

**MUSCAT**

**HM GREETINGS TO UAE PRESIDENT**

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates, while His Majesty was crossing the UAE's airspace on his way back home. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to Shaikh Khalifa, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant him good health, well-being and long life to continue achieving aspirations of further progress and prosperity for the UAE people under his wise leadership. — ONA

**OMAN WELCOMES SUDAN AGREEMENT**

The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the political agreement signed in the Republic of Sudan, a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry said. The Sultanate of Oman hoped that this agreement would serve Sudan's interests and meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people. The Sultanate of Oman also reiterated its backing for the unity, security and stability of Sudan. **SEE ALSO P6**

**‘FARM TOURISM’ IN THE OFFING**

As agriculture and fisheries form the central part of the Sultanate of Oman's economy and society, targeted investments are expected to enhance food security in the country further. Oman Vision 2040 has given special priority to ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns through the sustainable use and investment of natural resources and wealth to ensure high added value. **DETAILS ON P5**

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INSIDE 



GENERATION OF CHILDREN 'AT STAKE' IN LEBANON CRISIS: UN **P6**



46 KILLED IN BUS CRASH ON BULGARIA HIGHWAY **P8**



HIS MAJESTY AND QATAR EMIR HELD TALKS THAT REVIEWED BILATERAL RELATIONS

THE TWO LEADERS EXCHANGED VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

THE LEADERS EMPHASISED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIALOGUE IN RESOLVING ALL REGIONAL ISSUES

THE HISTORICAL VISIT WILL OPEN NEW VISTAS OF CONSULTATION, COORDINATION

OMAN AND QATAR AGREE TO COOPERATE IN THE AREAS OF CLEAN ENERGY

THE TWO SIDES AFFIRMED FIRM RESOLVE TO UPGRADE ALL AREAS OF COOPERATION

OMAN EXPRESSES ITS PRIDE AT QATAR'S HOSTING FIFA WORLD CUP

# OMAN, QATAR TO CONSOLIDATE TIES

HIS MAJESTY RETURNS HOME AFTER 2-DAY STATE VISIT TO QATAR

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home after concluding a two-day state visit to the State of Qatar, which came in response to the invitation of Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

During the visit, His Majesty held a round of official talks with Shaikh Tamim. The two leaders discussed aspects of cooperation and means of enhancing fraternal relations to achieve the aspirations of their peoples.

His Majesty was received at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan and other dignitaries.

The Sultanate of Oman and the

State of Qatar on Tuesday issued a joint communique reading as follows. "Based on the strong fraternal relations and deep-rooted historical ties binding the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik made a historic state visit to Qatar on November 22 and 23 in response to an invitation from Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar."

His Majesty the Sultan and the Emir of Qatar held expanded talks that reviewed bilateral relations and ways of developing them in various spheres. The two leaders also exchanged views about a number of regional and international issues. The talks showed that relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar are deep-rooted and their stands identical on regional and international issues. They reflected

the two countries' emphasis on the significance of dialogue in resolving all issues of the region.

At the level of bilateral relations, the two sides affirmed the leaderships' strong political will and firm resolve to upgrade all areas of cooperation. The historical visit of His Majesty to Qatar will open new vistas of consultation, coordination and cooperation between the two countries.

# OMAN, QATAR TO CONSOLIDATE TIES

**FROM P1**  
His Majesty the Sultan and Emir of Qatar commended the excellent bonds binding the two countries, notably their great scopes of cooperation and partnership. The two leaders reiterated their desire to promote cooperation in the areas of clean energy and their keenness to exchange expertise on ways to curb climate change.

**DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES**  
The two sides stressed that tangible, diverse opportunities in the two countries constitute strong grounds for consolidating relations, expanding investment opportunities, establishing partnerships, realising value added projects across different sectors, augmenting and diversifying the volume of commercial exchange and enhancing the role of the private sector to achieve their common interests.

Several pacts were signed as part of the state visit, including an agreement on military cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman's Government and the Government of the State of Qatar, an agreement on avoidance of double taxation, an agreement in the field of investment, an agreement on cooperation in investment in Oman Shipping Company, a cooperation agreement for investment in hospitality sector and a memorandum of understanding in the field of labour and human resources development.

The Sultanate of Oman expressed its pride at the State of Qatar's hosting Fifa World Cup 2022, affirming Sultanate of Oman's confidence that Qatar would show unprecedented success in organising the major global event in a manner that reflects the region's heritage and great potential.

At the regional and international levels, the two sides agreed on the importance of the role of Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in enhancing security and stability in the region.

They also underscored the significance of consolidating consultation and coordination of stands at a bilateral level, as well as regional and international arenas, with the prime aim of serving Arab, Islamic and legitimate



humanitarian issues — on top of which comes the Palestinian cause — and the need to bolster security and stability in the Middle East and the world at large.

At the conclusion of the visit, Shaikh Tamim expressed his heartfelt appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan and his pride at this historic visit.

Meanwhile, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik voiced his deep thanks to Shaikh Tamim and his great appreciation for the hospitality extended to him and his delegation during the visit. His Majesty the Sultan invited Shaikh Tamim to visit the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



## HM gives audience to FIFA President



**H**is Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at his residence in Doha on Tuesday to FIFA President Gianni Infantino. The audience

reviewed areas of cooperation and means of promoting them between football authorities in the Sultanate of Oman and the Fifa. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his appreciation for the Fifa efforts to develop football

globally. On his turn, Infantino expressed his utmost thanks and gratitude for His Majesty's continuous support to the Omani youth and different sports that sharpen their skills, particularly football. — ONA



# HM visits Qatar Foundation, National Library



**DOHA:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, accompanied by Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, on Tuesday visited Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development here as part of His Majesty's visit to Qatar. His Majesty the Sultan

listened to a briefing about the objectives of Qatar Foundation and its role in promoting education, research, community development, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Qatar Foundation houses branches of international universities and hosts

programmes of cooperation with educational establishments in the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty the Sultan and Shaikh Tamim toured the venues of world universities, research centres and academic facilities affiliated to Qatar Foundation. Later, His Majesty the Sultan

and Shaikh Tamim visited Qatar National Library.

They were briefed about the main functions of the edifice, which comprises a wide range of sources, reference books, manuscripts and archives serving researchers and students reading in different disciplines.

His Majesty the Sultan accepted a souvenir commemorating his Royal visit to the National Library and Research Centre. At the conclusion of the tour, His Majesty the Sultan signed the Visitors' Register, hailing the efforts of Qatar, led by Shaikh

Tamim, in upgrading education, innovation and community development. His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the two visits by the Head and members of Mission of Honour and members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty. — **ONA**

Private HEIs offer 51 scholarships at Expo 2020 Oman pavilion

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, NOV 23

Aligned with the Sultanate of Oman's 51st National Day celebrations at Expo 2020 Dubai and Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation's (MoHERI) 'Study in Oman' campaign, private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate of Oman offered 51 scholarships to bachelor and master degree holders.

The HEIs taking part in the Expo 2020 Dubai offered the scholarships under cultural exchange programme and also as an opportunity to introduce the Sultanate of Oman and its educational institutions among international visitors.

This initiative aims to increase the number of international students in the Sultanate of Oman due to its economic, social and cultural importance, especially due to criteria of accepting international students by international universities. The programme is also in line with 'Oman Vision 2040' which has specified it as one of indicators to ensure entry of four universities into the QS World University Rankings by 2040.

Those who meet the scholarship conditions should fill an online form for their entry into the monthly draw. The form contains general conditions for competing for grants. For more details one can visit (studyinoman.om).

Nizwa Castle hosts a cultural feast



AMAL AL RIYAMII  
NIZWA, NOV 23

Coinciding with the 51st National Day celebrations, Nizwa Castle (Al Shahba) conducted many activities and events on Friday and Saturday.

While the castle opened its doors to all, inviting them to celebrate the great occasion, the events took place from 8 am to 10 pm.

The activities began with the Omani folk art Razha being performed in the front yard, and it was followed by the Quranic episode, then the Hawl Hawl (way to celebrate birthday) and competitions for children. The

rooms of the castle contained a gallery of pictures from different photographers.

Omani families got an avenue to sell their products which were displayed in various corners of the castle.

Artisans' tents included pottery, carpentry, palm fronds, Omani bread making, spinning, sewing of clothes, cosmetics making, henna painting and textile products.

The castle garden was the venue for horse riding, camel riding, the traditional irrigation method, the Bedouin tent and Omani halwa making.

PHOTOS BY SAMI AL HINAI



EMBASSY OF OMAN IN US MARKS 51ST NATIONAL DAY



The Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in the United States of America, organised a ceremony for the Omani students studying in the US universities to mark the 51st Glorious National Day. The ceremony, held at Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre (SQCC) in Washington, saw the participation of Omani students and their colleagues, as well as professors. Moreover, the Embassy organised a cultural event during which collections resembling the Omani environment were showcased. During the event, a documentary was screened on the most prominent cultural, economic and tourist aspects of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Inflation rises 3.35 per cent in October

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 3.35 per cent in October 2021 compared to October 2020.

The inflation rate also went up by 0.75 per cent compared to September 2021, according to the latest data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The rise of prices in October 2021 compared to the same month in 2020 is attributed to the surge of prices in main groups, such as the transportation by 9.58 per cent, education by 5.10 per cent, food and non-alcoholic beverages by 3.42 per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 3.24 per cent, tobacco by 2.98 per cent, recreation and culture by 2.64 per cent, furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance by 1.37 per cent, housing, water, electricity, gas

and other fuels group by 1.01 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 0.70 per cent, clothing and footwear by 0.37 per cent and health by 0.06 per cent.

COMMUNICATION DOWN

On the other hand, prices of the communication went down by 0.07 per cent. According to the NCSI, prices soared during October 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 in the fish and seafood group by 14.82 per cent, vegetables by 7.62 per cent, fruits by 2.87 per cent, oils and fats by 2.39 per cent, bread and cereals by 2.04 per cent, non-alcoholic beverages by 1.70 per cent, sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 1.68 per cent, meat by 1.50 per cent, other foodstuff by 1.45 per cent, milk, cheese and eggs by 0.42 per cent. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 0.75 per cent compared to September 2021. — ONA



## FC Nizwa Sports Club to host blood donor event

RAY PETERSEN  
NIZWA, NOV 23

Not content with demonstrating a progressive community awareness and assistance programme in the aftermath of Cyclone Shaheen, when a large group of their senior players and supporters took part in a mass clean-up, easing the pain for many families and citizens in the wider society in their time of need.

Savad Hussain, Joint Secretary of the FC Nizwa Sports Club, said, "We have a vigorous club, of around 80 members, and we have an excellent football team that is performing well on the pitch. However, we also understand our obligations to our community in promoting healthy lifestyles, and feel we can assist in many different areas of social support." He explained that celebrating their first 10 years since being established in 2010 "Is a meaningful landmark, and that they felt strongly they should build upon their links to the community, and this was something that everyone can benefit from."

The team's next community programme, in conjunction with the Nizwa Blood Bank, and the Firq Nizwa, Badr Al Samaa Hospital is a Blood Donation and Free Medical camp to be held in the Lulu Hypermarket Nizwa from 9 am on December 3, and the club is looking for a good turnout.



**We also understand our obligations to our community in promoting healthy lifestyles, and feel we can assist in many different areas of social support**

**SAVAD HUSSAIN**

*Joint Secretary, FC Nizwa*

"The health authorities are always appealing for blood bank donations," said Hussain, "but also, in the wake of the pandemic and Cyclone Shaheen, with the lockdowns and restrictions on movement, there is a significant need to replenish the national supplies. Also, it is a good chance for people to get a free general health check, to reassure them, after the dramas of the last couple of years."

## Farm tourism to boost agriculture output and bring in extra income

SAMUEL KUTTY

[@samuelkutyv](https://twitter.com/samuelkutyv)

As agriculture and fisheries form the central part of the Sultanate's economy and society, targeted investments are expected to enhance food security in the country further.

Oman Vision 2040 has given special priority to ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns through the sustainable use and investment of natural resources and wealth to ensure high added value.

Support for innovative state-backed dairy, red meat and poultry projects continue to boost production and provide investment opportunities in niche segments such as organic farming.

The investments made by the government and the private sector in food security over the past period realised good proportions of success.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is learnt to have chalking out models for 'farm tourism' and 'contractual farming'.

"To be established for the first time in the Sultanate, these models will open up visas for marking agricultural products of farmers and provide hospitality and entertainment services for tourists", said an official who was associated with the recent Food Security Laboratory.



Oman Vision 2040 has given special priority to ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns through the sustainable use and investment of natural resources and wealth to ensure high added value

According to Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, there is a 150 per cent production rise in the fisheries sector where more than 50 firms operate and export their products to different countries of the world. Significantly, the Sultanate of Oman achieved almost 100 per cent self-sufficiency in dates production, while sufficiency in other products ranged between 50 per cent and 60 per cent.

The Lab, organised by the ministry, in cooperation with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, took initiatives and agreements that would augment investments and provide a suitable environment for food security.

According to the ministry, the lab identified 128 projects worth RO 1.3 billion investments set to be carried out in the next five years. These investments are expected to realise food sufficiency and food security in the Sultanate.

The projects include 37 in the agriculture sector, 29 in the livestock, 28 in the fisheries sector, 8 in the water resources sector, along with 26 other initiatives.

The lab also shaped an integrated set of investment opportunities in the food security sectors, targeting the segments of job-seekers and entrepreneurs.

In recent time, the ministry signed some agreements and contracts with a group of companies, including a project for coconut tree cultivation in Dhofar Governorate, banana commercial cultivation project in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, a contract for pomegranate and olive farms leasing and an agreement for the development of Wadi Dhayqah Dam.

At the beginning of this month, the ministry signed an agreement with Oman Flour Mills Company, which will enable the company to buy wheat from Omani farmers as part of its efforts to enhance food security.

Wheat crop production grew by 19 per cent in the Sultanate of Oman during the agricultural season 2020/2021 to reach 2,649 tonnes compared to the 2019/2020 season. The total area of land planted with wheat in the 2020/2021 season amounted to 2,449 acres, constituting a 19.6 per cent rise compared to the last season. The number of farmers has also increased by 5.5 per cent.

## Workshop on fair sharing of genetic resources

**MUSCAT:** The Environment Authority (EA) on Tuesday organised the second workshop for the GCC countries to prepare a national system for the fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources.

The two-day workshop was organised in coordination and cooperation with the GCC Secretariat-General and the United Nations Environment Programme for West Asia at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat. The opening of the

event was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, EA Chairman. The workshop offers a better understanding of the current situation and trends related to the implementation of Nagoya Protocol. — ONA

## Electronic Tender (s)



**Majan Electricity Co. (SAOC) Announces the Following E-Tender**

| Tender NO | Description                                                                                                                                                                           | Grade      | Last date for buying | Submission date | Tender price (including 5% VAT) R.O. |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 133/2021  | EXTENSION OF POWER SUPPLY TO THE POLT'S AT THE VARIOUS LOCATION AREA'S (SHINAS, SOHAR, SAHAM, AL-BURAIMI)                                                                             | C          | 28/11/2021           | 07/12/2021      | 26/300                               |
| 134/2021  | TESTING, REPORTING THE HEALTH INDEX AND TECHNICAL STUDY WITH RECOMMENDATION FOR RE USING THE EXISTING 11KV SWITCHGEAR IN OLD TAREEF PSS AND AL HOJRAH PSS (NORTH BATINAH GOVERNORATE) | B          | 28/11/2021           | 07/12/2021      | 26/300                               |
| 135/2021  | DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES CONSULTANCY SERVICE                                                                                                                               | Specialist | 02/12/2021           | 14/12/2021      | 26/300                               |
| 136/2021  | DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATIONS NAME BOARDS SUPPLY & INSTALLATION AS PER MJEC NETWORK NAMING CONVENTION STANDARDS (PHASE -1 SOHAR, SAHAM & KHABOURAH WILLAYATS)                              | Specialist | 02/12/2021           | 14/12/2021      | 26/300                               |

Interested Firm having relevant experience in the similar nature of services and registered with Tender Board and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for electrical work, may register and obtain the tender documents from E-Tendering Site <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against online payment of non-refundable fees mentioned above for each tender.

The Tenderers should enclose a copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of (1%) of the submitted bid value valid for a period of (90) days from the date of Submission, and addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee. The original Bid Bond to be delivered in sealed envelope, and the tender number and title of project only are to be mentioned on the envelopes. The place of submission the original bond would be at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at MJEC building in AL Sawari Center in Sohar or at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at Muscat in Al Mubailah- opposite to the industrial Area beside to Bank Suhar before 10 A.M. according to the assigned date of submission of the tender. Any Submission of original tender bond after the time and date mentioned in the advertisement will not be accepted and tenderer offer will be rejected.

The Completed signed and sealed commercial and technical offer with all tender documents should be submitted and uploaded online into the above mentioned E-Tendering website. The Hard copies of the tender document are not accepted.

**The bidder must submit a separate envelopes electronically for technical and financial proposal**

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Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products & and have a High level percentage of Omanization.

The Company is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders.  
"WITH ELECTRICITY WE PROGRESS PLEASE AVOID EXTRAVAGANCE IN CONSUMPTION"



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## OCCI takes part in Dubai meeting

**DUBAI:** Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) participated in the 12th World Chambers Congress (12WCC) which kicked off on Tuesday in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The OCCI delegation was headed by Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, OCCI Chairman. The three-day event, organised by Dubai Chamber, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and its World Chambers Federation (WCF), came on the sidelines of Expo 2020 Dubai. During the conference, delegates will participate in interactive sessions examining topics of common interest.

— ONA

### MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (54/2021)

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

| Tender No. | E-Tender No.  | Description of Tender                                                                    | Tender Fee | Last Date to Collect the Tender | Tender Return Date | Grade      |
|------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| PRE/21/065 | 2021/MM/QS-33 | Supply & Fix of Containers For Vegetables and Fruits in Wilayat A'Seeb (E-Tender)        | Rial 25    | 16/12/2021                      | 02/01/2022         | Specialist |
| PRE/21/095 | 2021/MM/QS-34 | Supply of Granit Walls for Mutrah Corniche (E-Tender)                                    | Rial 25    | 04/12/2021                      | 14/12/2021         | Excellent  |
| PRE/21/096 | 2021/MM/QS-35 | Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Web Application and Local Balancer (E-Tender)    | Rial 25    | 16/12/2021                      | 02/01/2022         | Excellent  |
| PRE/21/098 | 2021/MM/QS-36 | Construction of Sub-base Layer for Internal Roads in Wilayat Muscat, Al Sifah (E-Tender) | Rial 25    | 16/12/2021                      | 02/01/2022         | First      |
| PRE/21/099 | 2021/MM/QS-37 | Supply & Fix of Containers for Café in Wilayat A'Seeb (E-Tender)                         | Rial 25    | 16/12/2021                      | 02/01/2022         | First      |

#### Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be ( 1% ) of the tender value valid for ninety ( 90 ) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to ([etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om)) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to ([esnad@gstb.gov.om](mailto:esnad@gstb.gov.om)) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT ON RUSSIA VISIT



Russian President Vladimir Putin with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Sochi, Russia. – AFP

Deal to reinstate Hamdok is only ‘first step’

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday told Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and military leader General Abdel Fattah al Burhan that an agreement to reinstate Hamdok was only a “first step” in restoring Sudan’s democratic transition, according to a spokesperson.

Hamdok was restored to his post on Sunday. He had been detained following the October 25 military takeover. First appointed after the overthrow of autocrat Omar al Bashir in a 2019 uprising, Hamdok will lead a civilian government of technocrats for a transitional period.

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Blinken called on the two



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Sudanese leaders to build on the “first step” of the agreement and continue the transition that was interrupted by the coup.

Blinken’s message was that, “We must continue to see progress, we must continue to

see Sudan move back down the democratic path, and that starts with the reinstitution of the Prime Minister but it certainly doesn’t end there,” Price told reporters.

Price called on Sudan’s leaders to release all civilian leaders and others and lift a state of emergency.

Sudan’s military promised to release all political detainees after weeks of deadly disturbances triggered by the coup, although large crowds took to the streets to reject any deal involving the army.

Meanwhile, Sudanese authorities have released several civilian leaders detained since last month’s military coup, a former captive said on Monday, amid efforts to restore a fragile transition process towards full democracy. — AFP

IAEA seeks ‘common ground’ with Tehran

NUCLEAR TALKS

TEHRAN: The UN nuclear watchdog said on Tuesday it was seeking “common ground” with Iran days after reporting that the Islamic republic had sharply increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi made the remarks following talks with officials in Tehran ahead of negotiations next week aimed at salvaging the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

His visit comes after the IAEA said Iran had boosted its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to many times in excess of the limit laid down in the landmark accord. “Our work has been intense since the morning,” Grossi said at a joint news conference in Tehran with Mohammad Eslami, the chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

“We are continuing at this point the negotiations with a view to find a common ground,” he said. “There are other issues that we are working on and... it is very important to put this into the perspective of the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran. “We are multiplying our efforts with a view to conclude our exchanges today.”

In a brief statement, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said “establishing a clear framework for cooperation between the IAEA and the agency is one of the main topics of discussion”.



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

Establishing a clear framework for cooperation between the IAEA and the agency is one of the main topics of discussion

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

On November 12, Grossi had described as “astonishing” his lack of contact with the new Iranian government of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

Days later, Tehran responded

by announcing it had invited the watchdog chief to visit.

There was no mention of Grossi’s visit in Iran’s ultraconservative newspapers on Tuesday.

Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed hopes on Monday that his visit would be “constructive”.

“We have always advised the IAEA to stay on the path of technical cooperation, and to not let certain countries pursue their political orientations on behalf of the IAEA,” he said.

Iran began easing its commitments under the deal in 2019, a year after then president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the accord and began imposing crippling sanctions. — AFP

Generation of children ‘at stake’ in Lebanon crisis: UN

BEIRUT: The UN children’s agency on Tuesday called on Lebanon to take urgent action to protect children after it documented a spike in child labour rates and food insecurity since April. “Urgent action is needed to ensure no child goes hungry, becomes sick, or has to work rather than receive an education,” said Yuki Mokuo, Unicef representative in Lebanon.

“The staggering magnitude of the crisis must be a wake-up call,” she said, quoted in a statement. Lebanon is grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis, with nearly 80 per cent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line.

Unicef in October followed up with the more than 800 families it had surveyed in April and found

Lebanon is grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis, with nearly 80 per cent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line

that since then living conditions had deteriorated dramatically. “The future of an entire generation of children is at stake,” it said in its latest report titled “Surviving without the basics”.

The survey found 53 per cent of families had at least one child who skipped a meal in October 2021, compared with 37 per cent



Lebanon Representative Yuki Mokuo attends a news conference in Beirut. – Reuters

in April.

“The proportion of families... who sent children to work rose to 12 per cent, from nine per cent,”

Unicef added.

It said almost 34 per cent of children who required primary healthcare in October did not

receive it, up from 28 per cent in April.

“Life is very hard; it is becoming harder every day,” Hanan, a 29-year-old mother, was quoted as saying by Unicef.

“Today I sent my four children to school without food. “I have suicidal thoughts and the only thing stopping me from doing this is my children. I feel so bad for them.”

Amal, a 15-year-old who works as a fruit-picker in southern Lebanon, said she had to take up the job to support her family. “Our parents need the money we earn. What would they do if we stopped working now?” Unicef quoted her as saying. “When I look to the future, I see life getting harder.”

The report noted that less than

three in 10 families had received social assistance, leading them to take “desperate measures”.

The proportion of Lebanese families sending children to work increased sevenfold to seven per cent between April and October, the report said.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati’s government has been slow to implement social safety programmes including a \$246-million World bank-funded one adopted by parliament in March and a \$556-million ration card scheme backed by the legislature in June. “Urgent action is needed to ensure no child goes hungry, becomes sick or has to work instead of receiving an education,” Mokuo said.

— AFP/Reuters

SHORT TAKES

TRIPOLI

Nearly 100 Libyans apply to run for president

Ninety-eight people have submitted applications to run in Libya’s presidential elections next month, the election commission said. Registration for candidates in the December 24 election ended on Monday.

The candidates’ documents are being verified to check that they are eligible to run. Within days, an initial list of candidates will be announced.

After that, the commission will open a two-stage appeal



process that will take 12 days before the final list of candidates is published, the head of the High National Election Commission, Emad al Sayeh, told reporters. — dpa

ISTANBUL

Turkish city imposes hefty hike in bills

The Turkish city of Bolu has voted to dramatically increase water bills and civil marriage fees for foreign nationals, state news agency Anadolu reported.

The city council agreed to increase water bills 10-fold, and charge \$8,200 for civil marriage ceremonies for foreigners. The marriage fee for locals is only around 500 lira in Bolu, some 290 kilometres east of Istanbul.

Bolu Mayor Tanju Ozcan (pictured), said that the



controversial hike in water bills does not cover migrants under temporary protection status in Turkey.

The marriage fee, however, applies to all foreigners. — dpa

CAIRO

Military alliance attacks sites in Sanaa

The military alliance in Yemen said on Tuesday it had destroyed a ballistic missile launch site in overnight air strikes in the Ansar Allah-controlled capital Sanaa, where residents reported big explosions. A broadcaster run by the Ansar Allah movement, Al Masirah TV, said three air strikes by the coalition had hit a residential district of the capital.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. In a statement reported by the Saudi state news agency on Twitter, the



coalition said air strikes had been conducted against “legitimate military targets” in Sanaa. It described the ballistic missile sites as “secret”, and said one of “high-value” had been destroyed.

## In brief

### ■ SEOUL



#### FORMER SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT DIES AT 90

South Korean ex-dictator Chun Doo-hwan, who brutally crushed opponents until mass demonstrations forced him out, died on Tuesday, his longtime aide announced. The former president died at his home in Seoul, Min Jeong-ki told reporters outside the Chun residence. He was 90.

He oversaw the country's economic rise and secured the 1988 Olympics for Seoul. He was the first South Korean president to hand over power peacefully.

A general in the South Korean military, Chun took power in a coup after the 1979 assassination of strongman Park Chung-hee. — AFP

### ■ BANGALORE



#### FLOODING IN INDIA'S BANGALORE AFTER HEAVY RAINS

Indian tech hub Bangalore has been inundated by floodwater after torrential downpours that have killed scores of people across the country's south in the past few weeks. Lakes dotted around the city have overflowed after three days of ferocious rain, submerging roads and flooding homes.

Rescuers deployed inflatable life rafts to retrieve stranded residents while buses and motorised rickshaws carted commuters through knee-deep water.

"We can't go inside our house because the water has stagnated in front of it," Bangalore resident Rathnamma said. — AFP

### ■ COLOMBO



#### FERRY CAPSIZES IN SRI LANKA, 6 DEAD

At least six people have died after a ferry they were traveling in capsized in eastern Sri Lanka, officials said. Police spokesman Nihal Thaldewa said the ferry was carrying mostly students and teachers to a school across a lagoon in the town of Kinniya when it capsized around 0730 local time.

Villagers, police and navy managed to save 14 people, half of them children, and rushed them to the nearby hospital.

Thaldewa confirmed six people, including four school children, are among the dead. The ferry was carrying about 25 to 35 people at the time.

— Reuters

# Philippines navy ends resupply mission

MANILA: Navy vessels from the Philippines successfully completed a resupply mission on Tuesday at a South China Sea outpost, its defence minister said, a day after its president spoke at an international summit for its blockade of the area.

Two vessels were unhindered earlier on Tuesday in reaching the Sierra Madre, a ship intentionally grounded decades ago at the Second Thomas Shoal, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a statement.

A small boat was dispatched from a Chinese coast guard vessel with three people, who recorded the unloading of Philippine personnel and cargo, he said.

The Philippines and United States last week condemned China's coast guard for interrupting the mission and using water cannon on the resupply boats. The area is within the Philippines' its 200 mile exclusive economic zone.

"I have communicated to the Chinese ambassador that we consider these acts as a form of intimidation and harassment," Lorenzana said.

China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment.

A small contingent of military



Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana

#### A small contingent of military have for years been based on the rusty ship at the shoal to assert the Philippines' claim to sovereignty

have for years been based on the rusty ship at the shoal to assert the Philippines' claim to sovereignty in the area.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday told a summit hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping that he "abhors" what took place at the shoal last week and that the rule of law was the only way out of "colossal" rows in the South China Sea.



The BRP Sierra Madre, a marooned transport ship which Philippine Marines live on as a military outpost, pictured in the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, part of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. — Reuters File

China claims the majority of the South China Sea as its own, using a "nine-dash line" on maps that an arbitration tribunal in 2016 ruled had no basis under international law.

It has for years deployed hundreds of vessels in big clusters

to reinforce its claim. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have competing claims.

Meanwhile, Lorenzana said he and Huang had been talking "since the evening of the 16th while the incident was happening until

yesterday, 20 November".

The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment.

There will be no navy or coast guard escorts for the Philippines' resupply boats when they sail back to Second Thomas Shoal, Lorenzana said.

"They (China) have no right to impede, prevent or harass our ships within our EEZ (exclusive economic zone), whether we are fishing or bringing supplies to our detachment in the Sierra Madre (navy ship) in Ayungin Shoal," he said.

The chief of the Philippine military's Western Command, Vice Admiral Ramil Roberto Enriquez, meanwhile said the number of Chinese coast guard vessels in Second Thomas Shoal had gone down to two as of Saturday night from three on Tuesday. He said the Chinese maritime militia vessels had also left the shoal. China has denied operating a militia. There were 19 vessels near Second Thomas Shoal recently and 45 near Thitu Island, another Philippines-occupied area, according to National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon.

— Reuters

## ■ YOUTHS SAFE AGAINST CORONAVIRUS



Youths between the age of 12 to 17 wait to receive doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 coronavirus vaccine in Hanoi. — AFP

## Australia declares La Nina for second straight year

SYDNEY: Australia's weather bureau said on Tuesday a La Nina weather phenomenon had developed in the Pacific Ocean for the second year in a row that could bring above average rainfall across the country's centre, north and east.

La Nina is typically associated with greater rainfall, more tropical cyclones and cooler-than-average temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

The weather event could boost Australia's wheat yields. In September, the country lifted its wheat forecast for this season by 17 per cent to near record levels citing favourable weather. A wetter than usual end to the year could also result in a less severe bushfire season.

— Reuters

# Film star's death sets India's sights on eye donations

BANGALORE: Mourning fans of beloved Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar are pledging to give up their eyes after the actor's untimely death brought his post-mortem organ donation into focus.

The "Powerstar" — so named for his boisterous action roles — died of a heart attack in Bangalore last month at 46, with thousands of grief-stricken admirers thronging the city's streets to hug, cry and commiserate.

News reports in the days following revealed that Rajkumar had willed the donation of his eyes, with enough ocular tissue salvaged to restore sight for four people.

The tradition runs in the actor's family — both his parents made the same pledge before their deaths — and doctors say the example has now been taken up in earnest around Bangalore.

"He sort of reminded people that you should donate eyes...



Narayana Nethralaya Eye Hospital employees help volunteers fill eye donation pledge forms during an event organised in memory of late Indian film actor Puneeth Rajkumar in Bangalore. — AFP

#### More than 7,000 members of the public have committed themselves to post-mortem eye donations since Rajkumar's death

instead of burning or burying them," Rekha Gyanchand, medical director at the Lions International Eye Bank, said. "We see a lot of people coming forward to donate," she added. "The awareness has really increased."

At the nearby Narayana Nethralaya hospital, vinyl posters and pamphlets showed Rajkumar's smiling visage, along with a message urging prospective donors to give the gift of sight.

A queue of young men waited in front of a trestle to speak to staff and fill in pledge forms.

More than 7,000 members

of the public have committed themselves to post-mortem eye donations since Rajkumar's death, said the clinic's managing director K Bhujang Shetty.

"In the days after Puneeth passed away, we have had 112 eyes collected" from the recently deceased after relatives agreed to transplants, he added.

Among those donating was Subramani, a driver who lost work after his vision deteriorated but received a transplant just two weeks ago. He was offering the eyes of his recently deceased brother.

"We didn't want to waste his eyes, and would like to donate them to someone like the person who donated eyes to me," he said.

Rajkumar first made a name for himself as a child actor and went on to star in around 30 films, with his debut action-comedy flick "Appu" being one of the biggest hits. — AFP

# 46 KILLED IN BULGARIA TOURIST BUS CRASH

**BOSNEK, Bulgaria:** Forty-six people, including a dozen minors, were killed after their tourist bus caught fire on a Bulgarian highway early on Tuesday in Europe's deadliest road accident in the past decade.

A cause has yet to be determined but officials believe the bus crashed into the guardrails and caught fire while travelling from Istanbul in Turkey to Skopje in North Macedonia. There were no other vehicles involved in the accident, which occurred around 2 am on a highway about 40 kilometres from Sofia, near the village of Bosnek.

Seven people — five men and two women — survived. "Unfortunately, there are many victims, 46, including 12 minors", North Macedonian Health Minister Venko Filipce told public BNT television after visiting the survivors in a Sofia Hospital.

The survivors include a 16-year-old girl and are all from the same family and in stable condition, official said.

**Bulgaria's interim Prime Minister has dismissed the suggestion that road conditions were to blame**

The dead were mostly from North Macedonia and from different ethnic groups and also included a Belgian and a Serbian national, officials said.

Local media in Macedonia said the bus was registered with the "Besa trans" tourist agency, which organises tours to Istanbul.

Bulgaria's interim Prime Minister Stefan Yanev said a probe into the accident had been launched, dismissing the suggestion that road conditions were to blame.

Images showed the carcass of the charred bus after it broke through the guardrails between the two sides of the highway.

North Macedonian Prime



Officials work at the site of a bus accident, in which at least 46 people were killed, on a highway near the village of Bosnek, south of Sofia. — AFP

Minister Zoran Zaev told state news agency MIA that he had spoken to one survivor. "He explained that they were sleeping in the bus when an explosion was

heard. They succeeded in breaking one of the windows and saved a few people. Unfortunately, the rest did not succeed", he said.

"It is a great tragedy... 12

(victims) are under 18 years old, and the rest are young people about 20 to 30 years old", he added.

Bulgarian national police chief Stanimir Stanev said the bus driver

died "immediately so there was no one able to open the doors".

Survivors "jumped out of the windows", said Maya Arguirova, head of the treatment centre for severe burns where they were transported.

Bulgaria's Interior Minister Boyko Rashkov was among those who rushed to the site of the crash.

"It's a terrifying scene. I haven't seen anything like that before", Rashkov told journalists.

"Nobody can say for certain how many were there and who they were. The bodies are badly burned and have to be identified one by one", he added.

Frantic relatives of those on tours to Istanbul organised by the agency were trying to contact their loved ones in the hope they were not on the ill-fated bus.

"We are calling Besa tours non stop, but no one is answering for hours", Xhelal Bakiu told reporters in Skopje, saying he had been unable to reach his cousin on the phone. — AFP



## Poor diets imperiling people and the planet, says report

**PARIS:** Nearly half the world's population suffer from poor nutrition linked to too much or not enough food, a global assessment said on Tuesday with wide-ranging impacts on health and the planet.

The Global Nutrition Report (GNR), a yearly survey and analysis of the latest data on nutrition and related health issues, found that 48 per cent of people currently eat either too little or too much — resulting in them being overweight, obese or underweight.

At current rates, the report finds, the world will fail to meet eight out of nine nutrition targets set by the World Health Organization for 2025.

These include reducing child

wasting (when children are too thin for their height) and child stunting (when they are too short for their age), and also adult obesity.

The report estimates nearly 150 million children under five years old are stunted, more than 45 million are wasted and nearly 40 million are overweight.

It also finds more than 40 per cent of adults (2.2 billion people) are now overweight or obese.

"Avoidable deaths due to poor diets have grown by 15 per cent since 2010 and poor diets are now responsible for a quarter of all adult deaths", Chair of the GNR's Independent Expert Group Renata Micha said.

"Our global findings show that our diets have not improved over

the last ten years and are now a major threat to people's health and to the planet."

This year's GNR is the first to look at global diets and how food choices are affecting people and the planet.

It finds people are failing to consume enough health-promoting foods like fruits and vegetables, particularly in lower-income countries. Higher-income countries had the highest intake of foods with harmful health impacts like red meat, dairy and sugary drinks.

Consumption of harmful foods is on the rise, the report found, with red and processed meat already at almost five times the maximum recommendation of one serving a week. — AFP

## EU eyes update to Covid certificate as infections surge

**BRUSSELS:** The EU is looking to update its Covid certificate that has made travel easier within the bloc, as its acceptance is threatened by restrictions in some member states hit by surging infections.

EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides told the European Parliament on Monday that a revision was being prepared for this week to defend the "success story" of the EU Digital Covid Health Certificate.

The certificate, backed by legislation approved by the European Parliament, came into force in July and allows bearers travelling within the European Union to prove they were fully vaccinated, had a recent negative Covid test, or were recovered from the coronavirus.

Its use helped European summer destinations such as Greece bounce back, and several other non-EU countries, such as Britain, have since also plugged into the system.

But climbing case numbers in several EU countries as winter pushes people indoors have prompted some governments to start tightening restrictions again.

Austria has a national lockdown, the Netherlands a curfew for bars, and Germany is poised to announce new measures.



European Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton speaks with Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides before the College of Commissioners meeting at the European Commission in Brussels. — Reuters

**The certificate, backed by legislation approved by the European Parliament, came into force in July**

Several countries, including Greece, France and Germany, are moving towards requiring a third booster shot for someone to be considered fully vaccinated, given mounting evidence that the effectiveness of current jabs wane after four or five months.

But, at an EU level, that would

leave several, mainly eastern, member states out in the cold, given their relatively very low vaccination rates even for one or two doses.

Some stress that changes to the EU certificate need to be commonly adopted. "It can't be different between Luxembourg, Greece, Germany and France", said Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn. The issue is expected to be one of the main ones tackled at an EU summit scheduled for December 16-17.

Meanwhile, at present, 68 per cent of the German population is fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

— AFP

### SHORT TAKES

#### LONDON

##### UK prime ministers pay tribute at MP's funeral

Prime Minister Boris Johnson joined other senior British politicians and mourners for a funeral mass for David Amess, a lawmaker who was murdered at a meeting with voters last month. Amess, a 69-year-old father of five, was stabbed to death at a church in his constituency at the regular meeting he held to discuss local issues.

The killing of Amess sent shockwaves through the British political system coming five years after another MP was



murdered on the street. Johnson, who said some Cabinet ministers had broken down in tears when he broke the news to them of Amess's death, was among those present for the service at the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral in London. — Reuters

#### OTTAWA

##### Canadian PM Trudeau outlines priorities

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will add rebuilding from British Columbia's devastating floods to his list of priorities when he outlines plans on for the new parliamentary session, which include firmer measures to fight climate change. Trudeau's Liberals were re-elected on September 20, albeit with a second minority government that will need opposition support to pass legislation.

He kicks off work in the House of Commons with a speech that



Canada's governor general, who represents its head of state, Queen Elizabeth, will deliver on the prime minister's behalf. "We will be there to help rebuild, along with the province, in the weeks and months to come" will be the message to British Columbia.

#### OUAGADOUGOU

##### At least 19 confirmed dead in Burkina Faso attack

At least 10 civilians and nine soldiers have been killed in an attack in Burkina Faso in West Africa. The perpetrators attacked a gendarmerie post in the northern town of Foubé on Monday night, a government spokesperson announced. Fighting broke out between the attackers and the security forces in the process.

Armed fighters allied to terrorist groups are known to be active in Burkina Faso and many of its neighbours in the Sahel



region. Attacks on military and police posts have increased in recent weeks, especially near the Malian border. In mid-November, unknown extremists killed at least 53 people in an attack on a gendarmerie post in the northern province of Soum. — dpa

# Now Chilean voters veer back right

GRAM SLATTERY AND FABIAN CAMBERO

After years of divisive street protests and the election of a mainly left-wing body to rewrite the constitution, Chileans surprised analysts, markets and even themselves on Sunday night by favouring a right-wing presidential candidate and delivering significant gains to conservatives in Congress.

With 99.99 per cent of votes counted as of Monday, ultra-conservative former congressman Jose Antonio Kast had won 27.91 per cent, and leftist lawmaker Gabriel Boric had come in second, with 25.83 per cent. As both fell well short of the 50 per cent threshold needed to win outright, they will now advance to a December 19 runoff.

Kast, who has pledged to crack down on crime and illegal immigration, appears to have the momentum, though Boric can still eke out a victory if he wins over enough centrists, analysts said.

Still, the results of congressional elections may make the radical changes to Chile's free-market model that Boric has promised out of reach. Leftist and centre-left coalitions lost significant ground in both the upper and lower houses, and no coalition is expected to emerge with a functioning majority.

"It's going to be very difficult for any of the two major coalitions in the Senate to pass legislation," said Kenneth Bunker, head of political consultancy Tresquintos. "For the conservative sectors, this is not a problem as they are in favour of the status quo, but for the opposition it is very bad news."

Just six months ago, Chileans had favoured left-wing independents when selecting representatives to the body charged with rewriting the nation's dictatorship-era constitution. Boric, a 35-year-old who rose to fame leading student protests, has thrown his support behind the constitutional rewrite.

But crime fears, ongoing confrontations between police and separatist indigenous groups in the nation's south and fatigue with continued protests and disorder in what is traditionally one of Latin America's most stable countries likely played a role in the swing to the right, analysts said. — Reuters

“It’s going to be very difficult for any of the two major coalitions in the Senate to pass legislation. For the conservative sectors, this is not a problem as they are in favour of the status quo, but for the opposition it is very bad news

KENNETH BUNKER  
Head of Tresquintos



### AT THE TOP

French urban climber Alain Robert, popularly known as the 'French Spiderman,' reacts at the top after having climbed the 153.8 metre-high Skyper building in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Tuesday. — AFP

# A walk down the memory lane...



Samuel Kutty  
@samkuttyvp

THE BHOPAL TRAGEDY REMINDS ME OF THE FACT THAT SMALL, SILENT DISASTERS ARE STILL UNFOLDING IN THOUSANDS OF COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD

Next week we mark the 37th anniversary of one of the world's worst industrial gas tragedies that killed thousands of people in the central Indian city of Bhopal. Let me share with readers the tale of those nightmarish days of my stay in the city as a journalist to cover the ghastly disaster.

A swarm of both national and international journalists descended on the city to tell the world about the death toll and accident. But let me be frank, I did not realise the intensity of the disaster initially when I expressed my enthusiasm to go to Bhopal. My interest mainly was to meet scribes of international repute and learn from their experience.

When we reached, bloated bodies were lying everywhere and people were still being carried to hospital. There was death all around. People were still being rescued from affected areas. Animal carcasses filled the roads. No municipal workers removed the filth. The city started stinking. The feeling was that of a war-torn city albeit all buildings and properties remained intact.

Cremation grounds were stacked with bodies with no space for individual choices. It was a mass cremation. For

Muslims, the graves were almost like a three-tier kind; putting a body, then some sand, again a body...

The Bhopal gas tragedy saw over 30 tonnes of highly toxic methyl isocyanate leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide factory on the night of December 2-3, 1984.

The reaction produced poisonous clouds of deadly gases that were carried over the sleeping city by a gentle wind. No alarm was sounded. Over a period of several hours, the clouds spread out over some 40 square kilometres, poisoning over half a million people. Thousands escaped death but with prolonged illness, pain, cancer, stillbirths and heart disease.

Unofficial estimates place the number of deaths between 15,000 and 25,000. The effects are felt even by the second and third generations in Bhopal, whose ancestors were exposed to the gas.

Those who did not initially perish in the gas leak live with a toxic sword of Damocles over their heads. Justice has indeed remained elusive for the victims. Each anniversary brings some attention to Bhopal, but the tragedy remains the same.

I revisited Bhopal city in 2018. The biggest change I found along with modernisation of the city was the presence of a museum at the New Housing Board Colony near the now-defunct Union Carbide plant, reminding us of the horror and also the trail of destruction in the disaster.

Why I wrote this column is because I cannot forget Bhopal because it is not an isolated incident. The tragedy reminds me of the fact that small, silent disasters are still unfolding in thousands of communities all over the world, especially in the Third World where minimal safety and environmental regulations attract polluting industries.

The tragedy in Bhopal or other disasters — small or big — represent a much deeper problem. Chemicals pervade every aspect of our lives, and all of us carry residues of toxic chemicals in our bodies.

I know we are helpless except knowing that human suffering is complex. But we can act. Our nations can limit the use of chemicals. What is required is the commitment to pursue the pledges and their implementation.

# Digitalisation of Africa's mines could boost productivity



LANDRY SIGNÉ

THE WRITER IS A PROFESSOR AND MANAGING DIRECTOR AT THUNDERBIRD SCHOOL OF GLOBAL MANAGEMENT AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, IS A SENIOR FELLOW AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Mineral resources are a critical source of revenue for Africa. In 2019, minerals and fossil fuels accounted for more than a third of exports from at least 60 per cent of African countries. The continent produces around 80 per cent of the world's platinum, two-thirds of its cobalt, half of its manganese, and a substantial amount of chromium, leaving it in a strong position to benefit from growing demand for these minerals. Moreover, Africa is believed to have some of the world's largest untapped mineral reserves.

Unfortunately, a lack of systematic geological mapping and exploration means that the full scope of the continent's resources remains unknown. To unlock mineral-rich African countries' full potential, mining companies and African governments must

embrace Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies. Artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and big data can help mining firms limit damage to the environment, improve working conditions, reduce operating costs and boost productivity.

The adoption of efficient renewable-energy systems already is helping the mining sector reduce its environmental impact. Autonomous 4IR technologies complement the clean-energy transition by cutting fuel consumption in processes such as loading, hauling, crushing and drilling. According to one estimate, driverless technology could lead to a 10-15 per cent decrease in fuel use on mine sites.

Better use of data and analytics can improve mine performance as well. Mining companies

generate enormous amounts of data throughout their operations, but only a few use it in a way that provides real value. This represents a major missed opportunity, because advanced analytics can optimise mine planning, increase yields and reduce equipment downtime. In South Africa, a 30-year-old mine boosted its mineral recovery by 2 per cent by applying advanced analytics to its main processing steps.

The Syama mine in Mali is another example of a site that has benefited from digitalisation. In 2015, Resolute Mining took over operations at Syama and transformed it into the world's first purpose-built automated mine. Employees use a fiber-optic network connected to above-ground control centres to manage and monitor all activities, from the clearing

of the drill point to extraction, loading, and hauling. Although the initial investment was steep, the changes are expected to cut mining costs by 30 per cent and improve overall efficiency. The machines can operate 22 hours a day, and there is no time lost due to shift changes.

4IR technologies will define the future of mining. But while they represent tremendous opportunities for boosting productivity, improving safety, and mitigating the environmental impact of mining, they also raise legitimate concerns. Many of the new technology-enabled jobs require skilled workers that the labour market cannot supply, implying limited employment opportunities in the absence of educational and training programmes to reskill workers.

One proposed solution is for mining companies to use the profits gained from the higher margins made possible by the introduction of new technologies to train relevant workers in AI and machine learning. And new curricula in schools can teach the tech skills the next generation will need for 4IR-enabled jobs — including with the mining companies.

Another possibility is for mining companies to encourage the development of other local industries to reduce communities' dependence on the mine for employment.

In Mauritania, mining companies finance a number of ventures that encourage local economic development, including a jewellery production facility, a brick-making plant and an agricultural cooperative. @Project Syndicate

# sport

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## AL FAISAL EYES PODIUM FINISH



**MUSCAT:** He loves to take up fresh challenges. Following a satisfying season in 2021 that saw the Sultanate of Oman's talented endurance racer Al Faisal al Zubair climb up the overall podium in the International GT Open Series for Lechner Racing team in a Porsche GT3 R in Barcelona, Spain, last month, the Muscat-based racer is all set for a new competition early next year.

On Tuesday, Al Faisal announced that he has signed up for Haupt Racing Team (HRT) to launch his 2022 season by competing in the Hankook 24H Dubai, which will be held at the Dubai Autodrome on January 14-15.

HRT, who has an excellent track record at the Dubai 24H, will field two teams at the 2022 edition just like last year. Al

Faisal will be part of the four-driver line-up in a Mercedes-AMG GT3 #777 car along with Dutch Indy Dontje, German Luca Stolz and Austrian Martin Konrad.

The other car #4 will comprise owner and 2020 champion Hubert Haupt, Khaled al Qubaisi, Manuel Metzger and Raffaele Marciello.

Lights go green on January 14 and an excited Al Faisal is looking forward to his 24H appearance. The Omani racer had competed last year at the same event but rains had forced the abandonment of the event just after seven hours of the 24-hour race.

Al Faisal said, "I am very excited to compete in the 2022 Dubai 24H race with Haupt Racing Team, which has got many winners on their rolls and have done very



well in endurance races across the world.

"The HRT team had won the title last year in a rain-curtailed event and has also done well in the past editions. We have a strong drivers' line-up in Stolz, Dontje and Konrad.

I also have a new car team for the Dubai 24H but I am confident that we can fight for a podium finish."

He added, "This will be my first proper 24H. So it will be a new challenge but after my season in 2021 with Porsche GT3 R, I am much more confident. My experience in the International GT Open will definitely help me when I take on the wheels of Mercedes in Dubai."

Last year, Al Faisal had teamed up with Maximilian Gotz, Maximilian Buhk and Christopher Bruck with HTP Winward

Motorsport at the Dubai 24H.

The 23 year-old Al Faisal announced himself as a rising star on the regional circuit in 2018, when he won the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East title and then extended his dominance by claiming the overall title for the second time in a row in 2019.

Last year, the motorsports calendar was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic but the Omani proved his credentials as a competitive and skillful endurance racer this season with an overall third in the 2021 International GT Open despite missing one round due to illness.

Out of the 12 races he competed in 2021, he won four and took eight podium finishes underlying his potential at the top level.



## Al Nasr look to strengthen lead at top of domestic league

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, NOV 23

After an absence due to the national team's matches in AFC Asian qualifiers, Omantel League will be back in action with seven matches kicking off on Wednesday.

League leaders Al Nasr will be looking to strengthen lead at top when they will take on Al Musannah in the 5th week of 2020-2022 Omantel league at the Al Saada Stadium on Wednesday.

The match will kick off at 4:35 pm. Al Nasr will eye the 15th point and look to go away from the closest opponent Dhofar while Al Musannah will target to finish

the game on a successful note that will keep the team's hopes alive in competing at the top places.

Salalah giants, Dhofar, will face Al Suwaiq in a tough clash in this week of the top-tier league. Al Rustaq Sports Complex will be the venue for the tight encounter and the match will begin at 7:40 pm.

The second-placed team Dhofar is keen to reach 13th points and to reduce the deficit at the top. Al Suwaiq will try to register their second victory in the league under supervision of the new national head coach Qasim al Mukhaini.

Sohar will chase for the winning points when they will host defending champion, Seeb, at Sohar

Sports Complex.

The match will start at 4:40 pm. The Northern Batinah team will try to compensate from early exit at the HM Cup from Al Oruba. On the other hand, Seeb will look to get much closer to the top teams as they have four points gap from the topper Al Nasr. Seeb managed to edge Ibri in the last 32 round to move into the second round.

In the other fixture, third-placed Al Nahdha will travel to Salalah to meet Al Ittihad at Al Saada Stadium while Oman club will play against Nizwa at Seeb Stadium. Al Rustaq will host Muscat at Al Rustaq Sports Complex. Bahla will meet Saham at Nizwa Sports Complex.

# Fifa wraps up inspection of 2026 World Cup venues

**TORONTO:** Fifa, world soccer's governing body, wrapped up site visits to potential venues for the 2026 World Cup to be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico with a stop in Toronto on Monday, saying a decision on cities can be expected in April.

After inspection tours of 22 cities and 23 venues a Fifa delegation will now submit a report from which 16 hosts will be chosen although Fifa's chief tournaments and events officer Colin Smith suggested that number was not written in stone.

"When the bid was presented 16 was referenced and we've taken note but ultimately it is up to Fifa," said Smith, following a lunch-time media conference on the top floor of a downtown Toronto hotel overlooking Canada's national stadium BMO Field. "We'll wrap up these visits and then we will decide the most appropriate number we need to host the tournament.

"We haven't set the exact time (of the venue announcement) yet but I suspect it will be more likely April than March.

Toronto and Edmonton are the two Canadian cities bidding for games while Guadalajara, Monterrey and Mexico City are the Mexico candidates.

With the 2026 World Cup expanding to a record 48 teams, the joint bid calls for Canada and Mexico to each get 10 games with the rest going to the

United States.

Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New York/New Jersey, Orlando, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay area, Seattle and Washington, D.C are potential US venues.

The Fifa delegation looked at everything from infrastructure to legacy projects to stadiums and practice facilities.

"Overall we have been absolutely delighted with the quality of the presentations," said Smith. "It has been a very competitive process, one that is going to make our decision all the more harder."

Vancouver, venue for the 2015 Women's World Cup final, has expressed late interest in getting in on the World Cup action but Victor Montagliani, the Concacaf president and Fifa vice-president, on Monday threw cold water on the suggestion.

"I know that the premier of British Columbia (John Horgan) had expressed some interest and that's great," said Montagliani, who was joined at the head table by Smith, Toronto Mayor John Tory and Lisa MacLeod, Ontario's Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture.

"But right now we're dealing with the players we have, not the players that are not on the team.

— Reuters



## Messi, Ronaldo and Salah on shortlist for Fifa Best Men's Player award



**LAUSANNE:** Paris St Germain forward Lionel Messi, Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah are among the 11 players shortlisted for The Best Fifa Men's Player award, the world governing body said on Monday.

The trio are joined by last year's winner Robert Lewandowski of Bayern Munich, Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne and Chelsea duo N'Golo Kante and Jorginho.

Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema, Borussia Dortmund

striker Erling Haaland and PSG pair Kylian Mbappe and Neymar complete the list.

Women's Super League players dominate the women's award with Arsenal's Vivianne Miedema, City duo Lucy Bronze and Ellen White and Chelsea quartet Sam Kerr, Magdalena Eriksson, Pernille Harder and Ji So-yun all in contention.

Emma Hayes, who led Chelsea to the 2021 Champions League final, is joined on The Best Fifa Women's Coach shortlist by England manager Sarina Wiegman

and Canada coach Beverly Priestman. Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, Chelsea's Thomas Tuchel and Tottenham Hotspur boss Antonio Conte are nominated for the men's award, along with Germany's Hansi Flick and Italy coach Roberto Mancini, who led them to the Euro 2020 title.

Liverpool's Alisson Becker, Chelsea's Edouard Mendy and Leicester City's Kasper Schmeichel are among the nominees for The Best Fifa Men's Goalkeeper award. The winners will be announced on January 17.

## Al Muthla pip Aflag Group by 14 runs, Mazoon Dairy brush aside Y Horizon

**MUSCAT:** Al Muthla Golden CT beat Aflag Group CT by 14 runs in a E Division match of the Oman Cricket League over the weekend.

Batting first after winning the toss, Al Muthla Golden CT scored a respectable 178 for the loss of nine wickets in their allotted 20 overs. Shinu Prasad led the scoring with 43 off 26 balls, studded with four boundaries and one six. Syed Osama Afaq, Arnold Lewis, and Ahmed Mohammed picked up two wickets apiece for Aflag.

In reply, Aflag opener Junaid Iqbal started aggressively with 62 off 32 balls, with seven boundaries and three sixes. But the team got all out for 164, falling short of the target by 14 runs. Sajith Chenganassery was the pick of the bowlers for Al Muthla, taking three wickets for 29 runs.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Al Muthla Golden CT 178/9 in 20 overs (Shinu Prasad 43 (26) 4x4; Ahmed Mohamed - 30/2) won against Aflag Group CT 164/10 in 20 Overs (Junaid 62 (32)

7x4, 3x6; Sajith Chenganassery 29/3) by 14 runs

In another E Division match of the Oman Cricket League, Mazoon Dairy beat against Y Horizon by 38 Runs.

Batting first after winning the toss, Mazoon Dairy scored 172 for the loss of seven wickets in their allotted 20 overs, with opener Manish Bhatia scoring 69 off 52 balls, studded with 11 boundaries. Sakil Khan also ably supported with a quickfire 55 off 21 balls, including four boundaries and one six. Amar Pal Singh was the pick of the bowlers for Y Horizon with three wickets for 18 runs.

In reply, Y Horizon got off to a good start, but faltered their way to the target, scoring only 134 for the loss of six wickets in their allotted 20 overs.

Opener Vikram Soni was the top scorer with 53 runs off 46 balls with five boundaries. Mayoer Krishnakutty Jithin picked up two for 23.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Mazoon Dairy 172/7 in 20 overs (Manish Bhatia 69 (52) 11x4, Sakil Khan - 55 (21) 4x4, 1x6; Amar Pal Singh 18/3) beat Y Horizon 134/6 in 20 Overs (Vikram Soni 53 (46) 5x4; Mayoer Krishnakutty 23/1) by 38 Runs

In a F Division Match of the Oman Cricket League, Team Coorg Muscat outplayed Oct Al Hail 'B' by 9 wickets. Put into bat after losing the toss, Oct Al Hail 'B' could score only 81 all out in 12.1 overs, with Hassan Mohammed Hussain top scoring with 26 off 15. Arjan Mavji Halai was the pick of the bowlers, picking up three for 24.

Team Coorg Muscat breezed to the target in 9.5 overs for the loss of just one wicket, with Poonacha Pattada scoring an unbeaten 48 off 33 balls with seven hits to the fence.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Oct Al Hail 'B' 81/10 in 12.1 overs (Hassan Mohammed Hussain 26 (15) 3x4, 1x6; Arjan Mavji Halai - 24/3) lost to Team Coorg Muscat 82/1 in 9.5 Overs (Poonacha Pattada 48 (33) 7x4) by 9 Wickets.

# OMAN SET TO HOST LEGENDS LEAGUE CRICKET IN JANUARY

**MUSCAT:** Legends Cricket League (LLC), a professional T20 cricket league for former star players, announced that the inaugural season of the League, scheduled to take place in January 2022, will be played at Al Amerat Cricket Stadium.

The Sultanate of Oman was the co-host of recently concluded ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 along with Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi as the other three venues. The global league where former cricketers, legends of the game, will be playing competitive cricket is looking at emerging as a global professional league, where the legends can relive old rivalries on the field. With the Sultanate of Oman as the host nation, the League will start its journey on a global platform.

"It is an honour for Oman Cricket to host the Legends of the game. This is going to be very big for Oman Cricket. Such a gathering of star cricketers is unprecedented in the Sultanate of Oman and I am sure this will just be the beginning, opening up a completely new op-

**Former cricket greats will be in action at Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in the inaugural season**

portunity for Oman Cricket. We at Oman Cricket would extend the best hospitality to the Legends while they entertain the fans with cricket," Pankaj Khimji, Chairman, Oman Cricket, stated.

Ravi Shastri, Commissioner, Legends League Cricket, said, "We see our League as an opportunity to promote cricket in new destinations. Amongst all options, the Sultanate of Oman came out as the best package. It would be a great start to a new journey ahead."

Raman Raheja, co-founder and CEO, Legends League Cricket, said, "The Sultanate of Oman has proved its credential as a world-class international venue and host in the T20 World Cup and we felt it will be the best place for the League to start with. I am sure we will have fantastic tournament and



Oman Cricket Chairman Pankaj Khimji and Secretary Madhu Jesrani with Legends Cricket League officials at Al Amerat Cricket Stadium

all the players will have an experience of a lifetime."

This will be the first time that such big names will play in the Sultanate of Oman and perhaps once in a lifetime opportunity for the cricket fans.

Vivek Khushalani, Chairman of the Legends League Cricket said, "We are looking forward to the League being hosted in the Sultanate of Oman. It is an upcoming destination for international cricket and this event would further enhance their position. You don't get such opportunities every day to bring such legends together in one venue."

The first season of LLC will have former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England, among other cricket nations divided into 3 teams representing India, Asia and Rest of the World. Ravi Shastri joined the League last week as the Commissioner after completing his term with the Indian Cricket Team as its head coach.

Further details about the tournament and exact dates will be announced soon.



## Under-strength India still tough ask for New Zealand

**MUMBAI:** India's fringe players will have a chance to impress in the absence of big names when the hosts kick off their two-match series against inaugural World Test Championship winners New Zealand at Kanpur on Thursday.

The series will be the first in the longest format between the two sides since they met in the final of the WTC but the setting and the personnel at Green Park will be starkly different from that June contest in Southampton.

It will also be India's first test series under head coach Rahul Dravid, a batting great who played 164 tests and 344 one-dayers between 1996 and 2012 and accumulated more than 10,000 runs in both formats.

Dravid succeeded Ravi Shastri after the Twenty20 World Cup and has already tasted success against New Zealand during the three-match T20 series, which his team won 3-0.

The hosts will be without captain and batting mainstay

Virat Kohli, who decided to skip the first of the two tests, while batter Rohit Sharma, wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant and fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will miss both matches.

Batter KL Rahul was also ruled out on Tuesday due to a left thigh muscle strain and replaced by Suryakumar Yadav.

The side will be led by Ajinkya Rahane in Kanpur with Kohli returning at the helm for the second and final contest in Mumbai from December 3.

New Zealand will also be missing first-choice players in pace spearhead Trent Boult and all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme and will have their task cut out against the formidable Indian spinners in their own backyard.

The touring side will also not find much confidence from their past record in India where they have never won a test series let alone a test match since the 1988/89 tour.

"They're one of the great

challenges on the test calendar," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead told reporters on Tuesday.

"It's something we haven't done for a while, we haven't been here since 2016 but we're certainly looking forward to what's ahead."

While the Indian batting and fast bowling department would need reinforcements in the absence of key players, the hosts have their first-choice spinners in Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel available.

In the absence of Pant, the experienced Wriddhiman Saha is expected to don the wicket-keeping gloves.

"We have that (home) advantage, but we can't take New Zealand lightly at all," India vice-captain Cheteshwar Pujara said.

"They've played excellent cricket and they're a good side in all the formats. We'll stick to our game plans, we'll stick to what we know, how to play in Indian conditions." — Reuters

## Asian Tour back on tee after 20 months

**BANGKOK:** Golf's Asian Tour returns after 20 months of pandemic inaction in Thailand this week, buoyed by a \$200-million cash injection from Australian legend Greg Norman into 10 new lucrative tournaments from next year.

When the \$1 million Blue Canyon Championship tees off on Thursday on the idyllic Thai island of Phuket, it will see the first shots played on the Asian Tour since the Malaysian Open on March 7, 2020.

The restart comes just weeks after Norman shook up the world of golf by announcing his new Saudi-backed series of 10 events from 2022, triggering speculation that it could be the first step towards the Great White Shark's oft-touted dream of a golf "super league".

Asian Tour Commissioner and CEO Cho Minn Thant insists Norman's move is not a takeover of the circuit and his priority is to finish the 2019-2020 campaign which ground to a halt to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

"This week will help us to finally begin the process of completing our season, following the most difficult period in our history," Cho told asiantour.com.

Australia's Wade Ormsby has led the order of merit since winning the Hong Kong Open in January 2020.

He will head a strong field for back-to-back events in Phuket which will also feature home favourite Jazz Janewattananond and American John Catlin, fresh off a top 10 finish in the \$9 million DP World Tour Championship in Dubai on Sunday.

Jazz, the 2019 order of merit champions, will be joined by



Asian Tour luminaries such as Scott Hend of Australia and Shiv Kapur of India in the 144-player field.

'Most lucrative season' Players will make the short journey next week to the Laguna Phuket Championship, followed by two more \$1 million events slated for Singapore in January to round off the longest season in Asian Tour history.

Both Thai events will be played in "bubble" conditions, without spectators, and players have to be fully vaccinated to compete.

Resuming play in Asia had been complicated by the variation in Covid rules across different countries.

But Thailand dropped its strict quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated visitors, allowing the Tour to stage the back-to-back tournaments in Phuket.

The 2022 season schedule is yet to be announced but will begin with the \$5 million Saudi

International in early February, which is not be part of 10-event series funded by the Norman-helmed LIV Golf Investments.

The company is majority owned by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, which was behind the recent takeover of Premier League football side Newcastle United.

The Gulf kingdom's move in to sport has brought allegations of "sportswashing" — buying positive publicity to distract from its human rights record.

But Cho said the new partnership would help the Asian Tour stabilise and recover from the impact of the Covid-19 shutdown.

"To have 10 tournaments with prize money above \$1 million each has basically never before been seen on the Asian Tour," Cho said. "It's very likely to be the Asian Tour's most lucrative season."

— AFP

# business

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making life easy

## Omantel test runs 5G mmWave technology



BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, NOV 23

Omantel has announced the completion of a 5G mmWave proof of concept (POC) trial for extended range under the supervision of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). This trial which concluded recently with Ericsson will enable the company to extend the coverage of 5G

mmWave to longer distances. Commenting on this, Talal al Maamari, Omantel's CEO said: "In every step we take, we are trying to help in making the life of the people in the Sultanate of Oman easier, simpler and more entertaining. We have enjoyed a long and successful partnership with Ericsson, and we add these latest trials to our many milestones of achievement.

TURN TO PAGE 15

## Capital Market Authority's investor and insurance services go digital

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, NOV 23

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has announced the successful roll-out of six electronic services to facilitate the delivery of services to investors, insurance policyholders and other stakeholders. The e-services are available via the Authority's website as well as mobile apps. They include a system for submitting complaints against companies operating in the insurance sector (insurance companies, brokers, agents and valuers of cancelled motor vehicles), a system for complaints against companies operating in the capital market sector (public joint stock companies and the companies operating in the field of securities) beside the other electronic services such as enquiries, whistleblowing, applications for assistance from the fund for assistance of the injured and heirs of the deceased and compensation for damage incurred in traffic accidents, as well as the service for calculation of the value of the cancelled vehicles. The complaints registration



service, one of the most popular among the CMA's e-services, underlines the Authority's commitment to safeguarding the rights of insurance policyholders and investors in the capital market. It enables customers to file their complaints electronically and attach all related statements and documents. The complainant receives a response in three working days unless the nature of the complaint requires more time. Whistleblowers too can go

online to alert the Authority about any wrongdoing or irregularity by companies operating in the capital market and insurance sectors. The service assures complete confidentiality. The CMA also enables customers to seek clarifications with regard to any procedures and services rendered by the Authority. Furthermore, a service for calculation of the value of cancelled vehicles was added to the website and mobile apps.

The service elicits information about the vehicle, first time buying value or insurance value, date and date of the accident and then informs the user of the value of compensation from the insurer. The Authority has also introduced an e-service for the benefit of users seeking assistance from a special fund for those injured in accidents. A platform for communication with insurance companies has also been established.



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## Pact to study safety and security at industrial cities

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn has signed an agreement with Salamati Group, represented by the International College of Engineering and Management, to enhance joint cooperation and expertise exchange, and boost public-private partnership efforts in related areas. The agreement, which was signed by Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn and Affan bin Khalfan al Akhzami, CEO of Salamati Group, aims at developing an integrated study on safety and security assessment in Madayn, its industrial cities, and the industrial units based at these cities.



Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company

Diam Haya

Member of Nama Group

### EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Project for the Regions (excluding Muscat and Musandam)

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) was established on 1st June 2021 by Royal Decree (131/2020).

The Company provides water & wastewater services to all governorates of Oman except Dhofar.

OWWSC recently implemented AMR/AMI projects in Muscat and Musandam Governorates and now is planning to expand the AMR/AMI coverage to the rest of the Sultanate's governorates.

OWWSC intends to issue a tender to appoint a qualified contractor to supply smart meters (AMR) along with the means of transferring the meter readings (AMI) to a meter data management system in order to provide a fully automated process of submitting daily meter readings and associated alarms to the billing system. The Company intends to install smart meters that have the facility feature to work in pre- and post-paid mode.

At this stage, the number of smart meters expected to be installed during within this two years project will be approximately 300,000. Ongoing growth in the number of customers connected to the network will add an additional 20,000 customers per year.

Interested companies (Local and International) with relevant experiences in the deployment of AMR projects and the associated communication systems are invited to email their expression of interest (EOI) along with evidence of experience [before 2:00 pm on Thursday 9th December 2021](mailto:tender@owwsc.nama.om) to [tender@owwsc.nama.om](mailto:tender@owwsc.nama.om).

For more details or clarification, please email to [tender@owwsc.nama.om](mailto:tender@owwsc.nama.om).

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# Al Mouj Muscat wins three awards for customer experience

**MUSCAT:** Al Mouj Muscat is celebrating the news that it has won three prestigious regional awards recognising the high standards of Customer Experience (CX) present throughout Oman's leading lifestyle destination.

The Best Voice of Customer (VoC) award in real estate and hospitality, Best Customer Journey Mapping Real Estate & Hospitality and CX Leader of the Year was announced at Customer Experience Live Middle East 2021, a two-day conference for organisations across the Middle East which took place this week at the Meyden Hotel in Dubai.

Featuring 50 keynote speakers who covered all aspects of CX, the event was attended by some 200 senior executives and business leaders including Al Mouj Muscat's Head of Customer Experience, Hawra al Lawati who was also invited to take part in a panel discussion on 'Reimagining CX by creating hype and excitement'. Hawra leads a team of 22 CX staff and has been instrumental in ensuring Al Mouj's approach to putting the customer first at every touch point is organisation-wide



and community-related.

Commenting on the award, she says: "As a representative of an organisation that wholly embraces the importance of exceptional customer experiences, it is an honour to have accepted this award on Al Mouj's behalf.

"Creating great moments every day is at the heart of everything we do and it is also at the centre of any sustainable approach

to improving the customer experience. It is why attending this conference and learning from experts in their field as well as the experiences of other brands and organisations from across our region sits so well with our culture of continual improvement."

Research carried out this year by CX Live shows that 82 per cent of organisations believe good CX customer service is the number

one differentiator of strong corporate performance and can drive organisational growth.

Also commenting on the new accolade is Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, who says: "It is an honour to have received this award and is an opportunity to celebrate how great customer service is now firmly embedded at the core of our identity.

"At Al Mouj Muscat our 7,000 residents live life together and as an organisation we have a collective desire to make truly excellent customer service a reality, at every customer touchpoint, every day. And we're not just talking about the sales process although the customer journey when it comes to owning a home here at Al Mouj Muscat is one we are particularly proud of.

"What is just as important are the interactions every member of our community has with another person every day, for example, the extra mile a security guard goes to help someone in need, the welcome our Community Hub staff give to any one of our 3.9 million annual visitors."



## Bank Nizwa signs financing pact with Emaar Industries

**MUSCAT:** Bank Nizwa recently signed a financing agreement with Emaar Industries. A 100-per cent Omani-owned SME, Emaar Industries will receive financing from Bank Nizwa which will fulfil the working capital requirements of the company. A highly revered manufacturing company located in the heart of the Samayil Industrial Estate with an investment above RO 5 million, Emaar Industries has shown steady growth since its incorporation in 2018.

Establishing itself as a market leader in producing fire rated isolation products such as sandwich panels, the company has bagged several small and large-scale construction projects in a short span of time. The financing from Bank Nizwa will provide the needed financial support to acquire machinery for the project

while covering a portion of the company's capital expenditures.

"The development of the SME sector is a driving force for industrialisation and plays a vital role in building the nation's economy. By empowering entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skill and financial capabilities to undertake key projects, Bank Nizwa has remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting SMEs through innovative Sharia compliant financial solutions," said Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

"As a bank that recognises key players in the sector and goes the extra mile to support SMEs that have the potential to contribute effectively to the industry, Bank Nizwa takes great pride in assisting Emaar Industries in its expansion plans as it scales new heights."

## BankDhofar conducts 51st National Day special prize draw

**MUSCAT:** Marking the glorious 51st National Day, BankDhofar conducted a special prize draw as part of the Savings Account Scheme with prizes worth a total of RO 59,000. The draw which was conducted as part of the National Day celebrations, saw 59 lucky winners take home RO 1,000 each.

The draw was held as part of the 51st National Day celebrations, held in Nizwa Fort with the attendance of Mohammed al Mukhaini, a well-known Omani media figure. Representing BankDhofar at the event was Iman al Amri, Executive Manager - Retail Products & Segments at BankDhofar. The Bank took part in the event as the main sponsor.

During the draw event, BankDhofar applied preventive measures including social distance and adhering to wearing face masks for the attendees to avoid the widespread of Covid-19.



Commenting on this glorious occasion and congratulating the winners, Iman al Amri, Executive Manager - Retail Products & Segments at BankDhofar, said: "The National Day is one of the dearest occasions for everyone living in the Sultanate of Oman, and we are proud to celebrate this joyous occasion with a

special prize draw. I would like to congratulate all the winners in this draw, and I encourage our customers to continue saving. The scheme is valid till the end of the year, and they might be the lucky winners in the coming draws."

With a total of RO 2.304 million, the scheme is valid till December 2021.

## Bank Muscat, Visa renew partnership to drive digital commerce in Oman

**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, and Visa, the world's leader in digital payments, has announced the renewal of their partnership.

An agreement was signed recently in the presence of Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, by Dr Saeeda Jaffar, Senior Vice-President and Group Country Manager, GCC region, Visa, and Amjad al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Cards and eBanking, Bank Muscat.

The visiting Visa delegation also presented an award to the bank for its leadership in developing Contactless PoS infrastructure in the Sultanate of Oman. Amjad al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Cards and eBanking, Bank Muscat, said: "As a pioneer in



launching innovative products and services to enhance customer experience, we are very pleased to continue partnering with Visa to rapidly roll out contactless payment infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman.

"This is greatly benefiting our customers and merchant partners alike. Contactless payments are highly secure and convenient, and will promote further innovation in other sectors, apart

from enhancing the convenience of making PoS payments quickly and securely."

Dr Saeeda Jaffar, Senior Vice-President and Group Country Manager, GCC region, Visa, said: "As the global leader in digital payments, our mission is to connect the world through the most innovative, reliable and secure payment network — enabling individuals, businesses and economies to thrive."

# Toyota Fortuner: Drive the thrill with exclusive benefits

**MUSCAT:** Toyota Fortuner — the rugged, powerful and impressively capable 4WD SUV — is one of the most dependable and popular SUVs in the Toyota range.

Customers interested in owning the Fortuner can look forward to exclusive benefits including 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance from RO 250 up to RO 300. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year.

The campaign is valid up to December 30, 2021. Visit the showroom for exact details

The Fortuner is available with Petrol Engines that include a 2.7-Litre Four Cylinder Engine producing 164 HP & 25.0 Kg-m of

Torque. The 4.0-Litre V6 Engine churns-out 235 HP along with 38.3 Kg-m of Torque.

The 6-speed Automatic Transmission, available as a standard option, provides thrilling acceleration.

The Fortuner is equipped with Comprehensive Safety Systems to protect its occupants. These include Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) that prevents the tyres from locking during braking.

The Fortuner is equipped with SRS Driver Airbag, SRS Front Passenger Airbag, Side Airbag, Curtain Airbag and SRS Knee Airbag (driver only).

In terms of seatbelts, a three-point Emergency Locking Retractor (ELR) seatbelts are



equipped. When impact is experienced during a collision, the seatbelt locks to restrain the passenger.

Other reassuring safety features include the Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and the Tyre

Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS).

Rugged and adroit, the Fortuner also is known for its high standards on the inside. Premium Leather Seats, Leather and Wood Finished Steering Wheel with

Paddle Shifts, Cool Glove Box, Cruise Control and a whole bunch of other goodies augment its interior ambience.

Toyota Fortuner has a powerful Air Conditioner. Other innovative touches include a Navigation System. The Rear View Camera ensures peace of mind when Reverse Parking. The 6-speaker Audio System enhances its harmonious ambience. And to add to the convenience, there is a Power Back Door System which adds to the sheer convenience.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions

and fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories.

Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the nationwide parts and service network of Saud Bahwan Automotive supports Toyota's outstanding product quality. No wonder that today Toyota is one of the most trusted and well-known brands.

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## Al Shawamikh celebrates 51st National Day



**MUSCAT:** Well-known local community contracting firm Al Shawamikh Oil Services held celebration to mark the 51st National Day of the Renaissance with the attendance of management executives and staff.

In a speech, Dr Aflah al Hadrami, CEO, paid tribute to the renewed renaissance under way under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The CEO also thanked the company's employees for their dedication and hard work which, he noted, would help Al Shawamikh Oil Services support the achievement of various sustainable development goals set out in Oman Vision 2040.

# Oman and South Korea to boost cooperation in green hydrogen space

**KEY PACT:** OQ and KOGAS Tech sign MoU for hydrogen technology industry and R&D; Dajeon Metropolitan City pledges support

**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, NOV 23

OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with KOGAS Tech aiming at exploring potential cooperation between the two parties in hydrogen-related opportunities.

The MoU ceremony was held at OQ headquarters in Muscat and was signed by OQ Group CEO Talal al Awfi, and by KOGAS CEO Cho Yong-Don.

Besides officials from OQ, the MoU signing was attended by Kim Chang Kyu, Ambassador of South Korea to the Sultanate of Oman and Dajeon's Vice Mayor of Science, Dr Myungsoo Kim.

The latter is currently visiting Muscat and meeting Omani



officials to discuss ways to further enhance cooperation on hydrogen production between the two countries.

The Sultanate of Oman is blessed with favourable wind and solar resources, making it one of the best countries to produce Green Hydrogen.

Alternative Energy is considered to be one of the

selective growth areas at OQ, and collaborations have been established in the past few months between OQ and world-class partners to explore potential opportunities in this evolving industry.

This partnership with KOGAS marks another major milestone in the future development of Green Hydrogen in the Sultanate of

Oman.

The Vice Mayor said: "By strengthening cooperation with OQ we hope to achieve our joint goal of establishing a Green Hydrogen economy. Dajeon Metropolitan City plans to maximize positive synergies by connecting Dajeon Metropolitan City's advanced Hydrogen R&D capabilities and

**The Sultanate of Oman is blessed with favourable wind and solar resources, making it one of the best countries to produce Green Hydrogen**

the Sultanate's strong position to produce Green Hydrogen. At Dajeon Metropolitan City, we are committed to further strengthening our cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman."

Talal al Awfi, OQ GCEO said, "In the Sultanate of Oman, we are blessed with an abundance of wind and solar energy. In line with global trends, the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a major shift towards production of green hydrogen and ammonia, and OQ is proud to be leading the efforts to harness green energy in the Sultanate of Oman."

This MoU with KOGAS Tech is a step towards expanding the knowledge, technological and research pool on Green Hydrogen and we are confident that this cooperation will lead to innovative solutions in this field."

## Nigeria should end fuel subsidy, speed reforms to boost growth: WB



A man walks past a promotional banner showing a photograph of a pile of Nigerian naira along a road in Lagos. — Reuters

**ABUJA:** Nigeria needs to end its costly petrol subsidy within the next three to six months and improve exchange-rate management to speed up reforms to boost growth, the World Bank said on Tuesday.

The petrol subsidy has cost Nigeria 864 billion naira (\$2.1 billion) in the first nine months of 2021, it said, up from 107 billion naira in 2020 and the highest deduction in six years, as rising oil prices increase the cost of imports.

Fiscal pressures are mounting for Nigeria due to lower-than-expected revenues in the wake of the rising petrol subsidy costs, the bank said in a report, urging bold reforms to boost income.

"The Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) subsidy is eroding Nigeria's limited fiscal space to provide essential services", it said. "Aggressive reform effort could contribute more to growth than a sustained period of high oil prices."

Nigeria has slipped on reforms started at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, the bank said, adding that growth rates will lag those of other emerging economies, unless the reform momentum is restored.

The World Bank revised Nigeria's GDP projection to 2.4 per cent this year, from 1.8 per cent earlier, after the economy grew just over 4 per cent in the third quarter, its fourth consecutive quarterly rise, following the

Covid-19-induced recession in 2020.

The World Bank said prospects for the economy have improved, but the recovery is fragile and urgent action is needed to reduce poverty arising from high inflation.

"Urgent priorities include reducing inflation, improving exchange-rate management eliminating the PMS subsidy and improving infrastructure", the report said. — Reuters

## Omantel test runs 5G mmWave technology

**FROM PAGE 13**

This trial is the first of its kind in the Middle East, yet it is the next step for us to provide an even richer 5G experience to our customers."

Abdullah al Balushi, Country Manager of Ericsson Oman, said: "This trial demonstrates how 5G mmWave technology can be leveraged to offer fiber like experience at larger distance, even in rural areas of Oman. 5G Macro deployment complemented with mmWave extended range will help Omantel meet the opportunity to develop and deploy 5G networks that can handle the increase in traffic and deliver the user experience they expect for consumers and business across the Sultanate of Oman."

Yousuf al Azizi, Omantel Senior Manager Technology Strategy, added: "This major milestone showcased coverage from mmWave at distance of 6.5 km from the cell site. This step redefines the perception of 5G mmWave spectrum as a low range high-density-only deployment 5G technology and offers new opportunities for broader 5G coverage facilitating

home broadband and many other use cases including rural as well as suburban environments.

The mmWave 5G trial using 4 component carriers showcased Gigabit speeds of 1.2 Gbps at up to 4 kms distance and holding up to 516 Mbps at 6.5 kms."

Through this trial, Omantel and Ericsson have showcased how increased bandwidth can help to deliver faster, higher-quality video, and multimedia content and services at larger distances using mmWave 5G, and the successful test paves the way for enhanced 5G capabilities for consumers and businesses across the Sultanate of Oman.

It will also open the door for new use cases, which will bring 5G benefits to homes and business everywhere, from urban to rural communities in the Sultanate of Oman.

For example, Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) installations using mmWave 5G can provide a cost-effective way to deliver fiber-like internet speeds wirelessly to institutions such as schools, hospitals and town halls, addressing some of the "last mile" challenges in rural areas, like remote education and healthcare.

## Oil prices fall on expected deal to tap emergency crude reserves

**MELBOURNE:** Oil prices dropped on Tuesday, reversing gains in the previous session, on growing talk the United States, Japan and India will release crude reserves to tame prices despite the threat of demand faltering as Covid-19 cases flare up in Europe.

The US Department of Energy is expected to announce a loan of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve on Tuesday, and will be coordinated with other countries, a Biden administration source familiar with the situation said.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 43 cents, or 0.6 per cent, to \$76.32 a barrel at 0128 GMT. Brent crude futures fell 30 cents, or 0.4 per cent, to \$79.40 a barrel.

Brent and WTI both rose 1 per cent on Monday on reports that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), Russia and their allies, together called Opec+, could adjust their plan to raise oil production if large consuming countries release crude from their reserves or if the pandemic dampens demand.

With talk of a coordinated



3D printed oil barrels and percentage symbols are seen in front of dollar banknotes in this illustration. — Reuters

crude release having succeeded in driving prices back below \$80 a barrel and an actual release only expected to have a temporary impact, analysts are turning their attention to the potential hit to demand from a fourth wave of Covid-19 cases in Europe.

"As Europe, and in particular

Eastern Europe, struggles to halt the spread of Covid-19, the risk of lockdown-like measures looms large", said Rystad Energy analyst Louise Dickson.

She said demand in November for road and jet fuel in Europe is expected to fall to 7.8 million barrels per day (bpd) from 8.1

million bpd in October, although part of that is a normal decline for this time of year.

"If a new wave of lockdowns are enacted in Europe, oil prices will not be spared during the remainder of the flu season in the North Hemisphere", Dickson said. — Reuters

# Powell is best person for finance’s worst job

BY GINA CHON

Jerome Powell’s renomination as chair of the Federal Reserve sets him up for a thankless task. If he moves quickly on raising rates, as traditional inflation measures suggest he ought to, he could cut off job creation, going against his word. If he moves too slowly, prices could keep going up. The only consolation is that given this unenviable job, Powell is still the safest bet.

The Fed’s biggest conundrum is what to do about inflation, a long-absent central-bank foe that has revived thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic. The consumer price index rose 6.2% in October year-over-year, the biggest jump since 1990. Supply-chain bottlenecks due to Covid-19 coupled with a jump in demand for goods have created economic imbalances.

Powell has said he would be patient on rate hikes, and the nomination of dovish Lael Brainard as his vice chair suggests the Fed will stick to that path. Both want to give the labour market more time to heal so that women and minorities benefit. The unemployment rate fell to 4.6% in October but the labour participation rate for Black workers and job seekers fell from September by 0.2 percentage points to 61.1%.

These groups, though, are at the sharp end of whatever course the Fed takes. If near-zero rates cause consumer prices to jump higher, more vulnerable populations will be hit hardest. Inequality is also likely to rise as asset prices do. Yet if employers respond to higher rates by slowing the pace of hiring, many non-working Americans won’t get the chance to enter the labour market.

To make things worse, the pandemic has also spurred unusual economic behaviour. Additional unemployment benefits expired in September. Yet that same month, a record 4.4 million people quit their jobs. Michigan’s consumer sentiment index fell to its lowest level since 2011 in November, but retail sales surged more than 16% in October year-over-year.

In such uncharted territory, Powell is at least the best person for the job, assuming the Senate is prepared to confirm him. He has already steered the Fed’s aggressive response to the pandemic and is honest about the fallibility of central bank assumptions.

The rise in the S&P 500 Index on Monday reflects that Powell is at least a known quantity, in an economy where known quantities are hard to come by. — Reuters

**The Fed’s biggest conundrum is what to do about inflation, a long-absent central-bank foe that has revived thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic**



BROKEN NOTE

Broken glass is placed over Turkish Lira banknote. Turkey’s lira nose-dived 8% on Tuesday after President Tayyip Erdogan defended recent sharp rate cuts, and vowed to win his “economic war of independence” despite widespread criticism and pleas to reverse course. The lira crashed to as low as 12.49 against the dollar after hitting records in the last 11 straight sessions. It has lost 40% of its value this year, including a near 20% tumble since the beginning of last week. — Reuters

# Growth to boost competitiveness



ANDY JALIL  
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THE GOVERNMENT SAID REGULATORS WOULD BE GIVEN A FURTHER OBJECTIVE TO “FACILITATE THE LONG-TERM GROWTH OF THE UK ECONOMY” ALONGSIDE THEIR EXISTING OBLIGATIONS

As part of a push to secure the UK’s status as a leading financial hub, the government will task financial competitiveness.

In a sweeping set of reforms launched last week designed to overhaul the regulatory regime shaping the financial district (known as the ‘City’) of London, the Government said regulators would be given a further objective to “facilitate the long-term growth of the UK economy” alongside their existing obligations.

The new rules will also subject regulators to tougher parliamentary scrutiny, which some will see as reining in the regulators’ independence. Under the proposals, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) will have to launch a wide-ranging review of their rules at the Treasury’s request if the Government believes the current regime is not “in the public interest”.

The City’s chief lobby group called on the Government to go even further in the severity of checks and balances on the FCA and PRA, likely leaving the regulators more than a little concerned.

Chief executive of TheCityUK, Miles Celic, said: “(We) urge the Chancellor to take this even further, committing to a regular independent review of the UK’s financial regulatory regime to ensure that the rules are proportionate and coherent.”

Other City bosses embraced the stepping up of accountability of the FCA and PRA. Policy chair at the City of London Corporation, Catherine McGuinness, said: “It is crucial that our regulatory system is agile and dynamic, we welcome the Chancellor’s proposals to strengthen scrutiny”.

Nikhil Rathi, the boss of the FCA, has already committed to building a more agile regulator that maintains the UK’s reputation as a “great place to do business”. However, the Bank of England has repeatedly urged the Government not to impose a formal competitiveness remit on regulators due to concerns it could trigger a return of softer regulation that partly led to the financial crisis.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said the shake up “will support the future strength of the UK as a global financial centre.” The proposals sparked concerns in the City that the FCA and the PRA will struggle to meet the demands due to perceived underfunding.

Tim Dolan, a partner at Reed Smith, said, “without adequate resources the regulators cannot make the UK’s regulatory framework succeed in the nimble and competitive manner that the Treasury may envisage.”

Meanwhile, on the matter of growth, figures show business output growth fell for the sixth consecutive month as businesses face labour shortages and soaring energy

prices. Output growth has hit the lowest level since March, when Britain was in the depth of lockdown, according to accountancy firm BDO’s latest output index.

The index, which looks at the manufacturing and service sectors, dropped 105.23 points in September to 103.35 in October.

Supply chain chaos has been especially tough for manufacturing, which saw its output growth fall by 2.09 points to hit 97.03 in October.

The 95-mark separates growth and decline. A slowdown in the services sector was driven by staff shortages, with output dropping 1.85 points to 104.15 in October.

The end of the furlough scheme at the end of September caused the firm’s employment index to drop for the first time since January. The employment index fell 1.13 points to 107.65 in October.

Kaley Crossthwaite, partner at BDO, said: “Businesses are facing an increasingly difficult winter. Between rising inflation and a lack of staff, 2022 could be a difficult year for companies, who have been forced to prioritise short-term problems over long-term growth.

Against this backdrop, consumers have also started to see the impact of shortages in rising fuel and energy costs — potentially limiting spending. *(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)*

# Scoping out corporate carbon neutrality



GEOFFREY HEAL

The author is Professor of Social Enterprise at Columbia Business School

In the run-up to this year’s United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), a growing number of companies hopped on the sustainability bandwagon, declaring commitments to achieve carbon neutrality — net-zero carbon-dioxide emissions — by mid-century.

And among the many ambitious announcements to come out of COP26 is that almost 500 financial-services firms have “agreed to align \$130 trillion — some 40% of the world’s financial assets — with the climate goals set out in the Paris agreement, including limiting global warming to 1.5°C.”

But many commentators have been sceptical about such proclamations, suggesting that they

amount to greenwashing.

Critics point to corporations’ heavy reliance on “offsetting”, which has become an increasingly important — and controversial — issue in the broader climate debate.

So great is the confusion about what is real and what is not that the Taskforce on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets, led by UN Special Envoy for Climate Action and Finance Mark Carney, has established a new governance committee to review corporate emissions pledges.

The sceptics are right to be concerned about the use of offsets. The world needs to get to net-zero by mid-century, and it cannot do that with offsets. Companies buy offsets precisely so that they can continue emitting greenhouse gases

(GHGs) while claiming that their emissions are zero, net of the offsets.

The very existence of an offset means that the purchaser’s emissions are not zero. But not all offsets are alike. The critics focus on offsets in which one company or country pays another to reduce emissions and then claims the reduction as its own.

This is the kind of offset that cannot be allowed if the world as a whole is to get to zero emissions.

There is a place, however, for offsets generated by removing GHGs from the atmosphere, for example by direct air capture or forest growth. If a company emits 100 tonnes of CO2 and then removes the same amount, its net emissions really are zero. If all companies do this, the world as a whole will achieve net-zero emissions.

True, the recourse to forestry requires a cautionary note.

Growing trees raises issues of both additionality and permanence — additionality because it is hard to be sure that the forest growth would not have occurred anyway, and permanence because there is a risk that the forest will burn, a problem that has grown more visible and severe in recent years. Still, offsets can play a positive role. The costs of reducing GHG emissions, and the willingness and ability to pay for such reductions, vary greatly from country to country, depending on the sources of its emissions and its stage of development.

Some countries may not be willing or able to pay for an expensive reduction in emissions at home but could still pay for

less costly reductions abroad. When this happens, an offset market can facilitate a reduction in emissions that would not otherwise have occurred, or that would not occur without a policy that penalises CO2 emissions. In this case, offsets may be useful at least in moving the world closer to net-zero emissions.

But to reach the finish line, they will have to be phased out at some point. There ultimately is no place for offsets in a zero-emissions world.

In the meantime, policymakers and business leaders would do well to attend to a related issue that has been neglected: The failure to distinguish between so-called scope-one, scope-two, and scope-three emissions.

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## Peter Jackson's 'Get Back' finds joy in final days of the Beatles

"THE BEATLES: GET BACK," the eagerly awaited new Disney+ documentary from Peter Jackson, aims to dispel persistent myths about the Fab Four's breakup, offering a more positive take on their final months as a band.

The three-part series finds John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr in January 1969, preparing for their first concert in more than two years.

Using hours of unseen archive footage, it charts how the Beatles had set out to write and record 14 new songs for the occasion, giving themselves a deadline of just three weeks.

The time period is familiar territory for viewers of "Let It Be," the 1970 documentary from British director Michael Lindsay-Hogg that



famously emphasised tensions and acrimony within the band, which split that same year.

But Jackson — best known for his "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, and an avowed Beatles obsessive — does not dwell on arguments and creative disagreements among the Liverpool quartet.

"Get Back" attempts to reshape

the popular image of their later years as a time of resentment and fracture, instead showing the bandmates joking around and spontaneously creating classics that are still played regularly today.

"The best bit of us always has been, and always will be, when we're backs against the wall," says a young McCartney in the film, which hits

Disney+ from Thursday.

Jackson's series contains the Beatles' final public appearance together: a 40-minute concert on the roof of their company building on London's Savile Row — shown here for the first time ever in its entirety.

That company — Apple Corps — granted Jackson some 60 hours of archival video that had remained under lock and key for decades.

"I think there's always been this misconception that my father was the cause of the Beatles breaking up, and he wasn't," McCartney's daughter Stella said at a Los Angeles event for the series.

"You can see it very clearly through this amazing insight of unseen footage."

Her father remained "heartbroken" over the Beatles' breakup for "most of my life," as is clear from the series, she added.

"You just see him desperately wanting to keep this alive and wanting to make this work and his brotherhood to stay intact." — AFP



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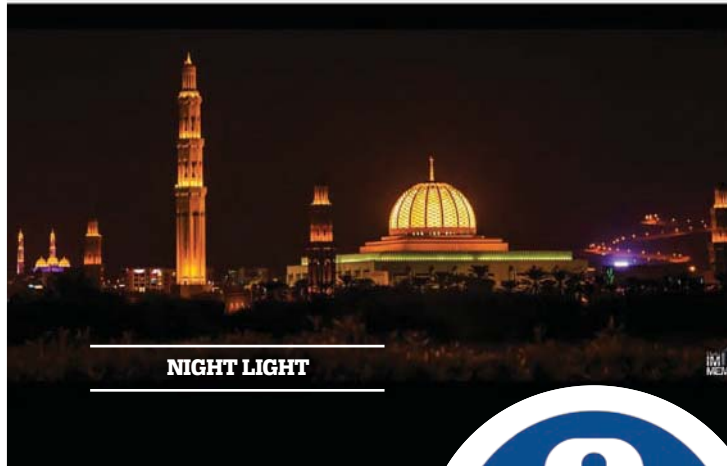
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## AROUND THE WORLD

### ENTERTAINMENT

## Meet the Sultanate's first baby African Penguin at Oman Aquarium



**CUTENESS ALERT!** Oman Aquarium, located in Mall of Muscat, Al Mabella, recently welcomed its first baby penguin and is now inviting visitors over to meet the new member in the family. The baby penguin was born at the first and only indoor public aquarium in the Sultanate of Oman on September 9, 2021.

The baby penguin belongs to the African Penguins species that originate from the rocky South-Western coast of Africa. With this very complex and delicate feat, Oman Aquarium,



now has a colony of 12 African Penguins. The species are also known as Black Foot Penguins.

During the first few weeks following its birth, the baby penguin was kept under the constant care of its parents and aquarium caretakers. The Black Foot Penguins are an endangered species, and every birth boosts the survival of such species across the world. Visitors can learn more about this breed of penguins at the aquarium.

"We are extremely thrilled to welcome the new member to the colony of penguins in Oman Aquarium. The African Penguins are an endangered species, and we are proud to play an active role in the efforts to protect them," says Mahmood al Jarwani, Chairman of Tamani Trading & Entertainment LLC, the Operator of Oman Aquarium.

Head over to Oman Aquarium to meet the adorable baby penguin. The aquarium is open from 10 am to 10 pm on weekdays and till 11:00 pm on weekends.

### TRAVEL TALE

## London's Big Ben to show fresh face to ring in New Year



**BIG BEN'S DIALS** will emerge from a shroud of scaffolding in time for the world famous clock to perform its most important annual role — ringing in the New Year for thousands on the streets of London and millions more watching on television.

The clock tower of Britain's Houses of Parliament has been hidden for three-and-a-half years while hundreds of crafts people repaired masonry, replaced metalwork and repainted and regilded in the biggest restoration since it was built in 1859.

Nick Sturge, project manager for Sir Robert McAlpine's special projects, said removing the scaffolding was a "massive milestone" in the £79.7 million (\$107 million) project.

"By New Year people will start to see a big difference; they'll start to get their tower back," he said. "The roofs will be fully visible along with the four clock faces."

Big Ben, the largest and most accurate four-faced chiming clock when it was built, is a symbol of London and Britain's parliamentary democracy around the world, as well as being one of the most photographed sites in the city.

The restoration includes replacing all of the panels on the clock faces using and-blown glass, Sturge said. The dials' hands, numerals and other details have been repainted bright blue rather than the black long familiar to Londoners.

### BLUE COLOUR SCHEME

Sturge said an early water-colour showed a blue colour scheme, which was confirmed

by paint analysis that discovered the first coat was Prussian blue.

"It's really striking," he said. "When you stand on the street it's a really nice nod to the past."

The floral emblems of the four parts of the United King-

dom — the thistle, shamrock, leek and rose — have been repainted in the colours of Charles Barry's original design for the tower, which was re-named after Queen Elizabeth in 2012.

The 12 bells from the Great Bell — the origin of the name Big Ben — that will mark the turning of the year will be powered by an electric motor. The original Victorian clock mechanism will take over again when the bells resume their familiar pattern of chiming every quarter and striking every hour in the spring.



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Alex Jeffrey, one of three

clockmakers at the Palace of Westminster, the parliament building's official name, said the clock had been transported to Cumbria, in northwestern England, to be disassembled and rebuilt.

"Everything has been re-

stored to its original spec," he said. "It's a lot of kit — 11-and-a-half tonnes. To give you an example, one of the hands weighs about 305 kilogrammes (672 lbs) and the minute hand is 14 feet long (4.3 metres)."

The one dial showing the time when the scaffolding comes down is electric-driven, but all four dials will be run by the original gravity powered clock again in the spring.

"It is famously accurate," he said. "The Great Clock is designed extremely well and it's accurate to one second to the first strike of each hour."

— Reuters

### A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

## Do not deceive yourself!

**WHEN WE INTERACT** with people around us, whether it is with our family or our neighbourhood, even with the community at large, no one wants to be seen as a liar. Quite simply, liars are considered untrustworthy at best and immoral at worst. However, we are perfectly satisfied with lying to ourselves all the time!

A person may say to himself: I love my work; who cares that I keep complaining about it? Or even - ironically - to say - I'm always true to myself. What I mean is that somehow everyone is fooling themselves, but that doesn't make him harmless. If we take the advanced levels of self-deception, for example, you will find that it is associated with poor mental health. While at moderate levels, self-deceptionists can temporarily protect against bad feelings, but they can still be a barrier to the profound well-being that comes from living with integrity. To be truly happy, we must learn to be completely honest with ourselves!

And here we may see it in our reality, that at times some people engage in self-deception to protect their vanity or to gather courage for themselves. For instance, if public speaking isn't your forte, you might try to bolster your courage before a scary presentation by saying: I'm a great public speaker! while looking at the businessman, he will still convince himself that his hard-line plan is a great idea! This is perhaps the same as that fake to make something forever, especially if your success at work or school resulted from cheating or preferential treatment but you chose to put it back to your own merit...is not it?

And here we must realise a very critical point, which is that these self-deceptions will delay the changes we need to make and incite our lies to others. Indeed, self-deception is a classic method of manipulative persuasion. Indeed, don't you see with me that when people are tasked with making a cer-

tain argument, they will fully resist hearing other words to the contrary? In other words, the salesman who tells you that the Mercedes - for example - you are looking at is the best car ever... has convinced himself that!

So let me ask you, what about your long-term happiness? Living in a cave of lies may be comforting, but it is like experiencing bliss at the end of a cigarette: it will never lead you to the deepest satisfaction. It is more important to believe that this conviction can only be found in the true version of yourself. This self-deception of reality is linked to the inability to see our flaws, which makes self-improvement more difficult. As such, refusing to admit that you are a little nervous may make you feel better in the moment, but it will also discourage you from making those efforts to change for the benefit of yourself and those around you in the long term.

And so each of us has to decide: Do I want the whole truth, no matter where it leads? If you are ready to give it a try, I advise you to start with small acts of defiance against your self-deception until you feel it. Maybe you can ask yourself this question: What are people most likely laughing behind my back? Make a list of your weaknesses or personal moves, and imagine yourself laughing at them too! And here you will undoubtedly find that this exercise has created relief from acknowledging something you felt the need to hide and trusting your true self and everything.

In the end, keep asking yourself questions like these: Do I prefer having people laugh behind my back or with me? Do I really want something I didn't have? Indeed, the honest path is not easy, but you can be sure day by day that you will be proud to say that the person who appears in the mirror tomorrow is not a liar and that's the fact!

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



# Giving in to the call of Via Ferrata

BY YERU EBUEN

The Sultanate of Oman is well-positioned in the Middle East as an exciting destination for different outdoor adventures. Ranking high in the global security index as one of the safest countries to live in and with a boost from Lonely Planet as a must-visit country for 2022, the easing of travel restrictions will drive traffic to the Sultanate of Oman in the years to come.

Of the many different outdoor activities, abseiling and hiking through the via Ferrata are two that I have postponed trying until this weekend. Given the right support, gears and group to join, it's one of the most fun and exhilarating experiences one can ever try I regretted prolonging joining this kind of excursion.

As of today, the Sultanate of Oman boasts about half a dozen different locations to do this adventure. From the scenic cliffs of Jabal Al Akhdhar to the intimidating peaks of Jabal Shams, the choice is definitely up to your stamina and strength.

For my first foray, I decided to join the Explore and Challenge Adventure Group spearheaded by Abdullah al Mabsali. Coordinated by a close friend and fellow outdoor adventure enthusiast Rumpa Mitra, we were told that being the shorter version, it will cover a 3 km distance that will be completed in 4 to 6 hours and will be comprised of an easy walk for 15 minutes, 35 metres abseiling and the via Ferrata rated as medium in the difficulty level.

Costing RO 10, the adventure group provided the abseiling kit, set up the ropes and harness to be used and provided coaching as we went through the different phases of the adventure.

Departing Muscat at 5:30 in the morning, we reached Jabal Shams nearly at 9 am and parked a few metres from the viewing deck of the Jabal Shams Balcony point.

The hike took us down a slope leading towards a wadi with a man-made dam collecting rainwater at the opposite end of our destination. The hiking paths are unmarked and lead towards a cliff overlooking one of the best spots in Jabal Shams. A deep pool filled with rainwater was framed perfectly by big rocks and some vegetation at the bottom.

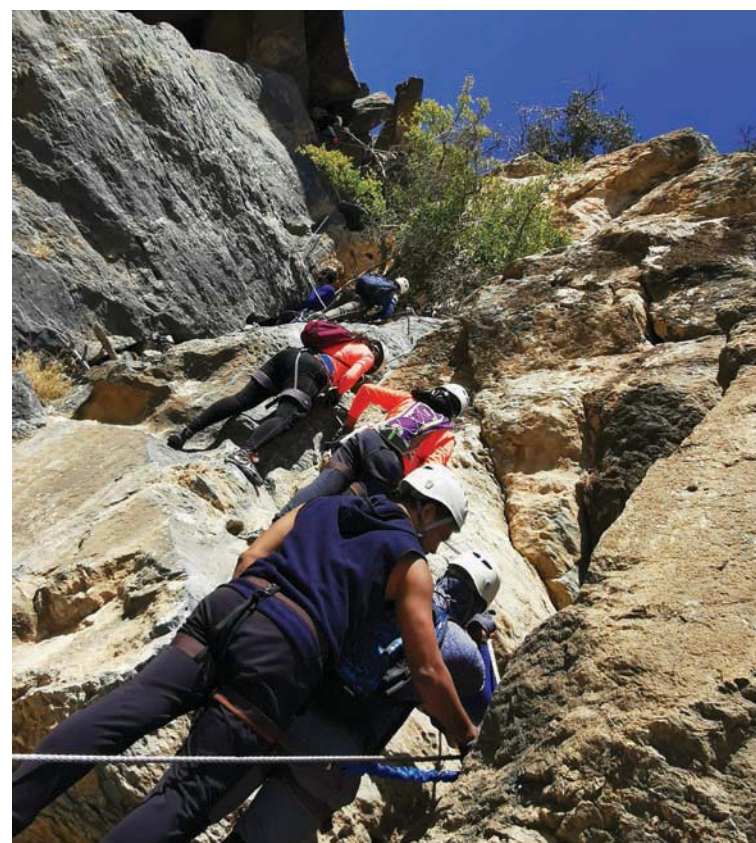
After securing the abseiling ropes, the descent was disarming for first-timers which was half of the group. Abdullah has been managing his Explore and Challenge group for nearly five years and along with the experience came patience. They encouraged everyone not to be intimidated by the height and assured that they are safely guided by the rope. Offering some coaching as to feet placement and overcoming the slight curve on the abseiling section, everyone reached the ground safely.

After abseiling, the view from where we were perched was breathtaking. It faced the section of Jabal Shams' deep canyons and made for good photos. After a few minutes of rest, we started going back up through the Via Ferrata.

With the iron cables securely nailed to the cliff, it provided the much-needed lifeline to safely navigate the cliffs. Via Ferrata is a global phenomenon that allows many explorers to see some of the best spots all over the world in a different light.

The adventure team offered several insights on how to navigate the iron cables. The Via Ferrata cable set comes with two screw gates attached to the harness. We were told to always make sure that the two screw gates are attached with one under and the other over for safety purposes.

We made slow and steady progress climbing up relying on protruding rocks and a few steel steps nailed into the rocks. After 30 minutes, everyone was back on top of the cliff. For those with acrophobia or fear of heights, this is not an adventure for you. A 13-year-old kid also did so well in doing the different phases of adventures which means that for



most adults, it is also something that you can do.

Overall, my first time doing abseiling and via Ferrata was a memorable experience, one that I would highly encourage everyone else of sound mind and fit body to do. Before you jump to more challenging locations however like the Via Ferrata Located at the Balcony

Walk near Sab Bani Khamis, test out your endurance first or your capacity to handle pressure dangling on the side of the cliff. The key was always not to panic.

For an introduction to abseiling and via Ferrata, you can reach out to Abdullah through their Instagram [@exploreandchallenge](https://www.instagram.com/exploreandchallenge).