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HM: ENSURE SAFETY OF CITIZENS, RESIDENTS

SHAHEEN TO MAKE LANDFALL TODAY MORNING



High waves break on the Muttrah promenade in Muscat on Saturday. Oman prepares to face Shaheen, which is expected make landfall on Sunday. PHOTO BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH AND KABEER YOUSUF

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Saturday directed to provide everything that would preserve the safety of citizens and residents during the Sultanate's exposure to the effects of the tropical situation, Shaheen.

This came during the emergency meeting of the National Committee for Emergency Management, headed by the Inspector General of Police and Customs.

During the meeting, the recommendations of the sub-committees of the National Committee for Emergency Management situations in the governorates, and the preparedness and readiness efforts undertaken by the main and supportive parties involved in dealing with the tropical situation and its expected effects, were discussed.

A review of the readiness of the efforts made by the sectors of the system to implement the national plan to confront the effects of the tropical situation and the measures taken to reduce potential risks, maintain public safety and reduce material losses.



National Committee for Emergency Management personnel at work. – ONA

LANDFALL

Shaheen is the first time a tropical cyclone is expected to make a landfall on North Al Batinah in more than 100 years. The last time North Al Batinah faced a tropical cyclone was in June 1890.

On Saturday night the centre of the tropical cyclone was 200 km from Muscat and the closest convective clouds band associated with the cyclone is about 150 km.

"It is moving quite fast and the flow of clouds continues with scattered rain of varying intensity on the coastal areas, as the tropical cyclone continues to move

towards the coast of the Sea of Oman, where the cyclone's movement reached 14 km per/hr and the speed around the centre is 64 to 75 knots", said Dr Said al Sarmi, Meteorologist from National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre.

Tropical cyclone, Shaheen, continues to move towards the coastal areas of Sea of Oman, is moving westwards and by Sunday morning is expected to head towards North Al Batinah and make a landfall.

Latest satellite images and weather charts analysis at the National Multi-Hazards Early Warning Centre indicates that the tropical cyclone

Shaheen located at longitude 61.8 degrees East and latitude 24.2 degrees North. Moving towards the Arabian Sea the cyclone is maintaining an estimated surface wind speed around the centre between 64 to 75 knots.

The indirect effects began on Saturday morning in South Al Sharqiyah with high swells reported in Ras Al Hadd, Qalhat and Sur in Sharqiyah as well as high waves across Muttrah sea front and rough seas across Oman Sea Coast line.

EMERGENCY TEAMS

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has confirmed the readiness of all health institutions to deal with any emergency condition. The ministry is providing health services in the governorates during the adverse climatic condition, as well as providing all the needs for the health institutions in terms of human resources, medical devices, medicines and other logistics services.

The ministry represented by the Emergency and Crisis Management Centre is closely monitoring the developments in coordination with the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre. The ministry has formed a task team to activate the national health emergency plan at the central level in the governorates.

MEDIA CHANNELS TO PROVIDE UPDATES

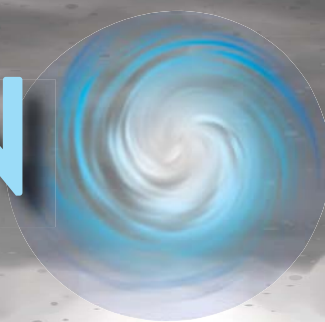
Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, held a meeting with officials from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the National Emergency Management Committee to get updates on the tropical climatic condition (Shaheen) and its expected impact on the Sultanate. The minister affirmed the preparedness of the media, through its print, audio, visual and electronic channels, as well as media supporting sections, to cover the developments of the climatic condition. Emphasis was laid on spreading public awareness.

HOLIDAY FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

Due to the adverse climate conditions being witnessed by the Sultanate and, in coordination with the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM), and to ensure safety of public and private employees, it was decided that Sunday and Monday, (October 3 and 4) will be official holiday for employees of the departments of the state administrative apparatus, other legal entities and private sector's establishments, except those in the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta. Private sector business owners may allow their employees to work during the above-mentioned days, if deemed necessary to continue work during this holiday.

EVACUATION CENTRES IN COASTAL WILAYATS

As the tropical condition is expected to bring heavy rain (200-500 mm) associated with strong winds and storms in the next 48 hours, people residing along the path of the storm from the Wilayat of Barka to Wilayat of Saham, coastal areas of Muscat Governorate, and some parts of the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah are requested to head to evacuation centres set up by the authorities. Meanwhile, all vaccination centres will stop receiving citizens and residents, except those in the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar, starting from Sunday till further notice.



High waves are seen on the sea side in Muttrah on Saturday, as Shaheen tropical storm nears Oman coast.

PHOTO BY MOHAMMED MAHJOUB

BEWARE OF WIND, INUNDATION AND FLASH FLOODS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

The tropical cyclone, Shaheen, continuing to move towards the coastal areas of the Oman Sea, is moving westward and is expected to head towards North Al Batinah by Sunday. Presently the estimated surface wind speed around the centre is between 65 to 82 knots (118 to 141 km/hr). The potential days for the impact of the cyclone are considered to be from Saturday to Monday and by Tuesday, according to the meteorologist from Oman Met Office.

"It could be places like Suwaiq, Shinas, or Liwa where it could make a landfall. The seas will be high, and South Al Sharqiyah coast has already begun to experience high swells of more than seven metres. Some penetration of storm surge into the land has already been noted. These are the first

signs of the cyclone. Sunday is the biggest day with heavy rains expected from Muscat to North Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi and Al Dakhiliyah and may extend to the governorates of Musandam, North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah," said Dr Said al Sarmi, meteorologist at the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre.

While the tropical cyclone moves, there is a huge band of convective clouds that are expected to move west and hit South Al Sharqiyah, Muscat, North Al Batinah and South Al Batinah gradually, which is expected to move west and will bring in moderate to heavy rainfall.

"We have got reports from Ras Al Hadd, Qalhat and Sur that they are already experiencing high waves. All the coasts from Ras Al Hadd to Musandam are expected to experience high swells and high waves as the cyclone approaches



It could be places like Suwaiq, Shinas, or Liwa where it could make a landfall. The seas will be high, and South Al Sharqiyah coast has already begun to experience high swells of more than seven metres. Some penetration of storm surge into the land has already been noted. These are the first signs of the cyclone. Sunday is the biggest day with heavy rains expected from Muscat to North Al Batinah Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi and Al Dakhiliyah and may extend to the governorates of Musandam, North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah

DR SAID AL SARMI

Meteorologist,

National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre

North Al Batinah. We expect heavy rainfalls which can cause flash floods, so people must avoid wadis and the low lying areas," he pointed out.

One of the other concerns is the strong wind that is expected. The centre of the cyclone has reached 65 knots which is the classification of category one.

"As it approaches Oman, most of the strong winds are in the sea. That is why we are experiencing high waves, but when it reaches North Al Batinah, the coastal areas might experience the wind of 45 to 55 knots which is around 90 to 100 km/hr. And this is a strong wind, and we can expect it from Sunday along with the areas from Muscat to Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi.

He said the community must stay aware of the latest developments in the three days regarding the potential severe flash floods resulting from heavy

rainfall. Muttrah Souq is one of the places that often gets impacted by the storm surge, and precautions must be taken. "All low lying places and residential areas throughout the mentioned coasts have to be cautious," he stressed.

Latest satellite images and weather charts analysis at the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre indicates that cyclone is now category one and is expected to directly impact the coastal areas from Muscat to North Al Batinah governorates starting from Sunday morning with strong winds and heavy rains expected to be ranging between 200 and 600 millimetres.

Sea condition is expected gradually to be extremely rough over the coastal areas between South Al Sharqiyah to Musandam governorates, with maximum height ranging between 8 and 12 metres.

With great sadness and sorrow in our hearts and with belief in God's justice and destiny, the Board of Directors, management and staff, express their heartfelt condolences to

Sheikh Abdul Azeez Bin Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Sheikh Taher Bin Soud Al Khalili

And Sheikh Khalid Bin Abdullah Bin Ali Al Khalili

Chairman of Bank Nizwa

and their families

for the sad demise of

Sheikh Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Founder of Bank Nizwa

May Allah bless his soul and
may he rest in eternal peace.

بنك نزوى
Bank Nizwa



■ INFORMATION MINISTER URGES PUBLIC TO FOLLOW OFFICIAL CHANNELS



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, held a meeting on Saturday with officials from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the National Emergency Management Committee to get updates about the tropical climatic condition (Shaheen) and its expected impacts on the Sultanate. The minister affirmed the preparedness of the media, through its print, audio, visual and electronic channels, as well as media supporting sections, to cover the developments of the climatic condition. Emphasis will be laid on spreading public awareness and disseminating instructions and warnings in multiple languages to citizens and residents in the Sultanate, said Dr Abdullah. The media sector will work hand in hand with the National Emergency Management Committee and report the efforts exerted by other sectors addressing the climatic condition. The minister urged all members of the public to take news and information from official sources, and not to entertain rumours, since the aim is to protect public safety and limit the potential risks of the tropical condition. The meeting was also attended by officials from the Ministry of Information. – ONA

EMERGENCY MEASURES IN PLACE TO FACE CYCLONE



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

In preparation for the looming tropical cyclone Shaheen, various ministries and government agencies have brought into place precautionary steps.

As per National Committee for Emergency Management, NCEM, instructions to the general public one should follow the latest updates published by the official agencies of the Sultanate of Oman. It also urges to keep the vehicles petrol tanks full, follow instructions and guidelines of the National Committee for Emergency Management. It also said that if one is requested to

evacuate from their location, do so by being cooperative as it is for one's own safety and if there is no evacuation requested, then stay home and only step out for emergency cases. If you must step out for emergency situations then stick to safe roads and avoid wadis at all costs.

Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has affirmed its readiness to deal with the situation.

Due to the weather conditions, two days, Sunday and Monday have been declared as holidays for employees working in the administrative apparatus, other legal entities and private sector establishments. Employees in

the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar are excluded from the decision.

People residing in the direct impact zone from the Wilayat of Barka to the Wilayat of Saham, coastal strip of Muscat Governorate and some parts of the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah have been requested to head to the evacuation centres or shelters announced by the authorities. Shelter centres have also been activated in Al Sharqiyah, Al Batinah South and Musandam governorates.

The Environmental Authority has activated the Environmental Emergency Centre to work around the clock to respond to pollution

incidents, tackle potential risks and at the same time to coordinate with other competent authorities for implementing response operations.

Accordingly, the Environment Authority has urged industrial facilities, ports, factories, chemical production units, radioactive materials, fuels and hazardous wastes to take precautions and activate their emergency plans and manage the materials as per the environmental standards during the period the governorates will be facing the impact of the cyclone.

Muscat Municipality has called on contractors and construction companies to ensure the unstable objects and tools are installed at the

work sites in order to ensure the safety of all. Muscat Municipality has activated the Muscat Call Centre to work around the clock in order to receive notifications on the number 1111.

The Ministry of Health has completed the readiness and preparedness of all health facilities with workforce, medical equipment and medical supplies for the mentioned period.

The National Committee for Emergency Management stated that the Municipality of South Al Batinah has confirmed its readiness to deal with the tropical situation and work has intensified to open wadis to ensure the expected flow

of rainwater. The Public Services Regulatory Authority confirms the readiness of the electricity sector and public services companies to deal with the tropical situation.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour has announced that its digital services will be suspended during this period.

The Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology has urged all land transport companies to follow up on the latest weather situation from official channels before providing services. By Saturday evening fishermen moved their boats to safety expecting storm surge and inundation.

Preparations in place to meet health emergency



SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkuttyvp

The Ministry of Health confirmed on Saturday its readiness to deal with any emergency situation that may rise from the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

In a statement, the ministry said it had activated the national health emergency plan for medical response and public health at central and governorates to deal with the situation.

"All health institutions are ready with enough manpower, medical equipment and medicines. All the necessary services are ready," it said.

Also, the call centre of the ministry was activated and a shift schedule was prepared for

administrators in the emergency plan and for doctors and health workers in health institutions.

Governorates close to the places expected to be affected by the cyclone are stocked with medicines, medical supplies and enough workforce.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Besides, central stores are ready to send additional shipments of medicines and other medical equipment to all directorates, hospitals and health centres.

Meanwhile, the Muscat Municipality has announced the activation of its 24-hour call centre to provide the latest tropical updates through notifications.

"As part of its efforts to provide necessary assistance to the general

public with regard to Shaheen, information about the tropical storm can be obtained from additional Muscat Call Centre 1111, which will be operational round the clock," the municipality said in a statement.

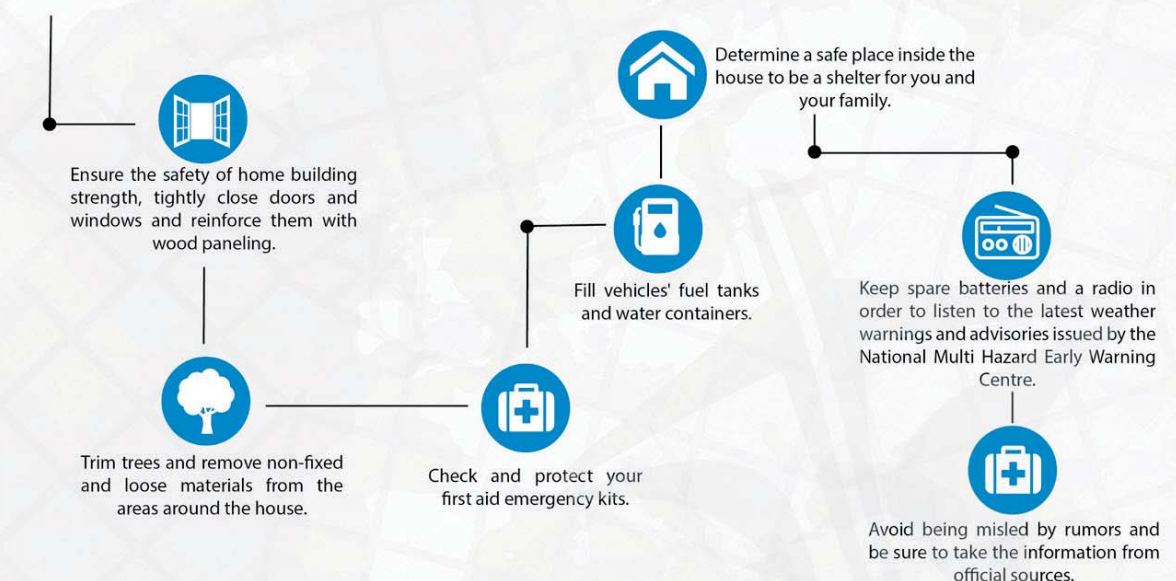
The municipality cautioned people living in the low lying areas and near wadis as they are likely to be flooded due to rains resulting from the tropical storm.

"The municipality has taken all necessary measures to deal with the situation," the statement said.

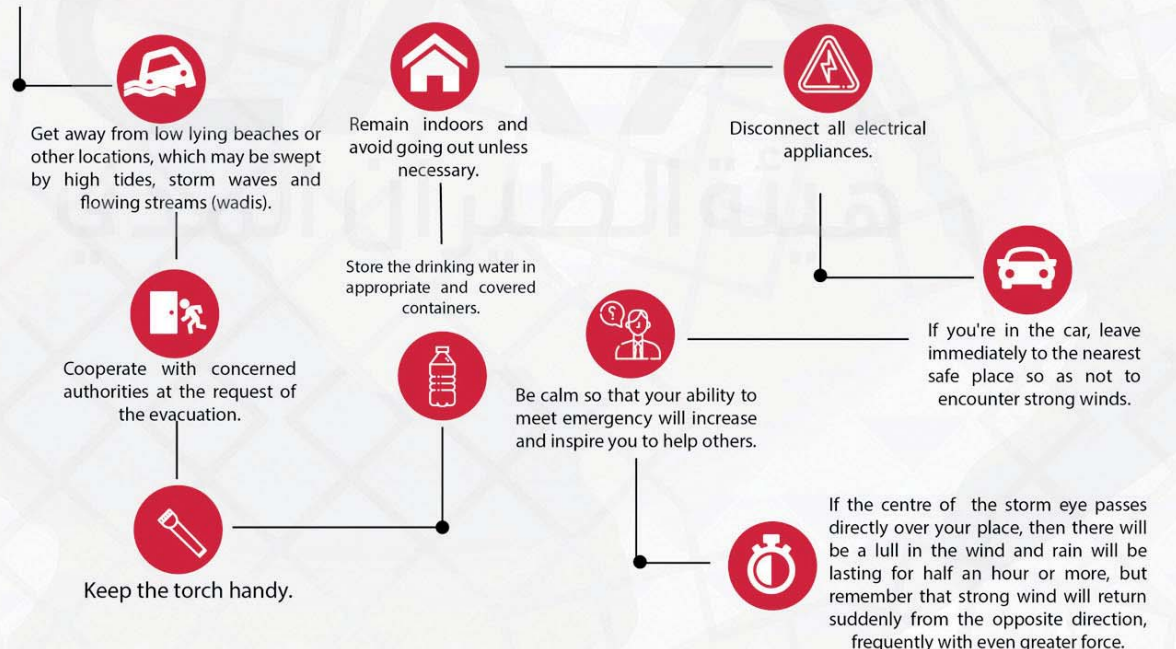
The met office confirmed the warnings issued by the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre against the multiple dangers of not going to the sea and staying away from the low-lying areas adjacent to the coasts.



Steps to be taken before the tropical cyclone:



Steps to be taken during the tropical cyclones:



Steps to be taken after the tropical cyclone:



Reasons why cyclones increasing in the Arabian Sea

MIDHUN RAJ
@midhunralpha

Cyclones are low-pressure systems that form over warm tropical waters, with gale-force winds near the centre. The winds can extend hundreds of kilometres (miles) from the eye of the storm. Sucking up vast quantities of water, they often produce torrential rains and flooding resulting in major loss of life and property damage. They are also known as hurricanes or typhoons, depending on where they originate in the world, when they reach sustained winds of at least 119 kilometres per hour (74 miles per hour). Tropical cyclones (hurricanes) are the most powerful weather events on Earth, according to Nasa.

WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE FUELLING THEM?

Oceans soak up more than 90 per cent of the heat generated by greenhouse gases, leading to rising

water temperatures. As cyclones draw their energy from warm waters, the rising temperatures are causing intense storms to become more common, experts say. "Now what is happening — the Arabian Sea temperatures, the ocean's surface temperatures — are warming rapidly," climate scientist Roxy Mathew Koll of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology said. Rising sea levels could also boost storm surges from cyclones, making them even more deadly and destructive.

WHY ARE THERE MORE IN THE ARABIAN SEA?

Scientists say historically, the Arabian Sea averaged two or three cyclones, that were typically weak, in a year. The Arabian Sea also previously experienced fewer severe cyclones than the Bay of Bengal off India's eastern coast. But rising water temperatures because of global warming is changing that, they said. This is the first time since



the start of satellite records in 1980 in India that there have been four consecutive years of pre-monsoon cyclones in the Arabian Sea. "One of the reasons that we are seeing more and more storms and cyclones in the tropical regions, especially regions like Arabian

Sea and all, is because of ocean warming, rapid ocean warming," Koll said. "The Arabian Sea is one of the fastest warming basins across the global oceans." Cyclones have been relatively rare in Gujarat, but they can be destructive and dangerous. The worst was in 1998

Now what is happening — the Arabian Sea temperatures, the ocean's surface temperatures — are warming rapidly

ROXY MATHEW KOLL
Climate scientist,
Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology

when more than 4,000 people died.

WHAT ELSE IS MAKING THEM MORE DEADLY?

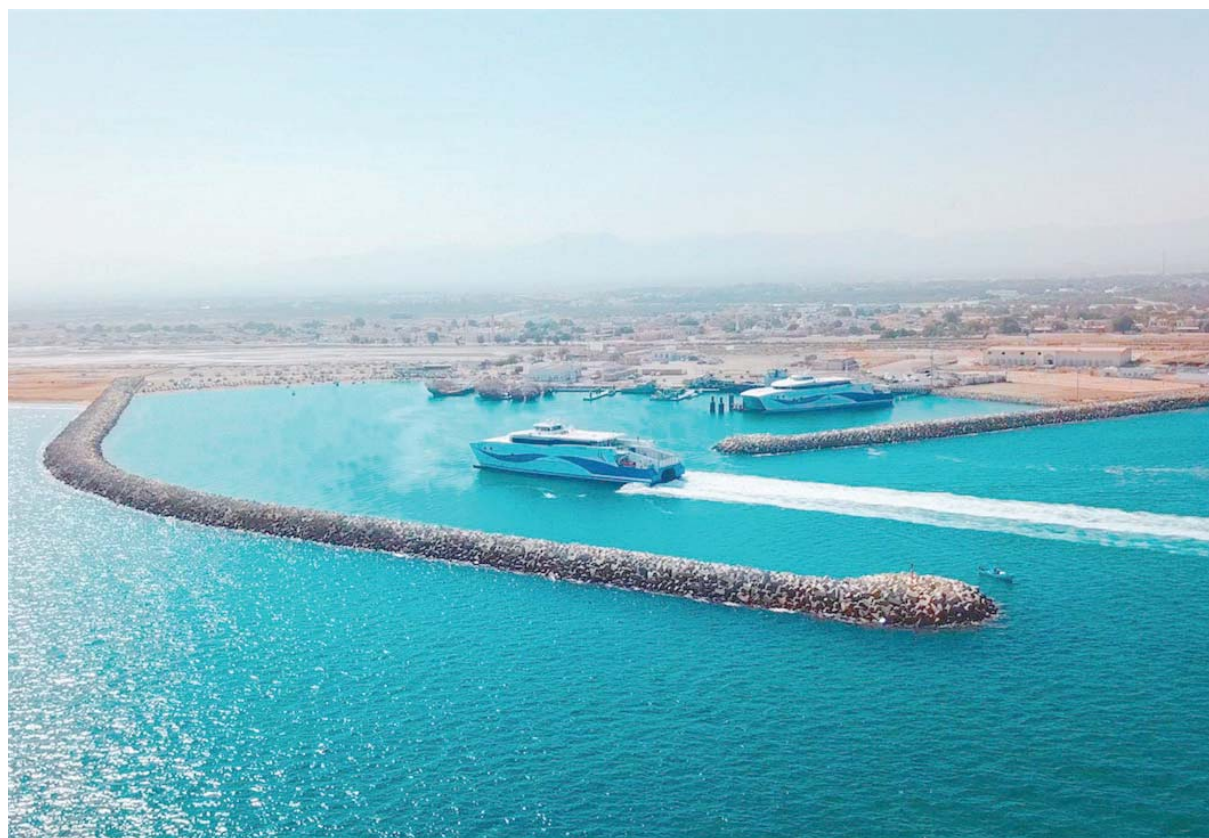
Cyclones can unleash catastrophic storm surges — tsunami-like flooding — when they make landfall. They can be the deadliest

part of a cyclone and are only partially affected by wind speeds. The term "storm surge" refers to rising seas whipped up by a storm, creating a wall of water several metres higher than the normal tide level. The large swells move faster than the cyclone and are sometimes spotted up to 1,000 kilometres ahead of a major storm. The surge can extend for dozens of kilometres inland, overwhelming homes and making roads impassable. A storm surge is shaped by a number of different factors, including storm intensity, forward speed, the size of a storm and the angle of approach to the coast. The underlying features of the land at the coast, including bays and estuaries, are also at play. In previous storms, people failed to flee because they did not grasp the surge's deadly threat. That was the case for 2013's Super Typhoon Haiyan, which left 7,350 dead or missing in the central Philippines, primarily due to the surge.

■ NATIONAL COMMITTEE TAKES STOCK OF CYCLONE



The National Committee for Emergency Management met in Muscat on Saturday to take all measures necessary to preserve the safety of citizens and residents. – ONA



Bus and ferry services suspended across Oman except in Salalah

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkuttyvp

Mwasalat suspended its bus and ferry services in all the governorates following the development from the tropical storm Shaheen.

However, bus services in Salalah will not be affected.

According to a statement from the state-owned operator, “Mwasalat will suspend its bus and ferry services in all governorates of the Sultanate, starting from Sunday. The city bus service in Salalah and ferry service for the route Shannah-Masirah will continue.”

In the meantime, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has called upon owners of shipping companies and marine units to exercise caution due to Shaheen.

A statement from the ministry urged them to monitor the developments with caution before

operating cruises.

“The ministry would like to warn all owners of ships to ensure the safety of maritime navigation in the Omani territorial waters. They should take the utmost care and caution and follow up on developments of the weather situation from their official sources before operating cruises,” it said.

SAFETY OF TOURISTS

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism called the hospitality and tourist establishments to instruct tourists and guests to take precautions and advised them not to venture into wadis and to stay away from low lying areas.

The ministry called upon them not to go to the sea during this period and to take the necessary precautionary measures to ensure the safety of visitors to hotel and tourist establishments, and we advise everyone to follow the latest developments from their

official source.

At the same time, a number of colleges and universities in the Sultanate have decided to switch to distance learning.

Sultan Qaboos University decided to suspend classes on Sunday and Monday. The university said that this decision comes in light of the exceptional expectations of the climatic conditions in the Sultanate and in the interest of the safety of students.

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Rustaq and Muscat announced its decision to implement distance learning from October 3 to 7.

“Due to the climatic conditions that the Sultanate is witnessing, it has been decided that distance learning will be for all students until further notice; therefore, please follow the email to follow up on the details of attending the courses,” the university said in a statement.

Shops and food suppliers warned against price rise

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkuttyvp

Shops and suppliers have been warned against any artificial rise in the prices of commodities in view of the tropical cyclone Shaheen that is advancing towards the Oman shore.

Salim bin Ali Gmana, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority, reminded all the commercial establishments in the Sultanate of the need to adhere to laws and regulations related to the consumer protection.

“No one will be allowed to take advantage of the situation. If anybody is found to be violating the regulations by raising the prices, they will be booked under the laws”, he said.

He said that the officials at the authority are continuously in communication with various commercial establishments and suppliers in the governorates concerned, and warned them against raising prices.”

The Authority in a statement earlier, said it has already chalked out a comprehensive plan including formation of teams of



“No one will be allowed to take advantage of the situation. If anybody is found to be violating the regulations by raising the prices, they will be booked

**SALIM BIN ALI
GMANA**
Chairman, Consumer Protection
Authority

officials to deal with situation.

“The teams, which will work in alternative shifts in morning and evening, will keep a watch on the markets and prices of commodities and services”, the statement said.

In addition, the officials will follow up on consumer complaints and will interact with owners of commercial establishments to ensure supply of all essential commodities.

“Any breach in the rights of consumer including price rise will be dealt with seriously”, the authority warned.

■ MOVE AWAY TO SAFETY



Police asking people to evacuate from low lying areas in Suhar on Saturday ahead of Shaheen.

Photo by Faisal al Balushi

In brief

■ BAGHDAD



HUNDREDS OF IRAQIS MARK PROTESTS ANNIVERSARY

Hundreds of Iraqis took to the streets of Baghdad to mark the second anniversary of a popular uprising that fizzled out after a bloody crackdown.

Brandishing Iraqi flags and portraits of “martyrs”, they marched to Tahrir Square, an epicentre of the 2019 revolt, surrounded by a large number of riot police.

“When will we see the killers behind bars?” and “No to corrupt parties, no to corrupt politicians”, said placards carried by the demonstrators, who included women dressed in black.

On October 1, 2019, widespread rallies erupted across Baghdad and the south of the country.

■ ISTANBUL



KARPOWERSHIP ENDS POWER SUPPLY TO LEBANON

Turkish company Karpowership has said it is shutting down electricity supplies to Lebanon, citing the end of a contract with the country’s state-run electricity company Electricite du Liban (EdL).

“As of October 1, our contract with EdL has come to an end and as such we will begin the process of shutting down the two power ships”, a spokesperson for the Istanbul-based firm said in a statement.

In May, the company had suspended supply from its floating power plants for more than a month, citing the failure to resolve a payment dispute that had lasted for months and legal threats to seize its ships over corruption allegations.

■ TRIPOLI



70 MIGRANTS MISSING IN MEDITERRANEAN

Seventy migrants headed for Europe across the Mediterranean from Libya have gone missing, the independent support group Alarm Phone said on Saturday.

“A boat with 70 people on board is missing for 4 days! They departed from Khoms, Libya, & called Alarm Phone several times”, it tweeted.

“When we lost contact, they were in Malta SAR (search and rescue) zone, 18 kilometres to Italian waters, but there is no record of their rescue or arrival. Authorities are silent.”

Alarm Phone criticised authorities in Malta and Italy.

Israeli activities trigger tension between Azerbaijan and Iran



Military tanks are seen during an Iranian Army exercise dubbed ‘Fatehan of Kheibar’, in the northwestern parts of Iran. — Reuters

TEHRAN: Iran has started military exercises near its border with Azerbaijan as tensions between the two neighbours rose over issues including Baku’s relations with Israel.

Iranian state media said the exercises involved armoured and artillery units, as well as drones and helicopters. They kicked off near the Poldasht and Jolfa border crossings with Azerbaijan.

Iran has long criticised Azerbaijan’s military ties with Israel, which include purchases of Israeli arms. Tehran has also been wary over nationalists in Turkey and Azerbaijan fanning secessionist tendencies among its Azeri minority.

After Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev reportedly voiced “surprise” over the planned exercises, Iranian Foreign Minister

Hossein Amirabdollahian said that holding military exercises by a state within its territory was part of its national sovereignty, Iranian state media said.

Referring to an Israeli presence along Iran’s borders, Amirabdollahian told the new Azeri ambassador: “Iran does not tolerate the Zionist regime’s activity against its national security and will take whatever action is

necessary”, state media reported.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) think-tank, Israel provided Azerbaijan with some \$825 million in weapons between 2006 and 2019.

Separately, Iran on Friday denounced a visit by Israel’s foreign minister to Bahrain to mark the establishment of relations.

— Reuters

Qataris vote in first legislative election



DOHA: Qataris headed to the polls on Saturday to vote in the first-ever elections for the consultative parliament in the country.

The elections are being held after repeated delays since a new constitution was ratified in 2004 introducing the polls.

Voters will elect two-thirds of the Shura Council’s members, or 30 candidates. The emir, Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, will appoint the remaining 15 members.

More than 200 candidates are vying for the 30 seats.

Local media showed short queues inside polling stations, as voters gathered to cast their ballots.

The parliament can approve the national budget, monitor the performance of ministers and draft legislation. Any decision needs a two-thirds majority in the council as well as the emir’s ratification.

Saturday’s vote comes one year ahead of the World Cup in Qatar, which will take place November 21-December 18, 2022. — dpa

UN agency for Palestinian refugees needs \$800m

GENEVA: The UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees announced that it was seeking \$800 million at a donor conference scheduled for November in Brussels.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York that the organisation needed “predictability” for its operations.

To fund UNRWA’s “three core activities” — education, health and social services — “we are seeking \$800 million a year”, he told reporters ahead of the gathering, organised by Jordan and Sweden.

“The main objective of the conference is to have a better predictability” and to “promote visibility” the Swiss diplomat said.

The funding would allow the agency to keep open the 700 or

so schools it managed, catering to 550,000 children, as well as health centers and to provide social welfare to Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

In addition to the \$800 million, Lazzarini said there was also a need for funds for the humanitarian aid provided by UNRWA, which varies from one year to the next, depending on the crisis, but which the agency estimates will be around half a million dollars in 2022.

Lazzarini, who took the post last April, said his agency was \$100 million short to see out this year, and warned that it might have to shut down some activities in November and December.

“Today we keep struggling, running after cash”, he said. “I never know as a Commissioner-General weeks ahead if I would be able to pay the salaries of 28,000 staff.” — AFP



A Palestinian volunteer pushes a trolley of food rations outside an aid distribution centre run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at the Al Shati camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City. — AFP

Fighting between separatist forces kills four in Aden



Members of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) man a checkpoint in Aden. — Reuters

ADEN: Clashes raged in the Yemeni city of Aden on Saturday between members of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) and at least four fighters have been killed, two security sources said.

Residents said heavy gunfire could still be heard at mid-day in Aden’s central Crater district that houses government headquarters and the central bank. The port city has seen tension between the internationally recognised government and the STC over control of the south of the country.

The prime minister returned to Aden last week from Saudi Arabia

and is residing at the presidential palace in Crater along with other government ministers. Yemen’s president is based in Riyadh.

“We ask citizens in Crater to remain at home during the next few hours as security and anti-terrorism forces clean the city from some... outlaw elements”, the STC’s Security Belt Forces unit said in a Twitter post. South Yemen has been paralysed by the power struggle between the government and the STC, leading to protests in recent months over widespread poverty and poor public services.

They are nominal allies under a coalition which has been battling

the Ansar Allah movement that ousted the government from the capital Sanaa in late 2014 and now holds most of northern Yemen and main urban centres.

Saudi Arabia mediated a deal aimed at ending the standoff between the government and the STC, including forming a new cabinet that includes separatists, but a planned troop redeployment has yet to take place.

The coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 against the Ansar Allah but the conflict has dragged on, killing tens of thousands and pushing the country to the brink of famine. — Reuters

Duterte retiring from politics

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said on Saturday he was retiring from politics and has decided not to run for vice-president in next year's elections amid surveys showing Filipinos believed it would violate the constitution.

In a surprise move, Duterte instead endorsed his long-time close aide, Senator Christopher Go, who registered at the Commission on Elections on Saturday as the vice-presidential candidate of the ruling political party in the May 2022 elections.

"I would like to wish Senator Go all the best and good luck in his quest for the vice presidency," said the 76-year-old leader, who accompanied the legislator at his registration and later on raised his right hand.

Duterte, whose six-year term as president ends in June 2022, earlier accepted the nomination of the PDP-Laban political party to be its vice-presidential candidate. Go was nominated as the presidential candidate, but he declined.

PDP-Laban has yet to name a presidential candidate.

In a short statement after Go filed his certificate of candidacy, Duterte said there was "overwhelming sentiment" from the public that he was "not qualified" to run for vice-president because his candidacy would violate the spirit of the constitution.

"In obedience to the will of the people, who after all placed me in the presidency many years ago, I now say, to my fellow Filipinos, I will follow what you want, and today I announce my retirement from politics," he added.



Philippine Senator Christopher 'Bong' Go, accompanied by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, files his certificate of candidacy to join the vice-presidential race, at Sofitel Harbor Garden Tent, in Pasay City, Metro Manila. — Reuters

Under the Philippines' constitution, a president can only serve for a single term of six years and cannot seek re-election.

Analysts had warned that if Duterte had successfully run for vice-president in the May 2022 elections, he could again have become president if his successor had become incapable of leading the country.

Filipinos expressed surprise at Duterte's announcement and Go's vice-presidential run, and wondered what political "drama" was behind the twist.

Political parties have until November 15 to file for substitutions in their registered candidates, and many believed that aspirants were still negotiating

alliances in the elections.

"Game of Thrones will be ashamed [with the twists] in the filing of candidacy in the Philippines," tweeted leftist activist Renato Reyes.

"The evil empire is consolidating," artist Bart Guingona said, noting that Go could be a placeholder candidate for another politician.

Go, 47, promised to continue Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs, corruption and criminality if he wins as vice-president. He also vowed to fight hunger and ensure efficient and affordable public health services.

"I will continue to serve especially those who need government attention the most,

the poor," he said. "I will be a working vice-president who will do everything I can to serve you all. I will not be a spare tire or just a reserve."

On Friday, boxing icon Senator Manny Pacquiao registered as a presidential candidate. Next week, the popular mayor of the capital city of Manila, Isko Moreno, and former police chief Senator Panfilo Lacson are expected to formalise their bids for the presidency.

Other possible presidential contenders include Vice-President Leni Robredo, Duterte's daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, and former senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, the only son and namesake of the late Philippine dictator. — dpa

UK army to deliver petrol from Monday

LONDON: The British army will begin delivering petrol to fuel stations on Monday after fears over tanker driver shortages led to panic buying and forced the government to offer visa waivers to foreign truckers to plug the shortfall.

"Almost 200 military tanker personnel, 100 of which are drivers, will be deployed from Monday to provide temporary support as part of the government's wider action to further relieve pressure on petrol stations and address the shortage of HGV drivers," the government said.

Motorists queued at fuel pumps across Britain at the beginning of the week, draining tanks and fraying tempers.

"Thanks to the immense efforts of industry over the past week, we are seeing continued signs that the situation at the pumps is slowly improving," said business minister Kwasi Kwarteng.

"It's important to stress there is no national shortage of fuel in the UK, and people should continue to buy fuel as normal. The sooner we return to our normal buying habits, the sooner we can return to normal," he added.

The government says a lack of tanker drivers to deliver fuel and unprecedented demand is behind the crisis.

Demand for fuel has stabilised throughout the week and stations are gradually stocking up again, but some parts of the country still face severe shortages.

The Petrol Retailers Association on Thursday said 27 per cent of stations had run dry — down from earlier in the week, but the same as on Wednesday.

"PRA members are reporting that whilst they are continuing to take further deliveries of fuel, this is running out quicker than usual due to unprecedented demand," association chief Gordon Balmer said. — AFP



A sign informing customers that fuel has run out is pictured at a fuel station in London. — Reuters

Global Covid-19 deaths surpass 5 million mark

WASHINGTON: Worldwide deaths related to Covid-19 surpassed 5 million on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, with unvaccinated people particularly exposed to the virulent Delta strain.

The variant has exposed the wide disparities in vaccination rates between rich and poor nations, and the upshot of vaccine hesitancy in some western nations.

More than half of all global deaths reported on a seven-day average were in the United States, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and India.

While it took just over a year for the Covid-19 death toll to hit 2.5 million, the next 2.5 million deaths were recorded in just under eight months, according to a Reuters analysis.

An average of 8,000 deaths were reported daily across the world

over the last week, or around five deaths every minute. However, the global death rate has been slowing in recent weeks.

There has been increasing focus in recent days on getting vaccines to poorer nations, where many people are yet to receive a first dose, even as their richer counterparts have begun giving booster shots.

More than half of the world has yet to receive at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, according to Our World in Data vaccinations.

The World Health Organization this week said its COVAX distribution programme would, for the first time, distribute shots only to countries with the lowest levels of coverage.

Co-led by the WHO, COVAX has since January largely allocated doses proportionally among its 140-plus beneficiary states



Globally an average of 8,000 deaths were reported daily over the last week, accounting for five deaths every minute. — AFP

according to population size.

"For the October supply we designed a different methodology, only covering participants with low sources of supply," Mariangela

Simao, WHO Assistant Director General for Access to Vaccines, said in a recording of a conference presentation last week posted on the WHO's website.

The United States, which has been battling vaccine misinformation that has caused about one-third of the population to avoid inoculations, surpassed 700,000 deaths on Friday, the highest toll of any country.

US cases and hospitalisations have been trending lower, but health officials are bracing for a possible resurgence as cooler weather forces more activities indoors.

Russia reported 887 coronavirus-related deaths on Friday, the largest single-day death toll it has recorded since the pandemic began and the fourth day in a row it has set that record. Only 33 per cent of Russia's eligible population has received a first vaccine dose.

As a region, South America has the highest death toll in the world

accounting for 21 per cent of all reported deaths, followed by North America and Eastern Europe contributing more than 14 per cent of all fatalities each, according to Reuters analysis.

However, India, one of the first countries ravaged by the Delta variant, has gone from an average of 4,000 deaths a day to less than 300 as its vaccination campaign is rolled out.

About 47 per cent of India's eligible population has received a first shot, with officials administering around 7,896,950 doses per day over the past week, a Reuters analysis of Our World in Data showed.

The Delta variant is now the dominant strain around the globe and has been reported in 187 out of 194 World Health Organization member countries. — Reuters

TBILISI

Georgians vote in local election

Georgians were voting on Saturday in closely watched municipal elections, a day after ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili's arrest on his return from exile deepened a protracted political crisis in the Caucasus nation.

The detention of Georgia's foremost opposition figure raised the stakes in the elections seen as a key test for the increasingly unpopular ruling party.

Saakashvili founded Georgia's main opposition party, the United National Movement



(UNM), and was president between 2003-2013.

The 53-year-old said on Friday he had returned from Ukraine, where he heads a Ukrainian government agency steering reforms.

BERLIN

Greens to debate next steps ahead of coalition talks

Germany's Greens, who emerged as the third strongest force in last week's elections, are set to discuss the next steps before negotiations over who should be in the country's next government.

During a party conference in Berlin on Saturday, some 100 delegates are to formally task a 10-member group spearheaded by party leaders Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck to conduct further exploratory talks.



The Greens had already conducted talks on Friday with the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), which came in fourth in Sunday's elections, to explore their role as potential kingmakers in a three-way coalition.

WASHINGTON

Trump asks judge to press Twitter

Former US president Donald Trump asked a federal judge in Florida to ask Twitter to restore his account, which the company removed in January citing a risk of incitement of violence.

Trump filed a request for preliminary injunction against Twitter in the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida, arguing the social media company was "coerced" by members of the US Congress to suspend his account.

Twitter "exercises a degree of



power and control over political discourse in this country that is immeasurable, historically unprecedented, and profoundly dangerous to open democratic debate," Trump's lawyers said in the filing.

For migrants, pandemic job cuts fuel ‘multiple crises’

NAIMUL KARIM

Five years ago, Belal Hossain left his home in the low-lying region of Garuikhali, near the coastal mangroves of southern Bangladesh, to work as a builder in a construction company more than 3,219 km away in Malaysia.

The 29-year-old said leaving his village in the Sundarbans — a fragile ecosystem already being affected by climate change impacts, from soil salinity to higher seas and river erosion — was the only way he could feed his family of five.

But the company he worked for in Malaysia suffered losses due to Covid-19 and was forced to make cuts. Hossain lost his job and returned home in March this year. “Soon after I came back, we were hit by Cyclone Yaas and my family’s farmland got devoured due to the rising water,” he said.

“I left home because of these problems... and now that I don’t have a job, I don’t know how I can support my family. It’s even more difficult to find work now,” he added.

Bangladesh is one of the world’s largest exporters of labour, with nearly 700,000 people getting jobs abroad annually prior to the pandemic. But thousands have been left without work in the last two years as the pandemic has slowed economies around the world. Climate researchers said stress levels among migrants who leave regions grappling with climate change effects to seek work elsewhere are far higher than others moving from environmentally stable regions, emphasising the lack of data on their situation.

“For climate migrants, the problem is much bigger,” said migrant researcher Shakirul Islam. “Firstly, the job loss due to Covid affects their livelihood and then they have to return to their villages which were always vulnerable.”

“Aside from needing to feed extra people, since the migrants are back home and jobless, they also have to deal with cyclones and floods,” added Islam, who is founder of the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program, a Dhaka-based think-tank.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

I left home because of these problems... and now that I don’t have a job, I don’t know how I can support my family. It’s even more difficult to find work now

BELAL HOSSAIN
Construction worker



THE CROWN OF SCOTLAND

The Duke of Hamilton carries The Crown of Scotland to the Debating Chamber at the opening of the sixth session of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, Scotland, on Saturday. – AFP

We are winning this Third World War



Ray Petersen
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Although the pandemic has seemed like a ‘one step forward, two steps back’ situation wherever you are, the perspective is generally much more positive today than even a few months ago.

Travelling from Oman to the United Kingdom last month was, however, very much an eye-opener in respect of the different effects of the pandemic, the attitudes to it, and some of the consequences of something that has probably wrought more havoc, socially and economically, than any other, since the Second World War of 1939-45.

The first noticeable effect, in Oman, was the absolute dearth of traffic on the new highway from Muscat to Wajaaja, on the border with the United Arab Emirates. Once we cleared the environs of Muscat, say beyond Mussanah, there was an almost total absence of vehicular traffic. Not to say that’s a bad thing, but it was very noticeable. It did mean however, that we were able to cruise along under no pressure at all, and Ali, our driver was able to point out several landmarks of interest.

Of course, the border posts were quiet too, so the formalities were quickly taken care of on the Omani side, while on the Emirates side, we gave the border officers something to do. Maybe they hadn’t had many people travelling with luggage recently, and they enjoyed the opportunity to do something meaningful, so our bags

got a genuine forensic examination. Nah, I’m only joking, but it was an extended stop. Impressively, the Covid compliance and precautions were 100 per cent on the mark.

The drive down into Dubai was ‘back to the future-ish,’ as the locals, ubiquitous in their Lamborghinis and Brabus’s with ‘special’ number plates, tend to keep drivers around the Emirates on their toes with their tailgating, lights-flashing, undertaking, and all-round reckless driving. You aren’t even safe in a slow lane either... but I digress, don’t I? There were definitely no less vehicles on the roads of Dubai, so it appears that the ‘work-from-home’ option was sparsely utilised.

Interestingly, because Ali dropped us at our hotel and returned to Oman, we used taxis and the metro extensively to move around the city. Our taxi drivers, across the 12-day stay, were adamant that our difficulties in hailing taxis were down to a 50 per cent reduction in taxi drivers, and therefore a matching on-the-road presence. It was concerning that the taxi drivers appeared reluctant to wear their masks effectively, or provide sanitisers, so we stayed masked, and carried our own sanitisers.

The overall mask compliance on the streets was diverse, and we were in Deira, where there is significant foot-traffic, and probably was about 50/50. In shops and businesses too the application of

Covid procedures was mixed. In fact, in an exchange on Rigga Street I had an altercation with a security guard who insisted upon trying to push customers close together, in contravention of the signage advising 2-metre spaces. We had a vigorous ‘discussion’ on the topic!

Dubai, and particularly Deira, is certainly showing the sign of the economic consequences of restrained retailing, with so many closed shops and restaurants, lighter foot-traffic numbers, and, to be honest, a depressing ‘feeling’ on the streets. The hotels too appear badly affected, with a number of closures, and hospitality management and staff report reporting ‘sinking lid’ recruitment and retention policies affecting their in-house compliance. They are still smiling, but honestly... you can see the smiles aren’t reaching their eyes, and it’s easy to feel sympathy for them. Airports and flying, on the other hand, demonstrated 100 per cent compliance, understanding, and compassion, in a number of situations where the Covid compliance and distancing were absolute.

So why do I feel we are on the way back? Because Oman has demonstrated that even if the majority don’t understand Covid, or don’t care, there are enough who do! The silent majority, herd immunity, these are the keys to winning this particular world war... and we will.

Ali Cogia is my classical discovery of the year



Rasha Al Raisi
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ALI COGIA WAS A MERCHANT IN BAGHDAD AT THE TIME OF HARUN AL RASHID THE ABBASID CALIPH

Have you heard of Ali Cogia before? Well, I haven’t until a few weeks back, while browsing children’s books for my niece. Assuming that the story was of Persian origins because of the name Cogia, I was surprised to discover that it was part of a series that included other well-known tales from Arab heritage such as Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Sindbad and Aladdin.

Out of sheer curiosity, I decided to buy the book and read it before gifting it to the little one. Ali Cogia was a merchant in Baghdad at the time of Harun al Rashid the Abbasid Caliph.

Cogia decided to go to Haj and hid his one thousand pieces of gold at the bottom of a jar that he filled with olives, before passing it

to his neighbour for safe keeping.

One day — after seven years of being away — the neighbour was craving olives and remembered Cogia’s jar. Assuming Cogia’s demise, the neighbour opened the jar and found the olives on the top had moulded.

He decided to dig deeper to check if the rest of the olives were still in a good condition, to recover the hidden gold instead. He kept the gold and filled the jar with fresh olives he bought from the market.

A month later, Ali Cogia returned from Haj and retrieved his jar to find it filled with olives and no sign of the gold. To his shock, the neighbour denied any knowledge of the gold which angered Cogia, who went straight

to the judge to report the incident.

Unfortunately, due to lack of evidence, the neighbour was not charged with theft and was set free. Cogia decided then to raise his complain to Harun al Rashid the wise Caliph, and his bailiff asked him to return the next day.

That evening — as was his custom — the Caliph went out in disguise to check on his people and respond personally to their needs. He found a group of three children re-acting the story of Ali Cogia as it was the famous case of the year. The Caliph watched in fascination as the boys played Ali Cogia, the neighbour and the judge roles respectively with a difference: the boys came out with a smart solution that the judge had never considered.

The following day, the boy who played the judge role was summoned to attend Cogia’s trial.

After listening to Cogia side of the story, the Caliph asked the neighbour to speak. He was about to swear his innocence when the boy interrupted and asked him to present Cogia’s olive jar.

The jar was passed to the Caliph and a few olive merchants present who confirmed that the olives were fresh, most probably this year’s harvest, hence it wasn’t the olives that Cogia had filled his jar with seven years back. The neighbour confessed his crime and gave back Cogia’s gold.

He was free to go and so was the boy, who was awarded a bag of gold coins from Cogia for his cleverness. The story of course

has other versions, where in one the case was cracked by the judge himself and not by the Caliph.

In another, the story has specific details of Cogia’s itinerary that includes a trip to Persia which delayed him for seven years.

The story is claimed to be part of One Thousand and One nights, as well as being narrated by other famous writers such as the American William Dean Howells (1837-1920) and the Scot Andrew Lang (1844-1912) in his famous book Arabian Nights Entertainment. Without doubt, Ali Cogia is my classical discovery of the year.

(The writer is a certified skills trainer and an author)

sport

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BERLIN: Karim Benzema has no doubt Kylian Mbappe will play for Real Madrid and says he enjoys being part of a team trying to redevelop under Carlo Ancelotti.

Madrid reportedly saw three bids rejected by Paris Saint-Germain for the France star during the transfer window.

Yet with Mbappe's contract expiring at the end of the season and no sign of an extension, the 22-year-old will be free to speak with foreign clubs over a possible free transfer from January onwards.

France team-mate Benzema says it is just a matter of time until Mbappe becomes a Madrid player, telling *L'Equipe*: "He said it himself. He wants something more. He will play at Real Madrid one day. I don't know when, but he'll come. It's a question of time."

Benzema believes Madrid are going through a transition under head coach Ancelotti, with established stars such as Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane having left while youngsters including Eduardo Camavinga and Vinicius Junior take on greater prominence in the first team.

"Real Madrid are still the best club in the world," he said. "Reconstruction or not, it's a new football, a new generation, new players. We have to invest in the youngsters so they become great players one day."

"I'm here to help them. I speak a lot with them. I want to improve them."

It is Benzema, however, who remains the cornerstone of the side. With eight goals and seven assists in just seven La Liga games in 2021-22, the striker has more than double the direct goal involvements of any other player in the division.

His form in the past year has led to calls for him to win the Ballon d'Or, the award returning this year after being suspended for 2020, with former Madrid star Luis Figo this week backing the 33-year-old for the prize.

While he cannot deny it is on his mind, Benzema says it is important not to become too focused on personal goals at the expense of helping the team.

"We have to think about it when you have ambition, but it doesn't have to be an obsession that makes you focus on yourself, telling yourself you have to shine individually," he said. "If you have to win it, it's because of who you are, what you show on the pitch, what you do."

— dpa

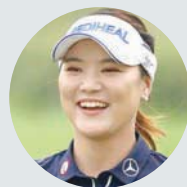
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He said it himself. He wants something more. He will play at Real Madrid one day. I don't know when, but he'll come. It's a question of time
KARIM BENZEMA
France midfielder

MBAPPE TO REAL
MADRID IS JUST A
MATTER OF TIME,
SAYS BENZEMA



Perry the first Australian woman to pick up 300 wickets

All-rounder Ellyse Perry became the first Australian woman to take 300 international wickets after she dismissed India's Pooja Vastrakar on day three of the four-day pink-ball test on the Gold Coast on Saturday. Perry sent off Vastrakar (13) in the 143rd over as Beth Mooney pulled off a stunning catch at gully.



Ryu shoots 65 to share lead at LPGA ShopRite Classic

Ryu So-Yeon shot a six-under 65 in the opening round of the LPGA Tour's ShopRite Classic on Friday to grab a share of the lead with Jodi Ewart-Shadoff. Starting on the back nine, South Korea's Ryu began her round with back-to-back birdies then closed with three straight birdies beginning at the par-three seventh.



Morgan's batting woes in IPL continue as WC approaches

DUBAI: England Twenty20 captain Eoin Morgan's poor batting performance in the Indian Premier League (IPL) continued as he scored only two runs in Kolkata Knight Riders' defeat by Punjab Kings, raising concerns over his form ahead of the World Cup.

Morgan, who also leads Kolkata, has scored a total of 17 runs in four innings since the IPL resumed in the United Arab Emirates last month. The 35-year-old has an average of 10.90 runs in the T20 tournament and Kolkata coach Brendon McCullum said the team expects more from the batter.

"I think he's captained the side really well. But look, you want

some more runs from him there's no doubt in there," McCullum told reporters after Friday's five-wicket loss.

"He's one of our senior players. He's one of our international batters and in his own head, he would have loved to contribute more runs.

"You need runs from your overseas players and you particularly need in those key spots as well. I am confident he will come alright."

Morgan is set to lead England in the T20 World Cup, which will be held in the UAE and Oman.

England face defending champions West Indies in their opening match on October 23 in Dubai. — **Reuters**

Rahul steers Punjab into Indian Premier League play-off contention

DUBAI: KL Rahul steered Punjab Kings to a nail-biting five-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders on Friday, keeping their hopes alive for a play-off place in the Indian Premier League.

KKR looked set for a big total in Dubai with Venkatesh Iyer smashing 67 off 49 balls but Punjab restricted them to 165 for 7 with England captain Eoin Morgan out for two.

Punjab were without Chris Gayle who announced his departure from the IPL on Friday with coronavirus "bubble fatigue" and to prepare for the Twenty20 World Cup.

But the openers made a good start before Mayank Agarwal departed for 40, caught at cover by Morgan — having dropped him in the first over — off Varun Chakravarthy.

Nicholas Pooran fell for 12, Aiden Markram for 18 and Deepak Hooda for three but Rahul held his nerve with a commanding 67 off 55 balls.

Rahul looked out with 10 balls left but Rahul Tripathi, taking what appeared to be a spectacular diving catch, was adjudged by the third umpire to have grounded the ball.

Rahul was finally caught a few balls later.

With four needed off four, Shahrukh Khan heaved the ball to the fence where Tripathi fumbled it over the rope.

"I think catches cost us," Morgan said afterwards.

Punjab's win takes them to fifth, level on 10 points with fourth-placed KKR and Mumbai Indians in sixth. The top four teams will go through to the play-offs. — **AFP**

BRIEF SCORES: Punjab Kings 168/5 (KL Rahul 67, Mayank Agarwal 40; Varun Chakravarthy 2/24) beat Kolkata Knight Riders 165/7 (Venkatesh Iyer 67, Rahul Tripathi 34; Arshdeep Singh 3/32) by 5 wickets.



Punjab were without Chris Gayle who announced his departure from the IPL on Friday with coronavirus "bubble fatigue" and to prepare for the Twenty20 World Cup

Royal Challengers, Knight Riders to start as favourites



With the tropical cyclone around the corner and public/private holidays being declared for the next two days in Oman, definitely the Indian Premier League is going to have a lot of eyes on it today. To add on a double header with both matches affecting qualifications for multiple teams, will assure the competition being at its maximum.

PUNJAB KINGS VS ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Royal Challengers Bangalore will walk into the Sharjah Stadium

with memories of Harpreet Brar rocking them earlier this year in their first encounter. Virat's boys are currently placed on the third spot and definitely have their eyes on finishing in the top spot. On the other hand, winning is just not enough for Punjab Kings as they need to work on their net run rate to qualify, with a lot of its and buts in the picture.

Punjab Kings – Punjab Kings won a thriller in Dubai against Kolkata Knight Riders and this would give them a big boost in confidence. KL Rahul played a patient captain's knock. Despite all the heroics, Punjab still had panic hiccups towards the end, just like how the season has been for them. But fortunately, this time they were on a rare winning side.



Royal Challengers Bangalore – The Royal Challengers Bangalore is almost on the verge of qualification, but that's not what they would be aiming for. They will surely have their eyes on getting to 20 points and in the process, they would surely be looking to work on their net run rate, so that they can finish

in the top two slots and have 2 opportunities to reach the finals. RCB just thrashed Rajasthan Royals in a one-sided encounter and Srikar Bharat's contribution at number 3 is adding great value for them.

What to expect in the match?

The match is at Sharjah and the pitch in Sharjah has been a tough

one for batting. Run-making hasn't been easy by any stretch of the imagination. The spinners are likely to make hay on the surface. Chasing should be the preferred option for teams. Expect a low scoring and closely fought encounter. Royal Challengers Bangalore should start as favourites in this encounter.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS VS SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Kolkata can at best reach the 14-point mark and their net run rate is far better than other teams. Hence, expect Kolkata to just make sure that they go a little cautious to make sure that they don't take any additional risks. With Delhi beating Mumbai, there is no other team that can get to 16 points and now the qualification for the 4th spot is on

14 points and net run rate. On the other hand, Sunrisers Hyderabad are going to play the remainder of their match for their pride and to entertain their fan base. They have already given a taste of this to Rajasthan Royals in the last week and Kolkata Knight Riders would be very well aware about this fact.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS MATCH?

The match is at Dubai International Stadium and it's a herculean task for the batters to score runs in the death overs on this surface. The wicket might get slower at the late end of the match. It's a 160-170 kind of a wicket and bowling first is a good option. Shakib Al Hasan might come in and with the quality of Kolkata's line up, they should go.

Five-wicket Khawar bowls Oman to victory



BY SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, OCT 2

Khawar Ali's beguiling leg-spin and all the incomprehensible variety that came with it left Papua New Guinea (PNG) clueless as it fell to Oman's spin again in a World Cricket League (WCL) 2 game at Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat on Friday.

Khawar's 5 for 15 was the highlight of Oman's 3-wicket win that helped the team to strengthen its lead at the top to 26 points from 17 games, having won 13 and lost 4. Scotland, who Oman face on Saturday, is second with 15 points from 11 matches followed by USA which has 14 points from 16. Chasing PNG's 150, Oman appeared to be in the driving seat at 120 for 3 in 27 overs before losing some quick wickets to create a bit of drama in the middle. The victory was, however, achieved in the 36th over as Oman scored 151 for 7. Aqib Ilyas led the way with a solid 56, getting good support from Mohammad Nadeem and Kashyap Prajapati who contributed 24 and 21 respectively.

PNG pacer Kabua Morea did the bulk of the damage, picking up 5 for 28 in his 9-over spell.

BRIEF SCORES: PNG 150 all out in 43.2 overs (Assad Vala 62 - 6x4, Lega Siaka 22. Khawar Ali 5-15, Zeeshan Maqsood 2-39) lost to Oman 151 for 7 in 35.5 overs (Aqib Ilyas 56 - 4x4, 1x6, Mohammad Nadeem 24 - 1x4, Kashyap Prajapati 21 - 3x6. Kabua Morea 5-28) by 3 wickets.

Khawar's 5 for 15 was the highlight of Oman's 3-wicket win that helped the team to strengthen its lead at the top to 26 points from 17 games, having won 13 and lost 4

'I would never force players to pick Socceroos'

HONG KONG: Coach Graham Arnold has said he will not force anyone to play for Australia over other nations as he revealed Gianni Stensness has yet to receive official clearance to complete his switch from New Zealand to the Socceroos.

Stensness declared last week his intention to change allegiance to Australia having represented New Zealand at the Olympic Games — a move All Whites coach Danny Hay called a "kick in the guts".

The Australia-born 22-year-old, who was eligible to play for New Zealand through his father, was not included in Hay's 21-man squad for October friendlies against Curacao and Bahrain and decided to represent Australia at senior level, said New Zealand Football.

Administrative delays have kept the defender out of the Australian squad for this month's World Cup qualifiers against Oman and Japan, but Arnold revealed he had been in discussions with Stensness — a near-neighbour in Sydney — for some time.

"I spoke to him three days ago and we're still waiting for the paperwork from Fifa for his clearance that he can play for Australia," said Arnold.

"It's very fortunate that he lives in the same area as me and we caught up and we've had those discussions about him playing for Australia and he's chosen to play for Australia."

Stensness could be joined in future Socceroos squads by Dinamo Zagreb's Deni Juric, who is also being pursued by Croatia, with Arnold looking to strengthen his squad as the Australians attempt to qualify



for a fifth straight World Cup.

"At the end of the day it's his decision," said Arnold. "Which country, which badge he puts on his heart is going to feel the right badge."

"I'd never force anyone to do something that they don't really believe in because if I do that then they're not going to feel comfortable in that shirt and they're not going to give 100 per cent if they're forced into it."

Australia have won their last 10 World Cup qualifying matches in a row and go into the meeting with Oman on October 7 with six points from their opening two games in the final phase of Asia's preliminaries for the 2022 World Cup.

Arnold's team defeated China and Vietnam in their first two qualifiers and face an Oman side that handed Japan a shock 1-0 loss in their opening game in Osaka last month.

The Socceroos are also due

to take on Japan at Saitama Stadium on October 12, and Arnold has selected a 25-man squad that sees Melbourne Victory's Chris Ikonomidis join Rhyann Grant as the only Australia-based players on the roster.

"The confidence and the belief, they're building in the boys. They're starting to believe they can win every game, which is fantastic and that's what I'd expect of the boys when they come into camp," said Arnold.

"It's one game at a time and there's a strong belief in what their qualities are."

AUSTRALIA SQUAD GOALKEEPERS: Mathew Ryan, Lawrence Thomas, Danny Vukovic. **Defenders:** Aziz Behich, Milos Degenek, Rhyann Grant, Trent Sainsbury, Harry Souttar, Ryan McGowan, Callum Elder, Fran Karacic. **Midfielders:** Jackson Irvine, Kenneth Dougall, Denis Genreau, Ajdin Hrustic, James Jeggo, Aaron Mooy, Tom Rogic, Riley McGree, Daniel Arzani, Chris Ikonomidis. **Forwards:** Martin Boyle, Mitchell Duke, Awer Mabil, Adam Taggart.

OCT Ruwi, Bank Muscat, Ideal, Vanderlande start season on a winning note

MUSCAT: Zubair al Balushi's magnificent 4 for 10 and Wasim Ismail's brilliant 58 were the highlights of OCT Ruwi's 7-wicket win over OCT Muscat in a B Division 30-over League game of Oman Cricket's new season 2021-22 here at the Muscat Municipality Ground 1 in Al Amerat on Friday.

OCT Muscat failed to capitalise on its decision to bat first and was dismissed for a meagre 105 in the 25th over due largely to Zubair's superb spell.

It took OCT Ruwi only 12 overs to reach the target, scoring 107 for 3. Wasim Ismail led the chase with a 33-ball 58 not out.

BRIEF SCORES (B DIVISION): OCT Muscat 105 all out in 24.3 overs (Ahmed al Balushi 30 - 4x4, Zubair al Balushi 4-10) lost to Oct Ruwi 107 for 3 in 12 overs (Wasim Ismail 58 - 12x4, Mohammed al Balushi 24 - 5x4) by 7 wickets.

AMIR BOWLS BANK MUSCAT TO VICTORY

In the day's other B Division game at the adjacent Ground 2, Amir Mehmood bowled Bank Muscat to an exciting 33-run victory against OCT Al Hail A.

The bankers' fighting total of 159 all out in 26 overs was built around Mubashar Iqbal's 31 and Mohsin Nazir's 29. Hisham Shafi picked up 3 for 32 while Nadhir Ghulam bagged 2 for 27.

OCT Al Hail A failed to fight hard, getting bowled out for 126 in the 25th over, Walid Rahim topscoring with a fluent 40 off 44. Apart from Amir brilliant bowling, Ajay Hirlekar bowled well too, claiming 3 for 29.

BRIEF SCORES (B DIVISION): Bank Muscat 159 all out in 26 overs (Mubashar Iqbal 31 - 2x4, 2x6, Mohsin Nazir 29 - 5x4, Hisham Shafi 3-32, Nadhir Ghulam 2-27) beat Oct Al Hail 'A' 126 all out in 24.5 overs (Waleed Rahim Al Balushi 40 - 4x4, Amir Mehmood 4-28, Ajay Hirlekar 3-29) by 33 runs.

RUBAN POWERS IDEAL TO EASY WIN

Ruban Durai's scintillating 75 off 35 powered Ideal International to a 4-wicket win over Design



RAHUL STEERS VANDERLANDE TO VICTORY

Group Engineering Consultants in a C Division T20 game at Muscat Municipality Ground 1.

Design Group failed to post an imposing total on the board, managing only 142 all out in 20 overs with Chaitanya topscoring with a run-a-ball 31. Wasim Jamadar and Nikhil Varsani were superb with the ball, picking up three wickets each.

Ruban's strokeful knock made Ideal's task easy as it reached 146 for 6 in only 13.5 overs for a comfortable 4-wicket win. Opener Wasim Jamadar made a brisk 29 off 19. Mohammed Haris and Jibin Kunnumpurath bagged two wickets each.

BRIEF SCORES (C DIVISION): Design Group Engineering Consultants 142 all out in 20 overs (Chaitanya 31 - 1x4, Wasim Jamadar 3-14, Nikhil Varsani 3-23, Sachin Mamnani 2-20, Ruban Durai 2-29) lost to Ideal International 146 for 6 in 13.5 overs (Ruban Durai 74 - 12x4, 2x6, Wasim Jamadar 29 - 2x4, 2x6, Mohammed Haris 2-25, Jibin Kunnumpurath 2-30) by 4 wickets.

In another C Division match at Municipality Ground 2, star all-rounder Rahul Chadha steered Vanderlande to a thumping 10-wicket victory against Al Jadidi Engineering & Contracting.

Al Jadidi was dismissed for a disappointing 110 in 19.1 overs despite a solid 57 by opener Feroz Vazhayil. Aasim Mohammed and Rahul were the star bowlers, claiming three wickets each.

Vanderlande raced to the target in only 11.3 overs, scoring 113 without loss thanks to a scintillating 74 not out off 41 by Rahul and an unbeaten 35 off 29 by Prasanth Reddy.

BRIEF SCORES (C DIVISION): Al Jadidi Engineering & Contracting 110 all out in 19.1 overs (Feroz Vazhayil 57 - 5x4, 1x6, Aasim Mohammed 3-22, Rahul Chadha 3-24, Joseph Navin 2-12) lost to Vanderlande 113 for 0 in 11.3 overs (Rahul Chadha 74 - 14x4, Prasanth Reddy Thonduru 35 - 2x4, 2x6) by 10 wickets.



S&P revises Oman’s outlook to positive on improving fiscals



The S&P Global logo is displayed on its offices in the financial district in New York City

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Adding to a succession of increasingly favourable assessments of the Omani economy, leading international credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings, on Friday revised the outlook on the Sultanate to positive from stable.

At the same time, the New York-based agency affirmed its ‘B+/B’ long-term and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings. The transfer and convertibility assessment was set at ‘BB-’.

In upgrading its outlook for the Sultanate, S&P cited the following reasoning: “Economic and fiscal pressures on Oman are easing, as the effects of the sharp drop in oil prices in 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic abates. We project that Oman’s reform programme will reduce the pace of net government debt accumulation over the next three years. We have therefore revised our outlook on Oman to positive from stable and affirmed the ‘B+/B’ ratings.”

It further added: “The positive outlook indicates that we consider that Oman’s reform programme,

PROMISING RECOVERY:
Real GDP to grow by 1.7 per cent in 2021 and accelerate to 3.1 per cent on average in 2022-2023 as oil and gas production ramps up after OPEC+ production limits are eased

and the higher oil prices relative to 2020, will narrow fiscal deficits and slow the increase in net government debt over the next three years.” Significantly, Oman’s real GDP is expected to grow by 1.7 per cent in 2021 and then accelerate to 3.1 per cent on average in 2022-2023 on the back of rising oil and gas production once OPEC+ production curbs are relaxed, the agency said.

S&P pointed out that it could raise its ratings for the Sultanate over the next 12 months “if planned fiscal reforms and stronger economic growth sustainably reduce fiscal imbalances and the stock of net government debt beyond our current expectations”.

However, on the flip side, it

noted that a downward revision to stable — from positive — was likely if it saw “risks to fiscal reform implementation that could reduce the government’s ability to maintain sustainable public finances”.

Likewise, a downward movement could also be triggered if “external debt issuances by government-related enterprises (GREs) increased the country’s external debt metrics more than we currently expect”, it stated.

The positive outlook by S&P comes on the heels of an equally upbeat assessment provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last month.

In a statement following its Article IV Consultation for 2021, the world body said the Omani economy has been tracked for recovery by a combination of fiscal reforms and other measures instituted by the Omani government. “The economy is set to recover in 2021, with non-hydrocarbon GDP growth of 1.5 per cent as vaccine rollout gradually restores domestic activity along with the recovery of external demand,” the IMF said.

“The fiscal deficit and government debt rose sharply in

2020 but are projected to improve considerably over the medium term with the implementation of the authorities’ Medium-Term Fiscal Balance Plan (MTFP),” it further noted.

In revising its outlook for Oman, S&P Global Ratings cited the “solid path” charted by the government to reduce historically high fiscal deficits, and backed by a “strong political will” to implement reform measures.

The agency noted that while “some slippages” are anticipated in the achievement of the key targets set out in the government’s 2021 — 2025 MTFP, the overall strategy is expected to produce a net positive outcome.

“...if the government fully implements its reform programme and oil prices turn more favourable than we had assumed, the pace of increase in net debt could slow significantly below our current forecast of slightly above 5 per cent of GDP on average over 2021-2024,” S&P stated.

These projects, it explained, are based on oil price assumptions of an average of \$60 per barrel in 2021 and 2022 and \$55/barrel from 2023, up from \$42/barrel in 2020.



New telecom towers to boost services in Duqm

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 3

Oman Tower Company (OTC) has started installing a number of telecommunication towers in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), aimed to enhancing the performance of the telecommunications network in the Zone and to keep pace with population and urban growth.

Eng Azzan bin Said al Hasani of SEZAD’s Public Utilities Department said the installation of 13 telecommunication towers has been approved at different locations in the Zone.

“The locations have been identified post conducting site visits by a team of specialists from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) and the telecommunication service providers. These

visits are aimed to study the possible ways to strengthen the telecommunications network in the Zone and prioritise the sites where the towers and fiber-optic network switches are installed,” Al Hasani said.

At the same time, Oman Broadband Company started connecting a number of fiber-optic networks in the commercial district of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, in line with starting developing the road network in the new commercial district.

“The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones commends the cooperation accorded by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) and the service providers to strengthen the telecommunications network in SEZAD and provide 5G networks in the next phase to keep pace with the Zones requirements,” Al Hasani added.

Oil settles near 3-year high ahead of OPEC+ meet

LONDON: Oil settled above \$78 a barrel on Friday, just shy of a three-year high reached earlier this week, on expectations that OPEC ministers will maintain a steady pace in raising supply.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, meets on Monday. The group is slowly unwinding record output cuts made last year, although sources say it is considering doing more to boost production.

Brent crude rose 97 cents, or



1.2 per cent, to settle at \$79.28 in its fourth weekly rise. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose 85 cents to settle at \$75.88 in a sixth week of gains. Brent has risen over 50 per cent this year and reached a three-year high of \$80.75 on Tuesday. — Reuters

400 applications received for CR mergers, liquidations

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 3

The number of new commercial registries recorded at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) during the first eight months of this year totalled 15,324.

Registries related to liquidations and mergers numbered around 400 during the first nine months of the year, the ministry said.

Procedures governing mergers and liquidations come within the framework of guidelines

announced by the ministry recently and which came into effect on June 15, 2021.

They aim to facilitate the correction of the legal status of companies interested in liquidating their commercial registries within a period of one year or to merge them within a period of six months. They also aim to encourage holders of multiple commercial registries to liquidate or merge their commercial establishments.

Khalid bin Khamis al Masrouri, Director of the Audit and Control Department of



Commercial Establishments at the ministry, said: “The liquidation or merger of commercial registries contributes to tackling the phenomenon of multiple commercial registries, correcting

market conditions, improving the business environment and its competitiveness, supporting plans for the development of small and medium enterprises SMEs, and enabling entrepreneurs to cancel their old inactive registries by utilising a package of facilities and fee waivers to help them get rid of previous burdens.”

Al Masrouri added: “These facilities include an exemption from all government fines resulting from the liquidation of commercial companies, specifying an amount of RO 50 only against

all liquidation procedures, while the liquidator must be one of the authorised signatories’ partners or whoever the company deems appropriate to execute this procedure.”

Applications for liquidation can be submitted electronically through the “Invest Easy” portal or Sanad Services Centres.

As for mergers, the interested applicant will be exempted from government fees and fines against their commercial registries. Applications can also be submitted electronically through the “Invest

Easy” portal or Sanad Service Centres.

The facilities package also include the possibility of transferring the ownership of the commercial registry from one owner to another and the transfer of foreign workers to the same registry to the new owner or partner, while an amount of RO 200 to be paid against each commercial registry, regardless of the number of workers instead of paying an amount of RO 316 against the clearance of each worker previously.

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Applications received for 54 testing and calibration labs: MoCIIP

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 2

As many as 54 applications have been received by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) from private sector investors seeking approvals to set up testing 40 and calibration 14 laboratories at various locations around the Sultanate.

In line with Oman Vision 2040, the organisational level of the Accreditation Department at the Directorate General for Standardisation and Metrology in the ministry has been raised to a level of Directorate instead of an accreditation office — a move designed to enhance the efficiency and quality of inspection and assessment of laboratories and certification bodies (management systems certification, halal certification, individuals and product certification systems).

Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Head of the Directorate of Accreditation at the ministry,



stated: “The Directorate General for Standardisation and Metrology represented by the Accreditation Office registers the private laboratories in accordance with the Regulation of Registration of Testing and Calibration Laboratories, while the concerned regulation specifies a number of administrative, technical measurements and requirements for evaluating the laboratory, including requirements related to the legal status of the laboratory, its structure, facilities, its work environment, health, safety requirements, subcontracting, experience and competence of

Private laboratories can contribute to raising efficiency and quality of testing and calibration services, says ministry

staff, specifications, testing methods, equipment used, and testing reports/calibration certificate issued by the laboratory.”

He further added: “The regulation classifies the private laboratories into three types, namely: first party laboratories, second party laboratories, and

third party laboratories. While the first party laboratory is defined as a laboratory affiliated to an establishment or a producing company, its activity is limited to testing and/or calibrating of products related to the establishment or the company. The second-party laboratory is a laboratory that testing and/or calibrating a commodity in which it has an interest. The third-party laboratory is a laboratory that is not affiliated with any institution or producing company and It provides its services to all customers, whether governmental or private entities or individuals.”

Majan Electricity issues revised bills

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 2

In line with the government's latest directives on the application of the revised electricity tariffs for citizen accounts in the residential category, Majan Electricity has issued the recalculated bills for the months of May and June.

The new band level for the existing tariff slab had been expanded to be started from 0 to 4,000 KWH, at a rate of 12 baisas, while the second slab starts from 4,001 to 6,000 KWH, at a rate of 16 baisas.

The third slab starts from 6,000+ KWH, at a rate of 27 baisas. These revisions have helped customers to be included



predominantly in the first band, effectively reducing their monthly billed amount, the company said in a statement.

Moreover, Majan Electricity has published a summary notice

to subscribers that include some clarifications on the adjusted outstanding amounts for the bills of May, June and July 2021.

These details have been included in the July bill. This notification has been sent only once, billing in the months will be made regularly.

“Majan Electricity has shown its support to its subscribers by offering them to choose an installment option to pay their outstanding bills. The company also continues emphasising to its clients the importance of updating their current information via any of the available channels, that include the company's website, Sanad offices, or any of the Customer Service outlets.

ASAAS Company appoints new CEO



MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of ASAAS Company has announced Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company. This was done basically to empower Omani competencies and in their leadership capabilities towards achieving the company's visions and aspirations.

Ahmed al Humaidi has had an affluent professional and leadership career and more than 20 years of experience in several sectors.

بورصة مسقط
MSX

MSX closes higher supported by Industrial Index

Month	Hotel Revenue (OMR 000)
Aug-20	2,500
Sep-20	4,500
Oct-20	4,500
Nov-20	6,500
Dec-20	7,500
Jan-21	6,500
Feb-21	6,500
Mar-21	8,500
Apr-21	6,500
May-21	4,500
Jun-21	6,500
Jul-21	6,500
Aug-21	8,500

MUSCAT: The MSX30 Index ended the week higher by 0.39 per cent. All sub-indices ended higher except financial index, which was down by 0.08 per cent. Services & Industrial Index closed higher by 1.33 per cent and 3.95 per cent, respectively. MSX Shariah Index closed lower by 0.04 per cent.

ACWA Power believes company is now of the view that it is very unlikely that it will receive an extension to its PPA before the expiry of its current PPA on December 31. In addition, the company, up until the date of this disclosure, has not received any further notification regarding the Power 2022 tendering process, therefore the company would like to inform its shareholders that, in its opinion, this process for extending the PPA is unlikely to continue. The company is in discussion with management and other stakeholders to determine how best to proceed, following receipt of this information.

Vodafone Oman is set to commence operations in the very near future — a development that promises to further intensify competition in the retail and business segments of the telecom market, as well as accelerate the country's digital transformation.

A top official affirmed that Oman's newest telecom player is gearing up to go live shortly, after nearly a year's delay, attributable primarily to the global economic slowdown and compounded by the pandemic. We at U-Capital believe it will be a challenging time for existing operators once the third telecom operator starts operations in Oman as the competition will heat-up. The MoCIIP last week launched a programme for granting long-term residency to expat investors in the Sultanate.

Aimed at enhancing the investment quality in Oman and create more job opportunities, the 'Investor Residence' programme offers foreign investors and retirees the right to long-term stay in the Sultanate. Applications will begin from October 3 through an online system of MoCIIP. Criteria for obtaining residency in the first category for up to 10 years: An investment of at least RO 500,000 in a limited liability company, closed joint-stock company or government bonds; Establishing a company that employs at least 50 Omanis without specifying the capital; and buy a unit or housing units with a value of no less than RO 500,000.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

\$200 Oil? Traders are betting big on a global energy crunch

RECORD PRICES: Some options traders are betting that oil prices could jump to \$200 a barrel by the end of next year

TSVETANA
PARASKOVA



Some options traders are betting that oil prices could jump to \$200 a barrel by the end of next year as the energy crunch in Europe and Asia shows signs of worsening just ahead of the winter heating season

in the northern hemisphere.

Call options at Brent at \$200 a barrel for December 2022 traded 1,300 times on Wednesday, according to data from ICE Futures Europe cited by Bloomberg.

Traders would profit from those call options if oil prices were to rally to record levels over the next year.

In recent days, the call options for triple-digit oil prices next year have increased, suggesting that more traders are betting on higher oil prices over the next 12 months.

According to Bloomberg estimates on ICE Futures Europe data, wagers on Brent \$100 calls through to the end of 2022 have jumped by 20,000 contracts this



French oil giant Total Refinery is seen during sunset in Donges

month alone.

Over the past month, the perceived energy supply shortage has led to record gas and power prices in Europe, record spot liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices in Asia for this time of the year, and multi-year high coal prices in Europe and Asia.

Investment banks revised up their oil price forecasts for the end of the year, although some started to warn that at \$80 oil or higher, demand destruction is just a matter of time.

Earlier this month, one of Japan's leading banks, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), said that Brent Crude prices were

set to retreat to \$64 a barrel by the end of 2021, while the energy minister of Oman warned that the International Energy Agency's suggestion of no new investments in oil could push oil prices to \$200 a barrel.

Bank of America said that oil prices could hit \$100 per barrel over the next six months if we have a colder-than-usual winter, which could be the most important driver of global energy markets in the coming months.

(Tsvetana is a writer for Oilprice.com with over a decade of experience writing for news outlets such as iNEZZ and SeeNews)



In brief

■ LONDON

**CD&R WINS \$10 BN AUCTION FOR MORRISONS**

Clayton, Dubilier & Rice (CD&R) has won the auction for Britain's Morrisons with a £7 billion (\$9.5 billion) bid, paving the way for the US private equity firm to take control of the UK's fourth biggest supermarket group.

The Takeover Panel, which governs M&A deals in the UK and arranged the auction, said on Saturday CD&R had offered 287 pence a share, while a consortium led by the Softbank owned Fortress Investment Group offered 286 pence. CD&R's victory marks a triumphant return to the UK grocery sector for Terry Leahy, the former chief executive of Britain's biggest supermarket chain Tesco, who is a senior adviser to the firm.

■ LONDON

**VIRGIN ATLANTIC DELAYS IPO PLAN UNTIL EARLY 2022**

Virgin Atlantic, the British airline founded by billionaire Richard Branson, has delayed its plan to list until early 2022 to focus on the reopening of the transatlantic market, said a person familiar with the situation.

The United States has said it will allow in fully vaccinated travellers from Britain and dozens of other countries in November, fully reopening Virgin Atlantic's main market for the first time in 18 months.

Virgin had been considering a float this autumn according to reports in August, but it will now wait until next year so it can focus on, and benefit from, the wider restart of travel between Britain and the US, the person said.

■ BERLIN

**ALLIANZ ASSET MANAGEMENT HEAD STEPPING DOWN**

Allianz's head of asset management Jacqueline Hunt is stepping down from the board, the company said after a scandal over billions of dollars in hedge fund losses prompted a restructuring of the firm's management.

The executive, who joined the company in 2016 and was due to stay until 2022, has been appointed as a strategic consultant to CEO Oliver Bate. "Jackie had signalled her openness for a change some time ago", Bate said in the statement.

Hunt will be replaced by Allianz's chief executive of the life insurance business in Germany, Andreas Wimmer.

Top 5 valuation elements in SME acquisitions

The valuation of small businesses seems to be one of the topics preferred by the regular readers of my weekly column on the *Observer*. So today I am sharing what are in my opinion the top 5 valuation elements to keep in mind when considering the acquisition of a Small and Medium Enterprise.

Let us first clear the air by saying that these are my personal opinions, and I am in no way advocating following only these 5 rules of thumb for any investment.

Always seek professional advice before making an offer. Having said so, each of the items in the list below could deserve an article on its own. This is just a quick summary.

1) PROFIT

95 per cent of the world's small businesses are turning over less than \$1million a year. So, looking

for valuation criteria certainly differs from case to case. Profit is the best indicator to start with. If the company is not in a loss, then risk is reduced, so it might be worth considering an acquisition and move to the second criteria.

2) ASSETS

Owning a business might come with assets such as machineries, software or even properties. In this case, the valuation is quite straight forward, as physical assets are relatively easy to value by comparison. Just a note of caution, make sure that the assets are entirely owned by the company, not by the owner of the company, so that they stay with the company as you buy it.

3) SALARY

Often small businesses are owned and operated by the same person. If that is the case, and you are planning to buy one of such businesses, then the acquisition

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HAVING A CLEAR CUT BETWEEN WHAT PROFIT BELONGS TO THE COMPANY AS AN ENTITY AND THE AMOUNT OF MONEY PAID MONTHLY TO THE OWNER AS SALARY IS ESSENTIAL FOR CLARITY WHEN ATTEMPTING TO ASSIGN A PRICE TAG TO A SMALL BUSINESS

can be referred to as "Buying a job". Once you own the company, you will be the one operating it. In this situation, it is very important that you assess the salary that the owner paid to himself or herself. Many small business owners do not compute their own salary from the beginning, and they do not even establish this healthy practice later.

They mix profit with salary, which is not recommended. Having a clear cut between what profit belongs to the company as an entity and the amount of money paid monthly to the owner as salary is essential for clarity when attempting to assign a price tag to a small business.

4) INVENTORY

This could be a double edge sword. When purchasing a business that sells good, one must keep in mind that very few goods in this world appreciate value over

time. In most cases, the value will drop soon or later. Consumable products have expiry dates and electronics become obsolete. So before "jumping" at a bulk deal based on the discounted market price, one should consider offering a devaluated stock price.

5) SOCIAL MEDIA

I would have not included this in any business valuation 10 years ago, but it is apparent now that digital followers have become an asset. Let us imagine a business with 10,000 total cumulative social media followers. This could be a great starting point for introducing new products once the business is taken over.

Starting social media from scratch is slow and expensive, so a quick start could be worth paying the price to save time.

(The columnist is a member of the International Press Association)

Dubai Expo 'new city' will exist for decades, says chief

DUBAI: Dubai has created a "new city" for Expo 2020 that will exist for decades, the head of the event said, promising most of the vast site will remain in use after the six-month world fair.

The \$7 billion, purpose-built showground occupies a vast site on Dubai's outskirts, with hundreds of pavilions and exhibitions sprawling across an area twice the size of Monaco.

Expo 2020, which has sustainability as one of its main themes, wraps up in March. But Director General Reem al Hashimy (pictured), said the lavish, largely air-conditioned development would not go to waste.

"It was never an investment to host an Expo, it was an investment to create a new city that is equal distance between Dubai and Abu Dhabi and really the city of the future", she said in an interview.

"That investment goes into a



Everything that we're building, a very large majority, over 90 per cent or so, will actually remain for that future city

REEM AL HASHIMY
Director General

city to 2040, 2050 and beyond. In addition to that, we have also made a commitment not to dismantle all Expo-related facilities.

"Everything that we're building, a very large majority, over 90 per cent or so, will

actually remain for that future city."

The UAE city has witnessed breakneck development in its growth to a major centre with the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa. The Expo project is connected to the Dubai metro and lies en route to the capital Abu Dhabi.

Expo is intended to draw millions of foreign visitors, but pandemic-related travel restrictions worldwide are likely to have a dampening effect.

And whether the 5G-enabled site thrives or languishes after Expo depends on what businesses can be persuaded to base themselves there.

"Given the focus on technology and sustainability we're looking to attract industries, residents that are inclined to operate in those spaces", said Al Hashimy, who is also the UAE's minister of state for international cooperation. — AFP

Rivian discloses nearly \$1 bn losses in IPO filing

MICHIGAN: Rivian Automotive, backed by Amazon.com Inc and Ford, disclosed losses of nearly \$1 billion in the first half of the year, the electric-vehicle maker's US IPO filing showed on Friday.

The company has been investing aggressively in ramping up production of its electric vehicles, including its upscale all-electric R1T pick-up truck which was launched last month beating out competition from more established rivals, such as Tesla Inc, General Motors and Ford.

Rivian had about 48,390 preorders for its R1T pick-up trucks and R1S SUVs in the United States and Canada as of last month.

The company is currently pursuing a two-track strategy: Building electric delivery vans for Amazon and developing an electric pick-up and SUV brand aimed at affluent individuals.

Amazon has ordered 100,000 of Rivian's electric delivery vans as part of the e-commerce giant's broader effort to cut its carbon



footprint. Rivian said on Friday it will list its shares on the Nasdaq under the symbol "RIVN".

Founded in 2009 as Mainstream Motors by R J Scaringe, the company changed its name to Rivian in 2011. "Rivian" is derived from "Indian River" in Florida, a place Scaringe frequented in a rowboat as a youth.

Scaringe on Friday said the company would put 1 per cent of equity in its environmental program called "Forever" that is aimed at helping address climate change and preserving wildlands and waterways.

Rivian, which confidentially filed paperwork with regulators for an IPO in August, has not yet set terms for its offering.

— Reuters

Venezuela's inflation-battered bolivar sheds 6 zeroes

CARACAS: The official exchange rate of Venezuela's bolivar went from 4.18 million to the US dollar overnight to just 4.18 as the impoverished country slashed six zeroes off its inflation-battered currency on Friday to simplify transactions.

It is the third banknote reform in 13 years, with a staggering 14 zeroes shed since 2008 — giving Venezuela the dubious distinction of becoming the South American country to have lopped the most zeroes off its currency.

"Everything expressed in national currency shall be divided by a million", the central bank announced.

Housekeeper Josefina Galindo said that she "went shopping without problems this morning. The new prices were displayed above the old ones. And there was always the price in dollars."

"The price (in dollars) has not changed", added the 52-year-old, who was shopping in the upscale Caracas district of Chacao but

With so many bolivars required for a simple purchase, 70 per cent of transactions in the country are conducted in US dollars, according to private sector estimates

said she had still paid in old prices using the old bolivars when she took the bus from her working-class neighbourhood of Coche.

The electronic platform of the public Banco de Venezuela, which has 14 million clients, was also down by mid-afternoon, with those trying to make internet transactions encountering a message apologizing for the inconvenience.

Venezuela, the once-rich oil producer, is battling its eighth year of recession and hyperinflation that reached nearly 3,000 per cent

Venezuela's monetary reform

The country battered by runaway inflation is slashing 6 zeros off its currency, the third banknote reform in 13 years



in 2020 and more than 9,500 per cent the year before, according to central bank figures.

Economic consultancy Ecoanalitica expects the 2021 figure to come in at around 1,600.

In May, the government tripled the minimum monthly wage but the new amount was not enough even to buy a kilogram of meat.

Three in four Venezuelans today live in extreme poverty, according to a recent study, with the economic crisis made worse by US sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic.

Millions have left the country in recent years to try their luck elsewhere.

With the bolivar losing nearly

all its value, seven one-million bolivar notes — very hard to come by — were needed to pay for one loaf of bread before Friday's currency update.

The government issued new banknotes in denominations of five, 10, 20, 50, and 100 bolivars, as well as a one-bolivar coin, but has said that it wants the economy to become entirely digital.

Analysts read this as a way to avoid printing money that will just continue devaluing, eventually requiring another readjustment.

The biggest note in the retiring bolivar family, with a face value of a million, is worth barely \$0.25 — not enough to buy a piece of candy. It will remain in circulation in parallel with the new notes for a few months.

"It (the bolivar) is not going to be worth more, it's not going to be worth less, it's just a monetary scale that we're applying by removing six zeros to facilitate transactions", Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said this week. — Reuters

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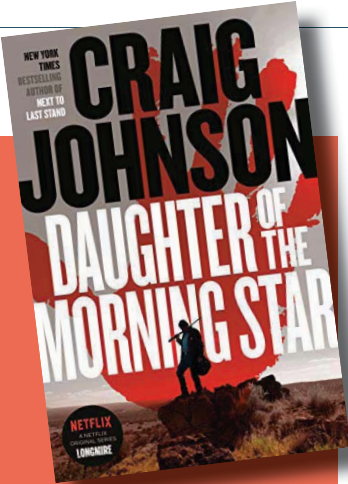
features



Oman in Focus:
Capturing
a visual
narrative
of Oman's
wildlife

Maisa al Hooti is a passionate underwater photographer and conservation advocate who had been running 'Oman in Focus' for many years now lending a unique voice to Oman's diverse wildlife. Embarking on an ambitious journey, she wanted to create a documentary that highlights what makes Oman's flora and fauna unique and different... **P20**

READ



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The 17th book in the Longmire Mystery series. A player on the Lane Deer Lady Stars High School basketball team receives threats.

ART

Banksy's 'Girl With Balloon' diptych up for auction for the first time

A TWO-PART VERSION of Banksy's "Girl With Balloon" painting is seen fetching up to \$4.75 million when it goes under the hammer for the first time at a Christie's auction in London later this month.

The rare edition, one of 25 created by the elusive British street artist in 2005, features a young girl in one painting and her heart-shaped balloon in another.

"It's a pretty signature image for Banksy in that he did the

first iteration of it on the streets," Katharine Arnold, co-head of Post-War and Contemporary Art for Christie's in Europe, said, as the artwork went on display at the auction house's London showrooms on Friday.

"The Girl With Balloon" first appeared on the streets of London's Shoreditch neighbourhood in 2002, with Banksy creating versions of the painting on London's South Bank in 2004 and at Israel's barrier at the West Bank in 2005.

"There are some iterations of this where you see the little girl with the balloon in the tiny little format of a single canvas," Arnold said.

"Here... the balloon is already flown away into a second canvas. And of course, that means that she's forever separated from her little heart balloon that she's hankering after."

The diptych has been in the hands of a private UK collector since 2013. It is the first of its kind to go on sale at Christie's, where it seen fetching between £2.5 million and £3.5 million (\$3.39-\$4.75 million).

"It's an image that really is about hope and aspiration, which after the last 18 months that we've gone through is something that we all need more than ever," Arnold said.

Banksy, whose real identity is unknown, rose to fame for



sharply ironic outdoor graffiti with political themes. Once a small-time graffiti artist from the English city of Bristol, his art work has become hugely popular and valuable.

"The Girl With Balloon" diptych will be part of Christie's "20th/21st Century: Evening Sale Including Thinking Italian" held in London on October 15.

— Reuters



England's Isle of Wight was Isle of Fright, with two big dinosaur predators

FOSSILS FOUND ON a rocky beach show there was double trouble on England's Isle of Wight about 127 million years ago, with a pair of large previously unknown dinosaur predators living perhaps side by side, both adapted to hunting along the water's edge.

Scientists on Wednesday announced the discovery of fossils of the two Cretaceous Period meat-eaters — both measuring about 30 feet long (9 metres) and boasting elongated crocodile-like skulls — on the southwest of the island, one of Europe's richest locales for dinosaur remains. They are examples of a type of dinosaur called a spinosaur, known for long and narrow skulls with lots of conical teeth — perfect for grasping slippery fish — as well as strong arms and big claws.

One is named Ceratosuchops inferodios, meaning "horned crocodile-faced hell heron." The name refers to a heron because of that bird's shoreline-foraging lifestyle. Ceratosuchops had a series of low horns and bumps ornamenting its brow

region.

The second is named Riparovenator milnerae, meaning "Milner's river-bank hunter", honouring British palaeontologist Angela Milner, who died in August. It may have been slightly larger than Ceratosuchops.

Each are estimated to have weighed around one to two tonnes, with skulls around a yard long, according to Chris Barker, a University of Southampton PhD student in paleontology and lead author of the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

"Both would have been heron-like shoreline hunters, wading out into water and thrusting the head down quickly to grab things like fish, small turtles, et cetera, and on land would do something similar, grabbing baby dinosaurs or the like. They would basically have eaten anything small they could grab", said palaeontologist and study co-author David Hone of Queen Mary University of London.

Spinosaurus were part of the broad group of bipedal meat-eating dinosaurs called theropods that

included the likes of Tyrannosaurus rex. As semi-aquatic hunters, spinosaurs targeted different prey and lacked the massive, boxier skull and large serrated teeth of T. rex, which inhabited North America about 60 million years later.

Ceratosuchops and Riparovenator roamed a floodplain environment bathed in a subtropical Mediterranean-like climate. Forest fires occasionally ravaged the landscape, with fossils of burned wood found throughout Isle of Wight cliffs.

With a large river and other bodies of water attracting plant-eating dinosaurs and hosting numerous bony fish, sharks and crocodiles, the habitat provided Ceratosuchops and Riparovenator plenty of hunting opportunities, Barker said.

These two cousins may have lived at the same time, perhaps differing in prey preference, or may have been separated a bit in time, the researchers said. There was a third roughly contemporaneous spinosaur named Baryonyx, whose

fossils were unearthed in the 1980s, that lived nearby and was about the same size, maybe slightly smaller.

Partial remains of Ceratosuchops and Riparovenator were discovered near the town of Brightstone. Ceratosuchops is known from skull material, while Riparovenator is known from both skull and tail material. There are braincase remains for both, giving particular insight into these creatures.

The fossils helped the scientists produce a family tree of spinosaurs, indicating the lineage originated in Europe before moving into Africa, Asia and South America, according to University of Southampton paleobiologist Neil Gostling, who supervised the research project.

The largest one, Spinosaurus, reached 50 feet (15 metres) long and lived in North Africa roughly 95 million years ago. It differed from its Isle of Wight forerunners, boasting a large sail-like structure on its back and adaptations for a more aquatic lifestyle.

— Reuters

LOCAL SCENE

Looking into Barramundi farming as an alternative in Oman



RESEARCHERS FROM the Department of Marine Sciences and Fisheries at the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University succeeded in establishing a farm for fish and vegetable farming on an experimental scale, including the cultivation of barramundi fish.

The project, with the support of the Scientific Research Council for two years, focuses on conducting research to enhance the contribution of fish farming to the national revenue and to increase income and reduce water use.

Barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) is widely distributed in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific and lives in freshwater, estuaries and seas.



Fish farming of this type of fish is new in the Sultanate. A few years ago, the Marine Sciences Department's research group began farming barramundi and gained great knowledge about it.

In 2016, students harvested an average of 800 grams per fish for its experimental 10 month period inside the Sultan Qaboos University.



Lead researcher Dr Gilha Yoon said that, "barramundi" multiply very quickly and can grow well in any water salinity, noting that there are many suitable places for barramundi farming. He added that barramundi fish is the most suitable species for fish farming in the Sultanate at the present time, noting that there is no "barramundi" farm of commercial size, but he hopes that this model will support the strategic plan to build small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance national revenues.

Student Majid al Shehi stated that many of the internal fish farms only raise tilapia, saying: "We are trying to farm valuable fish at a high density, such as Asian sea bass, and reuse water from fish ponds through agricultural greenhouse plants."

Student Manal al Sheryani indicated that many types of research have been carried out with this fish including a blind tasting test stressing that the commercial aspect of this project is moving forward, but "we only have an area of (5) m x (20) m of fish tanks."



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AROUND THE WORLD

FASHION

Balmain celebrates designer anniversary with live show



FRENCH FASHION house Balmain celebrated the 10-year anniversary of creative director Olivier Rousteing's tenure with a catwalk show featuring a host of celebrity models including Naomi Campbell, former French First Lady Carla Bruni, Milla Jovovich and Natalia Vodianova.

Models strutted down the stage of a packed music hall on the Seine River in deconstructed garments slit to show patches of bare skin, draped with chains and layered with bold-shouldered jackets or trench coats that swept the floor.



At the end of the show, the designer took his bow before the cheering crowd, flanked by over a dozen models wearing fanciful dresses coated in sequins. The label hosted thousands of fans at the hall for a two-day festival that included performances from Jesse Jo Stark, Doja Cat and Franz Ferdinand.

Dozens of brands are holding in-person fashion shows during Paris Fashion Week which runs through October 5, as slower Covid-19 infection rates and the easing of restrictions allowed the resumption of events paused during the peak of the pandemic.

Showgoers at the Balmain festival could buy food and drinks as well as branded merchandise including sneakers priced at 850 euros (\$986) and bags of hair cosmetics. — **Reuters**

TRAVEL TALES



Kashmir beekeepers head southward for warmth, honey and cash

AS THE WINTER months near, Kashmiri beekeepers like Abid Hussain are preparing for an annual migration southward in search of warmer climes, more honey and bigger payouts.

Hussain wears protective gear on his arms and face as he readies to send his convoy of bees hundreds of kilometres from the Himalayan region into the desert state of Rajasthan.

"Everything comes to a halt in Kashmir in winter, including nature," says Hussain, who takes his colonies 750 kilometres (465 miles) to vast mustard fields around Sri Ganganagar on the edge of Rajasthan's Thar desert.

Dozens of his fellow beekeepers make the same autumn journey, travelling across twisting mountain highways and the northern Indian plains to reach warmer provinces.

Honey-makers started taking the journey in the 1980s, when an insect disease nearly wiped out the local population and a replacement European species — much more sensitive to the Himalayan cold — was introduced.

Now hundreds of millions of bees feast on rich farm crops to the south of Kashmir every year and help feed a honey-making boom for the beekeepers.

Each hive can net Hussain, who transports tens of millions of bees, as much as 9,000 rupees



(\$120) worth of honey during his time in Sri Ganganagar.

While the bees get fed, the mustard farmers are happy to have their crops pollinated for future harvests.

For the beekeepers, the annual pilgrimage is crucial to their survival, says Parvez Ahmad Sofi, a professor at Kashmir's agriculture university.

"Migration saves the bees from the harsh weather, helps them reproduce colonies and produce honey," he said.

Without it, the beekeepers have only two harvests a year, instead of four if they travel south. As temperatures rise in February, Hussain will begin his return north, stopping for two months in the ancient city of Pathankot near the Pakistan border.

He will lease land and

wait for the flowers on lychee trees to blossom in early April, allowing him one more harvest before the final journey home.

But back in the Kashmir Valley, authorities say the region's temperatures are rising, while freak winter storms remain a threat to its wildlife.

Nearly 750 tonnes of honey were produced there last year and, while experts say the region could make more, storms, warmer winters and unpredictable rains have hit production in recent years.

Hussain says the changing climate in Kashmir makes the annual migration increasingly vital to his livelihood. "Hot weather can destroy the flowers and the bees cannot collect nectar," he said.

"In recent times, there has been more heat and too much rain." — **AFP**

ENTERTAINMENT

Daniel Craig to be honoured with Hollywood Walk of Fame star



DANIEL CRAIG WILL be honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, it has been announced.

The James Bond actor, 53, will be the latest entertainment figure to be immortalised on the Los Angeles tourist attraction.

Craig's star — the 2,704th — will be dedicated during a ceremony on October 6, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce said. It will be placed at 7007 Hollywood Boulevard, a nod to his character's famous code name and next to the star of one of his predecessors, Roger Moore.

Ana Martinez, producer of the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, said: "Daniel Craig is a British cultural icon as is James Bond, the man he has portrayed in five 007 films."

"We are thrilled to place his terrazzo Walk Of Fame star next to the star of another famed actor who also portrayed James Bond, Roger Moore. Fans will be thrilled when they see that their stars are appropriately located at 7007 Hollywood Boulevard!"

Craig is currently on the promotional trail for his 007 swan song "No Time To Die", which has earned rave reviews and cemented the actor's reputation as one of the top-ranking Bonds.

On hand to unveil the star will be Bond producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson, as well as Craig's "No Time To Die" co-star Rami Malek.

The film, also starring Lea Seydoux, Lashana Lynch and Ana de Armas, has enjoyed a flying start at the box office.

It grossed \$22 million over its first two days following its release in markets including the UK and Ireland, Germany and Denmark, producers said. The film will be released in the US and Canada on October 8. The first stars on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame were unveiled in 1958.

They cost \$50,000, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce said, with the money used to pay for the creation and installation of each star as well as maintenance of the wider attraction. — **PA Media/dpa**

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Oman In Focus: Capturing a visual narrative of Oman's wildlife

BY KABEER YOUSUF

It's one of the most ambitious endeavours taken by a local conservation advocate and if done right, they will be able to create one of the most comprehensive documentary features not only on Oman's wildlife but also its amazing topological treasures as well as what makes

the Sultanate a nation of unique flora and fauna.

Maisa al Hooti is a passionate underwater photographer and conservation advocate who had been running 'Oman in Focus' for many years now lending a unique voice to Oman's diverse wildlife and featuring the country's assets with the vision of capturing the global audience.

She believes that the universe is equally shared by all creatures including humans and that every bird, reptile and insect has the same right to the soil, water and air just as humans do.

Living by the code of environmental protectionism and sustainability, she wanted to protect and preserve these creatures identity and safety before we run out of time.

She has always been fascinated by many things around her, be it pictures, painting, colours, nature or whatever, it is very hard for her not to see the beauty in everything God gifted human beings with and it is

her goal to showcase them to the world.

Her passion witnessed a great milestone when she invited a highly professional video crew to work along with the local expertise to result in a documentary featuring the rare species of animals, mammals and birds that Oman is home for.

"We will talk about each animal, how they live, what they eat, and a complete profile of them and let the world listen", a passionate-voiced Maisa said.

"For example, we have five kinds of turtles. We have Arabian Humpbacks, Arabian leopards, Ibex and the like which are truly Omani and other birds which are migratory to Oman. It is to safeguard all creatures and their natural habitats and anything that only Oman exclusively has that often, we tend to overlook", she said.

With the documentary film on Oman from Musandam to Dhofar, Maisa and her team believe it's good to shed more light on the fact that we need to protect our nature and other creatures around us. It's also an attempt to tell the world that Oman is home to many of these unique animals and birds. Many people travel to other countries to see them.

"We have an international crew team along with the local craftsmen and experts who work hand in hand with them. They study about the animals, spend time with them, and learn how to capture them. And they know which animals can be filmed and where. And these experts help us ease our work", her team member told the *Observer*.

Her team

is aiming to make a two-part documentary that will showcase the wildlife and unique biodiversity of Oman. A second documentary will feature the various conservation efforts that are under way in Oman.

The entire country has interesting habitats in places like Musandam, Sur, Daymaniyat Island, Raz al Jinz, Ras al Hadd, Hasik, Masirah Island, Jabal Samhan, Bar al Hickman, Al Wusta, Nizwa, Jabal Akhdhar and so on and they will form part of the film.

The making of the film which started in March this year continued for two and half months before it took a short summer break. The team assembled again for the second schedule by end of August and the shoot is progressing across the country with a packed update in December this year.

The crew will travel by road to Salalah for the third time for the shoot to feel and let the world feel the spring in Dhofar these days. During the previous journeys, the crew had stopovers at Hasik, Duqm and the like, capturing the beauty in full.

Many international broadcasters are currently in the pipeline ready to show the film to the world and the support from various corners that she and her team received was really overwhelming that prompted them to take major steps forward.

The team has enjoyed support and cooperation from the Environmental Authority and Office of Conservation of the Environment, Diwan Office. Both of these agencies have been instrumental in sharing their knowledge and expertise with the 'Oman in Focus' team.

"We got very good support from the government and private companies all of whom believe that this project will help the country to get FDI, to receive tourists, and to mark Oman's name in the global tourism map. All our sponsors are our strength in making such a project happen and we owe it to them", Maisa adds.

The team met face to face with snakes, foxes, wolves and many other animals in different parts of the country. They travelled many nautical miles across the sea in boats, experienced amazing dolphins near Halaniyat and the experiences are aplenty.

"Oman has amazing marine life which we experienced in Musandam", her team member averred.

One of the cameramen of the team who has been filming and travelling all over the world said that he is in awe that Musandam is one of the best marine reserves all over the world and is unpolluted.

