, was due to address the conference on Monday in a written statement, according to an official schedule.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia, one of the world’s top three oil producers along with the United States and Saudi Arabia, dropped plans to participate in any talks live by video link, the Kremlin said.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said he had decided to stay away after Britain failed to meet Ankara’s demands on security arrangements and protocol, the Turkish broadcaster NTV reported. Less senior delegates — many of them held up on Sunday by disruptions to the rail service between London and Glasgow — had more mundane problems. — Reuters

Greenland ice melt raised global flood risk: Study

PARIS: The 3.5 trillion tonnes of Greenland’s ice sheet that has melted over the past decade has raised global sea levels by one centimetre and is heightening worldwide flood risks, new research showed on Monday.

The ice sheet atop the world’s largest island contains enough frozen water to lift oceans some six metres globally, and extreme melting events there have been increasing in frequency for at least 40 years.

Although it is one of the most studied places on Earth by climatologists, Monday’s research is the first to use satellite data to detect Greenland ice sheet runoff.

Writing in the journal *Nature*



Communications, researchers said that Greenland’s meltwater runoff had risen by 21 per cent over the past four decades.

More strikingly, the data provided by the European Space Agency showed that the ice sheet had lost 3.5 trillion tonnes of ice since

2011, producing enough water to raise oceans globally and put coastal communities at higher risk of flood events.

One-third of the ice lost in the past decade came in just two hot summers — 2012 and 2019 — the research showed.

The images showed significant annual variation in ice melt and, combined with temperature data, showed that heatwaves were increasingly a major cause of ice loss — above and beyond global temperature rises.

In 2012, for example, when changes in atmospheric patterns caused unusually warm air to hover over the ice sheet for weeks, 527 billion tonnes of ice was lost. — AFP

ANC hopes to avert worst result in South Africa local vote

JOHANNESBURG: South Africans voted in municipal elections on Monday, with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) hoping to avert its worst result since the end of white minority rule. There has been little reliable political polling, but based on the climate of discontent and the few surveys that have been conducted some pundits predict the ANC’s vote share could fall below 50 per cent for the first time since the end of apartheid.

President Cyril Ramaphosa remains popular after mobilising government grants that prevented Covid-19 from becoming a hunger crisis. But lasting poverty, crumbling infrastructure and nearly a third of workers unemployed mean some voters have lost patience with the party that has ruled for 27 years.

Analysts predict party share of vote could fall below 50pc as President Cyril Ramaphosa remains popular

The ANC hopes to win back metropolitan areas it lost to opposition-led coalitions in 2016, including in Johannesburg and Pretoria, when its 54% vote share was its worst since coming to power. Polls opened at 0500 GMT and close at 1900 GMT. ANC defenders say reversing decades of apartheid-era neglect in Black neighbourhoods was never going to be a quick fix. But it has also been dogged by corruption scandals.

Getting less than half the vote would be a psychological blow, and would raise the previously unthinkable possibility that the ANC could one day be in opposition. That still seems a way off. Its main rival, the Democratic Alliance (DA), has struggled to shed its image as a party of white privilege, and suffered a backlash in October from a divisive poster campaign addressing racial tensions between ethnic Indian and Black communities.

And despite widespread dissatisfaction, the ANC’s emotional hold on poor, Black townships remains strong, even among young voters with no living memory of apartheid.

“There is so much unfinished business, like the road, a hospital”, said Jonathan Mathebula, 20, queuing to vote in Diepsloot township north of Johannesburg. — AFP

“I’m here to vote for change”, said 67-year-old pensioner Xinyenyani Mthembu at a polling station in Soweto township.

“I have been very much loyal (to the ANC) for so many years because there were improvements but it’s not enough”, he said, adding he was changing his party of choice for the first time, for a new party led by former Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba.

R a m a p h o s a acknowledged that many voters were not happy, but called on them to support the party so it could improve.

“This is the one election where we are clearly saying to our people we are going to do better”, he said while voting in Soweto. “We’ve realised that we’ve not always met the aspirations of our people.”



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa casts his ballot at a polling station during local government elections in Soweto, Johannesburg. – Reuters

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

Covid rate prompts fresh fears in Germany

Germany’s Covid-19 incidence rate surged to over 150 for the first time since May on Monday, prompting concerns of a rampant fourth wave as the country wrestles with a change of government. The number of new infections per 100,000 people over the past seven days reached 154.8, according to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) health agency — up from 110.1 a week ago.

Outgoing chancellor Angela Merkel called for swift measures to tackle the “very worrying”



trend, stressing that Germany could not afford to wait until a new government is in place. Merkel is due to step down as the German leader after 16 years in power, with three parties currently in talks to form the next government after an election in September. — AFP

NAIROBI

Tigray forces kill 100 youths in key town

Ethiopia’s government accused rebellious Tigrayan forces on Monday of killing 100 youths in the key town of Kombolcha, as the United States expressed concern about Tigrayan advances a year into the fighting. There was no response from Tigrayan forces led by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) who have been fighting the government in a mounting conflict that has destabilised Africa’s second most populous nation.

Reuters was not able to verify



accounts of the fighting around the town on a major highway about 380 km from the capital, Addis Ababa. Communications to the area are down and journalists are barred. On Sunday a TPLF spokesperson said its fighters had pushed south to take Kombolcha and its airport. — Reuters

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

Biden tests Covid-19 negative

US President Joe Biden has tested negative for Covid-19 in the wake of his chief spokeswoman testing positive, the White House said. The “president was tested as well, a PCR test yesterday, and he tested negative”, Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One, on the way to the UN climate summit in Glasgow.

Jean-Pierre said Biden’s test on Sunday was not in response to news of the positive result for Press Secretary Jen Psaki, but



was done “independently” and was “required for entering the UK.” Psaki, who has frequent access to Biden in the White House, pulled out of his trip to Rome for a G20 summit and the following Glasgow event after family members tested positive for Covid-19. — AFP

A soft-spoken centrist and a baseball fan

KATIE FORSTER AND ETIENNE BALMER

Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, on track to hold power in Sunday’s general elections, is a soft-spoken leader with a reputation for seeking the middle ground and a fondness for baseball. The 64-year-old scion of a Hiroshima family of politicians is seen as experienced and capable, despite a low-key presence sometimes characterised as a lack of charisma.

As exit polls predicted his ruling coalition would hold power after the polls closed, he said that “if the ruling coalition is given a majority, the government is given trust. It is a big deal.”

It was his first major test as prime minister since replacing Yoshihide Suga as leader of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party a month ago.

Seeking to set himself apart from the unpopular pandemic response of Suga’s government, Kishida has touted his listening skills and promised a fresh stimulus package in a bid to revive the world’s third largest economy.

He has also vowed to tackle income inequality under his so-called new capitalism, although details at this stage remain vague. On Sunday, he said he would stick to his word if he won the vote. “It will lead to greater and wider support from the public if we implement the various programmes we have promised,” he said. Kishida served as foreign minister between 2012-17, during which time he negotiated accords with Russia and South Korea, with whom Japan’s relations are often frosty.

He has called abolishing nuclear weapons “my life’s work”, and in 2016 helped bring then-US president Barack Obama to Hiroshima on a historic visit.

But despite his liberal reputation, he has been reticent on some social hot-button issues.

He has also taken a cautious line on allowing married couples to keep separate surnames, another controversial issue.

“Prime minister Kishida has not always been very clear about what he wants to do in terms of macroeconomic policy,” Kenneth Mori McElwain, a social science professor at the University of Tokyo, said at a briefing this week. — AFP

“**Prime minister Kishida has not always been very clear about what he wants to do in terms of macroeconomic policy**

KENNETH MORI MCELWAIN

A social science professor



CONCERN FOR CLIMATE

French activist Jean-Baptiste Redde also known as Voltuan demonstrates outside the venue in Glasgow on Monday on the second day of the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference.

— AFP

Under the shade of a tree



Lakshmi Kothaneth lakshmiobserver@gmail.com

READING UNDER THE TREE OR HAVING A CONVERSATION ALL HAD A CONTACT WITH THE TREE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER

Whenever someone wants to park a car they look for shade. It could be one aloof tree and the drivers rush for the spot to keep their vehicle cool until they come back. It is a norm that gives us great satisfaction when we are able to spot a vacant space under a tree shade.

Trees have many benefits but we have taken them for granted for so long. Cyclone Shaheen uprooted many trees, however the Tree Day has brought back the prominence of this important resource which is considered to be one of the ways to tackle climate change.

Childhood memories are filled with moments with trees — it was the best place to play, sitting on the branch of a tree was as comfortable as the comfortable sofas. Reading under the tree or having a conversation all had a contact with the tree one way or the other. In the younger days we wanted a stable branch to latch the swing too. It was the trees that one climbed to take a peek into the nests of the birds.

There was a grand old neem tree in the neighbourhood in Ruwi, which used to ooze out gum, and it was fun to collect the gum — for a tree that has so many

benefits, the resin must have some benefit too.

It was actually the first time I knew neem tree produced gums. Researching about it made me realise it has been in use for a long time. It is even packed fancy and sold online.

Apparently it is a stabilising agent, gels as well as thickening agent so obviously it has been used in soaps, toothpaste, tooth powders as well as in antiseptic creams and not just that, the neem gum has also been used as tablet binder and coated not to forget its use in dyeing and printing of fabrics, according to Neotea Neem Gum on Amazon. After learning so much about neem gum I was looking forward to catching up with the elderly neem tree. Alas I found the space empty and sunny. As part of the renovation of a building, they had brought down the tree. I thought I had imagined the aura of the tree. Can it just go away like that? The tree’s fragrant filled flowers, followed by fruits and the intriguing gum - a rich colour at times golden brown are memories now. Where did the birds who had housing colonies fly to?

What is interesting are also the factors

that the tree produces the gum when it is wounded or when the soil is poor or when a drought is being experienced. It is a mechanism to close the wound and prevent loss of water. It is a defensive mechanism but mankind has found many uses for it too. It only goes on to prove the marvel of the creation.

If that is the case how can we humans alone fall prey to our own problems and shortcomings and circumstances ranging from loneliness, leading at times to depression to addiction?

The harshest of weather brings frankincense, which is why the frankincense trees do not do too well in the rain receiving areas as they do not produce quality gum then. But look at the old frankincense tree that continue to produce quality gum.

In reality, the people who have experienced challenges and overcome them are the ones who have a story of success and tell about the accomplishment of a goal. They probably are the ones who did not give up at the third trial. Their story has an element of fragrance of sweet success but also of pain, hard work and inner strength.

The path to climate credibility



JEAN PISANI-FERRY

The author is a senior fellow at Brussels-based think tank Bruegel and a senior non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics

On October 25, the electric-vehicle producer Tesla’s market capitalisation reached \$1 trillion – more than the combined value of the next ten global car manufacturers. Even after discounting for exuberance, this is a strong indicator of how the threat of climate change is triggering a transformation of capitalism. To be sure, polluters still abound, and greenwashing is pervasive. But it would be a mistake to dismiss the changeover under way.

Governments, however, are not on track to deliver on their promise in the 2015 Paris climate agreement to limit global warming to “well below” 2° Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels. According to the International Energy Agency, meeting the national pledges

made so far within the framework of the Paris accord would lead to an increase in global temperature of 2.1°C. Moreover, actual policies fall short of even these insufficient pledges: under the IEA’s “stated policies scenario,” global warming would reach 2.6°C.

Add to this the fact that — as the Energy Transitions Commission has documented — most governments have committed to achieving net-zero emissions only by 2050 or 2060, and plan to postpone major mitigation efforts until after 2030, and the emerging picture is one of massive credibility failure.

The root of the problem is well known. The Paris agreement was based on the realistic judgment that governments could not agree on a precisely defined allocation of climate-change mitigation efforts.

This conclusion had emerged from the collapse of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (which involved such an allocation but left out emerging economies, including China) and the failure of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (where an attempt to muster a global Kyoto-type agreement ended in dispute).

So, the world tried a different approach: experts would assess the climate efforts needed, governments would formulate pledges, and civil society would scrutinise them. No one expected the initial pledges to be sufficient. But the hope was that peer pressure, the weight of public opinion, and relentless warnings by the scientific community would gradually put policies on the right track.

Economists were sceptical. Christian Gollier and Jean Tirole of the Toulouse School of Economics warned early on that the strategy was “doomed to fail.” And William Nordhaus of Yale University showed that voluntary climate coalitions are vulnerable to free-riding and prone to instability.

The Paris agreement nonetheless achieved something that simple economic models could not reflect: the beginning of a change in business attitudes. Notably, the Paris accord encouraged investors and managers to ponder the risk of being left with stranded assets or an obsolete business model. Mark Carney, then-governor of the Bank of England, added that regulators would hold financial institutions accountable

for hidden climate risks. Such considerations generated private-sector momentum towards decarbonisation.

But green capitalism can prosper only if governments eventually keep their climate promises. Most investments in renewable energy, energy-efficient buildings, or zero-emission vehicles require carbon pricing, tight regulation, or both. Forward-looking investors may well bet on the eventual enactment of such measures, but only up to a point, and not without consequences.

An insufficiently credible decarbonisation policy implies both higher overall costs (because it leads investors to hedge by combining brown and green investments) and recurrent imbalances between demand and supply.

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IRANIAN
SHAHRBABAKI
NAMED AS
HEAD COACH OF
NATIONAL TABLE
TENNIS TEAM



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The Iranian Omid Shams Shahrbabaki was named as the head coach of the national table tennis team. Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) announced on Monday the appointment of the former Iranian table tennis coach.

The signing agreement took place recently at the meeting room in Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in presence of Abdullah Bamakhalf, chairman of OTTA, who signed on behalf of the association in presence of the board members. The date of the signing ceremony was inline to Youth International Day which falls on October 30 every year.

The Iranian coach replaced the Jordanian coach Mohammed Atoum, who was in charge for the national team since 2015 until 2021 and now he moved to ITTF.

The 46-year-old had served as the coach of Iranian national team during 2015 to 2018. Also, he was the head coach of Iran national table tennis hopes and youth team from 2014 until 2020. He has a wide range of experience in coaching junior age categories. He was with the Iran team at the World Cadet

The Iranian coach replaced the Jordanian coach Mohammed Atoum, who was in charge of the national team since 2015 until 2021 and now he has moved to ITTF

Challenge in 2017 and 2018.

TT FAMILY
Coach Shahrbabaki is father and coach of two young players of the Iranian national team named Hamid and Navid Shams.

The young player Hamid is the bronze medalist of the 2018 Myanmar Youth Asian Games while Navid is the champion of the two World Hopes of 2016 Qatar and 2017 Luxembourg.

He has several international titles in the world tournaments including: Slovakia Tour Champion, Jordan World Tour Champion, Gold Medal 2018 Hong Kong, World Tour, holder of two gold medals from the 2019 World Cadet Challenge in team and doubles competitions in Poland and holder of many medals at numerous other international.

FUTURE PLANS
Commenting post the signing ceremony, the Iranian coach Omid

Shams Shahrbabaki said that he has different technical initiatives and approaches to develop Oman table tennis teams.

“I see a very bright future for table tennis in Sultanate of Oman due to having active association members and potential manpower that is interested in the development programmes and progress. Beside that OTTA have good cooperation with the Asian and global community and holding several high-level competitions in all age groups in this country which will greatly increase my hope. Moreover, the strong presence of the OTTA chairman and vice chairman in the regional and international federations will power forums of this federation increase the overall growth of zinc tennis The table in Sultanate of Oman is very fast and attractive, I wish the best for the sports family, especially table tennis in Sultanate of Oman, with respect to the head coach of the Oman

national teams,” he added.

“I have considered complete programmes for the correct and up-to-date training of players and coaches with the latest ITTF sciences. Also, focusing on the basic tasks for the beginners and medium age group paddlers and adults. Having proper training camps at regular intervals that I hope will be done with the cooperation of the federation and players and other coaches. This will assist us more to have continuous development for the players,” he ended.

OTTA REVIEW CVs
OTTA chairman Abdullah Bamakhalf, said that the coaching committee reviewed bundles of CVs and resumes during the last few months.

“We have been keen to select the right qualified coach to lead the national table tennis teams. The appointment of the Iranian coach Omid Shams Shahrbabaki was based on the top experience for the coach in coaching the junior, youth and other categories. We will provide the suitable environment for the coach to deliver his best for development of the national teams,” he concluded.

Buttler helps England overwhelm Lanka

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Jos Buttler’s scintillating hundred powered England to a 26-run victory over Sri Lanka in their Group I match of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, in Sharjah on Monday.

Buttler’s (101, 67b, 6x4, 6x6) frenetic knock was the cornerstone of the England innings from a stage where they looked to be headed towards a 130-140 total.

Adil Rashid (2/19), Moeen Ali (2/15) and Chris Jordan (2/24) were among the wickets for England

LANKA START POORLY

Sri Lanka got off to the worst possible start losing the wicket of Pathum Nissanka for a run out. Star batsman Charith Asalanka (21, 16b, 3x4, 1x6) played a cameo of an innings before holing out to Moeen Ali off Adil Rashid.

The Lankans were in a spot of bother at 24/2 and needed someone to do a rebuilding act.

Instead, further misery came their way when frontline batter Kusal Perera was out to Rashid caught by Eoin Morgan going for a big one in the first ball after powerplay.

Avishka Fernando perished in the ninth over after Chris Jordan had him plumb in front to leave Sri Lanka in deep trouble at 57/4.

Bhanuka Rajapaksa had given the Lankan innings some momentum with a couple of sixes and boundaries but eventually was out to Chris Woakes after being caught at long on by Jason Roy.

Then came a 53-run partnership between Wanindu Hasaranga and Dasun Shanaka that brightened Sri Lanka’s chances. However, Hasaranga and Shanaka lost their



England’s Jos Buttler plays a shot. – AFP

wickets in quick succession as the Lankans stared down the barrel.

BUTTLER SHOW

England struggled with their batting in the first 10 overs of the game. They reached 47/3 with Jos Buttler on 24 and Eoin Morgan on six with strike rates of 80 and 40 respectively.

The Sri Lankan bowlers had tied them up into a knot after picking up three early wickets. Jason Roy was the first to go after he was clean bowled by Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva for 9.

Dawid Malan was castled by Dushmantha Chameera after scoring just six runs while Jonny Bairstow was out lbw to Hasaranga for a golden duck.

It was the 11th over where England decided to break free as Buttler slammed Lahiru Kumara

for a boundary and thereafter 12 runs came in the over.

Buttler was unstoppable as he carted Chamika Karunaratne for a six and a four in the 13th over as England started to get a move on. The England wicket-keeper batsman reached his half-century and stepped on the pedal as he blasted Kumara for three sixes in the 15th over.

Buttler’s strike had gone up to 125 and England were on course to get 140 and maybe 150 as well as Morgan started showing aggressive intent too.

Buttler was absolutely taking the England bowlers apart as he smashed Dasun Shanaka for three boundaries and eventually brought up the first hundred of the World Cup.

England set Sri Lanka a target of 164 for victory.



England’s Jos Buttler (R) celebrates with his teammate Moeen Ali after scoring a century. – AFP



India’s captain Virat Kohli reacts during the ICC T20 World Cup match against New Zealand in Dubai. – AFP

Problems mount for faltering India at T20 World Cup

DUBAI: Virat Kohli’s India faced a social media onslaught on Monday after their second defeat at the Twenty20 World Cup left them needing a miracle to reach the semi-finals.

India started the tournament as one of the favourites but heavy defeats to arch-rivals Pakistan and New Zealand have seen their hopes nosedive.

Here AFP Sport looks at where India went wrong and the fallout they are suffering now:

- Social media backlash - Angry India fans have slammed the team and national board chiefs while many blamed the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL) for the 10-wicket hammering by Pakistan and eight wicket mauling by New Zealand.

#BanIPL became a leading Twitter hashtag on Monday among fans targeting the role played by the world’s richest T20 tournament that only finished in

Dubai a few days before the World Cup started there.

“It’s all about ‘money’, not ‘country’ #BanIPL,” said Gaurav Goel a state spokesperson for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party on Twitter. Others targeted Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Jay Shah and captain Kohli.

BATTING FLOP

India’s famed batting line-up limped to a modest 110-7 against New Zealand on Sunday, a week after they managed 151-7 against a tough Pakistan attack.

Top batters KL Rahul and Rohit Sharma showed little fight and even though Kohli made 57 against Pakistan, the totals proved insufficient.

Against New Zealand, Rahul fell to Tim Southee for 18 and Sharma — who was dropped on nought — was out to Ish Sodhi after making 14. Kohli managed

nine off 17 balls before Sodhi claimed his wicket.

“Tentative with the bat, their shot selection was questionable,” batting great VVS Laxman wrote on Twitter. “New Zealand bowled superbly, but India made their task easier.”

India must now beat Afghanistan on Wednesday and hope that New Zealand lose a game to stand a chance of reaching the last four.

WORRYING TREND

India made two changes from their defeat by Pakistan including bringing in opener Ishan Kishan. However, the left-hander fell to pace bowler Trent Boult while trying to go for a big shot and got caught for just four.

Sodhi took Sharma and then Kohli to put India under pressure in the crucial six overs of powerplay.

Tottering at 48-4, the Indian

survived their 20 overs, but New Zealand overhauled their modest target with 33 balls to spare.

“I don’t know if it is a fear of failure but I know that whatever changes they made to the batting order today did not work,” said former India captain Sunil Gavaskar.

Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah said “bubble fatigue, mental fatigue” creeps in after days on the road, but former players were unforgiving. Gautam Gambhir said India lacked “mental toughness”.

“It’s been a trend, it’s been happening at most ICC (International Cricket Council) tournaments,” he told the ESPNcricinfo website.

MS Dhoni, now the team mentor, led India to the T20 World Cup crown in 2007 and the 50-over World Cup four years later.

— AFP



PHOTOS BY THANI AL SIYABI

Sports Minister Sayyid Theyazin presides over closing ceremony of Camel Race Festival



BARKA: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth today presided over the closing ceremony of the Camel Race Festival for 2021.

The event was organised by Oman Camel Racing Federation, in cooperation with the Royal Camel Corps.

The closing ceremony of the festival included 4 rounds. The rounds saw exciting and thrilling moments among fans and camel caretakers. Fierce competition was present during the closing ceremony of the festival.

At the end of the race, HH Sayyid Theyazin honoured top winners in each round.

The event was attended by their highnesses, ministers, under-secretaries, members of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, shaikhs, dignitaries and camel race fans from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

business

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Oman has potential to become a leading crowdfunding hub

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING: New legislation regulating crowdfunding platform activities to be issued soon

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

Crowdfunding platforms will shortly become a reality in the Sultanate of Oman with the Capital Market Authority (CMA) preparing to roll out legislation that aims to, among other things, position the Sultanate of Oman as a leading player in the crowdfunding space in the region.

According to a high-level official, new legislation regulating crowdfunding platform activities in the country is targeted to be issued as early as this month, effectively opening up a promising new and alternative funding platform for small businesses and entrepreneurs who find it difficult to secure financial support from banks.

Kemal Rizadi Arbi (pictured), Adviser (Capital Markets and Islamic Finance), CMA, said Sultanate of Oman's crowdfunding regulation is set to be quite distinct from corresponding laws in force elsewhere in the Gulf region.

"There are key flexibilities built into the Sultanate of Oman regulation for the benefit of the market players. That's because we are trying to compete with other markets in the GCC although many of them already have a head-start over us. Our regulation is comparable with some of the best in the world, if not better. We are trying to create a global hub for crowdfunding platforms in Sultanate of Oman."

The official made the comments during a panel discussion held as part of "IFN Oman Forum 2021", a daylong conference on Islamic Finance organised by RedMoney Events recently in partnership with the CMA.

The panellists, representing local and international Islamic banks, crowdfunding platform operators and a financial services training institution,



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN MODEL, FOR EXAMPLE, ALLOWS A FOREIGN INVESTOR TO INVEST IN A LOCAL COMPANY THROUGH THE CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM

shared their thoughts on the theme — "Islamic Fintech and Crowdfunding Platforms in Oman".

The Sultanate of Oman model, for example, allows a foreign investor to invest in a local company through the crowdfunding platform. Furthermore, besides enabling local SMEs to raise funds via crowdfunding, the channel can also be used to generate funding for projects outside of Sultanate of Oman as well, he said, adding that Omani companies operating abroad can also harness this avenue to locally raise funds for their overseas business.

Earlier, Kemal pointed out that the imminent rollout of the crowdfunding legislation follows a successful round of public consultations on the draft guidelines issued by the Authority in September.

The draft regulation were well-received by stakeholders and market players, effectively paving the way for the regulation on crowdfunding to be issued very soon, he explained.

"The draft regulation received positive feedback, and we expect to roll out the legislation hopefully by

November," said Kemal. "Crowdfunding provides an opportunity for microbusinesses, SMEs, startups and growth companies to tap an alternative source of finance, either because banks are perhaps not willing to provide or they are not big enough to go directly to the stock exchange to raise funds. We are trying to address these gaps in funding for such companies through the crowdfunding initiative."

Importantly, crowdfunding and Islamic fintech complement each other because crowdfunding is driven by fintech, the official pointed out.

"We are strongly supporting fintech, especially crowdfunding platforms, because it promotes financial inclusion and will enable alternative funding activities for the benefit of SMEs and small entrepreneurs. Additionally, improving financial inclusion is a key component of Islamic finance. Besides, fintech has the potential to create a diversity of financial products and services, diversifying the economy and in turn attracting foreign investors into the Omani market. All of these objectives align with Oman's Vision 2040 goals." A number of local and international crowdfunding platform players have shown great interest to establish and operate in the Sultanate of Oman.

Licensed crowdfunding platform operators can offer crowdfunding services via any of the following four prescribed channels: (i) Donation Crowdfunding (raising funds without expectation of any return), (ii) Reward Crowdfunding (funding in return for products in the early version of a product or special version or service on commencement of operation or production, (iii) Equity Crowdfunding (providing funding in return of getting shares in the company), and (iv) Peer to Peer Crowdfunding (providing funding in consideration of issuing conventional or Islamic investment notes backed by invoice financing).



Majan College SAOG

BOARD REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st AUGUST 2021

Respected Shareholders

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Majan College SAOG (Majan University College), I am pleased to present this report on Majan's financial and operating performance and the accompanying financial statements for the year ended 31st August 2021.

Business Environment

The government has given emphasis on the expenditure outlay for the education sector in the national budget for year 2021. While the Government has undertaken to reduce overall expenditure, spending on basic services such as education as a percentage of total expenditure has been maintained in line with the previous year. This measure reduces the challenges on the private higher education sector. The challenges posed by the increasing competition, however, put extensive pressures on revenue growth.

Business Associates

Guided by our vision and mission, Majan College SAOG (Majan University College) offers programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels that address the needs of the local, regional and international markets in a competitive environment. Majan continues to enjoy a well respected position among higher education institutions through its quality academic provisions. Majan maintains its academic long standing partnership with the University of Bedfordshire in the United Kingdom which validates Majan's undergraduate programmes in business, English and information technology disciplines. Majan hosts four University of Bedfordshire Master programmes (MBA and Masters in Computer Science and International Human resource Management and Applied Linguistics).

Commitment to Quality

Majan was the first higher educational institution to be institutionally accredited by Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education. It was accredited in December 2017 for a period of five years, now extended to six years. Majan goes through the institutional review by the University of Bedfordshire, an exercise that takes place every 5 years. The latest took place in March 2016 and the next review will be conducted in April 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The College maintains its commitment to enhance its academic provision and support to students through its transparent quality assurance measures.

Financial Performance

Majan's financial performance was affected in the core business due to the impact of change to the entry criteria for postgraduate students. However, that was counter balanced through controlling the expenses. In comparison to the previous financial year, total income was decreased by 19% to be OMR 5.03 million. This was mainly from decrease in new and returning postgraduate students. Total expenses have decreased by 16% to be OMR 3.61 million. This was mainly from the decline in postgraduate fees income and corresponding reduction in affiliation fees in addition to control of salaries and related cost and general and administrative expenses offset against the impact of depreciation of the new facilities. Tax expense has decreased by 77% to be OMR 0.07 million mainly because of deferred tax income on provisions on the impairment of fee receivables & fair value adjustment of investments FVPTL.

Audited statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 August 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
Income		
Fee income	4,686,792	5,672,501
Investment income	301,631	395,430
Other income	39,458	162,594
Total income	5,027,881	6,230,525
Expenses		
Salaries and staff related costs	(2,187,994)	(2,478,918)
General and administrative expenses	(1,055,039)	(1,577,567)
Depreciation	(384,527)	(235,824)
Expected credit losses	(5,948)	(34,425)
Foreign exchange gain	23,330	3,252
Total expenses	(3,610,178)	(4,323,482)
Profit before tax for the year	1,417,703	1,907,043
Income tax expense	(66,781)	(289,007)
Net profit after tax for the year	1,350,922	1,618,036
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Net profit and total comprehensive income	1,350,922	1,618,036
Basic earnings per share	0.015	0.018

Consequently, overall net profit after tax has decreased by 17% to be OMR 1.35 million. Earning per share has decreased from 18 Baiza per share to 15 Baiza per share.

Community Support

Majan recognizes its social responsibility and shares its resources with the Omani society through its contribution to the Ministry of Higher Education scholarships programme. As part of its training programme, Majan offers scholarships to its employees at the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Majan also operates a discount scheme for siblings and students with special needs and supports different charity organizations.

Dividend

Considering the annual financial performance, the liquidity requirements for operational needs and Majan uninterrupted record of declaration of 14.5% cash dividend on paid up capital starting from year 2018/2019. The board of directors recommends this year to distribute 14.5% cash dividends on paid up capital, i.e. 14.5 Baiza per share to the shareholders registered as on the date of the annual general meeting.

Future Outlook

Today Majan is well positioned in the private higher education sector and is highly regarded. Despite decreased government spending on education sector, the management believes that the demand for private higher education will continue to grow in the future. Majan has strong management since its inception and will continue on growth strategies that maximize shareholder value whilst maintaining sustainable quality higher education

Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to his Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his unlimited support and guidance to higher education. Our sincere thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for its support to the private higher education sector. This has resulted in tremendous growth in the sector. It is our intention that Majan College SAOG (Majan University College) continues to contribute to the achievement of the vision of the country by continuously improving and enriching the standards of its academic programmes and its resources.

Dr.Salam Salim Al Mur Al Kindi
Chairman

Audited statement of financial position as at 31 August 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
Assets		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	3,751,026	4,084,898
Deferred tax asset	260,883	84,940
Total non-current assets	4,011,909	4,169,838
Current assets		
Fees and other receivables	802,394	2,262,179
Investments at amortised cost	6,660,453	4,249,044
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	1,329,682	-
Cash and cash equivalents	1,163,403	4,267,509
Total current assets	9,955,932	10,778,732
Total assets	13,967,841	14,948,570
Shareholders' equity and liabilities		
Shareholders' equity		
Share capital	9,000,000	9,000,000
Legal reserve	1,470,584	1,335,492
Retained earnings	437,931	527,101
Proposed dividends	1,305,000	1,305,000
Total shareholders' equity	12,213,515	12,167,593
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Employees' end of service benefits	610,360	657,966
Student security deposits	327,805	401,305
Total Non-current liabilities	938,165	1,059,271
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	556,271	1,404,002
Provision for taxation	242,310	287,305
Withholding tax payable	17,580	30,399
Total current liabilities	816,161	1,721,706
Total liabilities	1,754,326	2,780,977
Total shareholders' equity and liabilities	13,967,841	14,948,570
Net asset per share	0.136	0.135

Note: The complete accounts are available on Muscat Stock Exchange (www.msx.om)



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KR Eshraqa contributes RO 200,000 to support cyclone hit families



MUSCAT: In solidarity with national relief efforts and to help communities affected by the recent storm, Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas Group's Social Development Arm, announced a contribution of RO 200,000 to support families affected by cyclone Shaheen in the Al Batinah Governorate.

The donations were channelised through Oman Charitable Organisation and Dar Al Atta'a. It consisted of essentials such as food, electrical appliances, ready-made meals and household requirements.

This initiative is in line with the relief efforts exerted by the

concerned institutions to ease the implications of cyclone Shaheen that occurred in the Sultanate and severely affected residents in the Al Batinah Governorate.

With social responsibility as a vital component of its mandate, Khimji Ramdas Group is committed to giving back to the communities it operates in.

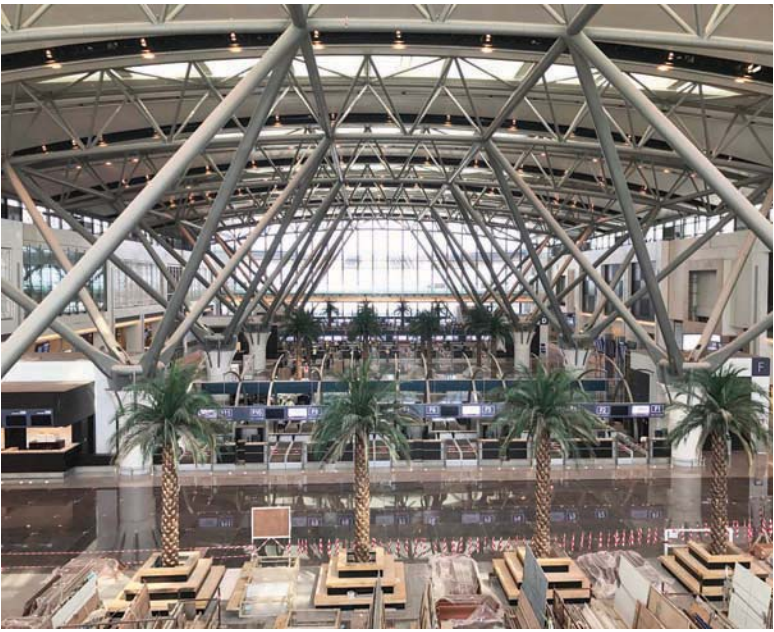
"As a community, we have always shown utmost dedication in assisting those in need, even during the previous relief operations. We applaud the sincere efforts taken by the government and the citizens and residents of this

area. We strongly believe in joining hands and supporting the community during times of need. By partnering with charitable organisations and responsible authorities, we have been able to support the national efforts and help bring stability to the affected families", said Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group.

As part of its commitment to empower the people of Sultanate of Oman the donations allocated towards the cause saw generous contributions from all employees of the group including the management.

Eshraqa, the Social Development Arm of the Khimji Ramdas Group, strives to contribute to the development of local communities through its four pillars — Education, Health, Community Well-being and Training.

In partnership with public, societal and educational institutions, Eshraqa has implemented a range of effective initiatives in various fields. These initiatives aim to support the development of society and, ultimately ensure a bright and sustainable future for the people of the Sultanate of Oman.



Hill International joins global IPM Day on Nov 4

MUSCAT: Hill International, delivering the infrastructure of change, will be virtually joining the International Project Management (IPM) Day on November 4 that is being observed globally.

The IPM Day was created to recognise the hard work, dedication, and often unappreciated efforts of the over 17 million project managers who ensure successful delivery of projects and services worldwide, said a posting on the website of the US-based Project Management Institute.

The Project Management Institute (PMI) certification is a much sought after accreditation for professions in the construction industry, including several in Hill International.

Tarek Abbas, Project Director

with Hill International Oman office in Muscat, has completed the PMI course and said completing the certification added to his knowledge base substantially and prepared him to meet the demand of projects and employers across the globe.

Abdo Kardous, Hill International's Middle East President, said: "Hill International has carried out some of the most iconic projects in the Sultanate of Oman including the Muscat and Salalah International Airports, a major expressway, hospitality and industrial projects. As we pursue new opportunities to provide our services, we are always on the lookout for Omani talent and graduates to join us and a PMI certification would be an added asset."

OTC organises blood donation drive

MUSCAT: As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative and to promote awareness of the importance of blood donation, Oman Tourism College (OTC), represented by the CSR Committee and Marketing Club, organised a blood donation campaign in cooperation with the Central Blood Bank in Bausher on Sunday. More than 120 donors from the OTC community and the public, participated in the initiative.

Commenting on the importance of organising such events, Qais bin Zahir al Hosni, Chairman and Acting Dean



of OTC, said, "Conducting a blood donation campaign is part of the responsibility of any institution towards society since

it an initiative to save someone's life. One of the objectives of this campaign is to instill a culture of volunteering and the spirit of

giving back to the community among the younger generation. In addition, we seek to raise awareness of the urgent need for all blood types by various health care institutions."

The initiative was organised and managed by the Marketing Club of OTC. Yumna Nabeel al Ruwaidhi, a member of the Marketing club said, "Based on the principles and values of the college in promoting cooperation and teamwork, we decided to organise this community initiative. Through this, we hope to educate the community about the importance of donating blood."

MUSCAT: Ooredoo welcoming the cooler weather with the popular mobile numbers' charity auction. From November 4-9, customers will have the chance to place a bid on over 100 of Ooredoo's most sought-after Diamond and Gold mobile numbers in a fun and interactive way. All proceeds from the auctions will be donated to those affected by cyclone Shaheen.

Interested customers can browse the list, which includes different starting prices for different numbers. A registration fee of RO 20 is applicable to take part in the auction and customers can bid for a maximum of ten numbers. First time bidders are required to fill out a registration form, while those who have participated in previous auctions can simply



reactivate their account.

For more details on Ooredoo's quarterly vanity number online auction visit www.ooredoo.om/Personal/Mobile/DigitalServices/Auction.aspx.

Vehicle Leasing Company supplies Mai Dubai with Isuzu trucks

MUSCAT: Vehicle Leasing Company (VLC), the Sultanate of Oman's leading one-stop-shop for automotive leasing and rental solutions and a subsidiary of OTE Group, supplied Mai Dubai with Isuzu trucks as an addition to its distribution fleet. Through a strategic leasing solution, VLC will support Mai Dubai, the leading bottled water brand of the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE, to expand its the Sultanate of Oman operations at a fast pace.

For Mai Dubai, the deal is

underpinned by a comprehensive, durable and cost-competitive cargo transportation solution for the company. Isuzu trucks are known globally as a robust and versatile workhorse.

The handover ceremony of the five Isuzu trucks was attended by senior executives from Al Ameen Ent LLC, Mai Dubai's partner in the Sultanate of Oman through Al Ameen Diamond Enterprises and OTE Group. Also gracing the event were Sudhir M CEO, OTE Group; Rajesh Nair — Vehicle Leasing Company; and

P Harikumar, General Manager, Al Ameen Diamond Enterprises.

Taking centre stage on the occasion was the Isuzu NPR 81H with a dry body fully covered and suitable for bottled water transportation, making it the top choice for distributors of FMCG products, among other consumer goods.

The Isuzu NPR 81H, part of the immensely popular N-Series of Isuzu trucks, is a vehicle that works for its owners. NPR 81H trucks are highly prized in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as



the wider region, for their strong performance even in areas that lack paved roads, including features that offer driver comfort and low maintenance costs.

Says Rajesh Nair — Vehicle Leasing Company, "The deal is a winning combination, and we are delighted to have come up with a leasing solution that ticked all of the boxes for Mai Dubai. It's an ideal solution that helps our customers achieve their business and growth objectives even in today's challenging economic climate."



In brief

■ LONDON

**BARCLAYS CEO STALEY QUILTS OVER EPSTEIN RELATIONSHIP**

British bank Barclays said chief executive Jes Staley had quit ahead of contesting the outcome of a UK probe into historical links with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Barclays, which had supported Staley during the investigation, added in a statement that the preliminary conclusion “makes no findings that Mr Staley saw, or was aware of, any of Mr Epstein’s alleged crimes”. The bank added that Staley has been replaced with immediate effect by its head of global markets, C S Venkatakrishnan.

The statement added that Barclays and Staley were made aware late on Friday of preliminary conclusions from the investigation carried out by British financial watchdogs. “In view of those conclusions, and Mr Staley’s intention to contest them, the board and Mr Staley have agreed that he will step down from his role as group chief executive and as a director of Barclays”, the bank said.

— AFP

■ DUBAI

**EMIRATES TO HOLD TALKS WITH BOEING OVER 777X DELAYS**

Emirates will hold talks with Boeing over the delays to its 777X jetliner before and during this month’s Dubai Airshow, the state-owned airline’s chairman said. The airline has repeatedly lambasted Boeing this year over the twin-engined jumbo, which is at least three years behind its originally planned arrival.

Asked by Reuters if Emirates would hold talks with Boeing at the five day air show that starts November 14, Shaikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum said: “There will be a discussion... before and during the air show.”

— Reuters

■ HANOI

**VIETNAM’S VIETJET SIGNS \$400M DEAL WITH ROLLS-ROYCE**

Vietnam’s VietJet Aviation on Sunday signed a \$400 million contract with Rolls-Royce for the provision of aircraft engines and services, the budget airline said.

The deal for the Trent-700 engines for widebody aircraft was signed in Edinburgh at the presence of Vietnam’s Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, who is heading to Glasgow to attend the United Nations COP26 summit, the airline said in a statement. — Reuters

MoCIIP to activate its role in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing

ADDED RESPONSIBILITY: Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre (CPMPC) exercise mandate

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre (CPMPC) operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), is preparing to activate legal mechanisms as part of its remit to combat money laundering and terrorist financing in coordination with other regulatory agencies.

Khaled bin Hamad al Saadi, Head of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Department at the centre, said the move is designed to ensure greater effective oversight and supervision of institutions most vulnerable to such risks.

The Department’s responsibility encompasses supervision, follow-up, monitoring of practices, staying up to date with developments related to anti-money laundering and terrorist financing and supporting to the growth of a private sector that is alignment with the developmental



objectives of the nation.

Article 1 of Royal Decree 30/2016 tasks the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to be one of the regulators monitoring businesses and non-financial professions for any money-laundering and terrorist-financing activities.

These cover business and professions involved in the trade of precious metals and gemstones, auditors, accountants and the automotive trade.

Also as part of its remit, the Ministry is required to prepare laws and ministerial decisions, follow-up on the implementation of recommendations issued by all national committees to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, and prepare

controls and regulations to ensure optimal compliance by businesses and companies and follow-up on their implementation procedures,

In addition, the Department is obligated to coordinate and cooperate with the relevant authorities in the investigation of any suspicious financial transactions and contribute to their resolution, impose administrative sanctions against companies and institutions that violate the law, control and follow-up inspection of companies and institutions to ensure that they are free of any activities to launder money and finance terrorism, and adopt and prepare follow-up reports and minutes of seizure and violations.

(With inputs from ONA)

Bank Muscat defends ‘ledger fee’ decision

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The country’s biggest lender Bank Muscat has defended its decision to start deducting 500 baisas from the accounts of its customers who fail to maintain their minimum balance every month.

In a post on social media, the Bank described the penalty — dubbed a ‘ledger fee’ — as “routine banking procedure”. The penalty is triggered if the minimum balance is not maintained throughout the preceding month, it noted.

The clarification came in response to a flurry of angry posts from customers protesting the new levy, which came into effect on Monday, November 1, 2021. They took to social media to demand that the ‘ledger fee’ be revoked forthwith, complaining that it adds to financial hardships they’re already enduring.

Some appealed to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) to intervene in rolling back the fee.

“Does each bank operate according to its own system

or should there be a unified system applied by all banks, specified by the Central Bank?” an aggrieved customer lamented.

Another questioned the justification of a penalty at a time when bank profits continue to rise.

Besides, the timing of the new levy, coming against the backdrop of immense personal losses suffered by many individuals in the wake of last month’s tropical cyclone, was also disconcerting, bemoaned a Twitter user.

Responding to the posts, Bank Muscat explained that a deduction of “500 baisas (plus 25 baisas as VAT) will be charged if the account balance falls below the minimum during the month, which is RO 100 for a Savings Account and RO 200 for a Current Account”. It cited in this regard terms and conditions applicable at the time of the opening of the account.

However, exempted from the penalty are accounts of children, youngsters, retirees and those covered by social security with salaries less than RO 500 per month, it added.

Today 5:03 AM

Dear Customer, An amount of OMR 0.500 is debited from your a/c [redacted] on 01/11/2021 01:40:44 as ledger fees for non-maintenance of minimum balance. For enquiries, kindly contact [24795555](tel:24795555)

Saudi Arabia appoints advisers on debt issuance

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia has appointed financial advisers for a planned green debt issuance but has yet to decide on the format, Finance Minister Mohammed al Jadaan said on Sunday.

He told Reuters that Saudi Arabia’s economy was recovering well from the Covid-19 pandemic and expected the non-oil economy to grow between 4.7-5 per cent this year, with overall GDP growth seen at 2.8 per cent. He forecast non-oil GDP growth of around 5 per cent in 2022. Authorities have no plans for now to adjust value-added tax, he said, after Saudi Arabia posts third quarter budget surplus, first in over two years — it last year to 15 per cent to offset the impact of lower oil revenue on state finances.

Speaking from Rome, where he attended a summit of the Group of 20 major economies, Jadaan said the kingdom, the world’s top oil exporter, was working towards a sustainable economy, revenues and energy sources.

“The sovereign has multiple projects that are green. We have a lot of solar, wind, power plants that require financing and we have multiple new plans in the pipeline”, he said.

He said Saudi Arabia had

appointed financial advisers, but had yet to decide on details, such as whether the new financing would be syndicated, bonds or sukuk, local or international.

“We are working that out and we will be announcing it very soon”, he said.

Ahead of UN climate talks that began on Sunday in Glasgow, Scotland, Saudi Arabia said it planned to reach “net zero” emissions of greenhouse gases by 2060, which climate scientists say is too slow.

“We are very serious about climate change... (but) we need to make sure that we are also realistic when it comes to the transition”, Jadaan said.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly stressed the continued importance of fossil fuels for the security of global energy supplies.

The Vision 2030 programme launched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman aims to wean the economy off oil exports gradually by creating new sectors and mobilising the Gulf state’s private sector.

As part of economic diversification efforts, the crown prince in March announced a programme called Shareek under which the local private sector would invest 5 trillion riyals (\$1.3 trillion) by 2030.

— Reuters

Stocks kick off big central bank week near peaks

MILAN: World stocks kicked off a big week for central bank meetings near record highs, helped by bets of fiscal stimulus in Japan and undeterred by concerns of interest rate hikes that have instead hit bonds hard. The MSCI world equities index, which tracks shares in 50 countries, rose 0.2% by 0934 GMT on Monday, just below a record high hit in September as stronger-than-expected earnings offset worries over inflation and supply bottlenecks.

Japan’s Nikkei rose 2.6% after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s Liberal Democratic Party won an unexpected comfortable victory, raising hopes for political stability and stimulus in the term ahead.

Trade elsewhere in equities was soft, with MSCI’s index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan dragged 0.3% lower by selling in Hong Kong after data showed a sharper-than-expected contraction of Chinese factory activity.

S&P 500 futures rose 0.5%. “While bears keep pointing to a myriad of concerns, we believe that the risk-reward for stocks is still positive”, said JP Morgan strategist Mislav Matejka. “The Fed is starting to taper, but we believe that key central banks



A pedestrian walks past an electronic quotation board displaying share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. — AFP

will stay dovish.”

Bond markets calmed down following last week’s brutal sell-off when investors moved to price in faster policy normalisation just ahead of a number of central bank meetings this week including in the United States, Britain and Australia.

“I think we may come out of (the) week past peak yield volatility, or at least, past peak rate hike fever”, said NatWest Markets strategist John Briggs.

“A lot of the things that went parabolic and took market rate hike expectations to a boil are at least looking like they are calming a bit.”

The yield on two-year Treasuries, which had soared to an almost 20-month high of 0.5640% last week, was last up about 1.4 basis points at 0.5149%. Benchmark 10-year Treasury yields were up 2.2 bps at 1.5838%.

The US dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies, remaining near a 2-1/2-week high ahead of the Fed policy decision. The greenback approached a 1-1/2-week high against the yen as the safe-haven Japanese currency weakened after a strong showing for the ruling party in weekend elections

— Reuters

Hopes high as tourists touch down for Thailand re-opening

Overseas tourists began pouring into Bangkok and the holiday island of Phuket as Thailand kickstarted its tourism industry after 18 months of Covid curbs. The coronavirus pandemic hammered the kingdom's tourism-reliant economy, which last year saw its worst performance since the 1997 Asian financial crisis as arrivals dwindled more than 80 per cent.

Thai authorities have given the green light to vaccinated tourists from over 60 "low-risk" countries to skip hotel quarantine — providing the sector a much-needed lifeline.

Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport and Phuket's international terminal were the first on Monday morning to receive visitors, with mostly European tourists greeted by staff dressed in personal protective equipment to process their documents.

"The paperwork was a big effort and a struggle, but it feels good again to travel and get back to normal life", said German tourist Marcel Florian Popp, 25, after he and his friends passed immigration in Bangkok.

In Phuket, Lin Turley, 68, said he and his wife were regular visitors to Thailand before the pandemic and were looking forward to a relaxing month of golf, and swimming in the island's clear turquoise waters.

"We have just come out of a cold Europe so we are looking forward to some warmth", he said. "We want to relax and enjoy being back in the Land of Smiles."

Airports of Thailand — which manages the country's international terminals — said it expects Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi to receive 30,000 passengers on Monday.

Visitors are required to take a Covid test upon landing, and spend a night at a government-approved hotel to await results before being allowed to travel freely across the kingdom.

Thailand hopes to capitalise on travellers escaping the winter blues in December, with several European countries, the United States and China on the approved list.

"The most important thing that the government and I are thinking right now is to make people's livelihoods return to normal", Premier Prayut Chan-O-cha said.

Tourism accounts for nearly a fifth of the economy and the impact of the pandemic has reverberated across various sectors, from restaurants to transportation.

— AFP

The most important thing that the government and I are thinking right now is to make people's livelihoods return to normal

PRAYUT CHAN-O-CHA
Thai Premier



FASHION GOES DIGITAL

Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, views The Sustainable Markets Initiative (SMI) Fashion Coalition's Digital ID, a virtual certificate that records each fashion item's history, as he stands with members of the coalition, which includes CEOs from some of the leading fashion houses including Giorgio Armani, Mulberry and Chloe, during his visit to the Villa Wolkonsky Residence Gardens in Rome. — AFP

Tax the rich!



PETER SINGER
The author is Professor of Bioethics, Princeton University, and Founder of the The Life You Can Save, a NGO

THE OPENING OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS ENRICHED MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SHIFT PROFITS TO WHEREVER THE CORPORATE TAX RATE IS LOWEST

"The taxation system has tilted towards the rich, and away from the middle class, in the last ten years. It is dramatic, and I don't think it's appreciated. And I think it should be addressed." So said the billionaire investor Warren Buffett 18 years ago. He illustrated his claim by surveying his office staff: Although he was then the world's second-richest person, he was paying a lower percentage of his income in taxes than his receptionist was.

Since then, economic inequality has only gotten worse, partly because of the rise of tech stocks that are immensely valuable but do not declare dividends. In 2020, six of the ten wealthiest Americans — Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Warren Buffett, Larry Page, Sergei Brin and Elon Musk — were major shareholders of corporations that do not pay dividends. Together, they were worth \$500 billion, or 0.5 per cent of total US wealth.

Last month, a paper from the White House, co-authored by economists from the Council of Economic Advisers and the Office of Management and Budget, estimated that America's 400 wealthiest families, all of whom had wealth exceeding \$2 billion, paid federal income tax at an average rate of 8.2 per cent if gains in unsold stock are counted as income. The average American taxpayer paid 13.3 per cent of their income in federal tax.

The US budget deficit, as a percentage of GDP, is now at its second-highest level since 1945. In poll after poll, Americans say that they want the rich to pay higher taxes, which would reduce the deficit and improve equity as well. Yet Congress does not raise taxes on the rich.

Consider the egregious "carried interest" loophole in the US tax code, which permits investment fund managers to pay lower tax on the fees they receive from their clients, as if those fees were capital gains, rather than income.

President Joe Biden has said that he wants the loophole closed, but tax reform proposals must pass through the House Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Richard Neal. In 2007 Neal, a Democrat, supported an unsuccessful attempt to close the loophole. Then he started receiving big donations from the corporate sector, including \$2.9 million for his 2020 campaign alone. Last month, the House Ways and Means Committee released its tax reform proposals. Closing the carried interest loophole was not among them.

The conclusion is inescapable: The United States is no longer a democracy. It is a plutocracy. But countries in which money has less influence on legislation are also struggling to tax the rich. The Pandora Papers, released earlier this month by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, show how wealthy people in more than 200 countries and territories are keeping their assets offshore, many of them to avoid taxes.

Among them was Brazil's finance minister, Paulo Guedes, who has ultimate responsibility for raising the revenue his country needs, but who has moved nearly \$10 million of his own and his family's money to the British Virgin Islands. Andrej Babiš, the Czech Republic's prime minister when the papers were released, claimed that his decision to put assets into offshore accounts involved no wrongdoing. The

electorate may have been sceptical: He subsequently lost a close election.

When leaders of the G20, which comprises the world's major advanced and emerging economies, meet in Rome this week, they are expected to endorse an agreement to tax large corporations at a minimum rate of 15 per cent. The aim is to end a "race to the bottom" that has driven down corporate tax rates as countries compete to attract investment. But the agreement will be phased in over ten years and has significant exemptions. Even for corporations that do not qualify for an exemption, the 15 per cent minimum rate is lower than most firms based in developed countries pay.

Is there anything else that the G20 could do about the tax inequity between the rich and most working people?

The economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman of the University of California, Berkeley have suggested a wealth tax of 0.2 per cent annually on the value of all publicly listed corporations' stock. Such a tax, they note, is progressive, because the rich own a lot of corporate stock, and the poor own none. It is also difficult to evade, because the value of a corporation's stock is public.

Moreover, Saez and Zucman point out that a wealth tax would not affect the availability of corporate finance, because publicly traded companies can issue more stock (slightly diluting the value of existing shares) and pay the tax in kind to governments, which can then sell the stock on the market. Extending the tax to large private corporations would also be feasible, using standard methods of valuation.

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Asian factories shake off lockdown blues, face supply headaches



LEIKA KIHARA
Chief Economy Correspondent, Reuters

JAPAN'S FACTORY ACTIVITY EXPANDS AT FASTEST PACE IN 6 MONTHS AS S KOREA MANUFACTURERS HIT BY CHIP SHORTAGE, SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS

Asia's factory activity stepped up a gear in October as emerging economies saw Covid-19 infections subside, but rising input costs, material shortages and slowing Chinese growth cloud the outlook, business surveys showed on Monday.

Policymakers in the region face pressures on multiple fronts as they steer their economies out of the pandemic-induced doldrums while also trying to keep prices under control amid rising commodity costs and parts shortages.

China's factory activity expanded at its fastest pace in four months in October, the private sector Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing

Managers' Index (PMI) showed on Monday, as dwindling Covid-19 cases drove up domestic demand.

But a sub-index for output showed production shrank for the third straight month due to power shortages and rising costs, falling in line with Sunday's official PMI that showed factory activity in October shrinking.

"Shortages of raw materials and soaring commodity prices, combined with electricity supply problems, created strong constraints for manufacturers and disrupted supply chains", said Wang Zhe, senior economist at Caixin Insight Group.

Factory activity in October expanded in Vietnam, Indonesia

and Malaysia as operations gradually normalised after being hit by shutdowns caused by a spike in Covid-19 infections.

Taiwan saw manufacturing activity growth accelerate on robust chip demand, while Japan's factory activity expanded at the fastest pace in six months in October in an encouraging sign for the world's third-largest economy.

India's factory activity expanded at its quickest pace in eight months in October, pointing to an extended business recovery in Asia's third-largest economy.

In a sign of the patchy nature of the region's recovery, however, South Korea's factory activity rose at the slowest pace in 13 months

in October on shrinking output and softer demand.

Material shortages and delivery disruptions drove up Japan's input prices by the most in over 13 years.

"While October Manufacturing PMIs point to a strong rise in manufacturing output, industry is likely to be working through huge backlogs of orders for many months to come and resulting supply shortages further afield are set to persist", said Alex Holmes, emerging Asia economist at Capital Economics.

The final au Jibun Bank Japan PMI in October rose to 53.2 from 51.5 in the previous month, expanding for the ninth consecutive month.

South Korea's PMI, by contrast, fell to 50.2 in October from 52.4 in September, though it managed to stand above the 50-mark threshold that indicates expansion in activity, for a 13th straight month.

Vietnam's PMI rose to 52.1 from 40.2 in September, while that of Indonesia increased to 57.2 from 52.2, the surveys showed. Malaysia's index stood at 52.2, up from 48.1.

Asia's emerging economies have lagged advanced economies in recovering from the pandemic's pain as delays in vaccine rollouts and a spike in Delta variant cases hurt consumption and factory production.

— Reuters

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features



Sur's Heritage Village tour is a plunge into a Unesco site and amazing scenery

Did you ever wonder where the scene of the new 100 baisas is taken from? Expat explorer Erin Coyle went on a Heritage Tour at three of Sur's villages and can't help gush about the beautiful sceneries she saw along the way...
P20

CONSERVATION

Rare white-cheeked gibbon born in Polish zoo

A RARE WHITE-CHEEKED gibbon named Dao has been born in a zoo in the Polish city of Wroclaw, moving the critically endangered species a small step further away from extinction. There are only 150-160 such gibbons left in the wild, as well as about 200 in captivity worldwide, Wroclaw Zoo said. In the wild, the animals are found in Vietnam and Laos. They have also been seen in China, although not for 30 years.

White-cheeked gibbons are difficult to breed. Dao was born in late September, but the zoo only announced his birth on Thursday. Radoslaw Ratajszczak, the director of Wroclaw Zoo, said it one of the best enclosures for gibbons in Europe, with many trees and ropes. "They can behave naturally here and have peace and quiet. They return the favour with beautiful singing and offspring," — **Reuters**



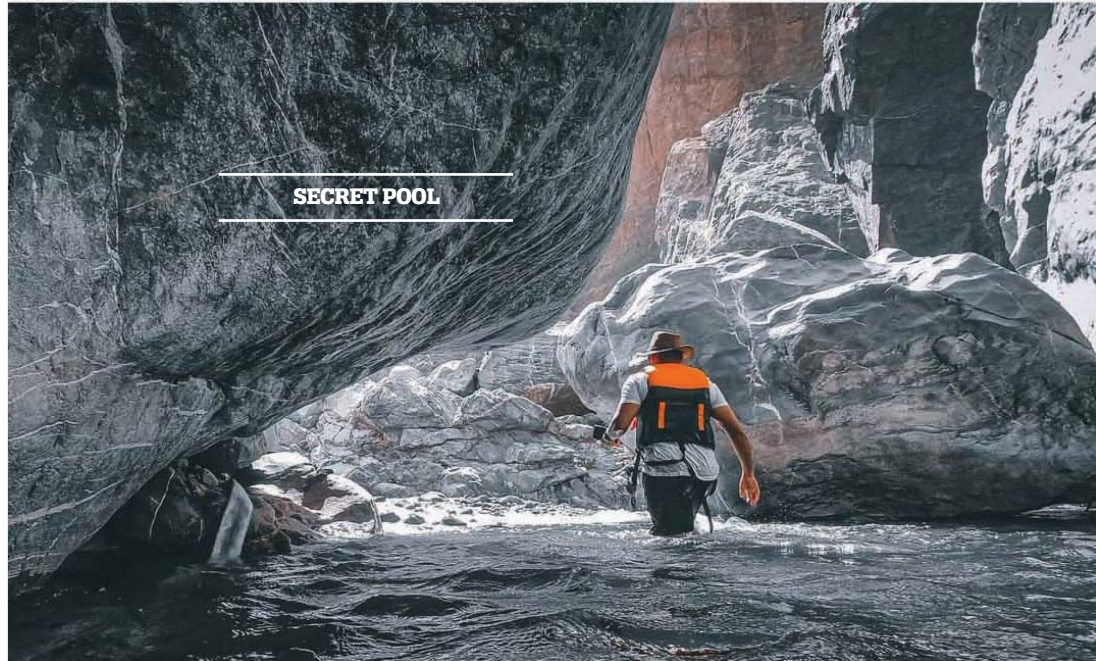


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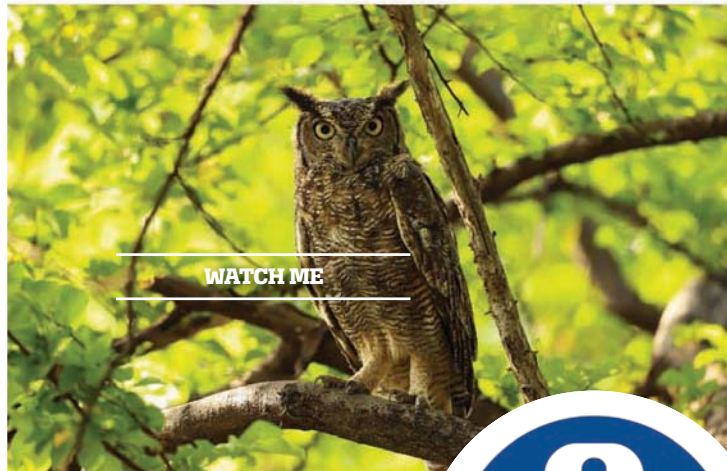
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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Jupiter's huge Great Red Spot storm is much deeper than expected



DATA FROM NASA'S Juno spacecraft is providing a deeper understanding of Jupiter's wondrous and violent atmosphere including its Great Red Spot, finding that this immense swirling storm extends much further down than expected.

Researchers said on Thursday the Great Red Spot plunges between roughly 200 to 300 miles (350 to 500 km) below the cloud tops on Jupiter, based on microwave and gravity measurements obtained by Juno. The data is giving scientists studying the solar system's largest planet — so big that 1,000 Earths could fit inside it — a three-dimensional account of Jupiter's atmosphere.

The planet, known as a gas giant, is composed primarily of hydrogen and helium, with traces of other gases. Stripes and a few storms like the Great Red Spot dominate the colourful appearance of Jupiter, the fifth planet from the sun with a diameter of about 88,850 miles (143,000 km).

The Great Red Spot is a storm roughly 10,000 miles (16,000 km) wide churning in Jupiter's southern hemisphere, boasting crimson-coloured clouds that spin counterclockwise at high speeds. It is one of the marvels of the solar system and has been in existence for centuries, but scientists until now have had little understanding of what lies below its surface.

"From a scientific point of view, it's puzzling how the storm can last so long and be so big," said Scott Bolton, principal investigator of the Juno mission at the Southwest Research Institute in Texas and lead author on one of two Jupiter studies published in the journal *Science* on Thursday.

"It is wide enough to swallow the Earth," added Marzia Parisi, a Juno scientist from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California and lead author of the second study.

An instrument called a microwave radiometer enabled scientists to peer beneath Jupiter's cloud tops and investigate the structure of its numerous vortex storms including the Great Red Spot, showing that they exist very deep in Jupiter's atmosphere — much deeper than expected.

Rather than being confined to the uppermost parts of Jupiter's atmosphere, the Great Red Spot's roots plunge to regions beyond where water condenses and clouds form — and below where any sunlight reaches.

Juno data previously showed that jet streams in Jupiter's atmosphere reach down even further, to depths of about 2,000 miles (3,200 km).

Assumptions based on how Earth's atmosphere behaves, as well as models produced over past few decades, had given the impression that the Great Red Spot was a relatively shallow storm, Bolton said.

"Jupiter works in this mysterious way that we're sort of revealing for the first time — because this is the first mission that's been able to look inside the planet," Bolton added. "And we're seeing surprises."

Jupiter and Earth are vastly different worlds, and not just in terms of size. Earth is a rocky place. Jupiter lacks a solid surface though it may have a solid inner core. — **Reuters**

ENTERTAINMENT

Iraq's Babylon arts festival back after almost 20 years



SHOWCASING TRADITIONAL dance, music and arts, Iraq's Babylon International Festival has attracted thousands of fans for the first time in two war-scarred decades.

"It's a great joy. We haven't seen a festival like this for years," said Shaima, 45, visiting the event at the ancient archaeological site with her two daughters.

The last edition of the festival was held in 2002, the year before the US-led invasion that toppled the veteran dictator Saddam Hussein.

In the years after, Iraq saw war between US troops and insurgents, sectarian clashes and the battle against the Islamic State group. Tens of thousands died and much of the country and its rich cultural heritage were reduced to rubble.

Today there is relative stability, though marred by periodic IS attacks and political tensions, and Iraqis are looking to the future. The five-day festival, which ended on Monday, is one of the symbols of this new hope.

The arts showcase, staged in what was the capital of the ancient Mesopotamian state of Babylonia, this year drew artists from dozens of countries including Jordan, Serbia and Russia as well as homegrown talent.

"It's a fundamental change compared with the terrible ordeals that we suffered," Shaima said.

ROOTED IN HISTORY

The festival, first launched in 1987, was staged at the majestic UNESCO World Heritage site of Babylon, south of Baghdad.

Most performances were held in the Babylon theatre which Alexander the Great built around 311 BC.

Because history, both ancient and modern, is never far away in Iraq, one of the palaces Saddam built still stands just a few hundred metres (yards) from the Babylonian ruins.

In the shadow of a replica of Ishtar Gate, built originally by Nebuchadnezzar II around 575

BC, Iraqi photographer Haider al Masalmawi was showing his work to visitors.

He voiced hope that the festival would "relaunch art, culture and even the economy of Iraq. It's a showcase."

Egyptian performer Mohammed Pathy said he was happy to be back in Iraq, as melodies from his Al Ahram group played in the background.

crumbling infrastructure where millions live in poverty despite the nation's vast oil wealth.

The festival was financed privately, said its executive director Mohamed al Rubaie, adding that the event also faced other challenges.

Babylon is located close to the Muslim Shiite shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, both socially conservative centres of religious



"I came here as a dancer in the 1990s and returned today as stage manager," he said.

A Serbian folklore group along with Jordanian and Palestinian practitioners of dabkeh, a Middle Eastern line dance, were rehearsing their show.

Yasser al Ardawi, head of the Jordanian troupe, while arranging his red and white keffiyeh head covering voiced confidence that the festival's return means that "security and stability have returned to Iraq".

'FREE TO SING'

Funding for culture is still often an after-thought in Iraq, a corruption-plagued country with

study.

Two days before the festival's opening, the governor of Babylon province, Hassan Mendil, demanded the cancellation of concerts at the festival in response to calls from "religious students".

But the song and dance shows went ahead.

"It's a joyous festival that reflects Iraqi culture," Rubaie said. "Of course there are some fears and we take into account the opinion of others."

Those fears were brushed off by festival visitor Ali Saleh from Diwaniyah, south of Babylon.

"If I want to sing, I am free to do so," he said. — **AFP**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Wolf's Eye

The following are translations of poems from Zahir al Ghafri's collection: "Whenever an Angel Appeared in the Fort", (Beirut: 2008):

The Poet, the Mute Woman and the Sun

Signs go after the poet to the bottom of the tavern
He walks as if searching for the world's map
His steps will take him to that point
To that place
To discover again world's injuries
As if that's what he's really short of!

This man
The man who roamed horizons
Walked with the deluge
Till it overflowed from his eyes.
But only Sidora* can tell
That the poet is too tired today.

...
And there's that mute woman
The woman who cries without tears
She complains
She begs the customers' sympathies
As if she talked to the dazzling sun
That day, that afternoon.

She's ready to stand before the poet
Saying with all clarity
Like a Scandinavian winter
"I'm the tall lady".

She's been enslaved
Till her tongue escaped her.

He saw in her eyes
Those words she couldn't say:
"The life you want you can't find".
Malmo** my dear poet
Is but a false lesson.
From here
Ibn Fadhlān*** passed as a war prisoner
In the pirates' ship.

Wolf's Eye

Take pain with the power of betting
With the power confusion
The confusion of a blind man before a passing cloud
The confusion of Gilgamesh****
Before the flower in the snake's mouth.

When life beckons
You find no track of either doors or windows.

The walls have cracked
The town has completely disappeared.
There
Under pearl's towers
You'll see in the wolf's

watchful eye
Your entire life's map
The sign of innocence.

You won't

You won't
You won't go farther than this, you won't see
You won't see farther than the window
You won't even see that fountain
The fountain one tries to drown in
To be reborn.
You want to test destiny at its edges
You're most probably a dead man
Walking in the dark
Singing the while of his long exile.

You won't go, you won't see
The angel won't come for you
In the fort.

Here the adventure ends once and for all
Here, time is exposed naked.

Light's Lake

I talk to this woman
Who no longer sees me
For her eyes are looking there
At what's behind the window
At Narcissus in a haunted lake
(Perhaps where man strives to meet
His half death)
I talk to her
Beg her
But she turns not.
She probably wants to see
How light ascends the grass of a lost life.
She sings again of her long exile
Waits here under ice for a moment
More transparent than her nakedness
Waits for a heron to jump from her fancy's lake
To bring her joy.
When she gets tired
When the window frame's laden with her ideas
She turns back to me.
I can see in her eyes her past life.

* Sidora is the goddess of wine in the epic of Gilgamesh (the translator).

** Malmo is a city in Sweden (the translator).

*** Ibn Fadhlān, an Arab scholar, was sent in 921 by the Caliph of Baghdad to Eastern Europe. He left a detailed account of his travels (the translator).

**** Gilgamesh, the main character of the Gilgamesh epic, was the king of Uruk, Mesopotamia. He's believed to have lived some time between 2800 and 2500 BC (the translator).



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Sur's Heritage Village tour is a plunge into a Unesco site and amazing scenery

BY ERIN COYLE

Ancient villages, a Unesco heritage site falaj system, and a chance to take a picture of the aqueduct built from stones, the very same scenery found on the new 100 baisas, gives anyone an excellent reason to take part in a heritage tour to Jayla along

Depending on your time, most likely, this will be the lunch stop. The lunch spot is about a five-minute walk from the car.

Said bin Hamdan al Muqami, the man who built the new off-road shortcut to link Jayla with the main road to Al Ghamb, is from this village. If he is there, it is possible to ask him questions about this road and the area.

After a short rest, it is time to walk around to find another falaj. While walking,



with other nearby villages.

Saleh bin Said bin Musalem al Habsi from Quick Challenge specialises in arranging trips to this hidden gem of the Sultanate of Oman and the meeting point for the trips he arranges is about 15 minutes from Sur.

Jayla Village can be the tour's first stop after going up a steep, winding, dirt road. One can't help notice the rock formations with their different shapes, random holes inside, plus the unexpected bush that hangs alongside them. It is a mystery how these

you will notice the jagged rock formations, the mountains and farms along the way. After seeing the falaj, it is easy to keep walking up and around it. The goal is to get to the source of the water. While it may be a little warm, it is worth going up to find it.

Finally, take some time to go to Jahal. Upon arriving, it is easy to take in the palm and date trees, uneven rocks, grey and black slated colours along the boulders while appreciating the water coming from



plants can survive on these rocks.

While making your way to the falaj, make sure to stop and get a picture of the 100 baisas scenery. The aqueduct, comprised of a series of stone arches, have palm trees and mountains as background. Pomegranate trees also surround this area. Do not be surprised if some of the children from the village follow along. Since many visitors do not come here, they are curious.

After walking about fifteen minutes from these arches, the first part of the Unesco falaj system appears. Continue to walk on the other side, and another part of the falaj is visible. Here you will pass through a small pool of water coming from the falaj. The water is refreshing, so fill your water bottle and cool off. While going back to the village, the locals may invite you for coffee and dates, so take a rest and enjoy.

Al Ghamb is another village to visit.

the top. While walking through the dry wadi, going left will lead you to where the water is coming out from the rocks. This path is about a ten-minute walk. Unless you plan to continue climbing up the mountain, you can turn back and walk the same way down. A few donkeys carrying food might also be on this trail.

Going right of the wadi will lead to an easier pathway made easy by stairs. This area makes for some good pictures of the farms, falaj and the view of the wadi.

This trip needs an entire day. If you arranged trips through Saleh, included are breakfast and a traditional lunch along with drinks and snacks. We also visited the ancient beehive tombs but did not spend too much time here.

When making arrangements with Saleh, let him know what places you wish to see. Contact him on Instagram [@quickchallenge](https://www.instagram.com/quickchallenge).