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DUQM TO HOST INTERNATIONAL TENT PEGGING TRADITIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FROM DEC 2

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AL SHARQIYA AVIATION TAKES DELIVERY OF FIVE-BLADED HELICOPTER

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ANOTHER THREAD IN OMAN'S RICH ARTISTIC MULTI-CULTURAL TAPESTRY

MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO CZECH PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Milos Zeman of the Czech Republic on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Zeman and the friendly people of his country further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

FIRST DAIRY PROJECT FOR CAMEL MILK

The countdown has begun for the start of the first phase operations of the Al Morooj dairy project. The project is all set to take-off November with the distinction of the first dairy project to produce camel milk commercially in the Sultanate. It is expected to support livestock breeders by purchasing their products directly. The project's production capacity is 18,000 litres of cow and camel milk per day and 6 million litres annually. According to officials, there will be three collection centres at three locations in Dhofar - Zeek, Ghado and Hajee - where raw milk from the breeders will be received in the morning and evening. Each centre will be equipped with stalls for receiving, checking and weighing milk.

DETAILS ON P3

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GERMANY PLAYS ISRAEL FOR OUTLAWING PALESTINIAN NGOS

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UK REPORT SLAMS FAILURE OF COVID TRACING

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CENTRE-STAGE IN THE CRICKET WORLD



Under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman Post in collaboration with Oman Cricket, issued a new stamp commemorating the Sultanate of Oman hosting its first ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021. The historic occasion marks the Sultanate of Oman's rise in cricket on-and-off the field after hosting the curtain raiser among other matches for this international event on Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat. **DETAILS ON P3**

More rain likely in many wilayats

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

A number of wilayats in the north of the Sultanate of Oman witnessed rains of varying amounts as formations of cumulus clouds poured in over the Governorate of Musandam and the coast of the Sea of Oman since early morning on Wednesday.

Rains were reported in the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Muscat and South Al Sharqiyah.

The Directorate-General of Meteorology, forecasts that rains will continue on Thursday and cloudy conditions prevail over the coastline of Musandam and the wilayats overlooking the Sea of Oman.

"The expanding of shortwave from the trough which is far away



from the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to the presence of cold air over warm sea creates conditions for isolated rains over parts of coastal areas of Oman Sea. All these parameters created ideal condition for rains," said the weather forecaster at the Met Office, Civil Aviation Authority.

The general weather forecast

stated clear to partly cloudy skies over Musandam Governorate and the coastal areas of Oman Sea with chances of isolated rain and mainly clear skies over most of the country with chances of cloud development and isolated rain with occasional thundershowers over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas.

Pact signed to make space, logistic panels

DUBAI: ETCO signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Italian firm D-Orbit to make space and logistic panels in the Sultanate of Oman.

The pact was inked on the sidelines of the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the International Astronautical Congress 2021 being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The MoU provides for the establishment of a plant to make small and medium space logistic panels through the transfer

Signs of first planet outside galaxy

WASHINGTON: Astronomers have detected signs of the first planet transiting a star outside of the Milky Way galaxy.

The unique discovery, led by Nasa's Chandra X-ray Observatory, opens up a new window to search for exoplanets at greater distances than ever before.

Exoplanets, which are planets located outside the solar system, have been a source of help to understand the conditions beyond the system. Until now, astronomers have found all other known exoplanets and exoplanet candidates in the Milky Way



galaxy, almost all of them less than about 3,000 light years from Earth. An exoplanet in M51 would be about 28 million light years away.

The possible exoplanet candidate is located in the spiral galaxy Messier 51 (M51).

"We are trying to open up a whole new arena for finding other worlds by searching for planet candidates at X-ray wavelengths, a strategy that makes it possible to discover them in other galaxies," said Rosanne Di Stefano of the Centre for Astrophysics at Harvard & Smithsonian in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

— dpa

Sultanate's role in 'Health for Peace initiative' commended

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) strategic plans will be in harmony with the Sultanate of Oman's 10th Five-Year Plan for health development 2021-25 and Oman Vision 2040 and there will be increased coordination and cooperation to achieve them, according to the WHO Representative to the Sultanate.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Country Office Coordination Meeting with the Ministry of Health (MoH) Operational Planning for Biennium 2022-2023 held under the auspices of Dr Fatma al Ajmi, Under-Secretary for Administration, Finance and Planning Affairs and Dr Mohammed al Hosani, Under-Secretary for Health Affairs at the ministry, and in the presence of other officials of the ministry, Dr Jean Yaacoub Jabbour, WHO Country Representative, said that country operational planning for biennium 2022-2023 works to ensure Sultanate of Oman's contribution towards implementation of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW13) to achieve the triple billion goals.

"Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW13) that works to achieve the triple billion goals include one billion people benefit from universal health coverage; one billion



Thirteenth General Programme of Work works to achieve the triple billion goals including one billion people to benefit from universal health coverage

DR YAACOUB
WHO Country Representative

better protected from health emergencies; and one billion people enjoy better health and wellness," said Dr Jabbour.

Dr Jabbour lauded the Sultanate of Oman as a pioneer and a very close example in terms of the exemplary work the country has carried out in the "Health for Peace initiative" which it launched in partnership with Switzerland and the World Health Organisation in 2019.

TURN TO P2



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WINTER MIGRATION OF BIRDS BEGINS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

The natural reserves in the Sultanate of Oman have been currently witnessing the arrival of migratory birds from Europe, West, and East Asia, which also marks the beginning of the winter migration season. More than 400 species of migratory birds are expected to visit until the end of February, and they constitute more than 80 per cent of the 532 species of birds recorded and counted in the Sultanate of Oman. The head of the Wetlands Management Department at the

Environment Authority said that the Sultanate of Oman's environment, especially the marine environment, is fertile and provides abundant food for these birds. There are 70 sites in the Sultanate that have been identified as important areas for bird migration. The official added that birds come to the Sultanate of Oman via East Africa and Central Asia, which is the second-largest path in the world for bird migration. The Sultanate of Oman has established a number of laws to preserve wildlife, including to international and regional agreements to preserve and sustain various bird species.



Pact signed to make space, logistic panels

FROM P1
... more competitive and more diversified economy.
Dr Saud bin Humaid al Shuaili, Head of Space Programmes at the ministry, said that partnership between the government and private sectors furnishes a proper environment for the attraction of investments in the field of space. "The ministry's support to this agreement seeks to activate the Digital Economy Programme," he said.
Meanwhile, Ammar al Rawahi, Director of Astro and Space Technologies at ETCO,

said that the output of the partnership with D-Orbit will cover the needs of the market in the region and open vistas for further space techs, but the greatest gain will be the development of national cadres with international expertise in space industries. On his turn, Luca Rossetini, Chief Executive Officer at D-Orbit, expressed his delight at the Sultanate of Oman's joining as a partner in space applications industries in the Middle East. It will enable the Sultanate of Oman to become an active contributor to the new space economy. — ONA



WHO praises Sultanate's role in 'Health for Peace initiative' in Middle East

FROM P1
This initiative aims to achieve cooperation and solidarity for peacekeeping, especially in the Middle East, and seeks to advance the international strategy for harnessing health in bringing points of view and contributing to resolutions to various conflicts.
"Our aim is to be relevant in every country, result-focused, technical, and ahead of the curve. Challenges are seen as best practices, providing further opportunities to learn and improve WHO's ways of working at country level," said Dr Jabbour.
WHO's transformation agenda focuses on enhancing country impact through coordinated support across the three levels of the organisation to deliver on WHO's health mandate. It also emphasises the importance of focused support that is based on country contexts, in view of the rapidly changing global health environment.
"The Covid-19 pandemic has constituted a turning point in the



health work agenda around the world, including the Sultanate of Oman, and has cast a shadow over progress in achieving sustainable development goals. So, it has become imperative for any operational plan in the health sector to seek to restore the path. Thus, it works to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," he said.
Every two years, WHO country offices develop their operational plans based on the organisation's general programme of work.

"WHO's support aims to accelerate country actions needed to achieve the core goals of WHO's transformation as set out in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023," adds Dr Jabbour.
Jabbour further reaffirmed said that the importance of planning with a clear recognition of the country's context and needs, and reaffirmed WHO country office commitment to support the country's health programme and its aspiration to further enhance health issues despite all emerging challenges.

The high technical level meeting between the WHO Country Office and the MoH to develop and validate the key priorities for the organisation's 2022-2023 biennial Operational Work Plan aimed to facilitate and strengthen ongoing strategic discussions towards aligning the organisation's two years activities with the health priorities of the government of the Sultanate.
This is further operationalised through the WHO EMR Regional Vision 2023 "Health for All by All" and the WHO the Sultanate of Oman Country Cooperation Strategy.

In brief

■ KHASAB

15-YEAR-OLD KILLS HIS TWO SISTERS, INJURES MOTHER

A 15-year-old boy stabbed to death his two younger sisters and caused a serious injury to his mother in the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate on Wednesday. The mother's condition is stable. "Two girls were stabbed by their 15-year-old brother, and their mother was seriously injured. Her health is stable. The incident took place in the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate, and the case is under investigation," Royal Oman Police, (ROP) said in a statement.

■ MUSCAT

SC CHAIRMAN MEETS PARTICIPANTS

Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, on Wednesday met the participants of the 9th National Defence Course, led by Air Vice Marshal Saleh bin Abdullah al Maskari, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC). During the meeting, the participants were familiarised with the Supreme Court's prerogatives. They were also briefed on the competencies, specialisations, progress and achievements of the Administrative Affairs Council for the Judiciary. The participants toured the Supreme Court's premises and facilities.

GCC SUPREME MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETS

The GCC Supreme Military Committee of Chiefs of Staff held its meeting via video-conferencing. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis Al Raesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). The meeting discussed topics related to enhancing the march of cooperation among GCC countries in various military fields. The outcomes of the discussions will be submitted at the GCC Joint Defence Council's meeting of Ministers of Defence.

30 STUDENTS TO GET SCHOLARSHIP

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences, the Ministry of Education and Petroleum Development Oman signed a cooperation agreement in the field of education and scholarships through the localisation of teaching jobs. "The University of Technology and Applied Sciences, the Ministry of Education and Petroleum Development Oman signed a cooperation agreement in the field of education and scholarships through the localisation of teaching jobs in remote areas by financing 30 scholarships for students who obtained a general education diploma for the academic year," a statement said.

Oman Post unveils stamp on ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 27

A new stamp commemorating Oman hosting its first ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 was unveiled by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday. The stamp released by Oman Post in collaboration with Oman Cricket marks the Sultanate of Oman's rise in cricket on-and-off

the field after hosting the curtain raiser among other matches for this international event at the lush grass of the Oman Cricket Academy Ground at Al Amerat.

Established in 2012, the 4,000-capacity venue enjoys picturesque views of Al Hajar Mountains, and has also witnessed many One Day International (ODI) and Twenty20 International (T20I) tournaments to date.

The special stamp valued at RO



1 features an image of a cricket player swinging his bat, as well as the logos of the tournament and Oman Cricket. In addition, the stamp's sheet features images of the hosting ground of Oman Cricket Academy, alongside the Sultanate of Oman's flag and those of the participating nations. Once the new stamp is available for order or purchase, Oman Post will make an announcement on its social media platforms.

■ MOU INKED FOR BUILDING 35 HOUSES IN AL KHABOURAH



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dar Al Attaa Association (DAA) to fund building 35 housing units for citizens whose houses were damaged by Cyclone Shaheen in the Governorate of North Al Batinah. The ministry will provide the layout for the new houses, which will be built on areas far from wadis. The ministry will also provide the designs for the houses and will supervise their construction. The move comes as part of the ministry's initiative to build 328 housing units for citizens affected by Shaheen. The MoU was signed by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and Maryam bint Issa al Zedjali, Chairperson of DAA.

Omani scientist elected as secretary of IAS



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 27

Dr Khalid bin Hameed al Rasadi, Director of the Medical Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and President of Oman Society of Lipid and Atherosclerosis (OSLA), has been elected as Secretary of the 2022-2024 Board of the International Atherosclerosis Society (IAS).

This is the first time that a member from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been elected as a member of the IAS board. Al Rasadi has been elected in recognition of his great contributions to education and training in the field of lipid and atherosclerosis on the local, regional and international levels. The International Atherosclerosis Society (IAS) was founded in 1979 and comprises 67 national organisations that are active in 57 countries.

Dr Khalid al Rasadi was born in the Sultanate of Oman where he studied medicine and obtained his Medical Degree in 1998. He obtained his postgraduate training in Medical Biochemistry at McGill University in Canada during 2002-2006. He spent another two years in Canada, working as scientist at the Royal Victoria Hospital, McGill University, under the supervision of Prof Jacques Genest.

Al Morooj Dairy to begin in Nov

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnassri

The countdown has begun for the start of the first phase operations of Al Morooj Dairy Company. The project, which is all set to take off in November, will be the first project in the Sultanate of Oman to produce camel milk commercially.

It is expected to support livestock breeders by purchasing their products directly. The project's production capacity is 18,000 litres of cow and camel milk per day and 6 million litres annually.

According to officials, there will be three collection centres at three locations in Dhofar — Zeek, Ghado and Hajeeef — where raw milk from the breeders will be received in the morning and evening. Each



centre will be equipped with stalls for receiving, checking and weighing milk.

The milk received will be put immediately in cooling equipment and cold milk collection tanks. In addition, there would be provision for a laboratory and a computer programme to receive and record milk.

The received milk will undergo an examination with

THE PROJECT, WHICH IS ALL SET TO TAKE OFF IN NOVEMBER, WILL BE THE FIRST PROJECT IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN TO PRODUCE CAMEL MILK COMMERCIALY

an advanced technology called (Milkoscreen) to assess the milk's quality validity.

The project aligns with the Sultanate of Oman's focus on strengthening the national economy by supporting local projects to meet the increasing demand for dairy and its derivatives.

The Sultanate of Oman's fresh milk production increased by 115 per cent between 2019 and 2020, as data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that local production of fresh dairy rose from 100,000 tonnes in 2019 to 215,000 tonnes in 2020.

The credit goes to Mazoon Dairy, which started production in 2017. The company expects its milk production will reach 202 million litres by 2026 and 985 million litres by 2040.

OCCI discusses truck ban

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Dhahirah discussed the decision to stop the movement of trucks on the Suhar-Yanqul road. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Tuesday decided to stop the

movement of trucks (weighing seven tonnes and above) on the Suhar-Yanqul road from November 1.

This decision was taken to reduce traffic accidents and the ministry urged trucks to use the alternative dual carriageway roads.

The OCCI members, led by Saif bin Saeed al Badi, head of the branch in Al Dhahirah, discussed the move to stop the

movement of trucks on the Suhar road.

It called for the decision to be reconsidered due to its negative impact on the land transport and logistics sector and the movement of trade exchange between the governorates of Al Dhahirah and North Al Batinah, which might lead to an increase in the cost of freight as well as the time to deliver goods.

شركة النماء للدواجن ش.م.ع
A' Namaa Poultry Co. S.A.O.C

Job Opportunities

A'Namaa Poultry is an integrated poultry project, using state of the art technologies in the market for all the project components, to produce a high- quality poultry meat. A'Namaa Poultry currently seek to application for the following position by national candidates to joint A'Namaa Poultry team.

No.	Job Title	Number of Position
1	HR AND ADMIN MANAGER	1

For more details and to apply, kindly log to <https://foodjobs.om>
Last date for receiving applications will be on 7 Nov 2021.

COVID-19 TO SPEED UP RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

@patkaushal

With the tourism trend tilted in favour of the hospitality sector, the pandemic has left many unanswered questions for hospitality operators. The first and foremost is how to get into responsible tourism, which is very close to sustainable tourism. The catastrophe the world witnessed in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic will live long, directly in the memory of four generations, which experienced it and among the generations to come through the pages of history. This may prove to be a catalyst for responsible tourism.

It will be a great reminder for everyone that many of the practices in the hospitality sector are not sustainable. The pandemic has allowed everyone to cut down on what is not needed. It took years for the people to understand that “less is more”.

Where exactly we missed and what is making us rethink?

Hena Pandey, an environmentalist and a social activist involved in education, and promotion of oriental products, says: “We missed in our own speed and greed. Hardly we knew that we were speeding. It has become our way of life. We were competing for nothing. We ignored the sufferings of our neighbours and got our own definitions of

prosperity. Prosperity lost its relevance and got limited only to money and wealth. People failed to realise that health and happiness were crucial constituents of prosperity. Covid has put a break; we are forced to slow down.”

Hena tried to relate her thoughts with responsible tourism and said, “There is no coordination between the stakeholders. Everyone is competing for his own benefits without any regard for ethics. Tourists have the potential to contribute to the economy. It is a fact that the tourists add value to economic, environmental, socio-cultural and institutional sustainability. But, they have to be genuine in demand and behaviour. While visiting a new place or a country, they should respect

the destination’s culture, which is a direct outcome of its environment.” If it is the responsibility of the tourists to be responsible. Other stakeholders like tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, governments, and local people also have to make tourism sustainable because they are direct or indirect beneficiaries of tourism.

The pandemic has its direct impact on carbon emission. Plenty of reports suggest a drastic cut in carbon emission during the pandemic. However, it is not a good idea to stop people’s movement to cut down on carbon emissions; still, there are many other ways the tourists and tourism service providers can help reduce carbon emissions. They have to derive new plans while accepting the fact that the plans they were working with didn’t match with the thoughts of responsible tourism.

Commenting on tourism in the current scenario, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, said, “Sustainability must no longer be a niche part of tourism but must be the new norm for every part of our sector. This is one of the central elements of our global guidelines to restart tourism. It is in our hands to transform tourism, and that emerging from Covid-19 becomes a turning point for sustainability.”

Some environmentalists believe that governments should set carbon benchmarks for tourism. And it may be easy now to introduce because everything has to start from scratch after a halt of almost two years. The hospitality industry needs to move in a sustainable direction to benefit the environment and communities, and businesses in general. The biggest lesson the world can learn from the pandemic is accepting sustainability not only in theory but also in practice. Over a period of time, sustainability may become a norm for the tourism sector.

Sustainability must no longer be a niche part of tourism but must be the new norm for every part of our sector. This is one of the central elements of our global guidelines to restart tourism. It is in our hands to transform tourism, and that emerging from Covid-19 becomes a turning point for sustainability

**ZURAB
POLOLIKASHVILI**
UNWTO Secretary-General



Oman takes part in UAE meet

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Labour, took part in the 6th Ministerial Consultation of Abu Dhabi Dialogue held in Dubai during October 26 and 27. The meeting raised diverse discussions among the Asian labour-sending and receiving countries. During the discussions, new ideas and experiences were exchanged on the

best practices to support and enhance bilateral and regional cooperation efforts aimed at developing and activating the management of the temporary contractual work cycle, and maximizing the benefits and advantages that will serve both contractual workers, employers, and the economies of the labour-sending and receiving countries.

— ONA

Luban seats come with 40 kg baggage

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 27

To offer a unique travel experience, Sultanate's fastest-growing value-for-money airline, SalamAir, has introduced Luban seating across its fleet. The front row seats in both the A320neo and the all-new A321neo aircraft are dedicated to the new Luban seating class.

From priority check-in to 40kg baggage allowance, lounge access at Muscat International airport, free hot meal and free seat selection, free modification/cancellation up to 24hrs before departure



SalamAir passengers can choose the all-inclusive Luban fare class and enjoy precedence through their journey. Extending maximum convenience Luban seating offers more personal privacy. Luban seats are certain to keep passengers comfortable from

take-off till landing.

The airlines' new Luban cabin responds to the passenger's desire to have bundled all-inclusive services that cater to their individual travel needs. Furthermore, the aircraft is also equipped with the latest HEPA air

filtration system and features a customized cabin with leather seats.

Captain Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said: "While we are delighted to have introduced an A321Neo aircraft to our fleet, we are also excited to introduce Luban seating for our esteemed customers. We are confident our guests will enjoy the extra comfort, expansive seats, priority check-in, more baggage allowance, and enhanced flexibility on their fare class. We are focusing not only on passenger comfort and ergonomics but a holistic cabin experience."

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement for the Supply and Installation of Radioactive Waste System

The Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Specification Fees
CCCRC/T/423/2021	Supply and Installation of Radioactive Waste System	11/11/2021	25 OMR

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Operational Committee of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, SQU Street Al Khoud, Sultanate of Oman, Procurement Department, Ground Floor.

Biddings that meet the above requirement should be submitted in a sealed envelope by an Omani National from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Operational Committee of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, SQU Street Al Khoud, Sultanate of Oman, Procurement Department, Ground Floor.

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than one week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@ccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

Muscat Short Film Festival to be held from Dec 12



The Oman Film and Theater Association has announced the Muscat Film Festival 2021 competition for short films, which will be held from December 12 to 18.

The festival's competition is divided into a number of competitions, including short narrative films, short documentary films, and animation films. — ONA

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
191/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-22 (Retenders)	Rehabilitation and Maintenance of buildings belonging to the General Directorate of Agriculture Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Monday 08-11-2021	Monday 15-11-2021
193/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-23 (Retenders)	Rehabilitation and Maintenance of villas in the Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources in the Governorate of North Al Batinah	25/-	Third	Monday 08-11-2021	Monday 15-11-2021
303/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-35 (Retenders)	Rehabilitation and Maintenance works at Ministry Headquarter - Second Floor	25/-	Third	Monday 08-11-2021	Monday 15-11-2021
429/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-56	Consultancy Services for Construction Supervision of Sheltered Fish Landing Sites at Al Jari & Gamdah in Musandam Governorate	25/-	First	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
430/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-57	Maintenance Works of Wadi AlKabar Recharge Dam in Wilayat Ibbi Governorate of AlDhahirah	25/-	Third	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
431/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-58	Maintenance Works of Storage Dam In Wadi AlAin, Jabal ALAKhdar in Wilayat Nizwa Governorate of Dhahirah	25/-	Third	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
432/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-59	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Muntarib Falaj in Almuntarib Village at Wilayat Bidiya at North AL-Sharqiyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
433/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-60	For Supply of Dry Feed for Livestock Research Stations	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
434/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-61	Supply of Concentrated Feed for Livestock Research Stations	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
435/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-62	Supply of 40 Computers & 7 Monitors	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
436/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-63	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Firewall System for HQ	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021
437/2021/MAFWR/ HQ-64	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Thabi Falaj in Samid Alshan Village at Wilayat Mudhaibi at North AL-Sharqiyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 14-11-2021	Sunday 05-12-2021

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.**
- Note:** Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Sub: Field Safety Notice of CPAP and Bi-Level PAP Devices from Philips Respironics.	الموضوع: إذار سلامة حول أجهزة ضغط الهواء الإيجابي المستمر (CPAP) و أجهزة ضغط الهواء الإيجابي ثنائي المستوى (BiPAP).
Affected Products: All Devices manufactured before 26 April 2021 All serial numbers (attached).	الموديل المتأثر: كل الأجهزة التي تم تصنيعها قبل 26 أبريل 2021 كل الأرقام التسلسلية للأجهزة (مرفق).
Manufacturer Name: Philips Respironics.	اسم المصنع: فيليبس ريسبيرونكس.
Local Agent: Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC.	الوكيل المحلي: صيدلية مسقط.
Reason of FSN: Philips Respironics is issuing a voluntarily Field Safety Corrective Action of the above devices due to two issues related to the polyester – based polyurethane (PE-PUR) sound abatement foam used in Philips Continuous and Non – Continuous Ventilators 1- PE-PUR foam may degrade into particles which may enter the device's the air pathway and be ingested or inhaled by the user, and 2- the PE-PUR foam may off – gas certain chemicals.	سبب الإذار: تقوم فيليبس ريسبيرونكس بإصدار إجراء تصحيحي للأمان الميداني طوعاً للأجهزة المذكورة أعلاه بسبب مشكلتين تتعلقان بإسفنجة خفض الصوت المصنوعة من البولي يوريثين (PE-PUR) والمستخدم في أجهزة التنفس الاصطناعي المستمر وغير المستمر من فيليبس، 1- قد تتحلل اسفنجة البولي يوريثان إلى جزيئات قد تدخل إلى مسار الهواء الخاص بالجهاز ويبتلعها المستخدم أو يستنشقها 2- قد تصدر اسفنجة البولي يوريثان بعض المواد الكيميائية الغازية.
Corrective Actions: Philips is committed to rectifying this issue through a robust and comprehensive repair and replacement program.	الإجراءات التصحيحية: تلتزم فيليبس بتصحيح هذه المشكلة من خلال برنامج إصلاح واستبدال شامل للمنتج.
Recommendations: Contact the local agent for remedial action. Contact data: 99416795- 99470911 or visit nearest Muscat Pharmacy Branch.	التوصيات: التواصل مع الوكيل المحلي لإتخاذ الإجراء التصحيحي بيانات الاتصال: 99416795- 99470911 أو زيارة أقرب فرع لصيدلية مسقط.



الأجهزة المتأثرة:

نوع المنتج	اسم المنتج	فترة الإنتاج	عدد الأجهزة المتأثرة
جهاز التنفس الاصطناعي المستمر ، دعم أدنى بالتنفس الاصطناعي ، خاص بالاستخدام في المنشأة	(الترخيص بالاستخدام الطارئ) E30		1499

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		DreamStation ASV, AVAPS,DreamStation ST, SystemOne ASV4, C-Series ASV, AVAPS and C-Series S/T, OmniLab Advanced+ SystemOne (Q-Series), DreamStation, DreamStation Go, Dorma 400, Dorma 500, REMstar SE Auto	جهاز التنفس الاصطناعي المستمر ، غير داعم للحياة
			جهاز التنفس الاصطناعي غير المستمر
Affected products:			
The number of affected devices	The Year of Production	Product name	Product Description
1499	All Devices manufactured before 26 April 2021 , All serial numbers	E30 (Emergency Use Authorization)	Continuous Ventilator, Minimum Ventilatory Support , Facility Use
		DreamStation ASV, AVAPS,DreamStation ST, SystemOne ASV4, C-Series ASV, AVAPS and C-Series S/T, OmniLab Advanced+ SystemOne (Q-Series), DreamStation, DreamStation Go, Dorma 400, Dorma 500, REMstar SE Auto	Continuous Ventilator , Non-life Supporting
			Non continuous Ventilator
To report any adverse events of Medical Devices, Please contact Medical Device Control Department through the following Email: med-device@moh.gov.om		للإبلاغ عن حوادث ومشاكل الأجهزة الطبية يرجى التواصل مع دائرة الرقابة على الأجهزة والمستلزمات الطبية على الإيميل التالي: med-device@moh.gov.om	



Israeli left wing activists gather with Palestinian activists at the Al Haq Foundation in Ramallah to denounce Israel's decision. – AFP

Germany criticises Israel outlawing of Palestinian NGOs

BERLIN: The German government said on Wednesday it was “very concerned” by Israel’s designation of six leading Palestinian civil society groups as outlawed “organisations”, in a move also criticised by the UN.

The Jewish state said its decision last week was due to their alleged financing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It accused the six of working covertly with the leftist group.

“We are very concerned by the Israeli decision,” a German foreign ministry spokeswoman told reporters, saying that the groups’ placement on a terror list would have “broad political, legal and financial implications” for them.

The German government routinely conducts “reviews of accusations and indications of connections of possible partners to organisations”, she added.

“We are waiting for further information from the Israeli government” on its justification

for the move, the spokeswoman said.

The UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet on Tuesday called the Israeli decision an attack on freedoms of association, opinion and expression and on the right to public participation.

Meanwhile, Israel advanced plans for building more than 3,000 settler homes in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, a military spokesman said, a day after the US forcefully criticised such construction.

The Civil Administration’s high planning committee gave the final green light to 1,800 homes and initial approval for another 1,344, a spokesman for the military body that oversees civilian matters in the Palestinian territories said.

The approvals came a day after the United States criticised Israel for its policy of building settlements, with President Joe Biden’s administration saying it “strongly” opposed new construction on the West Bank.

— Agencies

Security tightens grip in Sudan as global pressure bites

World Bank freezes aid as African Union suspends East African country

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces launched sweeping arrests of anti-coup protesters on Wednesday, tightening the regime’s grip while the international community ramped up punitive measures.

The World Bank froze aid and the African Union suspended the East African country over this week’s military takeover.

Armed forces deployed in large numbers after overnight protests saw clashes in the capital Khartoum, when officers fired tear gas and arrested several leading pro-democracy activists, including from Sudan’s largest political party, the Umma Party.

“Police forces have removed all the barricades since Wednesday morning and arrested all the people who stood near them,” said Hady Bashir, a protester, after AFP correspondents saw security forces clear rocks and tyres blocking major streets in Khartoum.

Beyond the capital, protesters have stood their ground to decry the country’s latest military coup, setting up blockades in Port Sudan in the east, Wad Madani to the south, and Atbara to the north.

“Sporadic protests erupt every now and then demanding the government’s return,” said Osama Ahmed, a witness from Wad Madani, about 186 km south of Khartoum.

Since top General Abdel Fattah al Burhan on Monday announced the dissolution of the government and declared a state of emergency, thousands of citizens have



Anti-coup protesters use bricks to barricade a street in Khartoum on Wednesday. – AFP

maintained protests, chanting “No to military rule”.

Shops have remained closed following calls for a campaign of civil disobedience, and pro-democracy movements ratcheted up calls for “million-strong protests” on Saturday.

On Wednesday, the AU called the military takeover in Sudan “unconstitutional” and suspended its membership within the continent wide bloc. The World Bank later suspended aid to the East African country over the coup.

Analysts had warned that the putsch could put at risk much-needed international assistance unlocked under Hamdok’s government to rescue Sudan’s economy, battered by decades of US sanctions and by mismanagement.

Police forces have removed all the barricades since Wednesday morning and arrested all the people who stood near them

HADY BASHIR
A protester

The blows came after Burhan allowed home Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok — who was detained by the military on Monday along with his ministers and civilian members of Sudan’s ruling council — following intense international pressure.

But Hamdok and his wife were returned “under close surveillance,” his office said on Tuesday, while other ministers and civilian leaders remain under full military arrest.

In a joint statement, Western diplomats called for an urgent face-to-face meeting with Hamdok.

“We continue to recognise the prime minister and his cabinet as the constitutional leaders of the transitional government,” read a joint statement by US, UK and Norway, the European Union and Switzerland.

The coup comes after a rocky two-year transition outlined in an August 2019 power-sharing deal between military and civilians. Their joint rule followed the ouster of Omar al Bashir on the back of mass protests against his regime.

— AFP

Jordanian company dives into Arabic mobile games market

AMMAN: Its logo is a tomato, not an apple, but in just eight years Jordanian company Tamatem has already bitten a chunk out of the lucrative market for Arabic mobile games.

“Less than one per cent of Internet content is in Arabic, even though there are 400 million Arab users,” said the company’s founder and CEO Hussam Hammo.

“There is a very big gap in this market that we are trying to fill,” added the 38-year-old

entrepreneur, sitting in his elegant Amman offices.

Hamo founded Tamatem — which means tomato — in 2013 and it was the first Arab company to win investment from the “500 Start-ups” programme based in Silicon Valley, California.

Eight years on the company has grown to about 80 staff who convert mobile phone games into Arabic, also adapting content to fit Arab culture. “Language was a barrier to mobile games growth”



A developer is pictured at the offices of Tamatem in Amman. – AFP

in the region, said Nour Khrais, founder and chief executive of games developer Maysalward.

“The Arabic language connects (the player) emotionally.”

With offices now in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, Tamatem has published more than 50 mobile games, which have been downloaded more than 100 million times on Apple and Google Play stores.

“Seventy per cent of smartphone users in the Arab world have set

their phones in Arabic, which means they like to use content in their mother language,” said Hammo. “Sadly when you search in English for a game in app stores you will find millions of games, but when you search in Arabic there are only a few thousand,” he added.

But competition is fierce, and Khrais said the Middle East and North Africa region was “the largest growth region in the world in the field of electronic games”.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

RIYADH

44 global firms to set up regional HQs in Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday it has licensed 44 international companies to establish regional headquarters in Riyadh. In February, the oil-rich kingdom issued an ultimatum to foreign firms that those seeking state contracts must have their Middle East headquarters in the country by 2024.

“Forty-four companies from various sectors and countries have signed agreements to move (their regional headquarters) and have obtained final licences,”



Investment Minister Khalid al Falih said on the sidelines of the Future Investment Initiative (FII) conference in Riyadh. He did not disclose the names of the firms.

TEHRAN

Iran’s president condemns cyberattack on petrol

Iran’s president has strongly condemned a cyberattack on the payment system in petrol stations across the country.

“The aim of our enemies was to create chaos nationwide to make citizens angry” with the government, Ebrahim Raisi said in remarks at the Oil Ministry on Wednesday.

Experts promptly neutralised the attack, the president said in the comments broadcast on state television. According to the Oil Ministry, the problem had been



fixed in many petrol stations and soon the situation would be completely back to normal. On Tuesday, customers were not able to refuel at petrol stations using a subsidy card.

LONDON

Prince Charles to visit Jordan and Egypt

Britain’s Prince Charles and wife Camilla are to visit Jordan and Egypt next month on their first major foreign tour since the coronavirus pandemic began last year, aides said.

The royal couple’s November 16-19 visit will start in Jordan.

The tour comes after the heir to the UK throne visits Glasgow next week for the COP26 climate summit. It will end in Egypt, which will take over the UN climate presidency from Britain next year. “In this decisive dec-



ade for climate action, the next 12 months is therefore expected to see a significant cooperation between the UK and Egypt,” said Chris Fitzgerald, deputy private secretary to Prince Charles.



In brief

■ BANGKOK



THAILAND PREPARES TO WELCOME BACK TOURISTS

Hotels, street food carts and tuk-tuks are gearing up for the return of tourists to Bangkok as Thailand prepares to re-open on November 1 to fully vaccinated visitors after 18 months of Covid travel curbs.

But the steamy metropolis, the world's most visited city before the pandemic, will take some time to get back to its pulsating, intoxicating old self, industry experts say. The coronavirus pandemic sent visitor numbers plummeting from 40 million in 2019 to just 73,000 in the first eight months of 2021 — leaving its tourism-reliant economy registering its worst performance in over two decades.

■ LAHORE



PAKISTANI POLICE KILLED BY GUNFIRE AT RALLY

Thousands of demonstrators from a banned Pakistani group clashed with police on Wednesday, killing and wounding several people from both sides, police and the group said. The clash broke out at a rally of the banned Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) on a highway in Sheikhpura district just outside the eastern city of Lahore, a spokesman for the Punjab police said on Wednesday.

"TLP activists used SMG, AK 47 and pistols to target police officials as the result of which several officials were martyred," the spokesman said. He said there were no details of the number killed but there were around 25 wounded.

■ NEW DELHI



INDIA'S TOP COURT ORDERS PROBE INTO PEGASUS SNOOPING

India's Supreme Court on Wednesday set up an inquiry panel headed by a retired judge to probe allegations that Pegasus software was used to hack phones of politicians, activists and journalists, according to legal reporting website Live Law.

The six-member panel includes experts in the field of investigation and information technology, cybersecurity and engineering.

The Supreme Court's order came after hearing a bunch of petitions asking for an independent investigation into the allegations of unauthorised surveillance that appeared in the media.



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang speaks during the virtual Asean Plus Three Summit, hosted by Asean Summit Brunei, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Asean states announce new strategic pact with Australia

Prime Minister Scott Morrison says Australia committed to regional stability

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Australia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) agreed at a summit on Wednesday to establish a "comprehensive strategic partnership", a sign of Canberra's ambition to play a bigger role in the region.

The pact would further strengthen Australia's diplomatic and security ties in a fast-growing region that has become a strategic battleground between the United States and China.

While concrete strategic objectives of the partnership were not immediately announced, Prime Minister Scott Morrison promised Australia would "back it with substance".

"This milestone underscores Australia's commitment to Asean's central role in the Indo-Pacific and positions our partnership for the future," he said in a joint statement with Foreign Minister

Marise Payne. "Australia supports a peaceful, stable, resilient and prosperous region, with Asean at its heart."

Brunei, serving as chair of Asean, said the agreement "marked a new chapter in relations" and would be "meaningful, substantive and mutually beneficial".

After the announcement, Australia said it would invest \$154 million in projects in Southeast Asia on health and energy security, counter-terrorism, fighting and transnational crime, plus hundreds of scholarships.

China has also sought an agreement on the same strategic level with Asean. Premier Li Keqiang met Asean leaders on Tuesday, and the bloc's leaders will meet China's President Xi Jinping in November at a special summit, to be held virtually, two diplomatic sources said.

Australia already has bilateral strategic partnerships of various levels with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and Vietnam.

STABILITY AND SECURITY Morrison also sought to reassure Asean that a trilateral security pact agreed last month between the United States, Britain and Australia, under which Australia will get access to nuclear-powered submarines, would be no threat to the region.

One ambassador to Asean, who asked not to be identified, said Australia clinching the comprehensive strategic partnership with Asean was "quite something" in the wake of regional reservations over its new AUKUS pact with Washington and London.

"Kudos to Australia," the ambassador said. AUKUS has raised some concerns in Southeast Asia that China could see it as a move by the West to challenge its growing influence in the region, particularly in the South China Sea. — Reuters

Japan PM's N-push faces resistance ahead of election

KASHIWAZAKI, Japan: Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's push to restart Japanese nuclear power plants idled after the Fukushima disaster faces stiff opposition ahead of a general election on Sunday, where his future as leader hangs in the balance if the vote is tight.

A decade after triple meltdowns at Fukushima forced mass evacuations and a shut-down of the nuclear industry, Japan has restarted only a third of its 33 operable reactors.

Debate over whether to fire more of them back up is highly charged, with 40 per cent of the population opposing the move.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

It matters most in rural cities hosting the idled plants which had once relied on them for economic activity, such as Kashiwazaki, 265 km northwest of Tokyo — home to the world's largest atomic power complex.

"The reason why we feel so strongly about this is because we feel the danger of the nuclear power plant — it hangs over our heads every day," said Mie Kuwabara, a resident of a town close to Kashiwazaki and anti-nuclear activist.

Voters mostly care about



The reason why we feel so strongly about this is because we feel the danger of the nuclear power plant — it hangs over our heads every day

MIE KUWABARA

Resident

economic recovery from the pandemic. But energy policy came into sharp focus last month, when Kishida beat a popular anti-nuclear candidate in the race for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chief.

The architect of Kishida's victory, party veteran Akira Amari, assumed a key party post and immediately pushed for restarts of 30 reactors while also promoting new, smaller reactors to replace ageing ones.

Amari says Japan must revert to nuclear power to meet its 2050 carbon neutrality pledge, avoid rapidly rising prices of imported coal and gas and to cut its reliance on other countries for energy needs. — Reuters



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivers a speech during his party campaign for the upcoming general election in Tokyo on Wednesday. — AFP

Taliban offers Afghans wheat for work

KABUL: For Kabul day labourer Khan Ali, struggling to feed a family of six since losing his job as a market trader, life has become so hard that he jumped on an offer by the cash-strapped Taliban government to pay him in wheat rather than the local afghani currency.

"For now this is good, at least we will not die of hunger," the 43-year-old said.

In a country where UN agencies estimate only 5 per cent of households have enough to eat on a regular basis, the government is giving him 10kg of unmilled wheat a day to work on strengthening the city's water and drainage systems.

"It is not enough of course, but in this situation where all Afghans are complaining about lack of work and poverty this is good," said Ali, a former market trader who was forced to sell the handcart he used at Kabul's main market as Afghanistan's economic crisis worsened.

International aid has largely disappeared following the Taliban's victory over



Zabiullah Mujahid (C), Chief spokesman for the Taliban, attends a launch ceremony of a programme to tackle hunger in Dasht-e-Padula of southern Kabul. — AFP

Afghanistan's Western-backed government in August, and long queues form outside banks.

For those with bank accounts and money in them, withdrawals have been rationed to 20,000

afghani or \$200 a week to help manage a dwindling money supply.

Bypassing a financial system that is close to collapse, officials on Sunday announced a public

works programme under which 66,000 tonnes of wheat will be distributed to labourers filling 44,000 jobs/44,000 labourers.

Most of the work will involve building defences against the

flash flooding that plagues Kabul in the rainy season and digging ditches to channel water into its badly depleted water table.

Neighbouring countries have donated thousands of tonnes of wheat to help Afghanistan deal with a humanitarian crisis that is slipping out of control, but the use of wheat as a means of payment underlines the extent of the economic meltdown.

Some \$9 billion in central bank reserves are frozen outside the country and key trade crossings have been blocked for weeks, crushing exports and depriving the government of millions of dollars in customs revenues.

"There is no big hope left for life in Afghanistan," said another man, Abdul, who had also found work paid for in wheat but who preferred not to give his full name. "Our world is destroyed anyway, now all that's left for us is survival."

While he has little faith in the Taliban government's ability to master the crisis, he also counts himself among the lucky ones.

— Reuters



US President Joe Biden and Democratic candidate for governor of Virginia Terry McAuliffe interact onstage at a rally in Arlington. – Reuters

Biden rallies for Democrat in key governor’s race

ARLINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Tuesday threw his weight behind the struggling Democratic candidate in Virginia’s closely watched election for governor, urging a crowd to defeat Republican “extremism.”

Standing by Terry McAuliffe, whose slide in the polls has put Democrats on red alert for a wider Republican comeback in next year’s midterm battle for Congress, Biden mocked the Republican opponent as an “acolyte of Donald Trump.”

“You’ve had the courage and the wisdom to reject the extremism that has taken over the Republican Party all across America,” Biden told the crowd in Arlington, a Virginia city in the Democrat-heavy suburbs of Washington, DC.

“Today’s Republican Party stands for nothing but just keep cutting taxes for the wealthy and the most powerful corporations.”

On paper, McAuliffe, 64, should have a relatively easy run in a week’s time against Republican Glenn Youngkin.

Already a former Virginia

governor and seeking to succeed the outgoing Democrat, McAuliffe is the closest thing to an incumbent in a state where Biden trounced Trump in the presidential election 12 months ago.

Instead, Youngkin is tied with McAuliffe in the polls, eyeing an upset victory on November 2 that would energise his party’s push to regain control of Congress in the 2022 midterms. Worried, Democrats are deploying all their big guns.

Popular former president Barack Obama has already campaigned for McAuliffe and Vice-President Kamala Harris is headed to Virginia on Friday.

“Vote, vote, vote,” Biden said. “Show up for democracy, for Virginia, for the United States of America.”

Part of the problem for the Democrats in Virginia and across the country is simply cyclical. They can expect to lose Congress in next year’s midterms because that is almost always what happens to the party of the sitting president.

— AFP

Assange can safely be extradited

LONDON: Lawyers for the United States launched a fresh attempt on Wednesday to have Julian Assange extradited from Britain, arguing that concerns about the WikiLeaks founder’s mental health should not prevent him from facing US justice.

The 50-year-old Australian is wanted in the United States on 18 criminal charges, including breaking a spying law, after WikiLeaks published thousands of secret US files and diplomatic cables in 2010.

Lawyers acting for the United States are appealing against a January 4 ruling by a London District Judge that Assange should not be extradited because his mental health problems meant he would likely commit suicide in a US prison.

In a document outlining their arguments, presented to the Court of Appeal and circulated to media, the lawyers said the United States had provided Britain with “a package of assurances” addressing the District Judge’s concerns.

These included that Assange would not be subject to a set of strict detention conditions known as Special Administrative Measures and would not be detained at a maximum security penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, known as ADX.

The US authorities had also assured Britain that they would consent to Assange serving any custodial sentence imposed by a US court in Australia, the document said.

In their response, also presented to the court, Assange’s lawyers rejected the US assurances, saying he could be held in another maximum security facility under oppressive conditions that would drive him to suicide.



A protester holds a poster in support of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange as she demonstrates outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London. – AFP

On the point about serving his sentence in Australia, they said Canberra had given no indication that it would consent to that arrangement, and in any case it would take so long he would be at high risk while awaiting a transfer.

“On the evidence, Mr Assange will most likely be dead before it (the proposed transfer) can have any purchase,” they wrote.

The appeal hearing is scheduled to last two days, with the judges expected to give their ruling at a later date.

Supporters of Assange gathered outside the court building from early on Wednesday, chanting “free Julian Assange”, before his father and Stella Moris, his partner and mother of his two children, arrived.

Assange, who denies any wrongdoing, is being held at



A protester with a face covering reading ‘Free (Julian) Assange’ takes part in a demonstration in London. – AFP

Belmarsh Prison. He had been expected to appear via video link but the court was told he did not feel well enough to do so.

Another subject of dispute in the appeal is whether the evidence of a psychiatric expert called by Assange’s defence team in the original extradition hearing was reliable. The US lawyers argue

the evidence should be dismissed because the expert initially failed to disclose that Moris was Assange’s partner and that the pair had children — information they said was highly relevant to the issue of his suicide risk.

Assange’s lawyers said the District Judge had been right to take into account the expert’s evidence. WikiLeaks came to prominence when it published vast troves of confidential US military records and diplomatic cables which the US says put lives in danger.

Soon afterwards Sweden sought Assange’s extradition from Britain over allegations of crimes. He was ordered to be sent to Sweden in 2012, but instead fled to the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and lived there for seven years.

— Reuters

UK report slams ‘eye-watering’ failure of Covid tracing

LONDON: The UK government largely wasted a mammoth £37 billion (\$51 billion) on a test and trace programme that failed to control the spread of Covid-19 last year, a report by lawmakers said on Wednesday.

The government and its inexperienced head for the programme, Dido Harding, displayed “gung-ho confidence”, the chair of the House of Commons public accounts committee said.

“But in the end it massively over-promised for what it



delivered and it was eye-watering sums of money,” Meg Hillier, of the opposition Labour party, told BBC radio.

“That is one of the biggest concerns — it is almost as if the taxpayer was an ATM machine. That lack of regard for taxpayer funding is a real concern for us as a committee,” she said.

When the pandemic erupted early last year, Britain tried to build from scratch a mass programme to test for new cases and trace infected people.

But its caseload soon exploded

and the country now has the second-highest death toll in Europe, behind Russia.

The MPs’ report said Harding and the government had relied too much on expensive outside contractors instead of existing networks in the state-run National Health Service.

Uptake of services offered by the programme was “variable” and “only a minority of people experiencing Covid-19 symptoms get a test”, the report said.

Overall, it concluded, the scheme “has not achieved its main

objective to help break chains of Covid-19 transmission and enable people to return towards a more normal way of life.”

The government defended the testing programme, insisting that more people now receive tests than in any other European country.

Jenny Harries, head of the UK Health Security Agency, said it was “saving lives every single day and helping us fight Covid-19 by breaking chains of transmission and spotting outbreaks wherever they exist”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

RIO DE JANEIRO

Senate panel recommends indicting Bolsonaro

A Brazilian parliamentary committee attributed serious crimes to President Jair Bolsonaro in connection with country’s devastating coronavirus pandemic and recommended an indictment. The committee on Tuesday vote 7-4 to formally approve the committee’s final report into the coronavirus policies of Bolsonaro’s, following a six-month inquiry.

The report charges Bolsonaro with nine crimes, ranging from charlatanism to incitement to crime and crimes against hu-



manity. It also recommends impeachment.

The investigative committee has “proven the president’s fingerprints” on thousands of Covid-19 deaths. — dpa

LONDON

Climate change protesters defy court to block London

Climate change activists blockaded two busy routes into London, causing rush-hour chaos for motorists on Wednesday, as they defied a national injunction by continuing to protest in the run-up to the COP26 summit next week.

Insulate Britain, a group demanding that the government provide more insulation for millions of homes, has caused long tailbacks, mainly on the M25 orbital motorway around the capital.

They targeted the A40 in west



London and a major roundabout in Dartford, Kent, east of the capital, on Wednesday. London’s Metropolitan Police said 17 activists had been arrested.

— Reuters

ABUJA

12m children ‘afraid’ to go to school in Nigeria

Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari said 12 million children are scared of going to school in the country, where fighters and heavily armed criminals have kidnapped hundreds of students for ransom. The first mass school abduction in Africa’s most populous nation was in the north-east in 2014, when Boko Haram fighters snatched 276 girls from Chibok, triggering a global campaign called #BringBackOurGirls.

Since then, attacks on schools



“have grown in number and spread across the northern part of the country,” said Buhari, addressing on Tuesday a conference on safety in education in the capital, Abuja. — AFP

Democrats fret over getting climate deal

DAVID SHERFINSKI

US Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island says he has been weighing whether to show his face at the UN climate talks that kick off on Sunday in Scotland.

He wants to make the trip, “unless it’s too humiliating to go (because) we’ve completely disgraced ourselves in Congress”.

Congressional Democrats’ stalled push to enact key parts of US President Joe Biden’s climate agenda has Democratic lawmakers concerned that they are undermining Biden’s message in Glasgow even before he arrives.

US Rep Ro Khanna, who met with Biden recently, said lawmakers could not send the president to the gathering without a robust climate plan in hand. “The Europeans are going to have a plan... and the Chinese are going to have a plan,” said Khanna, a Democrat from California. “We need to have... a strong plan to give the president the leadership, the opportunity that he deserves.”

Biden had hoped for a warm welcome at the UN climate talks, known as COP26, having promised to make climate action a cornerstone of his administration after Donald Trump dismissed the need for action on climate change.

But he has struggled to get key legislation through Congress — particularly his infrastructure bill and broader social spending legislation. Now Democratic leaders are eyeing the president’s overseas trip as an informal deadline to iron out a deal. Biden is slated to leave on Thursday for Italy, before heading to the UK next week.

Democrats want to ensure that major climate provisions like clean energy tax incentives are included as part of tandem infrastructure and social spending packages they have been working on since at least the summer.

But US Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia has expressed opposition to a centerpiece of Biden’s climate agenda: a \$150-billion Clean Electricity Performance Program (CEPP) to incentivise utility companies to transition to renewable energy. In a chamber split 50-50 between the two parties, just one Democrat can effectively block action if Republicans remain unified in opposition.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

The Europeans are going to have a plan... and the Chinese are going to have a plan. We need to have... a strong plan to give the president the leadership, the opportunity that he deserves

RO KHANNA

A Democrat from California



A CATCH OF THE DAY!

A Palestinian boy removes a crab from a net in Gaza City, on Wednesday.

— Reuters

My mobile became my life...



Sonia Ambrosio
soniambrosio@gmail.com

SONIA AMBROSIO

While evaluating reviews on the book *The Digital Cretin Factory*, by Michel Desmurget, the thought that we are wasting precious time and losing our brain to social media and other smart devices has risen as a reality. Hardly, we ask critical questions about the social relations, and hugs that we had so much missed during the long periods of lockdown.

Nowadays, I see groups of friends walking side by side with their eyes and attention glued to the small screen. The physical proximity becomes irrelevant because individuals are in one’s bubble. Before any hypocrisy labelling appears, yes, I do use social media, and I find it a convenient tool for easy and fast communication.

According to Desmurget, we are facing a state of intellectual stagnation. And I trust he is right, at least to a certain extent. Because the screen itself is not evil but the number of hours spent in front of it is staggering and alarming.

The simple physical contact of holding the smartphone gives a sense of comfort; checking messages frequently are signs that ‘my mobile became my life’ — and without it, something is amiss. This sense of coziness felt just by holding it can become an addiction. Well, people can become addicted to a range of causes —

and social media is one of them.

As in many situations, dependence can be explained. And with social networks, including gaming, it is not different. Desmurget refers to cognitive measurement. The emotional effect that dopamine has on the human brain: a chemical messenger that involves reward, motivation, and it releases a feeling of pleasure — the gratification that comes from likes, hearts and sharing, gives a sense of approval.

Social media is a tool. It can cause a negative impact, but also it can bring positive outcomes. Metaphorically, it represents evil and benevolent as one entity. It opens space for haters, lies and bullying. On the other hand, it can save lives, provide awareness, real-time information and develop a sense of identity and solidarity.

Social networking platforms have been widely used during natural disasters such as earthquakes, cyclones, wildfires, etc. The fast way they operate provides speed communication that saves lives, helps with preparedness, with gathering volunteers. A myriad of benefits. In the Sultanate of Oman, as happened with the Cyclone Shaheen, and other storms in the past, social media has proved to be an exceptional tool for communication crisis management.

Nevertheless, there is a need to reflect on another aspect that we have faced

recently. The outage of social media platforms brought an outcry around the globe. Conspiracy theories, angry people, and pointing fingers at people, at government, and weather conditions. An outpour of reactions to the failure of ‘my mobile, my life’.

Just a couple of hours without access to various platforms has demonstrated that we are turning into digital zombies, idiots, or ‘cretins’ as Desmurget defines. The sense of fear, panic, and confusion has shaken the globe - all because Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook had a break. The addiction has been tested and confirmed. People – in general – no longer can function without their smart devices.

Our reliance on social media, and other apparatus, has multiple effects. From social behaviour to neurological assimilation, media content creation, business development, but also a channel for humanitarian aid, a tool for education, and countless well-intentional initiatives

Still, the claims that social media or gaming makes us lazy or stupid have nothing to do with technology but with people’s attitudes. This embodiment of the evils and benefactors of our world might even get healthier with immersive relations experiences. To better understand where we are heading to, just learn more about the Squid Game and its hidden connotations between forces in life.

Restoring citizens’ trust on climate change



WERNER HOYER
The author is President of the European Investment Bank

The world must change how it tackles the climate crisis. The current approach is too slow and risks falling short of our own targets for limiting global warming and mitigating its impact. And, no longer satisfied with political pronouncements, people are demanding action.

This popular unease is borne out by the European Investment Bank’s annual climate survey. Some 75 per cent of European Union citizens, 69 per cent of Britons, and 59 per cent of Americans say they are more concerned about the climate emergency than their governments are. And roughly half of those surveyed say the difficulty in solving the

climate crisis is primarily due to government inactivity.

For those of us steering public organisations, these findings should be seen as a dire warning. If citizens stop trusting their governments to do something about climate change, many might conclude that there is no hope and give up. Governments then would face an even tougher task gaining public support for the policies and programmes that are vital to our future.

We cannot allow that to happen. The remedy for a lack of public confidence is to invest massively in concrete climate projects and innovations, starting immediately. Climate action

represents a tremendous business opportunity, and policymakers must be savvy enough to embrace it. The upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow will serve as a major test of the credibility of governments’ commitment to effective action. The whole world will be watching.

For its part, the EU is leading the way with major commitments, including a pledge to reduce its greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions by 55 per cent, relative to 1990 levels, by 2030. And as the EU’s climate bank, the EIB is at the forefront of this effort, with commitments to support €1 trillion (\$1.16 trillion) of

investment in climate action and environmental sustainability by 2030.

We are in the critical decade for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. In all the countries surveyed, large majorities (93 per cent in China, 81 per cent in the EU, 74 per cent in the United Kingdom and 59 per cent in the United States) consider climate change the biggest challenge of this century. Yet there is a lack of public faith in our chances of meeting current goals. In the EU, 58 per cent of citizens believe their country will fail to cut carbon emissions drastically by 2050, compared to 55 per cent in the UK and 49 per cent in the

US. Does this mean our citizens are resigned to environmental disaster? Not yet. A small majority of EU and British citizens believe a radical change in habits is the best way to counter climate change. But technological innovation will be needed to enable those adjustments, which aligns with the views of survey respondents in the US and China about the best way forward.

In any case, investment trumps behavioural change. In 2020, unprecedented pandemic-induced restrictions on mobility and economic activity caused a 5.8-per cent drop in global GHG emissions.

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Duqm to host International Tent Pegging Traditional championship from Dec 2

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

The International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF) announced on Wednesday that Duqm will host the International Tent Pegging Traditional championship from December 2 to 4.

The Chairman of ITPF, Mohammed bin Issa al Fairuz, announced the details of the global championship in a press meet that took place on Wednesday at Intercontinental Hotel in Muscat in presence of Ahmed al Abri, Secretary-General of Oman Equestrian Federation (OEF), Salim al Balushi, Assistant Secretary-General of ITPF, and Hussain al Fairuz, in charge of youth activities.

The chief of ITPF said that the event will witness participation of many riders representing 20 countries including: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Malaysia, Iraq,

Yemen, UK, Germany, Norway, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, Canada, USA, Sudan, Palestine, Syria, South Africa and the hosts Oman.

“ITPF is keen to diversify in their activities and programmes. The International Tent Pegging Traditional championship is the inaugural edition which will be held in early December in coordination with OEF.

The announcement of the world class event came on October 27 to mark the international day of tent pegging. It is a great occasion to resume the physical activities and tournaments after suspension of the sporting activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic during the last period,” he added.

ITPF, which is based in Muscat, hosted many inaugural editions of the championships including the first ITPF world championship in Muscat in 2014. Then, the first edition of ITPF beach tournament was organised in Masirah Island in



2017. In the following year, the first women tent pegging championship took place in Khasab.

Ahead of the international event, a national championship will take place from November 30 to December 1 which will be under the supervision of OEF. “This is a golden opportunity for the local riders to test and evaluate the readiness ahead of the international event. Also, it will be a great chance for the umpires and coaches to enter in the competition mood as well after a long gap of stopping the sporting events due to the Covid-19 crisis,” Ahmed al Abri, Secretary-General of OEF said.

Six teams representing different government units and individuals will attend in the domestic tournament. “A total of six teams from all the government units and individuals will participate in the local event. It is a good rehearsal for the local competitors ahead of

the international championship,” the Secretary-General of OEF ended.

The International Tent Pegging Traditional championship will begin from December 2. “The technical meeting and draw will take place on December 1. Also, the riders will get a chance to test the horses ahead of the commencement of the event. Then, all the participants will be busy for three days as tournament days. Many international umpiring and coaching courses will be organised as sideline events,” Al Fairuz commented.

Responding to an inquiry on possibility of increasing the participants and countries, Al Fairuz clarified that this is an inaugural edition of the championship. “This edition of the championship is limited with certain number of riders and horses from Royal Cavalry,” he concluded.

England rout Bangladesh, inch closer to semis



DUBAI: England continued their march towards the semi-finals of the Twenty20 World Cup with their second successive victory, an eight-wicket romp against Bangladesh in a Group I match in Abu Dhabi, on Wednesday.

England spinner Moeen Ali (2-18) struck in the powerplay and Tymal Mills (3-27) dominated the death-overs to restrict Bangladesh to a below-par 124-9 at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium.

Opener Jason Roy smashed 61 off 38 balls as England, bidding to become the first team to hold the 50-overs and 20-overs World Cups at the same time, chased down the target with 5.5 overs to maintain their top spot in the six-team group.

Earlier, Bangladesh won the

toss and elected to bat on what their skipper Mahmudullah described as a “belter” at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium.

Mahmudullah was soon left to rue that decision as England dominated the powerplay reducing Bangladesh to 27-3 after the first six overs. Moeen has enjoyed operating with the new ball in recent times and the

off-spinner once again was in the thick of things removing both the openers in the third over.

Liton Das offered a top-edge at backward square leg and Mohammad Naim sent the next ball straight to the mid-on fielder and Bangladesh’s powerplay woes were not over yet.

Adil Rashid took a tumbling catch running backwards at short

fine leg to dismiss Bangladesh’s talismanic all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for four.

Mushfiquir Rahim made a run-a-ball 29 before trying to reverse-sweep Liam Livingstone and getting trapped lbw in the process.

Bangladesh had to wait until the penultimate over for their first six in their innings when Nasum

Ahmed smashed a couple of them against Rashid though they still fell short of the 125-mark. England began their chase briskly to snuff out any prospects of an upset in the first ever 20-overs contest between the sides.

Jos Buttler fell for 18 but Roy killed off the contest with his whirlwind knock that included three sixes. — **Reuters**



Ruben Trumpelmann in action against Ireland in Sharjah. – Reuters

Ruben, Smit power Namibia to win

HARIDEV PUSHARAJ
MUSCAT, OCT 27

Ruben Trumpelmann’s first over triple strikes and JJ Smit’s late flourish gave Namibia an inspiring four-wicket win against Scotland in their Group II match of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Trumpelmann came away with match winning figures of 3/17 and Smit’s 32 off 23 balls took Namibia home as they continued their dream run at the World Cup coming on the back of the famous win against Ireland in the first round.

NAMIBIA START CAUTIOUSLY

Namibia started cautiously and reached 26/0 after the powerplay

overs. Scotland struck soon after dismissing Michael van Lingen for 18 after he holed out at cover to Richard Berrington off a Safyaan Sharif delivery.

Chris Greaves then claimed the wicket of Zane Green to put Namibia under a bit of pressure. At the 10-over mark, Namibia were 60/2 and well poised to win if they stuck to some sensible batting.

Scotland’s Michael Leask came up with an absolute peach of a delivery to castle Gerhard Erasmus off his first ball in the 12th over. Namibia lost their fourth wicket when Craig Williams completely misjudged the trajectory of a Mark Watt delivery to be stumped by Matthew Cross.

There were signs of an implosion from Namibia

considering the precarious situation they were in and hero of the Ireland game, David Wiese had huge responsibility on his shoulders.

JJ Smit’s aggressive batting skills took Namibia closer to victory in the company of Wiese. However, Wiese fell with just eight runs to win. Smit finished it off with a huge six in the first ball off the 20th over.

SCOTLAND HIT BY TRUMPELMANN

Scotland were off to a horror start after a sensational opening spell from Namibia’s strike bowler Ruben Trumpelmann. Trumpelmann bowled Scotland’s batting mainstay George Munsey off the very first ball of the match.

Calum Macleod was then caught behind off the third ball

and Richard Berrington was trapped lbw off the fourth as Scotland were in disbelief losing three wickets for two runs.

It was 18/4 when David Wiese got Craig Wallace lbw in the sixth over. After a brief 39-run partnership between Matthew Cross and Michael Leask, the former was bowled by Namibia’s Jan Frylinck as Scotland struggled at 57/5.

Thereafter, Leask got a move on as he took on the Namibian bowlers smashing four boundaries and a couple of big sixes.

A 36-run partnership between Leask and Chris Greaves ensued which was broken by JJ Smit when he bowled Leask for 44.

Scotland eventually finished at 109/8 setting up a 110-run target for the Namibians.



Mertesacker, Khedira and Podolski to turn up at Loew's farewell party

BERLIN: World Cup winners Lukas Podolski, Per Mertesacker and Sami Khedira will be among the guests when former Germany coach Joachim Loew enjoys an official farewell at the World Cup qualifier with Liechtenstein next month.

Part of the guest list for the November 11 event was revealed by fellow 2014 champion Benedikt Hoewedes, who will also be at the game in Wolfsburg in his new role as a liaison between the German Football Federation (DFB) and the national team.

"A part of the national team family are coming together - players, coaches and support staff who have accompanied him over the years and mean a lot to him, who have become world champions together with him. Lukas Podolski, for example, Per Mertesacker, Sami Khedira, to name just three," Hoewedes told the DFB website.

Long-time Germany goalkeeping coach Andreas Koepke will also say goodbye at the event. Loew, 61, coached Germany between 2006 and this year's Euro tournament, and was assistant coach 2004-2006. — **dpa**

11th edition of Musannah Race Week to see debut of para sailing

MUSCAT: Musannah Race Week returns on Saturday for the 11th edition with a new class joining the event this year. Sailing alongside talented youngsters in the Optimist, Laser Radial and Laser 4.7 classes this year will be sailors from Oman Sail's para sailing programme, 'SailFree'. In total, 50 sailors are expected across all of the classes as some of the region's most promising young sailors return to the water in Musannah for a week of racing, coaching and learning from each other.

Launched in 2019, in partnership with BP Oman, SailFree is the Middle East's first sailing programme for people with disabilities. Sailors use the lightweight RS Venture craft which can be modified quickly and easily. Eight sailors from SailFree will take part in this year's Musannah Race Week as the RS Venture makes its debut. Sailors from Malaysia, Egypt and Abu Dhabi will also be racing at the Barceló Resort Musannah.

Shaima al Asmi, Musannah Race Week Project Manager, said, "Musannah Race Week is a much-loved and highly-anticipated fixture in Oman Sail's sailing calendar that has been a crucial part of the development of young sailors for over a decade. We are delighted that the event is able to return this year and give the opportunity for young sailing talent to test themselves and develop as individuals with us. This year's edition is extra special as we will be introducing the RS Venture class for the first time and offer members of the SailFree programme a chance to race in a competitive environment. We look forward to welcoming all of the sailors, coaches, race officials and guests to Musannah Race



Week and hope it is a memorable experience for everyone."

As well as four days of racing, the sailors and coaches will take part in three days of classroom-based training and practice races with coaching in each of the classes by visiting professional international sailors.

The event is supported by a line-up of supported including Oman Air, OQ and the Barceló Musannah Resort as official partners, and Be'ah as environmental supporter and Salsabeel Water from the National Mineral Water Company as well as Medical support from the Naval Medicine Said bin Sultan Naval Base of the Royal Navy of Oman.



Al Musannah Sports City, located 85km north of Muscat, was purpose-built to host Olympic-standard international sporting events with facilities to accommodate thousands of guests, global media and up to 400 boats at its onsite marina. The venue has become Oman's home of sailing, successfully hosting high profile events including the recent Asian Windsurfing Championships, the forthcoming ICLA Radial World Championships and Youth World Sailing Championships, as well as the opening stage of this year's Sailing Arabia — The Tour, among others and is also home to Oman Sail's sailing school.



Oman National Rally championship begins today

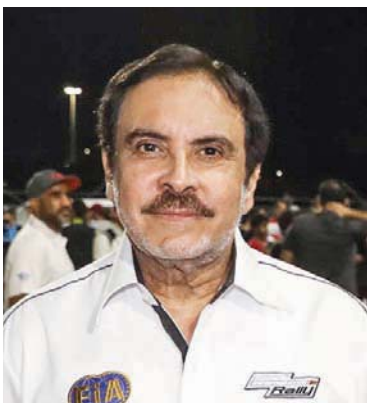
MUSCAT: After a long break due to the lockdown imposed by Corona pandemic, the Oman Automobile Association (OAA) is kick-starting its events in right earnest with the competitive Oman National Rally Championship 2021-22 on Thursday and Friday. The round one of the Oman National Rally Championship will be held at the Misfah-Saal tracks on Friday.

The event will be held according to the rules and regulations of the International Federation of Motor Sport (FIA).

Technical checks and final scrutineering will be done at the OAA premises on Thursday.

Brigadier (ret'd) Salim bin Ali bin Khalifa al Maskari, Chairman of Oman Automobile Association, said this is a welcome return to sports activities after the difficult period due to the Covid-19.

"The OAA is very happy to re-



Brigadier (ret'd) Salim bin Ali bin Khalifa al Maskari

turn to its sports activities after a long break due to the pandemic". We wish all the participants of the rally best of luck and thank them for their commitment to the sport." The OAA chairman said all the Covid-19 related medical protocols issued by the government and health authorities will be followed during the sports events organised by the OAA.

BEIJING: With 100 days until the start of the Winter Olympics, Beijing is promising a "simple and safe" 2022 Games - although preparations are anything but simple as China readies to host thousands of athletes and personnel as it battles flare-ups of Covid-19.

Beijing will be the first city to stage both the Summer and Winter Games, but the 2022 event is shadowed by the coronavirus pandemic and calls from human rights groups for a boycott over China's treatment of Tibet, Uyghur Muslims and Hong Kong.

The Games will run February 4 to 20, with all participants subject to daily Covid-19 tests and no international spectators. Unlike this year's Tokyo Summer Games local spectators will be allowed at events in and around the Chinese capital.

Athletes and other Games-related personnel will be enveloped in a "closed loop" including three clusters of venues - one in downtown Beijing, one in the outskirts near the Great Wall, and one to the northwest of the city, in Hebei province.



"Keeping the virus under control is the biggest challenge for us as hosts of the Winter Olympics," Zhang Jiandong, Beijing's vice mayor, told a Wednesday briefing. "If we cannot be Covid-19 secure, then we will not have hosted the Olympics successfully," he said.

Unlike the Tokyo Games, which were delayed by a year and stalked by speculation they would be cancelled, there has been little doubt the Beijing Winter Olympics will take place — no matter what — as an increasingly assertive

China seizes the opportunity to demonstrate soft power.

Still, the countdown comes as China, with some of the world's most stringent Covid-19 controls, manages small Delta variant outbreaks. The Beijing and Wuhan marathons were recently postponed, with curbs on travel into the capital announced due to dozens of daily new cases.

Such restrictions have contributed to a lack of the anticipatory buzz that marked the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics — an extravaganza widely seen as

China's global coming-out party.

On Wednesday, China reported 50 new locally-transmitted cases for the previous day — the most since September 16 but still tiny by global standards.

BOYCOTT CALLS

Since then, China has risen to superpower status, locked in antagonistic competition with the United States and under the increasingly authoritarian leadership of President Xi Jinping, with tightened censorship and suppression of dissent.

During the torch-lighting ceremony in Athens earlier this month, rights activists unfurled a banner reading "No Genocide Games" and waved a Tibetan flag, although the ceremony itself was not interrupted, as had been the case for the 2008 Beijing Summer Games. Rights groups and some US lawmakers have called on the International Olympic Committee to postpone the Winter Games and relocate the event unless China ends what the United States deems ongoing genocide against Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups. — **Reuters**

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CISCO WARNS OF HACKING CAMPAIGN TARGETING AVIATION INDUSTRY

BUSINESS REPORTER

Global Internet technology leader Cisco says it has detected a targeted phishing campaign aimed at the aviation industry and potentially organised by cyber threat actor(s) operating out of Nigeria.

The actor(s) have been

targeting the aviation industry for the last two years, while managing other campaigns at the same time. Researchers found that they do not seem to be technically sophisticated as they're using off-the-shelf malware since the beginning of their activities without developing their own

malware.

The operators also bought cryptors that enable the usage of such malware without being detected. Throughout the years they used several different cryptors, mostly bought on online forums and are believed to have been active since 2013.

Oman to unveil strategy for AI, advanced technologies



DIGITALISATION: AI adoption is one of 8 pillars of government's newly launched Digital Economy Programme

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) is formulating an 'action plan' designed to accelerate the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Advanced Technologies (ATs) in driving economic development in the Sultanate of Oman. According to a senior official, the proposed National Programme for AI and ATs will be launched "very soon" as part of the government's ambitious Digital Economy Programme unveiled by the Ministry last week.

"The Ministry is working on an action plan with regard to the adoption of Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies," said Hassan bin Fida Al Lawati, National Programme Head — AI and ATs, MoTCIT. "There are four main pillars in this plan: (i) Enhancing the productivity of the economic diversification sectors via AI, (ii) Developing human capabilities in AI, (iii) Accelerating AI adoption by service sectors such as Defence, Healthcare and Education, and (iv) Governance of AI and ATs to ensure fair and ethical use of these technologies." Delivering the keynote address at the opening of a conference on 'Digital Transformation', organised by UMS Events on Wednesday, Al Lawati said the action plan on AI & ATs is an integral part of the Ministry's Digital Economy strategy. The latter is based on eight pillars or initiatives, the implementation

of which will enable the use of digital technologies and processes to power the national economy. Besides AI & ATs, the other pillars underpinning the Digital Economy Programme are: e-Government (digital transformation), e-Commerce, Development of Technological Infrastructure, Digital Industry, Cybersecurity, National Space Programme, and Fintech, Al Lawati stated.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Speaking on the theme, 'AI Status and Future Opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman', the official outlined avenues for AI investment with promising knock-on effects for national development and economic growth. "For example, there are a number of submarine cable landings in the Sultanate of Oman that can qualify the country to have more investments in data centres, cloud services that can contribute in processing AI algorithms, and so on. On the other hand, there is also demand for AI services from sectors that plan to enhance their contribution to the GDP and need some tools to improve their productivity. Furthermore, we have a number of IT graduates, which we can capitalise on to train in specific areas of technology. Also, the Sultanate of Oman's political stability positions it well to attract foreign direct investments in AI and ATs." Although AI adoption in the Sultanate of Oman is still in the nascent stages, it is currently being used in a number of sectors, the official pointed out. For example, AI is being used in the early detection of breast cancer in the healthcare sector, in the detection of oil leaks in the hydrocarbon sector, in pollination and disease detection in the agriculture sector, and in smart metering in the electricity and water sectors, he added.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

We are pleased to present the Board of Directors' Report of Dhofar Generating Company SAOG (the "Company" or "DGC") for the nine months ended 30 September 2021.

Overview

We are pleased to inform you that the procedures implemented at the business have proved to be successful in mitigating any impact due to COVID19. This has enabled the company to maintain its safety record and the foremost value of the company. The entire team under the guidance of the Board has worked hard to maintain the Company's safety principles and ambitions.

The plant performance indicators continue to be excellent with almost perfect reliability factors which is essential for the financial health of the business. As highlighted earlier, the contractual revenue is highly seasonal during the calendar year, with higher revenue in the summer period compared to the winter period. Summer months include April, May, June, September and October.

The off-taker has paid all capacity payments on time throughout the reporting period. Fuel payments, which are pass through in nature, continue to be held however there is no payment to the fuel supplier. This payment status is common to the entire power sector and business earnings are dependent on the capacity revenues and not the fuel revenue.

As reported earlier, on 6 July 2021 at 13:00 hours external grid disturbance occurred on Dhofar grid resulting in plant trip. Consequently, a blackout occurred at 13:00 hours in the Dhofar grid. Subsequent to the Blackout the power units were restored and were available to export. Currently, an investigation is being carried out by Authority for Public Services Regulation to study the main causes of the black out incident.

There were no environmental exceedances during the quarter.

Plant performance during the period

30 September	273MW		445MW	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
Reliability Factor	99.77%	99.92%	99.70%	99.90%
Load Factor	9.68%	4.57%	36.69%	41.83%
Energy Exported (GWh)	173	82	1,065	1,220

Forced outage factor of both plants remained very low with performance similar to the corresponding prior period. Load factor is dependent on the grid demand and based on load dispatch centre instructions.

COVID19 Risks faced by the business and mitigation actions

As reported in the previous quarter, the team at DGC and NOMAC Oman have continued to deal with the risks posed by COVID19 in a proactive and responsible manner. Taking every precaution possible. The operator has implemented a formal COVID19 risk management plan which includes assessment of key maintenance requirements and inventory levels for the next six months on a rolling basis, medical consumables and staff testing requirements and stakeholder engagement. COVID19 vaccination is completed for DGC & NOMAC staffs.

The Company continues to work closely with all stakeholders and is following the guidance issued by regulatory authorities to manage the risks faced by this pandemic virus.

Maintenance activities during the third quarter

The third quarter of the year includes two winter months and one summer month. Certain planned maintenance activities required OEM or specialized contractor presence in Salalah, however due to COVID 19 travel restrictions, these activities were postponed to the end of the year. All other routine proactive, routine maintenance was performed to ensure equipment healthiness. There was no major maintenance during the quarter.

The DGC team alongwith NOMAC has continued to work with the EPC Contractor to focus on closing the warranty items.

Cash Sweep mechanism

Company's financing arrangements provide for a cash sweep obligation to take effect from 31 July 2021. The cash sweep mechanism requires that after operating costs and debt service payments have been accounted for, 95% of the free cash flows shall be paid to the lenders towards prepayment of the loan amount ("Cash Sweep Mechanism"). The Company may disapply the Cash Sweep Mechanism if it provides letters of credit ("LC") for amounts that increase over time as specified in the financing agreements. If the Cash Sweep Mechanism is not disappiled, the Company will not be able to distribute dividend as envisioned due to the application of the Cash Sweep Mechanism. The Cash Sweep Mechanism has been described in detail in DGC's Prospectus issues in relation to the Initial Public Offering ("IPO"), Chapter XII Project Cost and Sources of Financing - Cash Sweep Mechanism (Page 64), Chapter XIII Risk Factors and Methods of Mitigation - Dividend policy may not be fulfilled (Page 73) and Chapter XV Dividend Policy Page 97 explain the Cash Sweep Mechanism and associated risks in detail.

Due to various reasons including but not limited to the country credit rating and other issues prevalent in the local power sector, the international banks have refused to provide the required Backstop DSRA LC to disapply the Cash Sweep Mechanism. The project lenders have also indicated that the LC from local banks will not be accepted as these banks don't meet the required credit rating under the financing arrangements. In this regard, the Company requested its lenders for an amendment to the loan agreement to extend the Cash Sweep Start Date from 31 July 2021 to 28 October 2021.

Lenders unanimously approved to extend the Cash Sweep Start Date from 31 July 2021 to 28 October 2021 ("Extended Cash Sweep Start Date") with the condition that no dividend shall be distributed to the shareholders until the Extended Cash Sweep Start Date (i.e. 28 October 2021) as well as, if the Backstop DSRA LC is arranged, the LC provider shall meet the required credit ratings as specified under the financing arrangements. Accordingly, the Company was not able to distribute the dividend payment in September 2021 as envisioned in the IPO prospectus.

During the extension period, Company continued to work diligently to arrange the acceptable LC but has not been succeeded yet due to the reasons explained above. It is therefore highly likely that the Cash Sweep Mechanism will kick-in from 28 October 2021 which will disallow the Company to make future dividend distributions until the balloon amount is fully prepaid.

Financial highlights

Income Statement in OMR '000	Nine Months Ended	
	30-Sep-21	30-Sep-20
Total revenues	31,007	31,714
Operating costs	(22,539)	(23,033)
Gross profit	8,468	8,681
Other costs	(5,554)	(6,812)
Net profit after tax	2,914	1,869
Earnings / (loss) per share - 8z/share	13	8

Revenues

In comparison to the same period of last year, the revenue for the nine months period has reduced by OMR 0.7m mainly due to OMR 0.2m lower fuel revenue on account of lower load compared to the corresponding period in 2020, OMR0.2m lower major maintenance revenue, OMR0.3m lower capacity revenue being 2020 a leap year and finance lease amortization.

Operating Costs

Operating cost has reduced by OMR 0.4m mainly due to lower fuel cost and lower variable O&M expenses on lower load compared to the corresponding period in 2020.

Other Costs

Other costs have reduced by OMR 1.2m primarily due to deferred tax credit on carried forward tax losses of 2020. The government of Sultanate of Oman allowed to carry forward 2020 tax losses to an unlimited period to be adjustable against future taxable income.

Net profit after Tax

Net profit is reflective of the variances noted above.

Balance Sheet OMR '000	Nine Months Ended 30-Sep-2021	Year Ended 2020
Total assets	220,775	239,349
Net shareholder's equity	41,664	37,556
Paid up capital	22,224	22,224
Cash	3,019	4,649
Current ratio	1.05	1.08
Gearing ratio	3.3	3.9
Net assets per share - OMR	0.187	0.169

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

	30-Sep-2021	31-Dec-2020
	RO	RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Plant, equipment and capital work in progress	147,294,395	150,093,406
Finance lease receivable	41,336,614	43,222,248
Right-of-use assets	1,804,924	1,855,736
Major maintenance accrued revenue	2,040,453	2,307,738
Prepaid connection charges	543,527	453,753
Total non-current assets	193,019,913	197,932,881
Current assets		
Inventories	5,742,753	5,670,405
Finance lease receivable	2,480,524	2,333,129
Major maintenance accrued revenue	515,751	584,735
Trade and other receivables	15,859,194	27,754,835
Advances and prepayments	138,408	424,626
Cash and cash equivalents	3,018,874	4,648,738
Total current assets	27,755,504	41,416,468
TOTAL ASSETS	220,775,417	239,349,349
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Share capital	22,224,000	22,224,000
Legal reserve	439,457	439,457
Retained earnings	25,577,352	24,663,590
Cash flow hedge reserve	(6,576,739)	(9,770,973)
Net equity	41,664,070	37,556,074
Non-current liabilities		
Long term loan	131,154,066	138,578,204
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	5,725,632	9,541,067
Provision for decommissioning costs	4,899,779	4,722,679
End of service benefits payable	111,130	92,490
Lease liabilities	1,851,898	1,919,068
Deferred tax liability - net	8,863,274	8,580,746
Total non-current liabilities	152,605,779	163,434,254
Current liabilities		
Long term loan	7,452,454	6,957,669
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	2,011,708	1,954,195
Lease liabilities	152,716	152,716
Trade and other payables	16,853,368	29,259,119
Income tax payable	35,322	35,322
Total current liabilities	26,505,568	38,359,021
Total liabilities	179,111,347	201,793,275
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	220,775,417	239,349,349
Net assets per share	0.187	0.169

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

	Quarter ended 30-Sep-2021	9 months ended 30-Sep-2021	Quarter ended 30-Sep-2020	9 months ended 30-Sep-2020
	RO	RO	RO	RO
Revenue	11,291,320	31,006,774	10,236,971	31,713,760
Operating costs	(8,787,923)	(22,538,963)	(7,802,734)	(23,032,500)
GROSS PROFIT	2,503,397	8,467,811	2,434,237	8,681,260
Other Income	12,476	12,476	-	-
General and administrative expenses	(164,236)	(574,234)	(241,589)	(743,562)
Finance costs	(1,830,512)	(5,439,706)	(1,807,569)	(5,264,577)
Finance income	52,517	166,416	63,944	190,563
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	573,642	2,632,763	449,023	2,863,684
Income tax expense	(385,245)	281,160	(86,017)	(994,427)
Net profit for the period	188,397	2,913,923	363,006	1,869,257
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss				
Fair value loss arising during the year on cash flow hedge - net of tax	337,542	3,194,234	376,835	(5,157,673)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/(LOSS) FOR THE PERIOD	525,939	6,108,157	739,841	(3,288,416)
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.001	0.013	0.002	0.008

The financial statements were approved by a resolution of the Board of Directors on 26 October 2021.

Bank Nizwa announces Leadership Programme

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa has been recognised for its efforts towards enhancing the skills of its employees as well as helping them achieve their personal development goals.

While Bank Nizwa recently won the coveted title of the Best Employer Brand Award at the 16th Employer Branding Awards, the bank's Head of HR, Haifa al Lawati also won the Exemplary Leader Award in the same event. Continuing its untiring efforts towards enhancing the talents and capabilities of its workforce, the bank announced its Leadership Development Programme.

In line with the bank's strategy to develop its middle management employees, the programme is yet another innovative initiative geared at high-potential employees who have shown continued dedication towards achieving their organisational goals, proven their capabilities and demonstrated the right attitude at the workplace.

Haifa al Lawati, Head of HR department commented "We believe that nurturing talents is vital to achieving long-term success. Through ongoing training sessions, workshops and seminars, Bank Nizwa has taken various initiatives to ensure that its employees have the scope to constantly enhance their professional and interpersonal skills. We take great pride in the achievements of our employees and ensure that their efforts get due recognition even on international platforms," Haifa added.

"The Leadership Development



Programme is a testament to our ongoing efforts towards encouraging our high-potential employees to lead the way for change in the future. Aimed at fostering a learning environment at the workplace, this programme will also instil healthy competition and further motivate our employees to assume leadership roles. The Sultanate of Oman has a talented workforce of aspiring, enthusiastic and skilled youth and Bank Nizwa will continue to take efforts to tap into their potential and create a new generation of talents that will propel the country to new heights." Geared at elevating high-potential employees and closing the gap between them and the executive management team, the programme aims to

provide learning opportunities to those who have demonstrated the potential to succeed in leadership positions in the bank. To ensure transparency in the selection procedures, all employees are assessed by a third-party consultant. To commence the programme, a group of twelve employees was selected and inducted into the programme.

The group went through an extensive course that started from business simulation, after which they received training on ten different leadership modules. Finally, they were tasked with real-life projects that were then presented to the executive team of Bank Nizwa. As an appreciation and acknowledgment of the efforts put in by the group, the

projects will be sponsored for implementation. To ensure ample opportunities for all its employees, the LDP — Leadership Development Programme will be an ongoing process at Bank Nizwa where employees will be selected and trained at regular intervals.

By providing ongoing developmental opportunities, Bank Nizwa seeks to build a workforce that is not just highly skilled at their respective areas of expertise but also possesses the leadership mindset and qualities. As a bank that has won several accolades for excellence and has also been recognised as the employer of choice, Bank Nizwa will continue to take initiatives to develop the national workforce in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens 18th showroom



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading global jewellery retailer with over 260 retail outlets across 10 countries has launched its 18th store in the Sultanate of Oman. The grand showroom was virtually inaugurated by M P Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group on October 27 in the virtual presence of Khamis bin Thani bin Thunai al Mandhari, Director for the Sultanate of Oman, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Dr P A Ibrahim Haji, Co Chairman, Malabar Group, Abdul Salam K P, Vice- Chairman, Malabar Group, Sham Lal Ahmed, Managing Director — International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Asher O, Managing Director — India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Najeeb K, Regional Head, the Sultanate of Oman, management team members and well-wishers.

The new showroom inside Lulu Souk, Ruwi, Muscat is determined to cater to the increasing footfall and demand for the brand. The brand also has other stores located across key locations in the Sultanate of Oman namely Sohar, Muscat and Salalah.

The brand-new outlet unveils a large collection of traditional as well as contemporary designer jewellery collections that will leave customers spell-bound with their awe-inspiring beauty and classic designs.

Malabar Gold and Diamonds, through its 'Brides of India' campaigns, has strengthened its position as a wedding jeweller of repute. The store will offer unique and Bespoke bridal jewellery solutions to celebrate the brides who choose to make the big day all about her, with varied collections that cater to varied sensibilities of new-age brides across regions. Triumphant, the brand has managed to captivate the trust and

confidence of the Omanis alike and this has led for the brand to launch an exclusive showroom in Muttrah Souq catering to the interests of Omanis. "We are excited about this launch as it is the largest jewellery store in the Sultanate of Oman and it signifies that our brand is thriving in this region as a result of being appreciated, accepted and trusted by the residents and Omanis alike. We are soon to launch two more outlets in the Sultanate of Oman as part of our global expansion and it is indeed a great achievement that we look forward to," said M P Ahammed. The brand offers an array of exquisite and uniquely handcrafted collections namely Ethnix — Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Era — Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Mine — Diamonds Unlimited, Divine-Indian Heritage Jewellery, Precia — Gem Jewellery and Starlet - Kids Jewellery.

This outlet will also exhibit a wide range of diverse and trendy designs in gold jewellery, IGI certified diamonds and precious gem jewellery from over 20 countries. Special offers were announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds as part of the showroom opening. Customers can get guaranteed gold coins on the purchase of gold & diamond jewellery. Customers will get a gold coin free with every RO 300 worth gold jewellery purchase, this offer is valid from October 29 to November 2. Additionally, customers will receive free ½ gram gold coin and 1 gram gold coin with purchase of diamond and precious gem jewellery worth RO 250 and RO 400 respectively and this offer is valid until November 2.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront in gold jewellery manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing and plans on being the 'most-preferred' global jewellery retailer in the world.

Bank Muscat rewards 25 Shababi customers to celebrate Omani Youth Day

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat celebrated the Omani Youth Day with a special draw for its Shababi account holders at the premises of FuninVR Oman at Al Araiimi Boulevard Mall.

The exclusive event for the bank's Shababi customers saw the invitees draw the names of the 25 lucky winners who won RO 500 each. The draw, which gave away a total of RO 12,500, was streamed on the bank's official social media accounts on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram on the occasion of the Omani Youth Day on October 26.

Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani, Deputy General Manager — Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat recognises the goals and aspirations of its customers, especially the youth, who are the future of the country. The bank would especially like to provide strong motivation for youth to excel in all arenas and thereby contribute to the development and progress of the Sultanate of Oman. The Shababi special draw as well as regular monthly draws are a way to encourage them to save more for the future, and there is no doubt that it leads to



the building of a strong financial culture amongst our youth and the strengthening of our economy and society."

Abdullah al Maashani added: "Bank Muscat constantly encourages its employees, especially the youth, to innovate as it considers innovation to be one of the pillars of its corporate values. The bank provides many opportunities to do so through various programmes and initiatives, which nurture and enhance innovation by the youth."

Shababi accounts can be opened by youth between the ages of 18 and 23 years. It comes with a number of benefits

including no minimum balance fee, the Shababi contactless Debit Card, exclusive competitions on social media, and participation in the Shababi monthly draw.

The Shababi Debit Card helps the Sultanate of Oman's youth to learn early how to spend, save and manage their money, and has a daily withdrawal limit of RO 600.

It allows for a number of discounts and special offers at selected merchants. All customers who have a minimum balance of RO 10 are eligible to enter the Shababi monthly draw in which 100 winners win RO 100 each every month.

Shababi account holders

are also eligible to apply for contactless wristbands, which can be used to make contactless payments at different merchants and points of sales (PoS), similar to a contactless debit card.

The wearables allow customers to complete transactions with a single tap at the POS Machine without the need to enter their PIN, with a limit of RO 40 per transaction and multiple transactions up to a total of RO 60 daily. More details regarding the Shababi account can be had by calling 24795555.

Al Mazyona is the longest-running savings scheme, offering the largest prizes in the country. In 2021, the scheme will give away over RO 11 million to 7,470 winners, with the number of winners going up by 12 per cent compared to last year. It must be noted that the bank has started the countdown to the special Al Mazyona draw being held on the occasion of the 51st National Day celebrations, which will give away a total of RO 102,000 to 51 lucky winners. The 2021 Al Mazyona Scheme will culminate with the special End-of-Year draw, which will reward customers with high value prizes worth over RO 1.5 million.

Omantel bags 'Outstanding Leadership and Growth' Award

Omantel has been awarded the 'Outstanding Leadership and Growth Award' at SAMENA endorsed *MEA Business Magazine* Technology Achievement Awards 2021. Baha al Lawati, Vice President, Enterprise at Omantel received the award on the company's behalf.

"This award reflects the direction in which Omantel is headed. Omantel has positioned itself as the market leader in integrated communications. The way now only leads upwards and the Wholesale arm is helping us to achieve that. We are humbled by being awarded for 'Outstanding Leadership and Growth' by a leading regional business publication such as

MEA Business in coordination with SAMENA Council at GITEX, which is a platform that brings together global industry leaders, start-ups and game-changers to unveil the future. The recognition is a further motivation to us to continue to excel in our leadership and innovation," said Al Lawati.

In September 2021, Omantel Wholesale emerged as a winner at the Carrier Community Global Awards (CCGA), walking away with top honours as the Middle East Regional Operator of the Year, which is a prestigious achievement and a global recognition of its success in the Wholesale business and growing investment in national and international capacities.



In brief

■ TOKYO

**NISSAN ASKS TOKYO COURT FOR LENIENCY OVER GHOSN CHARGES**

A lawyer for Nissan Motor Co asked a Tokyo court for leniency when it sentence the company over charges it allowed ousted chairman, Carlos Ghosn, to hide earnings from Japanese authorities. Nissan, which has already pleaded guilty, is standing trial alongside former executive Greg Kelly, who has denied charges he helped his former boss hide 9.3 billion yen (\$81.8 million) of Ghosn's earnings over eight years through deferred payments.

Prosecutors are seeking a 200 million yen fine for the carmaker, and a two-year jail sentence for Kelly, for breaching regulations introduced in 2010.

— Reuters

■ ROME

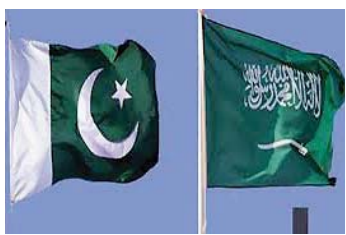
**ITALIAN, FRENCH AIRPORTS CREATE FIRM FOR INFRASTRUCTURE**

Airports in the Italian cities of Rome, Venice and Bologna and on the French Riviera have teamed up to create a company to build and manage infrastructures for flying taxis, the companies said in a statement.

The infrastructure, also known as vertiports, will be used to deploy battery-powered aircraft that can take off and land vertically, offering a new way for travellers to beat traffic and hop between cities.

Urban Blue will also partner with German flying taxi startup Volocopter and will be supported by investment fund EDF Invest. — Reuters

■ ISLAMABAD

**SAUDI ARABIA ANNOUNCES CASH, OIL BOOST FOR PAKISTAN**

Saudi Arabia will deposit \$3 billion in Pakistan's central bank and provide oil on defer payments to help the country overcome a deepening economic crisis, officials said. Pakistan's Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said the money from the Islamic Kingdom will be used to maintain central bank's depleting reserves at a safe level.

Riyadh will also provide Pakistan a \$1.2-billion-a-year lifeline to buy oil on defer payments to cover one of the main imports of the country that is facing a balance of payment crisis. The assistance was agreed as Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan's last weekend visited Saudi Arabia and met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. — dpa

SOHAR Port outlines next steps on marine service growth

**BUSINESS REPORTER**
MUSCAT, OCT 27

SOHAR Port recently held its Annual Shipping Agents Meeting to provide progress updates to more than 40 regional and international partners and discuss innovative ways to attract business to the Port.

During the meeting, the Port also conducted a signing ceremony for Ship Chandling licenses with three new partners: Seven Seas Ship Chandlers LLC, Al Diyafah Supplies & Services Co. LLC, and Mars Marine Services. The three companies will provide general ship supplies, spare parts to the shipping lines.

"As critical business partners in our industry, agents have a direct relationship with shipping companies and are always looking for new competitive advantages, efficiencies and value-

added services to improve performance for their current and future clients. With our aim to ensure world-class facilities and services, this is a great opportunity to present our capability to meet the growing demands of global trade and industry, while also attracting new investment to SOHAR," said Mark Geilenkirchen, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Port.

As part of its efforts to develop a full-service ecosystem and make top-class marine services available to its clients, SOHAR partners with a number of local SMEs and international companies.

Among these, it has joined hands with Hormuz Marine to introduce bunkering services and Credential Ship Services LLC Asfor crew change and supplies at sea. In addition, berth 25 has been made available again for layby and service operations such as hold

cleaning and repairs. Next month, the new marine waste collection service provider, Oman Maritime Waste Treatment, will also begin its first soft trials at the Port.

As one of the fastest-growing Port and Freezone complexes in the world, SOHAR is investing in cutting-edge technology and renewable energy to lead the expansion and modernisation of the Sultanate's logistics and trade sectors.

The latest partnerships will support these efforts, while enhancing the reputation of the Port and Freezone, attracting new clients, including the world's largest container vessels, and allowing increased cargo traffic to pass through.

Meanwhile, SOHAR Port and Freezone continues to build on its future capabilities in support of the economic diversification objectives within Oman's 2040 Vision.



Salim al Auli (centre), flanked by Manlio Di Stefano (left) and Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy in the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman and Italy pledge to collaborate in green hydrogen

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

The Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals of the Sultanate of Oman, Salim al Auli, and the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Manlio Di Stefano, held a meeting on October 26 on the occasion of the visit to Muscat of the Italian Under-Secretary.

The two parties reviewed the existing cooperation in the energy sector and agreed on the opportunity to further strengthen the bilateral collaboration in the field renewable energies with a specific focus on green hydrogen.

The visit stands as a follow up to a joint bilateral dialogue that was inaugurated online by the two undersecretaries on September 29 in the presence of the major Omani and Italian players in the development of technologies for green hydrogen production and its related industry with the goal to explore opportunities for a stronger cooperation in innovation, technologies and

investments in this sector.

In the framework of the excellent relations between the two countries, the two Under-Secretaries shared the willingness to promote and develop cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Italy in the field of green energy for the mutual benefit and in line with the efforts envisaged by both Oman Vision 2040 and the European Green Deal, both aimed at contributing to the global targets for emission cuts.

The two Under-Secretaries shared the view that collaboration between the Sultanate of Oman and Italy in the green energy field can support the ambition to ensure a safe, competitive and sustainable energy market.

In this regard, they agreed to support institutional, industrial and academic collaborations between the two countries related to green hydrogen, supporting the exchange of best practices on energy policies, as well as stimulating closer connections between universities, scientific research institutions and the private sector of both countries.

Al Sharqiya Aviation takes delivery of five-bladed helicopter

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

Airbus Helicopters has delivered the first five-bladed H145 to Milestone Aviation and Al-Sharqiya Aviation, which will operate the helicopter in the Sultanate of Oman for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) missions.

It is the first five-bladed H145 in the Middle East region. With the new helicopter, Al Sharqiya Aviation will further expand its service offering providing reliable onshore and offshore passenger transport and Emergency Medical Services throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

"Al Sharqiya Aviation is very proud to be the first operator of the five-bladed H145 variant in the Middle East. The on-time arrival of the helicopter was critical to deliver for our customers and we thank Airbus and Milestone for their support," said Tariq al Barwani, CEO of Al Sharqiya Aviation.

"We are extremely grateful for the confidence that ASA has in the Milestone team, and for the hard work by the Airbus team



to ensure the timely delivery of the aircraft. We wish ASA all the success with this brand new five-bladed H145 and look forward to continuing to work closely with them in the future," said Claire Brugirard, Vice-President Commercial Africa & Middle East at Milestone.

"We're honoured that the H145 will enter into service for HEMS missions in the Sultanate of Oman soon", said Axel Humpert, Head of the H145 programme at Airbus Helicopters. "Especially the excellent hot and high performance and the increased

EXPANDING SERVICES:
OMAN-BASED FIRM TO OPERATE HELICOPTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (HEMS) MISSIONS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

useful load the new five-bladed version offers make it the perfect choice for those missions in the Middle East."

The new version of Airbus' best-selling H145 light twin-engine helicopter was unveiled at Heli-Expo 2019 in Atlanta in March. This latest upgrade adds a new, innovative five-bladed rotor to the multi-mission H145, increasing the useful load of the helicopter by 150 kg.

The simplicity of the new bearingless main rotor design will also ease maintenance operations, further improving the benchmark serviceability and reliability of the H145, while improving ride comfort for both passengers and crew. The helicopter's high-mounted tail boom and wide opening clamshell doors facilitate access to the H145's spacious cabin.

Today, Airbus has more than 1,515 H145 Family helicopters in service around the world, logging a total of more than six million flight hours.

For EMS alone, there are more than 470 helicopters of the H145 family conducting air rescue missions worldwide.

Stocks run out of steam on higher yields

LONDON: A flare up in US-China tensions, signs of further regulatory crackdowns from Beijing and a rise in short-dated US Treasury yields doused the equity market rally on Wednesday, offsetting tailwinds from forecast-beating earnings on Wall Street.

MSCI's global equity benchmark is hovering close to Monday's seven-week high and is on track for the best month in almost a year.

However, European stocks softened, led by a 1.6 per cent drop in mining and resource firms. Bank shares also slipped, with Deutsche Bank down more than 5 per cent despite forecast-beating earnings.

The losses started earlier in Asia, where tech stocks suffered hefty falls after China's internet watchdog said it planned stricter registration rules for younger net users. US futures also turned negative as the chipper mood over Tuesday's forecast-beating results from Google owner Alphabet Inc and Microsoft Corp started to wane. "We have good US data in earnings which is very reassuring but valuation is very stretched in both the value as well as the growth sector," said Sebastian Galy, senior macro strategist.

— Reuters

Slowing growth creates headache for next German govt

Global supply chain bottlenecks forced the German government to downgrade its 2021 growth forecast as it prepares to hand over the reins of a spluttering economy to the country's next coalition.

Supply chain disruptions and shortages of raw materials, including plastics, metals and paper, have choked off the recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in Europe's top economy.

As a result, the government lowered its forecast for gross domestic product growth to 2.6 per cent this year, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told ZDF public television, from 3.5 per cent previously. "It will still be one of the strongest growth rates in Europe," Altmaier said.

"But many goods are not being delivered because there is a shortage of raw materials in many areas and that is simply having an effect," the minister said. "Higher energy prices are also a factor. At 2.6 per cent, the economy will still expand strongly this year. But it will only really begin to boom next year with growth of over four per cent."

A scarcity of components has had a particularly hard impact on the country's manufacturing-driven economy, with production lines grinding to a halt in Germany's important automotive sector. The question of how to kickstart the economy will also be at the top of the agenda as the parties seeking to form the next German government pick up talks this week.

In their initial agreement, the Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats (FDP) pledged massive investments and less red tape to prepare Germany for a greener and more digital future.

But they vowed not to introduce any tax hikes and to maintain Germany's strict debt rule, which limits deficits to 0.35 per cent of GDP in normal times, a red line for the FDP.

Finding a way to deliver on both will require "creativity" by the parties' own admission, and could see the new coalition house their investment programme somewhere else, such as public lender KfW, as per one mooted solution.

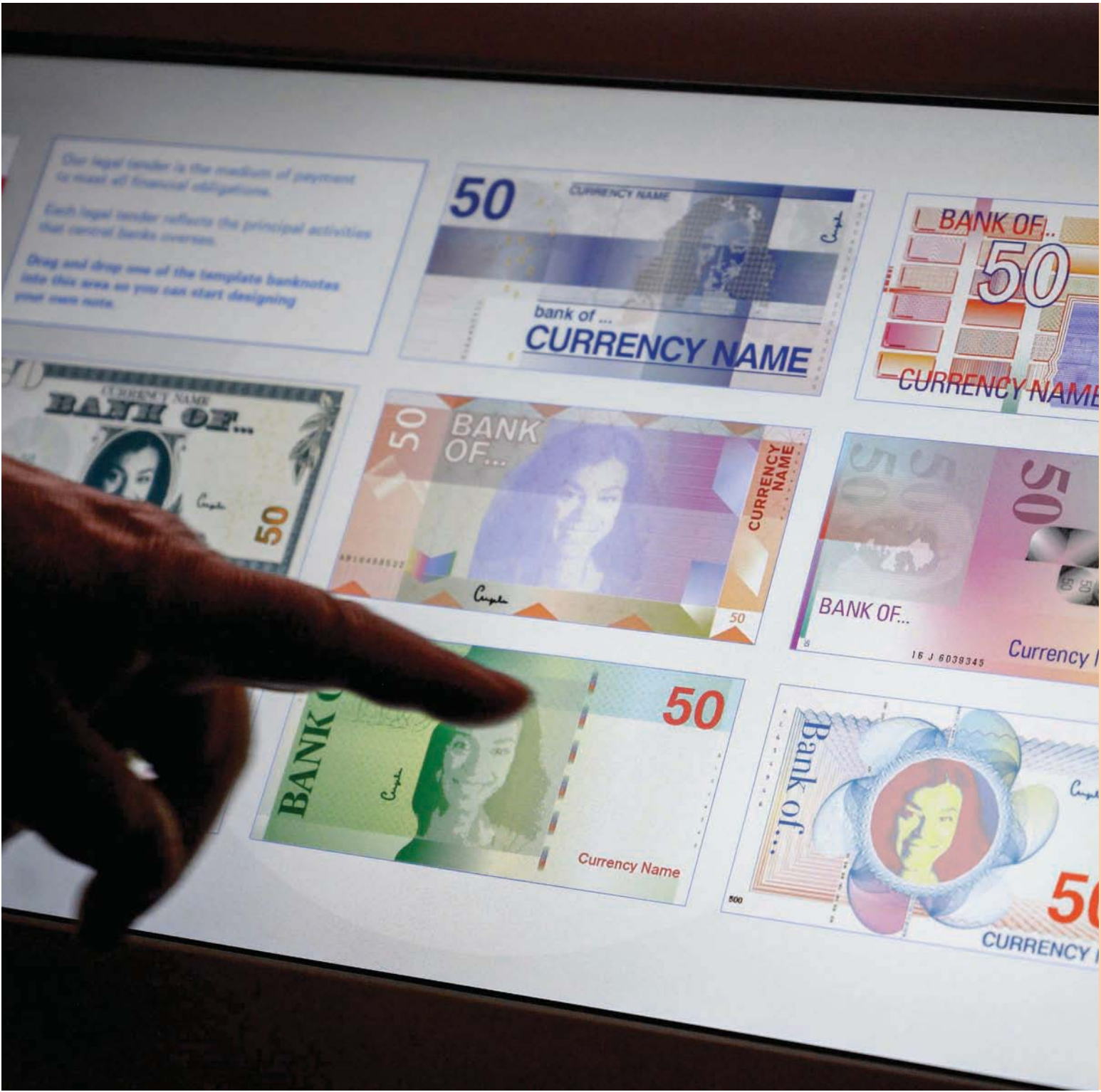
The new forecast comes against the backdrop of a raft of tough news. The German Ifo institute's closely watched business climate indicator fell for the fourth consecutive month in October, according to figures published earlier this week.

In services, manufacturing and trade, the mood among businesses deteriorated — only in construction did the sector see the situation improving.

"Supply problems are giving businesses headaches," Ifo president Clemens Fuest said in a statement, describing the bottlenecks as "sand in the wheels of the German economy". — AFP

At 2.6 per cent, the economy will still expand strongly this year. But it will only really begin to boom next year with growth of over four per cent

PETER ALTMAIER
German Economy Minister



UNIQUE CENTRAL BANK

A visitor selects on a screen a fancy banknote during a press preview at the exhibition for the 90th anniversary of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel. The BIS, considered as the central bank, celebrates its 90th anniversary with an exhibition to explain its unique but often overlooked role in the international financial system.

— AFP

High food prices, a global concern



Haider al Lawati
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR IMPORTED FOODS WILL REMAIN STRONG IN MANY COUNTRIES, WHICH WILL NEED TO MITIGATE PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON THEIR PRODUCTION WITH SUPPLIES FROM ABROAD

The world wastes million tonnes of food annually at a time when food prices are rising globally. Losses resulting from wasted food total around \$1.1 trillion, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Around 14 per cent of these losses, amounting to around \$400 billion, occur between farms and the wholesale market, while about 17 per cent, worth \$700 billion, is wasted between the retailer and the consumer.

This daily waste ultimately affects the prices of foodstuffs, which have recently witnessed an increase in their value, especially after the pandemic, thereby adding to inflationary trends in many countries of the world.

The Oxford Business Group, citing UN data, says that global food prices have risen to their highest levels in the past ten years, at a time when grain stocks are declining to the detriment of emerging markets.

Since the beginning of 2020, with the outbreak of the pandemic, crop production increased in trend with growth in international trade. But the

pandemic in decline and businesses restarting, food prices are increasing to their highest levels.

The UN World Food Price Index averaged 130 points last September, which is an increase of 1.2 per cent per month and 32.8 per cent year-on-year. The rise is evident in wheat prices, which recorded an increase of 40 per cent on an annual basis, as humans and animals depend on it for their food.

Maize prices have also increased by 38 per cent due to the current decline in production in Latin America.

Numerous products are made from grains such as wheat, corn, barley, rice and others because they contain a lot of calories and proteins. Therefore, an increase in their prices will exacerbate problems and weaken food security policies.

The United Nations reports show that 272 million people suffer from acute food insecurity in 79 countries in 2020, compared to 149 million people in 2019.

With the growth of global trade after the pandemic, the International Trade Organisation expects that 2021 will record

a growth of 10.8 per cent in the volume of merchandise trade due to the world's transition from a state of emergency to gradual recovery to address the legacy of the epidemic in many areas of normal life.

Global demand for imported foods will remain strong in many countries, which will need to mitigate pandemic impacts on their production with supplies from abroad.

Our Gulf, Arab and African regions are among the largest food importers in the world. Exposed to periodic droughts, their local production capacities and agricultural projects are often impacted.

Food security policies are often disrupted as a result. Our economies depend on oil revenues, the prices of which fluctuate from time to time.

By moving towards food production and processing, countries in these regions can aim to produce various types of food they need in the quantities that are required to achieve food security.

This will be possible only through modernisation and the use of technologies in agriculture, processing and manufacturing.

The G20 family reunion



PAOLA SUBACCHI

The author is a Professor of International Economics at the University of London's Queen Mary Global Policy Institute

This week, G20 leaders gather in Rome for their annual summit. But will they use their stay in la grande bellezza to reconcile their differences and lay the groundwork for improved policy cooperation? Will their private dinner reinforce progress, by enabling those who are new to the process — some participants will be meeting US President Joe Biden for the first time — to build relationships with G20 veterans?

Since the G20 became a leaders' summit in 2008, the private dinner has become an invaluable platform for some of the world's most powerful people to discuss, face to face, the most important

issues that they and their countries are facing. A decade ago, in Cannes, the euro zone debt crisis dominated the dinner discussion. A few guests allegedly cornered Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to persuade him to resign.

This year, there is no shortage of topics that will get the diners talking. The event's host, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, is keen to discuss the humanitarian and geopolitical situation in Afghanistan; in fact, he recently chaired an extraordinary meeting of G20 leaders on the topic.

The imperative of delivering vaccine doses to low-income

countries is also likely to come up — about 23 billion doses are needed, and this requires coordinated effort and open trade for vaccine supply chains. And perhaps guests will consider some form of energy coordination, aimed at easing supply bottlenecks and reducing price pressures.

Of course, anyone who has ever hosted a big holiday party or family reunion knows that some topics are best avoided at the dinner table.

The coming G20 dinner will be no different, though the stakes are much higher.

Relationships among leaders have historically been what drives

progress at the G20, despite struggles to agree on specific commitments or language. The pandemic has been damaging in this respect as well, because the shift to virtual meetings prevented leaders from having the kinds of casual, personal interactions that cement such relationships. Political capital is now thin.

Moreover, in recent years, leaders have become increasingly polarised in their positions. So, even as the multilateral process itself has gotten smoother, progress has become more difficult.

Finding common ground, and making the event more pleasant

than not for its participants, is essential if the G20 is to remain an effective multilateral forum.

Fortunately, Draghi is well practiced at navigating competing demands and interests — a proficiency he honed during his tenure as European Central Bank President and is demonstrating now at the helm of Italy's coalition government. To keep disagreements from getting out of hand at the G20 dinner, Draghi will most likely attempt to identify low-hanging fruit — areas of common interest, where coordinated action is most likely.

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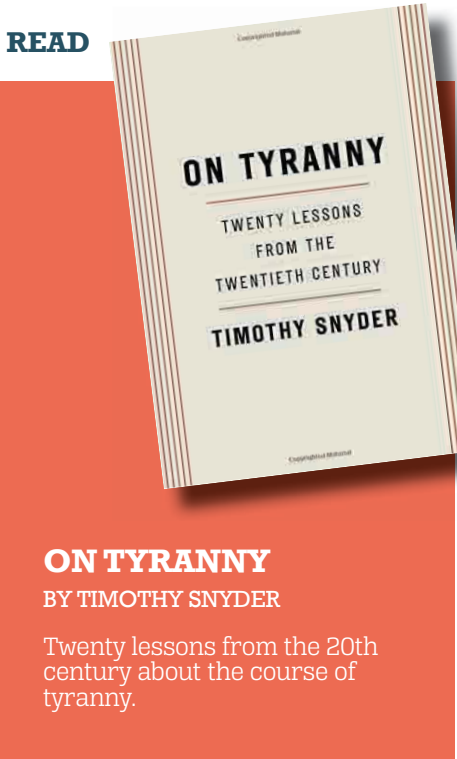


Another thread in Oman's rich, artistic, multi-cultural tapestry

Not simply an artist, Anna Dudchenko doesn't want to be tied down to one particular genre, or material. Having called the Sultanate of Oman her second home in more than a decade, she embodies the origins of a consultant carving a niche for herself in the country... **P20**

CONSERVATION

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ON TYRANNY
BY TIMOTHY SNYDER

Twenty lessons from the 20th century about the course of tyranny.

Speak up to save our planet, Billie Eilish urges ahead of COP26

MUSIC STAR Billie Eilish joined forces with scientists from the group Arctic Basecamp on Tuesday, calling on world leaders to stand together and take urgent action at the UN COP26 climate summit next week. The singer recorded a video message, with "The

Office" actor Rainn Wilson, explorer Levison Wood and Robert Irwin, son of the late Australian conservationist Steve Irwin, also lending their voices to the project in conjunction with Britain's University of Exeter. The global climate summit, hosted by British

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, kicks off in Glasgow on October 31. "This year our leaders are deciding the global actions required on the environment climate emergency in a critical decade for our planet," Eilish said. "We must stand together and speak up to save our planet, not just for us, but for our future generations, and we need urgent, urgent action now and to work together as one." Britain has cast the summit as the last big chance for countries to commit to steps to slow rising temperatures. "Courage. That's what our world's leaders need more than anything. The decisions that they make

about the climate crisis in the next decade are the most important decisions in our planet's history," Wilson said. Arctic Basecamp was founded by Gail Whiteman, a social scientist who studies how decision makers make sense of environmental threats such as climate change. The group has set up a tent camp for scientists at the World Economic Forum in Davos and will be attending the COP26 summit. "This is a crisis and the Arctic is sounding the alarm. It is time that world leaders come together to create real change that ensures a safe future for humanity," Whiteman said in a statement. — Reuters



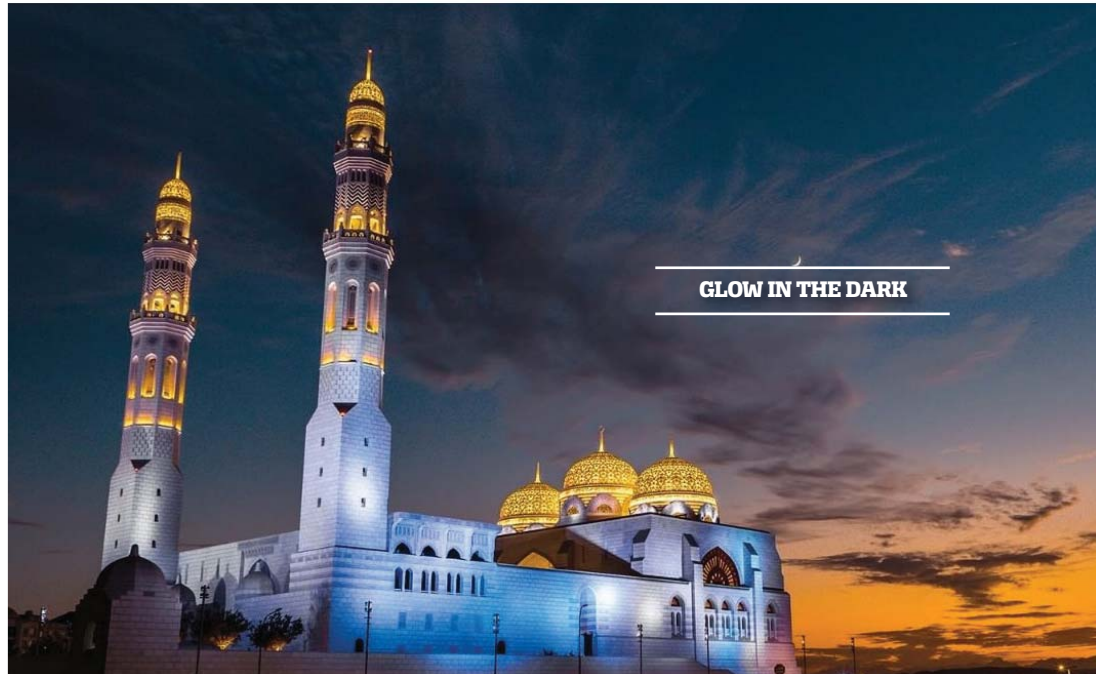


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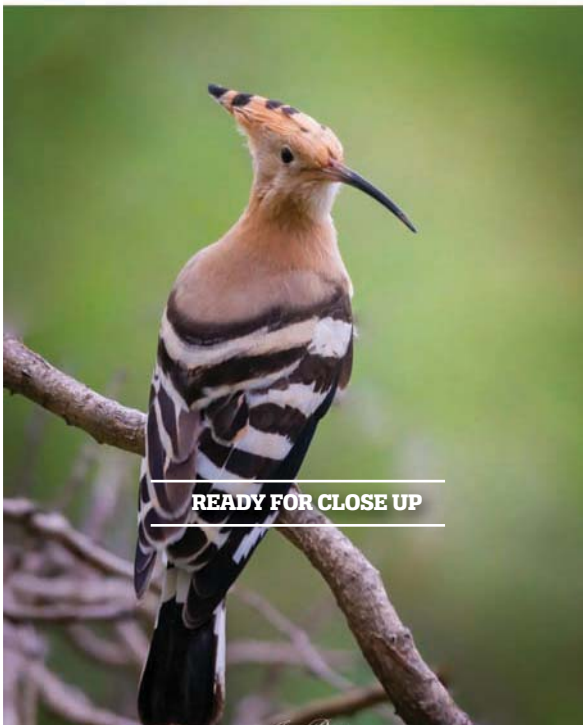
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Somali drama wins Pan-African film festival grand prize



SOMALIA'S ENTRY "The Gravedigger's Wife" by Finish-Somali writer-director Khadar Ayderus Ahmed won the prestigious Stallion of Yennenga grand prize for best film at the Pan-African film festival in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on Sunday.

According to a Reuters report, the poignant drama about a gravedigger's struggles to raise money to pay for his wife's surgery, took home the 20 million franc CFA (\$35,714) prize money and the golden stallion statue.

The film, which was Somalia's first official entry for the Best International Feature Film category at the 2021 Academy Awards, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in July.

Ahmed, who was not in Ouagadougou to collect his prize, has previously said the film was inspired by incidents that happened in his family.

The Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, known as Fespaco, is the largest biannual meeting of African cinema which attracts international and African cinema and television professionals from the continent and the diaspora to the Burkinabe capital.

This 27th edition was postponed by nearly eight months to October 16-23, 2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and security challenges the country is facing. — Reuters

Adele to play first concerts in five years with London Hyde Park shows

MUSIC SUPERSTAR Adele said on Tuesday she will play two concerts at London's Hyde Park next summer, her first in five years, a statement that British media said caused her website to crash as fans rushed to register to a pre-sale of tickets.

The 33-year-old, who topped US and UK charts last week with the comeback single "Easy On Me", took to Twitter with the message "Oiii Oiiiiiiiiiiiiiii", sharing the concert dates of July 1st and 2nd and the link to pre-sale on her website.

The shows, which are part of the BST Hyde Park concerts, are Adele's first since 2017.

However, several UK media outlets reported that the site had crashed, citing fans for saying they were unable to sign up for the pre-sale.

"I tried to subscribe for more than 2 hours but still could not do it," one wrote on Twitter.

"Trying to sign up for pre-sales to @Adele at Hyde Park, but even signing up doesn't work haha! I think it's easier to win the lottery than to get tickets to these concerts," wrote another.

When clicked, the pre-sales registration tab on the website displayed the message "Currently unavailable, please try again later". Some fans said they had managed to sign up. — Reuters

CHANGING WORLD



In Brazil favela, skateboards made of bottle caps promote recycling

IN BRAZIL'S LARGEST favela of Rocinha, on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, a local project aims to promote recycling by donating food in exchange for bottle caps that are used to build skateboards.

Each colourful skateboard is made of some 500 plastic bottle caps that are crushed, melted, placed into a mold and then baked in an industrial pizza oven. Each one takes about two hours to complete.

"It's made 100 per cent from recycling plastic that is collected, recycled and fabricated here in Rocinha," said Arian Rayegani, a Canadian mechanical engineer who heads the Na Laje Designs project.

The project gives food donations in exchange for the bottle caps.

"We are not a skateboard factory, it's bigger than this. We want to create a hub and a center of innovation for recycling here in Rocinha," Rayegani said.

"Rocinha produces 230 tonnes of garbage per day and there is no recycling and waste management locally here that actually deals with this implementation and that is what we want to do," Rayegani added.

"Today we work on plastic but tomorrow we want to be able to recycle paper, metal, glass and beyond that. We want to bring the next generation, bring the kids here, to learn about it, to prevent the issue." — Reuters



AROUND OMAN IN 3RD GEAR



Rachael MacIver
Instagram: @rachael_maciver

The adventure of a blonde and a very old car #15

"THEY CALL THEM the gentle giants, you know", I told Mrs J as we cruised along the road from Wadi Darbat towards Dhofar's famed baobab forest.

"Gentle? Mrs J looked puzzled.

"Aren't all trees gentle?"

Not really knowing what to reply, I ignored her.

"Just enjoy the views, will you?"

The views certainly were a treat for sore eyes. The seasonal summer monsoon had long finished and left everything fresh and green. The land had soaked and replenished and dusted itself off. Even on bad days the diversity with some 900 species of plants and trees, and an estimated 41 unique to Dhofar, made every botanist hop and skip with joy. Most of us remembered when we spotted our first frankincense tree or our first wild desert rose, so much happier and healthier than its less fortunate cousin in Muscat, restricted and constrained, living its life in too small pots on too hot patios.

How the baobab trees, the gentle giants, made it to the Sultanate of Oman is still unclear. Of course, Dhofar's proximity to mainland Africa made it perfectly possible that these trees, native to Africa, could have made their way here in the stomachs of migrating birds and started out as droppings. But perhaps it was more likely that the baobabs were brought here as seedlings and planted by early travellers from Africa. Regardless of how they got here, these impressive trees set down roots and were now towering over everything else in only two places in the Sultanate of Oman. We parked the little rented Yaris and started on one of the many narrow trails crisscrossing through the forest. There weren't many leaves left on the trees and their almost bare branches helped to give the tree its unique shape. Enormous swollen trunks, storing water like all succulents and allowing the trees to survive in the aridest of places. And far up, a crown of sparse branches reaching out like thin, gnarled fingers. This look had given rise to many stories and legends about the weird-looking baobab tree. One such traditional story would have you believe that the

baobab tree wasn't always as gentle and humble as now. It would lord over all the other trees and plants with no consideration for what tried to grow underneath its giant crown. This behaviour became too much for the god, who to punish the self-serving baobab, pulled it out of the ground and forced its crown back down in the hole left by the roots. The tree now, therefore, stood on its head with its roots sticking up in the air and so became known as 'The Upside Down Tree'. Mrs J craned her neck and looked up. "Well, that would humble anyone", she remarked, "imagine standing on your head with your feet in the air - and still manage to live to a tender age of a thousand years. That's what I call adaptability".

A couple of Dhofar's cows trotted past us on the path, scouring the place for something to eat. The huge baobab trees, with trunks impossible for even the keenest tree hugger to get his arms around, and a crown touching the clouds (well.ok, maybe not quite) didn't offer much for them to chew on. Or so we thought. Until we noticed a strange velvet, Mexican maracas shaped object on the ground. These were the baobab fruit. They had fallen from the trees and some cracked open exposing the seeds hidden inside. About a foot long, with a hard shell and covered in moss-green velvet, the cows munched them with delight. We picked up a couple of these strangely beautiful fruits, which did look like maracas and inspired Mrs J to play an imaginary tune and do a little cha-cha-cha there on the path. The cows weren't impressed. "I forgot to tell you, the baobab tree also has another name", I interrupted her. "They call it 'Dead Rat Tree'. When the fruits are ripening on the tree, they, with their velvet coat and all, look like a bunch of dead rats dangling from their tails". "Yikes!", Mrs J threw her maracas on the ground. Whatever names you used for these majestic trees, one couldn't help feeling small and insignificant next to them. They had adapted, and in doing so, they had survived. We could surely learn from that if nothing else.



Another thread in Oman's rich artistic multi-cultural tapestry

BY RAY PETERSEN

Anna Dudchenko is yet another contributor to Oman's artistic scene but has a diversity to her artistic portfolio that sets her apart from others in her realm. "Being an artist is a never-ending process and you learn and discover more from experience," says the multi-faceted artiste, as she emphasized the versatility of her own experiences.

"I spent 7 years at the art school, and 5 years at the university studying Fine Art and Art History, and now, having been in the art business for 20 years, I feel I can continue to grow, develop and diversify."

Arriving in Muscat for a short-term contract during 1999, the young artist's life, and artistic journey, took a new turn, and she made the Sultanate of Oman her second home.

"My first solo show was in the capital in 2004. It sold out, and I realised that I could make a living out of my art. Since then, I've had thirteen solo exhibitions, participated in numerous art fairs, illustrated books, worked as a consultant on private and commercial projects, curated exhibitions for other artists and art galleries, locally and internationally, and developed my clients' private collections," she said.

Focusing on this latter perspective, Dudchenko commented, "Working as an art consultant can be quite challenging, but it is something I enjoy more and more these days. One of my Muscat-based projects required the production of more than 700 artworks of various styles and concepts."

"Coordinating ten very talented and diverse artists, printing specialists, framers, technical staff, took more than a year to complete. However, I found the work personally, professionally and artistically invigorating."

More recently, she has worked with local hotel operators such as the internationally renowned Al Bustan, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and the Marriott Hotel Muscat, to develop their identities. In one local establishment, this involved creating themed artworks for their Jazz Lounge, searching for, and reproducing, vintage images of iconic Dixieland, swing, jazz and blues musicians and singers, of which

she says, "It has created a whole new vibe, a new atmosphere, and it is fast becoming a popular venue in Muscat now."

Speaking of vibes, Dudchenko doesn't want to be tied down to one particular genre, or material, saying, "The materials and the genre are a consequence of the artistic process, which starts with generating ideas, developing concepts, and then choosing the style and media that emerge from the process to implement the ideas. I work in different media from the traditional oils, acrylics, pencils and inks, to contemporary spray paints, markers, epoxy and pastes, to the more organic crushed rocks, sand, glass, clay, crystals, corks and ropes."

The world of art, and its cross-social appreciation, have never been quite so diverse, with Picasso, Warhol, Lowry, Vettriano, Hirst, Murakami, Hockney, Emin, Freud, Banksy, and other artists all contributing to a global 'rebirth,' of artistic appreciation. So, who or what inspires Dudchenko?

"Architecture, books, music, theatre, all the creative/artistic things I guess, but I am finding myself more drawn to, or inspired, by nature of late. It's the tranquillity and peace, that fosters an open mind, new ideas, and nature also fits well with my other passion — cycling, especially in the South of France... in the summertime is such paradise."

So, what does the future hold for this artist cum consultant, cum curator, cum, I guess entrepreneur?

"Well, quite a few new hotels are being constructed in Muscat, and with the opening of borders and the return of tourists, hopefully, some of them will need the services of an art consultant. I am currently working on an exciting new project, and once we are back to normal after the pandemic, I will start organising exhibitions again."

Not simply an artist, Anna Dudchenko embodies the origins of a consultant, from the 16th century French 'consultare,' meaning "to take counsel, meet and consider," and curator, from the Latin 'cura,' which means "to care for," in carving a niche for herself in the Sultanate of Oman, offering yet another thread in its rich multi-cultural tapestry.

