

Support for UN development goals

Through its membership in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Sultanate of Oman will focus on supporting the path of sustainable and comprehensive development in national plans consistent with the noble goals of the United Nations. This was stated before the UN General Assembly in New York. In his speech Diplomat Sultan bin Mohammed al Fazari stressed the need to focus on confronting Covid-19 pandemic until it recedes. The Sultanate of Oman called for persistent action to stem the virus at a time many countries around the world continue to suffer the pandemic's repercussions. — ONA



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RED WARRIORS ARRIVE IN DUBAI AHEAD OF CHINA CLASH



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AIRASIA INTERESTED IN POTENTIAL AIRBUS A321NEO FREIGHTER



P20

OMAN SKATE HUNTS DOWN SULTANATE'S BEST SKATERS



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY UZBEK PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan in reply to His Majesty's cable of greetings to him on his re-election for a second term as his country's president. In his cable, President Mirziyoyev expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's sincere sentiments and best wishes. He affirmed his keenness to enhance the bilateral relations. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. — ONA

OMAN FLOUR MILLS TO BUY LOCAL WHEAT

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an agreement with Oman Flour Mills Company vide which the company buys wheat crop, locally known as (Al Bur) from farmers during the 2022 harvest season. The agreement will enhance food security and support farmers to enable them engaging in the food market. The agreement was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary for Agriculture, and Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of OFMC.

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OPINION

International standards determine fuel quality

Ali Al Matani

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Unlocking the job creation potential of the renewable energy sector

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Majlis Ash'shura to hold regular sessions on Nov 7-8

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will hold its first and second regular meetings of the third annual session (2021-2022) of the ninth term, on November 7-8 during which the Majlis will elect the members of the Office of Majlis Ash'shura for the remaining half term.

This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of

Majlis Ash'shura.

Shaikh Al Nadabi said that the second meeting will discuss the plans of the standing committees, adding that the committees have drawn up their plans as per the purviews of each committee particularly those relating to the legislations, oversight tools and the messages and addresses referred by the Office of Majlis Ash'shura.

The agenda for the second meeting includes discussions on the report of the Economic and Financial Committee regarding the reorientation of electricity and water subsidy for the citizens and the economic sectors, applying the value added tax on electricity and water bills. The Majlis will also discuss the committee's report on the economic incentives for the small and medium enterprises.

The meeting will also discuss the conditions of the Oman Food Investment Holding Company, Shaikh Al Nadabi said.

The Majlis will be briefed on the state's draft general budget for the fiscal year 2022, which was recently transferred by the government and is currently under study by the Economic and Financial Committee. The Majlis will be

briefed on a draft agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of Hungary on the encouragement and mutual protection of investments, and a draft agreement to regulate air transport services between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Shaikh Al Nadabi said. — ONA



ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN MARKS ANNUAL DAY

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) marked its Annual Day at the military parade ground at Said Bin Sultan Naval Base on Wednesday. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority. The RNO Day, which falls on November 3 every year, is marked to glorify the eternal memory when the RNO was honoured to receive the banner from the late Sultan Qaboos on November 3, 1990. DETAILS ON P4

Oman, Saudi sign MoU in telecom, IT

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the fields of telecommunication and information technology (IT).

The MoU was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Abdullah Amer al

Swaha, Saudi Minister of Communication and Information Technology.

The MoU stipulates cooperation in the fields of digital transformation, investment in digital economy, fostering talents and IT.

It also covers the scope of cooperation in exchanging best practices and experts, as well as participating in meetings, joint work sessions

and implementing joint programmes and initiatives.

The MoU will include a training programme for 1,000 participants in the areas of cybersecurity, digital transformation, web development, python programming and the Internet of things (IoT). Additionally, 25,000 participants will benefit from the Digital Giving Webinar.

SEE ALSO P2

Youth played role in drafting Vision 2040

MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, has underscored the effective contribution of Omani youth towards the preparation of Oman Vision 2040.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), the minister said that freedom of expression and diversity of opinion are guaranteed — which is testimony to the liveliness of society and its resourcefulness and it reflects the desire of all, including youth, to take part in developing performance in all sectors.

The minister made the statement as he attended the 15th Government Outreach Gathering held at the Ministry of Education on Wednesday. The forum brought together operators of media and communication departments of government units.

“In recognition of the significant role of youth, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued Royal directives to government authorities to reach out to youth, hold meetings with them, engage them, listen to their opinions and study their



concerns and aspirations,” said Dr Abdullah.

He added that His Majesty the Sultan affirms that all opinions are respected and studied to make ideal use of them in developing government performance.

“Despite the harshness often observed in some messages circulated in social media, a vivacious patriotic spirit and absolute allegiance to this nation and its leadership constitute the common feature of all these exchanges, without exception. The communications express a strong desire for the improvement of performance and removal of hurdles that come in the way,” said Dr Abdullah.

TURN TO P2

Scientists eye beginning of an end to the Covid-19 pandemic

CHICAGO: As the devastating Delta variant surge eases in many regions of the world, scientists are charting when, and where, Covid-19 will transition to an endemic disease in 2022 and beyond, according to interviews with over a dozen leading disease experts.

They expect that the first countries to emerge from the pandemic will have had some combination of high rates of vaccination and natural immunity among people who were infected with the coronavirus, such as the

United States, the UK, Portugal and India. But they warn that Sars-CoV-2 remains an unpredictable virus that is mutating as it spreads through unvaccinated populations.

None would completely rule out what some called a “doomsday scenario”, in which the virus mutates to the point that it evades hard-won immunity. Yet they expressed increasing confidence that many countries will have put the worst of the pandemic behind them in the coming year.

“We think between now and the



A child covers her face as she waits for her turn to receive the vaccine in Hartford, Connecticut, United States. — AFP

end of 2022, this is the point where we get control over this virus... where we can significantly reduce severe disease and death”, Maria Van Kerkhove, an epidemiologist leading the World Health Organization's (WHO) Covid-19 response, said.

The agency's view is based on work with disease experts who are mapping out the probable course of the pandemic over the next 18 months. By the end of 2022, the WHO aims for 70 per cent of the world's population to be vaccinated.

— Reuters



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Khazaen Dry Port starts operations

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, in coordination with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Royal Oman Police (ROP), announced the commencement of Khazaen Dry Port (KDP) operations as a customs bonded dry port.

The Dry Port, which is internationally identified with the code 'OMKDP', is ready to serve customers and facilitate imports, exports and storage activities of all general cargo and containers through efficient logistics solutions.

Located in Barka, it will also play a pivotal role in bolstering trade across the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Abri, CEO of Asyad Ports, said, "Khazaen Dry Port is an exciting addition to the Sultanate of Oman's trade operations, cementing its position as a global logistics hub as it serves as an important link between seaports, land and air ports. Shipping lines can use KDP as a port of origin and port of destination and issue through bills of lading for importers and exporters to clear containers and cargo."

He added, "The start of operations will raise the efficiency of logistics in the Sultanate of Oman and contribute to reducing the total cost of cargo movement and storage while alleviating congestion at the level of seaports and land ports." — ONA

Oman, Saudi expand cooperation



Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Abdullah Amer Al Swaha, KSA Minister of Communication and Information Technology, after signing the MoU in Riyadh on Wednesday.



Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) with Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Duailej, President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) in Riyadh on Wednesday.

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in telecommunication and information technology (IT). The MoU was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications

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cooperation in exchanging best practices and experts, as well as participating in meetings, joint work sessions and implementing joint programmes and initiatives.

The MoU will include a training programme for 1,000 participants in the areas of cybersecurity, digital transformation, web development,

python programming and the Internet of things (IoT). Additionally, 25,000 participants will benefit from the webinar.

Another meeting the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia discussed regulation of air transport services. Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil

Aviation Authority (CAA) and Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Duailej, President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) led the talks which reviewed air traffic between the two countries, as well as investment and logistic opportunities in the civil aviation sector. — ONA

Tenders worth 67.4 million get approval

MUSCAT: The Tender Board approved tenders worth RO 67,419,292 for new projects and additional works at existing projects, during its meeting held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy and Chairman of the Tender Board.

These include a tender worth RO 37.8 million for the Ministry of Health and five government entities for supplying medicines and vaccines for the year 2022, a tender worth RO 11.4 million for the rehabilitation works on the Arjout-Sarfait road in Dhofar Governorate, a tender for the provision of cleaning pest control and supply of vehicles and equipment for the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to the tune of RO 3.5 million, among others. — ONA



Youth played role in drafting Vision 2040

FROM PAGE 1

The minister ruled out any clash between Oman Vision 2040 and the Fiscal Balance Programme, which, he said, was set to handle a temporary situation undergone by the Sultanate of Oman in the wake of decline in oil prices. He added that different countries of the world were impacted by the negative Covid-19 circumstances that prevailed in the global economic arena.

Dr Abdullah pointed out that economic conditions in the Sultanate are progressing to the best, notably after overcoming the repercussions of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on the national economy and on the private sector. He valued the various types of support and incentives made by the state to alleviate the impacts of the pandemic. The minister explained that the gathering was, in the first place, a forum for exchanging views in a collective manner about the reality of the situation and about action to be undertaken. This is in addition to the formulation of recommendations for the improvement of communication among segments of society, particularly youth who, he said, are "the cornerstone of the present and the future and who shoulder the responsibility of safeguarding the gains of the nation and its prospects of progress into wider horizons." — ONA

WORKSHOP FOR 10-MILLION TREES PROJECT CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The third national workshop for the plantation of 10 million trees, organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with public and private authorities and societies, concluded on Wednesday.

The workshop came up with several recommendations including holding a lab for the implementation of future projects and initiatives, preparing for a laboratory to determine the areas to be planted and the type of plantation up to 2030, identifying the geographical locations on the map, determining the proposed mechanisms for plantation at each site, identifying the contribution of each of the parties involved in the initiative.

The initiative is aimed at boosting protection from the effects of climate change in addition to biodiversity at the level of the fertile environment in many natural habitats and various micro-animals that live in such cultivated environments in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



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عن المؤتمر

يوفر هذا المؤتمر فرصة ثمينة لمناقشة مجموعة واسعة من التحديات لضمان مستقبل مائي مستدام، ليس فقط لعمان ولكن للمجتمعات في جميع أنحاء العالم. يستمر المؤتمر ٣ أيام وتغطي جلساته أكثر من ٣٠ ورقة بحثية عالية الجودة تمت مراجعتها من قبل نخبة من الباحثين، بالإضافة إلى العديد من المساهمات من قبل المتحدثين الرئيسيين العالميين المعروفين بمساهماتهم الكبيرة في الأبحاث العالمية.

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■ ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES SWISS AMBASSADOR



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Balz Abplanalp (pictured), Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and means of promoting cooperation in all spheres. The meeting also touched on matters of common interest. The Minister of the Royal Office also received Niels Annen, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. The meeting was attended by Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

■ BADR RECEIVES GERMAN MINISTER



Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received Niels Annen, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, in Muscat on Wednesday. They reviewed the bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional and international matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Khalid Hashel al Musalhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department at the Foreign Ministry, Thomas Schneider, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman and officials. — **ONA**

Forum explores govt's communication with youths

MUSCAT: As part of the Government Communication Centre's engagement with youth, the Ministry of Information on Wednesday organised the 15th Outreach Gathering of officials of the government media and communication departments.

The forum was attended by Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information. The gathering, titled "communicating with youth — listening to them and engaging them", seeks to enhance the role of government departments responsible for maintaining and sustaining communication with youth.

It comes in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in his first address to the nation on February 23, 2020, in which he said, "Youth are the wealth of a nation, its



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, speaks at the forum on Wednesday

inexhaustible resources and the arms that built it (the nation). They are its present and future."

In the speech, His Majesty the Sultan stressed the need to find mechanisms and channels of communication

with youth in order to highlight efforts undertaken to meet the requirements of the development march in all sectors.

The forum also reviewed the basic pillars of effective communication with youth,

incentives to foster their role in the development process, engage them and reward them by channelling the outcome of development efforts to them.

The discussion covered specific ways of carrying out the Royal



directives when interacting with the youth segment. The process involves selecting the right topics and utilising the right measures of communication in accordance with the issues of concern to youth.

It was agreed that the practices would be set in "frames of

action" and "determinants" that guide government departments when implementing youth communication activities. The forum explored leading experiences on engaging Omani youth in decision making and visions at the national level. — **ONA**

Syrian delegation learns Oman's best health practices

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 3

A high-level delegation from the Syrian Ministry of Health is visiting the Sultanate of Oman to learn about best practices in establishing emergency operations centres and strengthening public health response mechanisms.

The overall purpose of the visit is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the Covid-19 preparedness and response coordination, strategies and approaches to contain the pandemic; the public health emergency operations/management centre; surveillance and public health laboratory priorities and capacities in the pandemic context; and supporting Syria's health system and strengthening public health emergency preparedness and response capacities and capabilities are high on the agenda of Syria's Ministry of Health.

Based on the recent lessons learnt from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health has committed to establish fully functioning Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) at national and governorate levels during the next two years.

The visit is facilitated by the World Health Organization to allow the Syrian delegation to



learn technical aspects about the functions and operations of PHEOCs and all its components through a structured visit to the existing Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Health also showcased the country's surveillance and public health laboratory capacities, as well as visiting Nizwa, the certified healthy city by WHO, to introduce to the healthy cities project and experience of the Sultanate of Oman as part of addressing the social determinants of health.

The visit contributes to the vision of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to promote Health for All by All, which is spearheaded by Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and calls for solidarity and action of everyone

to help maximise health and well-being across the region.

Regional and global cooperation is critical now more than ever to address the Syrian's prolonged fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, hospitals stretching their capacity to treat Covid-19 cases, as well as to address the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, life-saving medicines and supplies to meet the growing needs of the population.

Dr Akjemal Magtymova, Head of Mission and WHO Representative in Syria, said, "This visit as well as the overall regional and global cooperation in health are extremely important nowadays than ever, for global health security, and is an effective step in strengthening, sharing and accelerating health development and sharing knowledge and experiences to address the increasing health threats such as Covid-19."



The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees	Last Date For Tender Submission
1/2021	Cleaning services for the offices of the Ministry of Economy to 2022	25 Omani Rials	13/12/2021

First All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website and attach an electronic copy of the temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate with a value of (1%) of the value of the tender submitted and valid for (90) days from the last date of submission of bids. It has to be addressed to HE Chairman of the Tender Committee of the Ministry of Economy.

Second Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

✉ etenderhd@ita.gov.om
☎ + 96824166670

Royal Navy of Oman marks its annual day



MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) marked its Annual Day at the military parade ground in Said Bin Sultan Naval Base on Wednesday.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The RNO day, which falls on 3 November every year, is marked to glorify the eternal memory when the RNO was honoured to receive the banner from the late Sultan Qaboos on November 3, 1990.

The ceremony included graduation of a new batch of recruits. Diverse programmes reflecting the RNO's personnel capability and competency were performed, thanks to the royal keenness and care of His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander.

Activities of the ceremony began by playing the Royal Anthem to the chief guest. The chief guest inspected the front parade column and then pinned long service and good

conduct medals on RNO personnel in appreciation of their sincere efforts in serving the country and His Majesty the Sultan.

Various military and musical shows were staged by the parade column that depicted the progress witnessed by the RNO under the reign of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander.

After that, the participants at the parade chanted the RNO anthem and proclaimed thrice Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander.

The ceremony was attended by commanders of the Sultan Armed Forces (SAF), military and security units, members of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, senior officers at SAF, military and security departments, Military Attachés at embassies of the sisterly and friendly countries in Muscat, shaikhs and dignitaries of the governorates of South and North Al Batinah and RNO personnel. — ONA





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Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

RECALL CAMPAIGN
For Cadillac CT4 / Cadillac CT5 model vehicles



Date of Campaign : 4 / 11 / 2021
Campaign Type : Safety
Recall Segment : Airbags
Product Description : Cadillac CT4 2020-2021 / Cadillac CT5 2020-2021

Model Year	Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles in Oman
2020 - 2021	Cadillac	CT4	1G6D95RK0L0135978 to 1G6D95RLXM0128143	5
2020 - 2021	Cadillac	CT5	1G6D85RK0L0131769 to 1G6D85RWXM0119441	14

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Asyad Global Logistics Challenge ends today

DUBAI: As many as 57 data analysts, start-ups and entrepreneurs from 15 countries around the world gathered at Expo 2020 Dubai for the Asyad Global Logistics Challenge. Running until November 4, the world-class eventorganisedin collaboration with Hypermotion Dubai and the Sultanate's technology arm, Omantel includes two fast-paced competitions; Asyad Global Logistics Hackathon and Asyad Global Logistics Start-up Challenge, both tasked to identify data-driven, industry-transforming solutions to some of the issues faced in the sector today.

"To be a global leader in logistics, and to stay ahead of the curve, we have to constantly think of game-changing ideas and solutions. With the introduction of 4IR technologies, the exponential growth of e-commerce, and the broadening scope of



Asyad Global Logistics Hackathon and Asyad Global Logistics Start-up Challenge to identify data-driven, industry-transforming solutions to some of the issues faced in the sector today.

demand for logistics solutions, data has become a crucial tool for operational optimisation and the development of new services," said Abdulrahman al Hatmi, Asyad Group CEO.

He added, "Adopting a creative mindset is paramount for the advancement and competitiveness of the

logistics industry and by working with our partners at Hypermotion Dubai and Omantel, will cement our role as an innovation-catalyst and incubator for technology-driven minds in the region and the world."

Commenting on Asyad Global Logistics Challenge,

Ghaith al Darmaki, Chief technology Officer (CTO) of Asyad Group, said, "We are leveraging Asyad's wealth of data and harnessing emerging technologies to advance the transport and logistics sector in Oman, enhance our efficiencies, devise new solutions and predict future market trends."

The data scientists will have a chance to showcase their skills and share ideas on how to solve these real-world logistics problems, which include vessel maintenance prediction, vessel fuel and route optimisation, marine sensors using Internet of Things (IoT), emissions monitoring, and Ports asset damage identification using image processing.

Solutions will be evaluated using Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms throughout the two-day competition to select the top 4 winners.

— ONA

Children with disabilities to have more equipment



HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, Chairperson of the Association for Children with Disabilities, and Najeeb al Harthy, CEO of Mitsui E & P Middle East, sign the agreement.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

The Association for Children with Disabilities signed an agreement with Mitsui E & P Middle East to provide physio and occupational therapy equipment and devices for the Association's centres in various regions of the Sultanate of Oman.

The children have started returning to the Association in September after the lockdown and closure due to the pandemic.

Najeeb al Harthy, Board Member, General Manager and CEO of Mitsui E & P Middle East, stressed the company's keenness to activate partnership and cooperation between the organisation and non-profit institutions.

Speaking to the *Observer* when asked when would the agreement be effective, he said, "It is effective immediately. We saw the need for specific equipment, and we felt we could do the needful for the Association.

"It serves aspects of sustainable development as well as upgrading of community services and projects of public

interest in the country."

He added that this initiative comes from the scope of the company's endeavour to expand the umbrella of its social responsibility permanently and continuously to include various aspects related to society.

HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, Chairperson of the Association for Children with Disabilities, said, "The children have had a tough time with Covid-19 and its impact during the whole of last year. I am excited to welcome the children to this important signing ceremony to help the children. We will now be able to purchase a lot of equipment for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and special need therapy."

According to her, as of now, there are 350 students all around the country.

"At present, due to the Covid-19 measures, we cannot have a full classroom as it is now one to one. That is why the number is smaller now. Here we have 45 children, and the schedules are fully booked, and we have more children on the waiting list," she noted.

More steps sought to restore global connectivity

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has urged governments to make real progress towards restoring global air connectivity.

While several countries have eased the quarantine rules for fully vaccinated travellers, the cost of PCR tests on either side of the travel continues to be a major economic factor in the travel plans of a passenger.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the RT-PCR test costs RO 15 + RO 5 (for MoH certificate) per person, plus the travel plans are always on tenterhooks till the results are confirmed.

Travel operators are urging governments to do away with PCR tests or replace them with simpler antigen tests for fully vaccinated travellers.

"We do not know whether it is technical or not; sometimes results can be disappointing even though a person has no symptoms and is totally healthy," said a travel operator.

He added, "It affects the mood of the passenger, and rescheduling or getting refunds from airlines are equally painful."

"People who are yet to travel in the last two years since the outbreak are nervous about PCR tests and other travel-related requirements. Government should give some concessions to fully vaccinated and healthy passengers."

Recently, at the International Civil



Travel operators are urging governments to do away with PCR tests or replace them with simpler antigen tests for fully vaccinated travellers

Aviation Organization (ICAO) High-Level Conference on Covid-19 (HLCC), the participating states agreed to follow around 14 measures to help airlines meet consumers' demands worldwide for a revival of air travel.

These measures, which will help safely restore international connectivity and support the revival of the global economy, were mutual recognition and accessibility to digital applications, secure validation of pandemic-related testing, vaccination and recovery certification that protects

the privacy and personal data.

The conference called for technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of Covid-19 and providing exceptions for non-vaccinated passengers, which will help work towards strengthening the confidence of the travelling public and safely rebuilding international civil aviation.

IATA has said that government-imposed restrictions continue to stop a revival of international travel. It remains 70 per cent down on pre-crisis levels.

"The airline industry, 88 million livelihoods and billions of travellers are counting on governments to deliver on the risk-managed reopening of international travel to which they have committed," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director-General.



SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT



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

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-166/2021	Upgrading of Building Management System (BMS) at Haima Hospital in Al Wusta Governorate	11/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 08/December/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-167/2021	Replacement of Generator in Medical Store at Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Dhofar Governorate	11/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 08/December/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-169/2021	Supply of Laboratory Items	11/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 17/November/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-170/2021	Supply and Installation of Medical Equipment for Orthopedic Department at Khoula Hospital	18/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 08/December/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-171/2021	Supply & Installation of Radiology Equipment for Various Health Establishments	18/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 15/December/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 100.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-172/2021	Supply and Installation of PABX Telephone System for Sinaw Hospital in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate	18/November/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 15/December/2021	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Purchase and Tenders one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

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

Any Clarification, you may contact via
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Investment Manager Report

On behalf of the Fund Management Board, I am pleased to present the unaudited financial results of ahli Global Equity Fund for the quarter ended 30 September 2021.

	30-Sep-2021	30-Sep-2020	31-Dec-20
Number of units	3,215,000	3,215,700	3,216,100
Net asset value (RO)	2,240,391	2,206,954	2,309,660
Net asset value per unit (RO)	0.697	0.686	0.718
Net profit/(loss)	(68,416)	(132,409)	(29,614)

The ahli Global Equity Fund closed 3Q 2021 +4.9% higher taking our YTD performance to +18.0% YTD (adjusted). Our positive performance for the quarter was aided through a meaningful overweight position in Saudi petrochemicals which continued to break higher underpinned by the surge in oil and gas prices. Leejam also contributed positively to our performance. However, our positions in Humansoft and Aramex contributed negatively to our performance. We are currently in the process of raising cash to re-position the portfolio to also take advantage of global opportunities.

In terms of rebalancing we continued to remain overweight Qatar as we rotate out of overvalued names in Saudi Arabia. The re-positioning has already started to show positive results reflected in the positive portfolio performance for the quarter of +4.93%. The fund will continue to raise cash and book profits as we rotate across to global players.

Markets Performance

Global markets have seen been volatile in 3Q due to the Evergrande default, build-up of inflationary pressures, rising commodity prices and supply chain disruptions. Given the multiple headwinds investors remained cautious during the period under review.

The MSCI World closed -0.4% QoQ as major worldwide indexes pullback. Dow Jones and the Nasdaq all ended in negative territories for the month; -1.9% MoM, & -0.4% QoQ respectively. Whilst the S&P 500 closed fractionally positive +0.2% QoQ as big-tech remained resilient. MSCI China and MSCI Emerging Market Index closed negative for the quarter down -18.4% QoQ, and -8.8% QoQ respectively.



*As of 30 September 2021

Regional markets, in comparison, were relatively strong driven by higher oil prices, which recovered to over USD +\$75/bbl. GCC countries have also opened their borders to fully vaccinated individuals and the Expo 2020 has now begun in Dubai. Increased vaccine rollouts in Saudi, Oman and Kuwait, are increasing investor optimism on overall GDP growth for the final leg of the year. Saudi Arabia inflation rate increased to 6.2% in June amidst supply chain concerns and overall government spending but most expect this to be transitory. Over in Oman, the country has opened its borders to fully vaccinated individuals with no quarantine as cases continue to trend lower.

Market Outlook

While our medium-term outlook remains positive on high vaccine rollout, stimulus supported markets, strong earnings growth and higher oil prices, we continue to remain selective amidst stretched valuations, higher inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions. We remain positive on US, Dubai and Qatar but are more selective in Saudi on valuations. Our outlook for EM & China also remains cautious over regulatory concerns and potential fall-out form the Evergrande default. Overall, we continue to be optimistic on the re-opening and recovery of the economies and strategically allocating our cash to take advantage of any opportunities in the market.

ahliGlobal equityfund

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEP 2021

	Unaudited Sep 2021	Unaudited Sep 2020	Audited Dec 2020
RO	RO	RO	RO

Assets

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,123,838	1,918,716	2,079,446
Cash and cash equivalents	123,833	301,643	238,344
Dividend Receivable	-	-	-
Total assets	2,247,671	2,220,359	2,317,790

Liabilities

Accruals and other payables	7,280	13,397	8,130
Amount due to unitholders	-	8	-
Net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,240,391	2,206,954	2,309,660
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,247,671	2,220,359	2,317,790

Net assets per unit attributable to the unitholders	0.697	0.686	0.718
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STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE QUARTER ENDED SEP 2021

	Unaudited Sep 2021	Unaudited Sep 2020	Audited Dec 2020
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Income

Dividend income	51,775	46,860	46,861
Wakala profit	199	452	452
Other income	5	783	-
Total income	51,979	48,095	47,313

Net realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

	124,686	(50,262)	(46,420)
--	---------	----------	----------

Net unrealised (loss)/gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

	(204,299)	(89,894)	29,080
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Net investment income

	(27,634)	(92,062)	29,973
--	----------	----------	--------

Expenses

Management fees	(21,256)	(20,838)	(27,979)
Custody fees	(3,345)	(3,743)	(3,000)
General and administrative expenses	(16,181)	(15,766)	(28,608)
Total expenses	(40,782)	(40,347)	(59,587)

(Loss) and total comprehensive (losses) (Decrease) in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the period

	(68,416)	(132,409)	(29,614)
--	----------	-----------	----------

(Loss) per unit	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.009)
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UN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO HOLD SPECIAL SESSION ON SUDAN

Hamdok wants coup reversed before dialogue

KHARTOUM: The Sudanese prime minister ousted in an army coup last week wants detainees released and governing bodies restored before he will enter into any dialogue, his office said on Wednesday, denying a report he had agreed to lead a new government.

Abdalla Hamdok has been under house arrest since his government was toppled on October 25 by military chief General Abdel Fattah al Burhan in the coup which derailed a transition towards civilian rule and led Western donors to freeze aid.

Burhan said last week he wants to form a new government of technocrats, and that Hamdok could return to lead it.

Mediation efforts have been under way for several days in search of a negotiated way out of the crisis.

A source close to Hamdok said mediated talks were ongoing but no deal had been reached.

Quoting unnamed sources, the Al Arabiya TV said earlier on Wednesday that Hamdok had agreed to return to lead a government. Al Hadath TV, an affiliate of Al Arabiya, reported Hamdok wanted political detainees released as a condition.

However, his office denied he had agreed to return.

“Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who is detained in his residence by order of the coup authorities, is sticking by the conditions that all detainees be released and constitutional institutions be restored (as they were) before October 25, before engaging in any dialogue,” it said in a statement posted on Facebook.

Hamdok was being prevented from communicating with supporters, it added.

Volker Perthes, the UN special representative to Sudan, said on Monday that Sudanese and international mediation efforts were expected to bear fruit in coming days.

Speaking to Sudanese editors on Wednesday, he said “the contours of an agreement are becoming clearer”, his office said.

The transition was meant to steer to elections in 2023, after the army deposed long-ruling president Omar al Bashir two years ago, prompted by a popular uprising against his rule.

Burhan has said he moved last week to avert civil war after civilian politicians stoked hostility to the armed forces. He says he is still committed to a democratic



A protester gestures as people demonstrate in the capital Khartoum, Sudan. – Reuters

transition, including elections in July 2023.

The Geneva-based World Organisation against Torture said on Tuesday at least 36 civilians arrested in the coup were still held incommunicado.

“The whereabouts of many of those who have been detained are not yet known and they have not been able to contact their families or lawyers,” UN Special Rapporteur Clement Voule said in a statement on Tuesday.

SPECIAL SESSION

The United Nations Human Rights Council said it would host a special session this week on the situation in Sudan following last week’s military coup.

The session will take place on

Friday starting at 12:30 pm (11:30 GMT), the UN’s top rights body said in a statement.

The decision came after Britain, the United States, Norway and Germany led dozens of other countries in a call on Monday for an emergency council session on the rights situation there following the coup.

“The actions of the Sudanese military are a betrayal of the revolution, the transition, and the hopes of the Sudanese people,” British Ambassador Simon Manley said in a tweet announcing the request for the special session.

In a move widely condemned internationally, Burhan declared a state of emergency and detained Sudan’s civilian leadership, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and members of his government.

Tens of thousands of people turned out across the country for demonstrations on Saturday against the coup.

At least three people were shot dead and more than 100 wounded during Saturday’s demonstrations, according to medics, who said at least 12 people had been killed since the coup. Police forces denied the killings, or having used live rounds. — Agencies

Lebanese carry ‘worthless’ stacks of cash after currency crash

BEIRUT: Restaurant owner Antoine Haddad has been in business for over 35 years but says he is running out of hope as Lebanon struggles with one of the deepest financial crises of modern times.

The Lebanese pound lost around 90 per cent of its value in the past two years, propelling three quarters of the population into poverty. For Haddad, the difference between this and other crises that Lebanon has experienced, including the 1975-1990 civil war, is that it feels like there is no end in sight.

“Previously, you had hope that: ‘tomorrow the war will end, we do this and that and go back to where we were’, but this time there is no hope,” he said.

“They (those in power) promised us we would have plenty of money in our hands, and we indeed have a lot of it to play with,” he said sarcastically referring to the growing stacks of banknotes needed for even



Moussa Yaakoub, a Lebanese hotel owner, counts Lebanese pound banknotes in Beirut, Lebanon. – Reuters

basic purchases after the currency drop. Haddad, whose small restaurant has been in business since 1984, said he can only buy 10 per cent of the olive oil he used to buy with the same money.

The government, facing an election in March as it tries to secure an IMF recovery plan, has tripled transport allowance for employees to alleviate some of the pain but most salaries,

including the minimum wage, have not been adjusted.

Hotel-owner Moussa Yaakoub is also taken aback by the amount of cash he needs to run his business.

“I have never before held in my hands this amount of money,” he said as he counted some 10 million pounds, worth \$6,600 at the pre-crisis rate but now less than \$500 at the market rate. — Reuters

Palestinian olive growers face climate challenge

ASIRA AL SHAMALIYA, Palestine: During the recent olive harvest, Palestinian farmer Dalal Sawalmeh raked her fingers through the silvery green leaves of her family’s trees but said there weren’t as many olives cascading to the ground.

Like many farmers across the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel, she blames climate change for impacting the iconic gnarled trees that have shaped the Holy Land for centuries.

This year her trees produced less than half their usual yield and “not all the trees bore fruit,” the 38-year-old said near her West Bank village of Asira al Shamaliya.

Palestinian and Israeli farmers both say the once reliable two-year olive cycle — where a bountiful harvest is typically followed by a weaker one the next year — has been disrupted.

Last winter was exceptionally warm and dry, the spring brought an uncommon cold snap, and



Mohammed Amer Hammoudi touches one of his irrigated olive tree in his orchard in the northern West Bank town of Asira al Shamaliya. – AFP

through the year rain fell in spurts or downpours. “The changes are very obvious,” said Hazem Yaseen, the mayor of Asira, where olives have been cultivated for at least 500 years. Israeli and Palestinian olive growers are now trying to adapt to a heating planet — each in their own way.

High-tech Israel, at the government-funded Volcani Center for agricultural research, is seeking a genetic “supertree”

to withstand climate change. In an orchard outside Tel Aviv, plant sciences expert Giora Ben-Ari, 49, is testing 120 olive varieties from around the world for heat resistance.

While the Israeli Barnea shows good oil yield even after a hot summer, another, the Suri strain originally from Lebanon, produces quality but not quantity when the sun beats down, he said.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

RIYADH

Coalition says 145 Yemen fighters killed near Marib

The military coalition in Yemen said on Wednesday it has killed 145 Ansar Allah fighters in 24 hours in air raids near Marib, the final northern stronghold of pro-government forces.

The coalition, which backs Yemen’s internationally recognised government, has reported near-daily strikes over the past three weeks that it claims have now inflicted more than 2,000 lives among the fighters.

But the fighters, who have for months waged an offensive against



the government stronghold, rarely comment on losses, and AFP can not independently verify the tolls.

“Eighteen military vehicles have been destroyed and 145” fighters killed in the latest 24 hours, the coalition said in a statement published by Saudi Arabia’s official SPA press agency.

ISTANBUL

Turkey probes tweets about Erdogan’s health

Turkey’s cyber police on Wednesday launched a legal probe into “baseless” social media posts speculating about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s health.

In a statement, the police said they were investigating 30 people who used or retweeted the hashtag #olmus (#heisdead), which became a top trending topic on Turkish Twitter.

Underscoring the government’s sensitivity about the posts, Erdogan’s communications director Fahrettin Altun posted a



short clip on Wednesday showing the Turkish leader walking out of his official car along a turquoise carpet.

Rumours about the health of Erdogan, 67, have been swirling for years, with one of his doctors going on record in 2011 to deny that the Turkish leader had cancer.

BAGHDAD

Iraq’s protest movement seeks to find voice

For the first time in Iraq, a new breed of representatives is entering parliament, born from a civil society movement fed up with the corruption that has long tarnished politics. Among the newcomers is pharmacist Alaa al Rikabi, 47, whose party Intidat (Extension) emerged in the aftermath of the October 2019 protest movement against the entrenched political elite.

Intidat positions itself as the “opposition” to governments that have emerged through an



informal ethno-sectarian quota system that has been in place since the US-led invasion of 2003, Rikabi said. Despite campaigning with extremely limited finances, the party secured nine of the 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives in the October 10 election.

In brief

■ BENGALURU



INDIA'S COVID SHOT WINS WHO EMERGENCY USE LISTING

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday said it had approved Indian drugmaker Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, paving the way for the homegrown shot to be accepted as a valid vaccine in many poor countries. The emergency use listing would allow Bharat Biotech to ship the shot known as Covaxin to countries that rely on WHO guidance for their regulatory decisions. It could also help millions of Indians who have received the shot to travel outside the country. The WHO tweeted its technical advisory group had ruled that Covaxin's benefits significantly outweighed the risks.

■ MANILA



DUTERTE ORDERS MILITARY TO BYPASS VACCINE 'GRIDLOCK'

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered military and police to airlift Covid-19 vaccines across the country's provinces to bypass "gridlocks" in jab distribution that he blamed on local governments. While nearly 90 per cent of adults in the capital region are fully vaccinated, only about 35 per cent of adults in the country have had both jabs. "(Supplies) will no longer pass through the provincial government because that would be another gridlock," Duterte said in a meeting with pandemic advisers on Tuesday. Duterte has leaned heavily on the armed services to fight the pandemic.

■ GLASGOW



JAPAN PLEDGE BRINGS CLIMATE FUNDING TARGET CLOSER

The developed world's \$100 billion climate financing target could be met a year earlier than expected, US climate envoy John Kerry said on Tuesday. In 2009, the developed countries most responsible for global warming pledged to provide \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing nations deal with its consequences. That commitment is currently not expected to be met until 2023. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told the COP26 UN climate conference in Glasgow his country would offer up to \$10 billion over five years in additional assistance to support decarbonisation in Asia.



'We can't lose hope' to save the planet: Ex-Maldives president

GLASGOW: The corals might be doomed, his country is still at risk of being swallowed by rising seas and he has recently survived an assassination attempt, but former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed is feeling optimistic.

Nasheed, who is representing dozens of the world's most climate vulnerable countries, is at COP26 to call on world leaders to make good on their promises to help nations on the front line of global heating.

A veteran of climate diplomacy, Nasheed made headlines in 2009 when he persuaded his cabinet to don scuba gear and hold an aquatic meeting among the coral reefs that ring his Indian Ocean archipelago.

"Ten years later on, where are we?," he said. "I think we've moved a long, long, long way forward."

Though some countries still need to scale up their climate ambitions, Nasheed said that now he

dares to believe that the Paris agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels is possible.

"I believe now people have understood the gravity of the issue," he said, referring to the onslaught of climate change-fuelled weather disasters this year, from record-shattering heatwaves in North America to devastating floods in Europe.

"It is an election issue now, that is why world leaders have joined the rhetoric."

A particular sore point at the Glasgow gathering is the failure of rich nations to honour their pledge — first made in 2009 — to provide \$100 billion a year by 2020 for countries facing the worst climate impacts. Last week, they laid out a plan for hitting the target only in 2023 — although US climate envoy John Kerry this week said funding the funding might reach the target next year. — AFP

A veteran of climate diplomacy, Nasheed made headlines in 2009 when he persuaded his cabinet to don scuba gear and hold an aquatic meeting

Unicef to directly fund Afghan teachers, bypassing Taliban

HOSPITAL ATTACK UNDERMINES TALIBAN SECURITY PLEDGES

KABUL: The United Nations children's agency said it was planning to set up a system to directly fund Afghan teachers, after the international community placed a freeze on funding to the Taliban-led administration.

"Unicef is setting up a system that will allow direct payments to teachers without the funds being channelled through the de facto authorities," Jeannette Vogelaar, Unicef Afghanistan's Chief of Education, said in an email.

In preparation, she said, Unicef would begin registering all public school teachers.

"The best way to support the education of girls in Afghanistan is to continue supporting their



A Taliban fighter gestures to people waiting to cross into Pakistan at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border crossing point in Spin Boldak on Wednesday. — AFP

schools and teachers. Unicef is calling upon donors not to let Afghanistan's children down," Vogelaar added. Afghanistan's public services, in particular health and education, have been plunged into crisis since the Islamist Taliban movement took over the country on August 15.

Many foreign governments have placed a ban on funding outside of humanitarian aid that is channelled through multilateral agencies.

SECURITY PLEDGES

Just a few months after the Taliban took charge in Kabul and promised to restore peace in Afghanistan, many Afghans still fear an invisible enemy: the IS.

The local chapter of the group is replicating the very tactics that the Taliban used to successfully destabilise the now-ousted US-backed government, including bombings against symbolic targets.

— Agencies

■ FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Children look at firecrackers to buy on the eve of the festival of Diwali at a market in Amritsar, India, on Wednesday. — AFP

India powers renewable ambitions with solar push

BHADLA, India: As camels munch on the fringes of Thar desert, an oasis of blue solar panels stretches further than the eye can see at Bhadla Park — a cornerstone of India's bid to become a clean energy powerhouse.

Currently, coal powers 70 per cent of the nation's electricity generation, but Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged that by 2030, India will produce more energy through solar and other renewables than its entire grid now.

"First, India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 gigawatts... Second, by 2030, 50 per cent of our energy requirements will come from renewable resources," Modi told the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

The arid state of Rajasthan, where Bhadla Park takes up an area almost the size of San Marino,



An engineer walks next to solar panels made by Vikram Solar at the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) site at Bhadla Solar Park in Bhadla. — AFP

sees 325 sunny days each year, making it perfectly placed for the solar power revolution, officials say. Once an expanse of desert, authorities have capitalised on the sparsely populated area, claiming

minimal displacement of local communities. Today robots clean dust and sand off an estimated 10 million solar panels, while a few hundred humans monitor.

This pursuit of a greener future

I believe this is more of an aspirational target... to show to the world that we are moving in the right direction

VINAY RUSTAGI

Bridge to India

vulnerable countries in the world for climate change and that is why it has this big push on renewables to decarbonise the power sector, but also reduce air pollution," Arunabha Ghosh, climate policy expert from the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, said. But experts say the country — the world's third-biggest carbon emitter — is some way from reaching its green targets, with coal set to remain a key part of the energy mix in the coming years.

Although India's green energy has increased five-fold in just over a decade to 100GW this year, the sector now needs to grow by the same proportion again to meet its 2030 goals. "I believe this is more of an aspirational target... to show to the world that we are moving in the right direction," Vinay Rustagi from Bridge to India, said.

— AFP

is fuelled by necessity.

India, home to 1.3 billion people and poised to overtake China as the most populous country, has a growing and voracious appetite for energy — but it is also on the frontline of climate change.

"India is one of the most

KIDS RECEIVE VACCINES



A ten-year-old child high fives Pharmacist Colleen Teevan after he received the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for kids at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. The United States can now start giving children aged 5-11 the Pfizer-BioNtech Covid vaccine, US health authorities said in a move hailed by President Joe Biden as a 'turning point' in the fight against the pandemic. — AFP

Republicans capture Virginia governorship



Supporters of Republican nominee for Governor of Virginia Glenn Youngkin react during an election night party in Chantilly, Virginia. — Reuters

FAIRFAX: Republicans won the Virginia governor's election and were within striking distance in New Jersey on Wednesday, a warning that President Joe Biden's Democrats are in trouble heading into next year's congressional elections.

Glenn Youngkin (pictured), a former private equity executive who surged in the polls in the Virginia campaign's final weeks, beat Democratic former Governor Terry McAuliffe, CNN and NBC projected. Youngkin declared victory in a speech before ebullient supporters, while McAuliffe did not publicly concede.



Having never held elected office, Youngkin sold himself as a political outsider while seeking to rally suburban voters around hot-button issues such as how to handle the discussion of racism in schools and Covid-19 mask mandates.

In New Jersey's closer-than-expected governor race, Republican challenger Jack Ciattarelli and incumbent Democrat Phil Murphy were locked in a virtual draw, even though registered Democratic voters outnumber Republicans by more than 1 million. Democrats clung to hope because more votes were due to be counted in their strongholds. — Reuters

UN CLIMATE SUMMIT TACKLES FINANCING

GLASGOW: With national leaders gone from the UN climate conference in Scotland, attention turned on Wednesday to the state treasuries and the businesses and financiers responsible for carrying out the pledges to cut emissions and build infrastructure.

A main aim of the COP26 talks is to secure enough national promises to cut greenhouse gas emissions — mostly from burning ubiquitous fossil fuels — to avert the worst climate disasters by keeping the rise in the global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

But how exactly to meet those pledges, particularly in the developing world — is still being worked out. Above all, it will need a lot of money

Among the most vexing questions are who should pay and how the funds can be channelled through the financial system quickly and effectively. A major goal will be to attract more private money. The issues are so important that organisers dedicated all of Wednesday for executives and public finance leaders to discuss them.

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero — an umbrella group that includes all the major Western



Delegates sit in the Action Zone as they attend the third day of the COP26 UN Climate Summit in Glasgow. — AFP

banks as well as insurers and asset managers — announced that firms responsible for managing \$130 trillion in capital, equivalent to 40 per cent of the world's financial assets, had signed up to assuming a "fair share" of decarbonisation.

UN climate envoy Mark Carney, who pulled the alliance together, said it needed to find creative ways to channel private money purposefully into investment that advanced the UN-backed drive for

'net zero' greenhouse emissions by 2050.

"The money is here — but that money needs net zero-aligned projects and (then) there's a way to turn this into a very, very powerful virtuous circle — and that's the challenge", he told the summit.

He said \$100 trillion of investment were estimated to be required over the next three decades.

"We need blended finance

facilities that don't mobilise fractions of private capital for the public dollar but multiples... in double digits", he added. "There are facilities that are being developed that can do this; we need to scale them dramatically."

However, the chances of mobilising that kind of money are likely to decline if individual countries fail in Glasgow to collectively expand their emission reduction goals. — Reuters

MADRID Spain tourist numbers up, short of pre-Covid levels

Tourist arrivals in Spain leapt in the first nine months of 2021 compared with a year earlier, but remained far below pre-Covid levels, official data showed. During the period, Spain welcomed 19.7 million tourists, an increase of 17.2 per cent over the figures for same period in 2020, the National Statistics Institute (INE) calculated.

Although the data point to an improvement in the tourism sector, they fall far short of the government's forecast for some

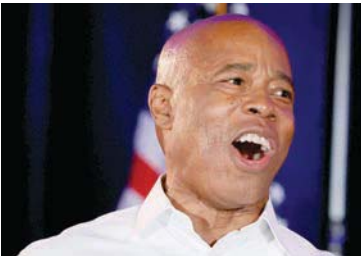


45 million visitors this year — approximately half that of 2019. The figures "confirm that the recovery of international tourism is under way and that in 2022 we could return to pre-pandemic levels", said Reyes Maroto. — AFP

NEW YORK New York elects ex-police as new mayor

Ex-cop Eric Adams, who fought racial discrimination within the police, was elected New York's next mayor on Tuesday and will become just the second African American to lead the United States's largest city. He will take office in January, tasked with steering the metropolis's economic recovery after the pandemic, which has killed more than 34,000 residents and closed hundreds of thousands of businesses.

Adams's win caps a remarkable



rise from his beginnings in poverty, which included running errands for a gang as a teenager before a beating by police officers spurred his determination to join the NYPD and reform it from the inside. — AFP

SYDNEY 4-year-old missing girl found in W Australia home

Police on Wednesday found a 4-year-old girl who went missing from a campsite in Western Australia more than two weeks ago and reunited her with her parents. "What a great day, we now have returned Cleo to her loving parents", Western Australia Police Commissioner Chris Dawson told reporters. "It is a really special day for Western Australia — indeed, I know the nation is rejoicing over the fact that we've been able to conduct this operation, and we never gave



up hope."

Showing a photo of Cleo waving and smiling from what looks like a hospital bed, Dawson said: "As you can see she's alive, she's safe, she's back with mum and dad." — dpa

Germany experiencing 'massive' pandemic of unvaccinated

FRANKFURT: Germany is experiencing a "massive" pandemic of the unvaccinated, Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Wednesday, calling for curbs targeting those not inoculated to tame a resurgence in Covid cases. The fourth wave is raging "with exceptional force", Spahn said.

"We are currently experiencing mainly a pandemic of the unvaccinated and it is massive", he added, warning that "in some regions in Germany intensive care beds are running out again."

Germany, Europe's most populous country with some 83 million people, has been grappling with a fourth wave of Covid-19 cases in recent weeks that has seen the seven-day incidence rate hit highs not seen since May. The country added 20,398 cases over the past 24 hours, the Robert Koch health institute said on Wednesday, while another 194 people died.

More than 66 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated, but Spahn expressed frustration



German Health Minister Jens Spahn during a press conference on the coronavirus situation in Germany, in Berlin. — AFP

at a recent survey that showed a large part of Germany's still unvaccinated adults had no intention of getting inoculated.

"For the unvaccinated, the risk is high that they will become infected in the coming months", warned RKI chief Lothar Wieler, speaking at the same press conference.

Spahn called for "more consistent" checks at establishments or events where only those who can show they have been vaccinated, have recovered from Covid or have recently tested negative are allowed to enter. — AFP

Biden’s struggles propel Youngkin’s Virginia victory

JAMES OLIPHANT

Republican Glenn Youngkin’s upset victory in the Virginia governor race is likely to embolden and energise Republicans ahead of next year’s crucial midterm elections, when control of Congress will be at stake.

In edging out Democrat Terry McAuliffe, Youngkin may have provided a model for Republican candidates in 2022, while Democrats must now fret over President Joe Biden’s sagging approval ratings and stalled agenda in Congress.

Biden and his Democrats have had a rough year. The spread of Covid-19 and pockets of resistance to vaccines continue.

The military pullout from Afghanistan was widely viewed as chaotic and mismanaged.

The president has struggled to cohere Democratic moderates and progressives around his big-ticket legislative agenda. At the same time, prices for consumer goods, food and fuel have shot up — with voters largely blaming the party in power. Simply put, Biden hasn’t given voters — particularly those outside the Democratic base — much to feel good about.

Youngkin capitalised on those troubles, running up the score in rural Virginia and squeezing McAuliffe’s margins in some critical suburban areas.

While Biden won independents handily in 2020, 57 per cent to 38 per cent, Youngkin won them 54 per cent to 45 per cent, according to CNN exit polls. A narrow majority of voters overall said the Democratic Party was too liberal, the polls showed.

McAuliffe, a former governor, brought his own history and baggage to the race. A well-known figure in Virginia with strong ties to Bill and Hillary Clinton, he did not give voters the fresh voice that political newcomer Youngkin offered.

But the losses by McAuliffe and other down-ballot Democrats in a state Biden won by 10 percentage points a year ago — along with a closer-than-expected New Jersey governor’s race — left no doubt that Democrats are now in a weaker political position. Signs are pointing to substantial Republican gains in Congress next year, said Bill McInturff, a Republican pollster.

“Every survey number we are seeing paints a bleak picture for President Biden and Democrats in Congress,” McInturff said. — **Reuters**

“Every survey number we are seeing paints a bleak picture for President Biden and Democrats in Congress”
BILL MCINTURFF
A Republican pollster



A FOG-COVERED CITY

A pedestrian takes a picture of fog covered skyscrapers of Moscow’s International Business Centre in Moscow, Russia, on Wednesday.
— AFP

International standards determine fuel quality



Ali Al Matani
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The production of petrol and all its byproducts is a very precise process. It is subjected to internationally recognised technical standards which do not accept any defect or change in the composition of the final product. There are clear standard specifications approved by local and international authorities.

Therefore, none of the players involved in the production process can violate standard specifications of their products for many national and international considerations and obligations. They have well defined responsibilities and duties in this regard. Above all, they have to take care of their reputation, which develops our confidence in the authorities and organisations. We have confidence in the government organisations and authorities with regard to the process of production and distribution of fuel in the Sultanate of Oman. We trust them as they play supervisory and control roles. We are also confident about the organisations and companies which are involved in production and marketing as they have extensive experience in their areas. A lot is being talked about the quality of fuel and variation in consumption by some vehicles. All this is being said on social media. It is nothing more than rumours being circulated without giving any scientific references or mentioning any technical standards approved by international organisations.

What is being said on social media is nothing but inaccurate reactions which lack credibility due to their being devoid of scientific evidence and exact technical proof to reveal the truth.

Unfortunately, these rumours made some people convinced that there is a problem, which the authorities concerned should take it up and investigate. Authorities should uncover the fact as well as tell the reality as those who benefit by spreading such rumours are punished. They should tell the masses that there is no room for any doubt in such matters.

The technical aspects of such products are dealt with much precision in the Sultanate of Oman as well as around the world. The production process of petroleum and its products are being monitored by international agencies. No space is left for any mistake in such things including composition of fuel products. The organisations and authorities which work to ensure that there is no compromise in standard specifications are keener about it than anyone else. They are strict about the commitments of this trade.

For those who are confused and have no information of the area, I would like to mention that there are certain authorities and organisations which work to ensure that the quality and standard specifications of fuel, as a product and its process, are maintained. Recently, the

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion along with OQ group took 90 samples from 40 filling stations from various governorates of the country. Then, they tested these samples in independent and trusted laboratories. Through the process, the laboratories confirmed that the fuel was as per the standard specifications specific to fuel.

The OQ group has also made it clear that it was committed to do periodic laboratory tests of fuel. It fulfils all the requirements and commitments of collection of samples and their tests, from refineries to the market or filling stations. There is no space left for compromise in quality.

The OQ group follows a strict fuel quality verification system under international standards such as EUR4 as has been agreed by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The production of fuel used in the country is in accordance with the specifications and guidelines provided by the Directorate-General of Standards and Metrology, which fulfil requirements of all international standards in regarding fuel production and ensure high quality at all stages. Despite all this hard-work, any effort to spread rumour and confusion is surprising. It is important that we have confidence in our own institutions which follow internationally trusted approach and standards.

Why Climate Change Conference (COP26) now under way will fail?



Mark Leonard, Florian Kommer
The author is a Co-Founder and Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations and the author of The Age of Unpeace

The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) now under way in Glasgow might conclude with a big international agreement. But whatever tactical successes are achieved at COP26, the results are likely to mark a strategic setback for humanity — at least when compared to the hopes of climate activists.

The world is missing target after target. This should not be surprising: while a growing number of countries have set net-zero targets, for example, very few have credible plans to meet them. And even if we did meet existing targets, that would not be enough to achieve the 2015 Paris climate agreement’s main goal: limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In fact, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s latest report warns that the planet is likely to reach the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit in the early 2030s. As long as multilateral engagement is defined by nationalism, power politics and emotion, rather than solidarity, law and science, our future will continue to grow bleaker.

At the height of the Cold War, the American television series The Outer Limits told the story of an idealistic group of scientists staging a fake alien invasion of Earth, in the misguided hope that they could avert nuclear Armageddon by giving the world a common enemy against which to unite. When faced with the prospect of extinction, the logic went, the

Soviet Union and the United States would turn their attention from competition to shared survival.

Today, nobody needs to contrive a common cause. Climate change poses as a great threat as any alien invasion. But, far from shocking national leaders out of their petty competition, it is being wielded as a weapon in a many-sided propaganda war. From Brazil and Australia to China and the US, countries are trying to game climate negotiations in order to shift the costs of adaptation onto others.

For example, the Brazilian government is trying to get the world to pay it to stop destroying the Amazon rainforest. Chinese President Xi Jinping will participate in COP26 only by video link, and

Russian President Vladimir Putin might not attend at all.

Meanwhile, the advanced economies — including those that proudly claim to be committed to climate action — have broken their promise to provide \$100 billion annually to support the climate transition in the Global South. And even if they did deliver, it wouldn’t be enough.

Developed economies are finding increasingly coercive ways of shaping other countries’ behaviour. Commitments by most of the Western and multilateral development banks to stop financing coal (now joined by China) restrict options for grid expansion in developing countries where demand for power is growing rapidly.

Influential countries have also urged the International Monetary Fund to attach green conditions to debt relief for poor countries, as well as to its new allocation of special drawing rights (the IMF’s reserve asset). And the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism — a non-trade barrier intended to force exporters to Europe to shift to green production — disproportionately hurts small emitters in Africa and Eastern Europe with a lot to lose. This is not to disparage coal bans, green financing and carbon pricing. On the contrary, these tools have a crucial role to play in changing how the global economy works.

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Red Warriors arrive in Dubai ahead of China clash

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 3

The Sultanate of Oman national football team arrived in the UAE on Wednesday ahead of the crucial encounter against China in Sharjah on Thursday.

The team is gearing up for the fifth fixture in the Asian qualifiers — Road to Qatar 2022 for group B and eyeing the winning points to raise the chances of securing direct ticket to the World Cup for the first time in history.

China's fixture will be followed with another tough encounter against

Asian heavyweight Japan on November 16 in Muscat.

The Red Warriors ended the last internal training session at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday. The warm-up sessions were attended by OFA chairman and board members. The Sultanate of Oman players are upbeat after the victory against Vietnam 3-1 in Muscat last month. The head coach of the team, Branko Ivankovic, focused on different tactical and technical sides and prepared the players with mixture of attacking, defensive techniques ahead of the significant forthcoming clashes.



After completion of fourth round, the team is positioned in third place and possesses six points while Saudi Arabia is leading the group by 12 points. Australia is second with nine points. Japan's credit is six points while China have three points in the fifth position and Vietnam is in the last place without any point.

The Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic was very keen during the previous weeks to attend different rounds of domestic top tier league.

The coach and his assisting technical staff presented different matches around the

Sultanate of Oman.

The 67-year-old selected 25 players for Dubai camp which included Harib al Saadi, Salah al Yahyaei, Arshad al Alawi, Ahmed al Rawahi, Amjad al Harthy, Juma al Habsi, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Ali al Busaidy, Al Munther al Alawi, Khalid al Buraiki, Fahmi Said, Ibrahim Saleh, Khalid al Hajri, Abdullah Fawaz, Motaz Saleh, Essam al Subhi, Ahmed al Khamisi, Omar al Fazari, Ahmed al Kaabi, Mohammed al Ghafri, Mohsin Jawher, Fayez al Rushaidi, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi and Mahmood al Mushaifri.

12 teams to vie for 51st HM's Cup hockey title



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 3

As many as 12 teams confirmed their presence in the 51st edition of His Majesty's Cup Hockey Championship. The teams have been divided into two groups. Title holders, Ahli Sidab, were in group B which featured Al Bashaer, Qurayat, Saham, Al Seeb, Suhar and Al Salam while

group A comprised Dhofar Governorate clubs including Al Nasr, Dhofar, Salalah, Al Ittihad and Mirbat.

The draw ceremony of the oldest sporting championship in the Sultanate of Oman took place on Wednesday.

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, was the chief guest for the draw ceremony in presence of Oman Hockey Association (OHA) chairman Dr Marwan al Juma, top



Title holders, Ahli Sidab, were in group B which featured Al Bashaer, Qurayat, Saham, Al Seeb, Suhar and Al Salam while group A comprised Dhofar Governorate clubs including Al Nasr, Dhofar, Salalah, Al Ittihad and Mirbat

officials at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and other dignitaries.

The Championship, which began in 1971, will be played in groups from November 21.

The top two teams in group A will advance to the next round while three teams from group B will move to the same round. The third-placed in group A will meet fourth-

placed in group B for the last ticket to the second stage.

In the second round, all the teams will play in a league system from the first round. The top four teams will advance to the semifinals. The first placed team in the group will face third placed team while the runner up of the group will lock horns against the fourth placed team. The winners will move to final game.

Dr Marwan al Juma, Chairman of Oman Hockey Association (OHA), delivered a speech in the ceremony. "Since the first edition of the oldest local championship, there was continuous development until reaching the latest edition. A dedicated thanks to all the previous chairmen and board members for their valuable efforts towards development of hockey," he said.



India come to the party with batting blitz



HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, NOV 3

Riding on a batting blitz, India registered a massive 66-run win over Afghanistan that has mathematically kept their hopes of qualifying alive in the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Batting first, Rohit Sharma (74, 47b, 8x4, 3x6) and KL Rahul (69, 48b, 6x4, 2x6) smashed fifties and healthy cameos from Hardik Pandya and Rishabh Pant helped India put up the highest score of the World Cup: 210/2 in 20 overs.

With the massive victory, India have improved their Net Run Rate (NRR) to a positive run rate of +0.073 and their fortunes would depend on their remaining games against Scotland and Namibia as well as New Zealand's match against Afghanistan. If Afghanistan manage to upset NZ, that would give a big boost to

India's chances of qualifying for the semis.

AFGHANISTAN STRUGGLE

Afghanistan were off to a poor start as they stumbled to 13/2 losing Mohammad Shahzad and Hazratullah Zazai in quick succession. Rahmanullah Gurbaz played a brief innings that was studded with a boundary and two sixes before he was brilliantly caught in the deep by Hardik Pandya for 19.

Afghanistan were scoring at a brisk rate to keep their run-rate up as well but India were checking on them at regular intervals.

Ravichandran Ashwin, making his comeback into the Indian white-ball team after 2017, scalped Gulbadin Naib as Afghanistan slipped to 59/4.

At 61/4 after the completion of 10 overs, India were looking



to wrap up the rest of the Afghan batsmen as quickly as possible.

Mohammad Nabi hung around for a while with some lusty hitting but eventually Afghanistan wrapped up their innings at 144/7 in 20 overs.

INDIA DOMINATE

India had their best start of the tournament as Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul took off all guns blazing. At the end of the powerplay overs, India were 52/0, their best score in powerplay in the tournament.

Rohit was batting at 34 off just 19 balls with five boundaries and a six and Rahul going at 18 off 13 with a boundary and a six.

The Afghanistan bowlers Hamid Hasan and Naveen ul Haq were getting clattered around all over the park as they went about their business.

India were laying a strong platform to go berserk in the latter part of their innings.

At the end of 10 overs, India were at a very healthy 85/0 with Rohit and Rahul in their 40s and looking to make the most of the remaining 10 overs.

The slow paced nature of the Abu Dhabi wicket was causing some problems to the batsmen but Rohit and Rahul were dealing with it smartly.

Rohit Sharma's well deserved fifty and India's 100 came in the 12th over, the latter after a massive six from Rahul.

Rahul's fifty came after an

inside out aerial shot through the covers as India started to explode in Abu Dhabi.

In the 14th over, Rohit absolutely blasted Rashid Khan out of the park with two huge sixes as 16 runs came off that over.

Rohit was finally out for 74 holding out to Mohammad Nabi off Karim Janat in the 15th over and Rahul was castled by Gulbadin Naib in the 17th over.

Then it was the Hardik Pandya and Rishabh Pant show that took India to a mammoth 210/2 in 20 overs.

Pandya bulldozed his way to an electric 35 off just 13 balls comprising four boundaries and two sixes while the busy Pant smashed 27 off 13 balls with three sixes and a four.

It was going to be a herculean task for Afghanistan to pull it off as India were looking to win big with an eye on the Net Run Rate (NRR).

Guptill leads New Zealand to 16-run win over Scotland

DUBAI: Martin Guptill hit 93 and became only the second man to pass 3,000 Twenty20 International runs as New Zealand defeated Scotland by 16 runs at the World Cup on Wednesday.

New Zealand made 172-5 before Scotland battled to a respectable 156-5 off their 20 overs.

The Kiwis' second win in three matches in the Super 12 stage kept them on course for the semi-finals.

Pakistan have already reached the last four from Group 2 leaving New Zealand, Afghanistan and India to fight for the last qualifying spot.

Tournament favourites India have to beat Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi later on Wednesday to avoid elimination after two losses in two games.

Put into bat, 35-year-old opener Guptill put on 105 for the fourth wicket with Glenn Phillips.

Guptill made his runs off 56 balls with six fours and seven sixes.

His first six off Alasdair Evans in the sixth over allowed him to pass 3,000 runs in the format, second only to India captain Virat Kohli.

Phillips made a steady 33 off 37 balls before he was dismissed by Brad Wheal.

The Scottish bowler also



accounted for a weary Guptill off the next ball of the 19th over as the opener attempted to cart him

over long on.

Guptill now has 3,069 runs in T20 Internationals while Kohli

leads the way on 3,225.

Despite taking two wickets in two balls, Wheal conceded 40 runs off his four overs.

New Zealand, who earned their first points of the tournament with an eight-wicket mauling of India last time out, hit 35 from the first four overs, 24 of those off Wheal.

But Safyaan Sharif then sent back Daryl Mitchell for 13 and, four balls later, claimed the key wicket of skipper Kane Williamson for nought.

At the midway point, the Black Caps were 70-3 before Guptill completed his 18th T20 half century off 35 balls with another six, his 150th in the format.

Sharif was the pick of the Scottish bowlers with 2-28.

In reply, the Scots were on course for victory after 10 overs when they were 76-2.

Matthew Cross made a useful 27, hitting five boundaries in five balls at one stage off Adam Milne.

Matthew Leask gave Scotland hope with a brisk, undefeated 42 off 20 balls with three fours and three sixes.

However, the greater experience of the New Zealand attack was potent enough to apply the brakes with Trent Boult taking 2-29, Tim Southee 1-24 and slow left-armer Mitchell Santner only conceding 23 runs off his four wicketless overs. — AFP



McLaren name New Zealander Gilmour as first female driver

LONDON: McLaren announced New Zealander Emma Gilmour as their first female racer on Wednesday with the rally driver set to compete in the new electric Extreme E off-road series next year.

The announcement during the COP26 climate change summit in Glasgow took the British-based team back to its origins, with late founder and first driver Bruce McLaren also a New Zealander.

“I keep pinching myself. It is so surreal. Growing up in New Zealand, Bruce McLaren is such an iconic name with New Zealand motorsport”, Gilmour told reporters. “I never imagined, I never day-dreamed about racing for McLaren because I was a rally driver.

“To have my passion in motorsport, my rallying, be a skill set that’s now allowed me to race for a childhood, iconic motorsport legend is just a dream come true. I feel so, so honoured.”

McLaren are Formula One’s second most successful team after Ferrari, making their debut in Monaco in 1966 with their founder at the wheel.

They won Formula One titles with Emerson Fittipaldi, James Hunt, Niki Lauda, Ayrton Senna,

Alain Prost, Mika Hakkinen and Lewis Hamilton and have branched out into other areas of motorsport, including IndyCar.

“McLaren is still thought of as a Kiwi team because of our heritage and Bruce being the founder... I still get goose-bumps thinking about it”, said Gilmour.

Extreme E started this year and teams must have a male and a female driver.

The series, which uses identical SUVs, aims to raise awareness about climate change and promote sustainability by racing in remote and harsh environments already suffering damage.

Formula One world champions Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Jenson Button are among the team owners with McLaren the 10th outfit to sign up and debuting in 2022.

Gilmour, who has been a reserve for the Veloce team this season, will partner American rallycross and stunt driver Tanner Foust in the McLaren lineup.

“To be the first female driver for McLaren Racing, I feel that’s leaving a pretty impressive mark already,” she said when asked about future success.

— Reuters



CHELSEA GET BETTER OF MALMO

RONALDO

SAVES MAN UTD AGAIN AS BAYERN, JUVENTUS REACH CHAMPIONS LEAGUE KNOCKOUTS

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo scored another late goal to rescue Manchester United in the Champions League on Tuesday, as his former club Juventus and Bayern Munich both secured qualification for the last 16 with two group games to spare.

Ronaldo fired in from the edge of the box a minute into injury time to snatch United a 2-2 draw with Atalanta in Italy and keep them on course to qualify from Group F.

The competition’s all-time top scorer had earlier cancelled out Josip Illicic’s opener to equalise at the end of a slick team move in first-half stoppage time.

However, having lost Raphael Varane to injury before that, United went behind again in the 56th minute when Duvan Zapata ran through, evading Harry Maguire before slotting in.

The goal was initially disallowed for offside before being given after a VAR review, but Ronaldo thwarted the hosts again with his ninth goal in 11 appearances since returning to Old Trafford and his record-extending 139th goal in the competition.

“We believed until the end. I helped my team get one point”, said Ronaldo. “We never give up, it’s a good result for us I think.”

The 36-year-old also scored an injury-time winner when United came from behind to beat Villarreal 2-1 in September and headed in late on to complete a comeback from 2-0 down to defeat Atalanta 3-2 at home two weeks ago.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s side are level on seven points atop the group with Villarreal, who beat Swiss champions Young Boys 2-0 in Spain with Etienne Capoue scoring a first-half opener and then setting up Arnaut Danjuma to clinch the win late on.



Captain Paulo Dybala’s brace helped Juventus to a 4-2 win over Zenit Saint Petersburg in Turin as they kept up their 100 per cent record in Group H to secure a last-16 place.

Dybala’s early opener was cancelled out when Leonardo Bonucci headed into his own net, but the Argentine international restored Juve’s lead just before the hour, netting a penalty which he had initially missed before being granted a retake.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata added further goals for Massimiliano Allegri’s team before Sardar Azmoun pulled one back in stoppage time.

Juve are three points clear of reigning European champions Chelsea, who beat Malmo 1-0 in Sweden with a second-half Hakim Ziyech goal. Thomas Tuchel’s side, who were again without Romelu Lukaku, need one more point to be certain of advancing.

LEWANDOWSKI HAT-TRICK

Robert Lewandowski netted a hat-trick as Bayern steamrolled Benfica 5-2 in Germany to make it four wins from four in Group E, securing their progress and leaving them requiring a single point to clinch first place.

Lewandowski nodded in the opener and then set up Serge

Gnabry for a cheeky back-heel to make it two.

Morato headed Benfica back into the game and Lewandowski then had a penalty saved right on half-time after a Lucas Verissimo handball.

However Leroy Sane made it 3-1 just after the restart and Lewandowski added two more delightful finishes either side of a consolation effort from visiting substitute Darwin Nunez. It was an eventful night for Lewandowski on his 100th Champions League appearance. He has now scored 81 times in the competition — only Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have scored more. — AFP

Oman Sail’s Mussanah Race Week kicks off with 50 sailors

MUSCAT: Mussanah Race Week got under way in perfect conditions at the Barcelo Resort in Al Mussanah Sports City. Running until November 5 with racing everyday, fifty young sailors in Optimist, Laser Radial, Laser 4.7 and, for the first time at week, para sailors using the RS Venture Class took to the waters for the first practice round.

Sailors from five countries will compete throughout the week alongside classroom sessions to improve technique and learn from professional sailors and coaches. Alongside a strong home contingent, young sailors from Malaysia, Egypt and Abu Dhabi join the fleet to put their skills to the test.

Mussanah Race Week 2021 has seen the debut of para sailing, which is a big step forward for the event, with eight sailors from Oman Sail’s SailFree programme taking part. This introduction

comes in the same week that World Sailing launched its ‘Back the Bid’ campaign to reinstate para sailing to the 2028 Paralympics in Los Angeles, USA. Sail Free was launched in 2019 on partnership with BP Oman, and it is the first of its kind in the Middle East’s for people with disabilities. Prior to the event, SailFree Para-Sailing National Team travelled to Palermo, Italy, to represent the nation at the Hansa World Championships 2021, joining 180 athletes from 25 countries.

Shaima al Asmi, Mussanah Race Week Project Manager, said, “For more than a decade, Mussanah Race Week has been the proving ground for promising young sailors to develop on and off the water, learn from each other and the coaches and experience the Sultanate of Oman’s famed hospitality. We’re delighted with the depth of the fleet this year considering the challenges much of the world is still facing and



Oman Sail’s Mussanah Race Week kicks off with 50 sailors at the start-line 3.

in particular with the introduction of sailors from SailFree. Mussanah Race Week is the first step for many

towards a successful career in sailing and we look forward to an exciting week ahead.”

The event is supported by a line-up of supported including Oman Air, OQ and the Barcelo Mussanah

Resort as official partners, and be’ah as environmental supporter and Salsabeel Water from the National Mineral Water Company as well as Medical support from the Naval Medicine Said Bin Sultan Naval Base of the Royal Navy of Oman.

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

business

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Oman’s economy on recovery path, set to create 32,000 jobs for Omanis this year

KEY TRENDS: Based on initial performance indicators, there was a 10 pc improvement in the country's economic performance during the first half of 2021: Dr Al Saqri

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

A recovery in the Omani economy

is well underway, said Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri (**pictured**), Minister of Economy, citing preliminary indicators of the country's economic performance that he noted are “very reassuring and constantly improving”

In a radio interview, he also pointed to clear evidence of growth in the labour market, with as many as 32,000 the Sultanate of Oman is set to receive employment this year.

Based on initial performance indicators, there was a 10 per cent improvement in the country's

economic performance during the first half of 2021, compared with the corresponding period of last year when the economy underwent a contraction, Dr Al Saqri said.

Various international ratings agencies had also upgraded the country's sovereign ratings, corroborating evidence of an improvement in the Sultanate of Oman's economic performance notwithstanding lingering pandemic-induced challenges.

“The 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) will help restore the

momentum of economic growth, accelerate economic activities and achieve balanced economic and social development through the implementation of many proposed programmes, initiatives and projects within a timeframe

set by the Ministry of Economy and relevant government agencies,” said Dr Al Saqri.

He added in the interview that raising the efficiency of public financial management will help to bolster economic conditions weighed down by low oil prices and the pandemic.

The Ministry of Economy along with the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-Up and Implementation Unit, have been assigned roles to monitor important indicators related to increasing foreign investment, financial

sustainability and rationalisation of spending. In all, there are 430 programmes and initiatives set out in the 10th Five-Year Plan for implementation in this regard by various entities, he said.

At the same time, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is developing a dashboard that links all ministries, enabling the easy monitoring of how various government agencies perform in the implementation of their programmes outlined in the 10th Plan.

TURN TO P15

PO BOX 78, QURUM CITY CENTRE, PC 102, SULTANATE OF OMAN

Group's Unaudited Financial Results for the three months ended 30 September 2021

Chairman's Report

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you the report on the activities and unaudited financial results of the company for the 1st quarter ended 30 September 2021.

1. Operating Results

The Group's total revenue for the three month period ended 30 September 2021 was RO 4.414 million as against previous year revenue of RO. 4.165. The Parent Company made RO 0.175 million profit after taxation compared to RO 0.053 million for the same period in the last financial year.

The Group recorded a consolidated profit after taxation of RO 0.027 million for the three months period ended 30 September 2021 against the net loss of RO 0.171 million in the same period of the previous year.

2. Operations

Compared to the previous year, the Group revenue increased by 6% on account of increase in Aggregates Sales in UAE. We were under severe pressure from the delayed projects and COVID-19 impact. This resulted in long overdue situation that restricted us from taking up projects in order not to increase exposure in the Market. We are confident that your company will achieve better revenue in the coming period subject to improvement in COVID-19 pandemic impact post vaccination drive.

The drilling and blasting industry in Fujairah (UAE) is continuing their better performance that helps the Group to achieve reasonable result at this difficult period.

Explosives supply from Geodynamics is continuing with limited storage facility available and work on phase 2 of the Explosives facility is in progress. We hope that after completion of Phase 2 and the resultant additional storage facility, volume will increase in the upcoming months that will help to improve revenue and profitability of the Group.

3. Health, Safety and the Environment

Your Company is operated in a safe and efficient manner in strict compliance with the highest safety standards and in accordance with the prevailing Royal Oman Police Explosives Rules and Regulations.

No accidents or environmental incidents were reported during the period ended 30 September 2021.

Your Company was in compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and other applicable rules and regulations during the 3 months ended 30 September 2021.

4. Future Outlook

We would like to update the esteemed shareholders that construction work on Phase 2 the proposed explosives facility in the UAE is in progress and once this is completed, the additional storage facility will help to increase volume in the coming months. We are confident that this would enhance the overall profitability of the Group.

COVID-19 impact and travel restriction delayed resources availability which impacted start of full pledged production of the Gypsum mine. The situation will improve now considering the pandemic situation being brought under control and lock down lifted in India, the main target market. We hope that we will achieve targeted production in the second half of 2021-2022, subject to COVID-19 pandemic impact, that will add value to Group.

In addition to the above, your company has plans to venture into mining other materials such as limestone, Chromite, etc as part of diversification plan and is planning to expand its footprint in the African continent, Bangladesh, India and Nepal. These new ventures are delayed due to COVID-19 impact.

5. Acknowledgements

The Members of the Board wish to record their gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq bin Taimur and the Government of Oman for the successful efforts made to improve development and prosperity within the Country.

The Directors also wish to thank the Royal Oman Police, other Government bodies, our valued customers and Banker for their cooperation and support

Saleem bin Qassim bin Ahmed Al Zawawi
Chairman

Note
The complete accounts shall be delivered to any shareholder or beneficiary upon request, in Arabic or English, within 7 days from receiving the application.

	GROUP		PARENT	
	30.09.2021 RO.	30.09.2020 RO.	30.09.2021 RO.	30.09.2020 RO.
Revenue	4,414,250	4,165,325	1,580,205	1,419,579
Cost of Sales	(3,638,931)	(3,621,856)	(1,180,360)	(1,039,429)
Gross Profit	775,319	543,469	399,845	380,150
Other Income	40,515	62,630	189,255	23,077
Administration & General expenses	(431,079)	(462,821)	(133,177)	(144,878)
Sales & Distribution expenses	(169,173)	(70,397)	(118,672)	(70,404)
Operating Profit	215,582	72,881	337,251	187,945
Finance charges	(185,046)	(236,870)	(132,836)	(124,624)
Profit before taxation	30,536	(163,989)	204,415	63,321
Taxation	(3,992)	(7,454)	(29,165)	(10,711)
Profit and total comprehensive income	26,544	(171,443)	175,250	52,610

	GROUP		PARENT	
	As at 30.09.2021 RO.	As at 30.09.2020 RO.	As at 30.09.2021 RO.	As at 30.09.2020 RO.
Fixed Assets	10,775,850	10,925,075	752,060	833,868
Intangible Assets	4,206,230	4,081,861	752	2,349
Goodwill	22,228,249	22,228,249	579,717	579,717
Investment in Subsidiary	-	-	37,020,845	37,038,488
Investment in associates	857,627	870,139	857,627	870,139
Right of Use of Assets	187,273	187,467	115,925	95,223
Deferred Tax	490,648	422,142	61,631	22,557
Due from Subsidiaries	-	-	2,163,500	-
Current Assets	20,599,590	18,245,419	5,407,131	3,778,244
Total Assets	59,345,467	56,960,352	46,959,188	43,220,585
Non-current Liabilities	10,982,297	9,995,136	8,118,861	7,294,367
Current Liabilities	22,367,354	21,312,547	12,435,320	10,096,026
Total Liabilities	33,349,651	31,307,683	20,554,181	17,390,393
Net Assets	25,995,816	25,652,669	26,405,007	25,830,192
Shareholders' Fund				
Share Capital	4,933,025	4,933,025	4,933,025	4,933,025
Legal Reserve	1,453,749	1,396,268	1,357,593	1,300,112
Special Reserve	579,717	579,717	579,717	579,717
Share premium account	13,550,576	13,550,576	13,550,576	13,550,576
Retained earnings	5,478,749	5,193,083	5,984,096	5,466,762
Total Shareholders' equity	25,995,816	25,652,669	26,405,007	25,830,192

OFMC to procure locally cultivated wheat

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 3

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an agreement with Oman Flour Mills Company (OFMC) under which the latter will buy locally cultivated wheat crops of

the 2022 harvest season, locally known as ‘Al Bur’, from Omani farmers.

The agreement will enhance food security and support Omani farmers to enable them to be part of the domestic food market.

The agreement was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri,

Under-Secretary for Agriculture, and Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills.

Al Bakri said that this agreement is the second of its kind, following the first agreement, which was signed in 2020. (With inputs from ONA)

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Non-refundable)	Tender Purchase Deadline	Clarification Deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/11/04	Construction of a New Filling Station at Lima Harbour in Musandam Governorate	50.000	11.11.2021	16.11.2021	21.11.2021

Bank Name & Account Number
Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

1. **Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.

2. **Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.

3. **Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.

4. **Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.

5. Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.

6. Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.

7. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.

8. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.

9. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.

10. For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co. (SAOG)
PO Box No: 57, PC: 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman

Bank Nizwa records stellar performance in Q3 2021

MUSCAT: With an eye on innovative banking procedures and products, seamless customer service and a progressive mindset to bring about change, Bank Nizwa has been leading the way as the most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman.

While aligning itself to 'Oman Vision 2040', Bank Nizwa has also remained abreast of the changing market demands and recorded commendable growth as reflected in its financial results for the third quarter ended September 30, 2021.

Despite the after-effects of the pandemic and the various uncertainties that governed the market, Bank Nizwa recorded a 6 per cent growth in net profit. Attributing this to the bank's ability to adapt to the economic realities, including the competitive environment in which it operates, the figure is a testament to the bank's resilience. The bank's total assets also grew by 22 per cent from 1,138 million to reach RO 1,384 million during the period.

Deeply invested in its drive to create more value for clients and shareholders, Bank Nizwa has achieved continued growth in its core business and recorded a 51 per cent growth in shareholder's equity. With the successful

BANK NIZWA SET TO ACHIEVE CONTINUED GROWTH WITH THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF RIGHTS ISSUE

completion of the rights issue of RO 70 million, the bank is geared up for the next phase of growth and aims to further increase returns for shareholders.

Driven by healthy activities across both its wholesale and retail businesses and prudent control on costs, the bank has also registered a 15 per cent growth in operating income when compared to the same period in the last year.

With a vision to expand its reach, Bank Nizwa has earned its place as the preferred Islamic banking partner for both retail and corporate customers. This is evident from its gross financing portfolio that grew by 19 per cent to reach RO 1,130 million, while the total customer deposit portfolio reached RO 1,073 million recording a growth of 18 per cent compared to the same period last year. This growth has provided the necessary momentum needed to continue the bank's growth trajectory and achieve long-term objectives.



Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalili

The bank has also recorded an increase in operating income which stands at RO 4.3 million (15 per cent YoY) and an increase in operating expenses by RO 2.2 million (16 per cent YoY) which reflects dedicated and strategic efforts to cost management. This has led the bank to achieve a net profit after tax of RO 9 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2021.

"We have achieved yet another milestone in our journey to improve performance and uphold our position as the leading Islamic bank in the country. Bank Nizwa has once again recorded stellar growth throughout its departments as is reflected in our latest financial result. Adhering to our core values of achieving business excellence through

Sharia-compliant financing, we have been able to fulfil our commitments to our shareholders while delivering the highest level of customer satisfaction to our clients. Our resilient performance, robust strategies and focus on innovation have been instrumental in paving the way forward", said Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa.

"We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our shareholders, business partners and customers who have bestowed immense faith in our strategies and have continued to lend their unending support to all our initiatives. As a leader in the sector, Bank Nizwa will continue to be an advocate of Islamic banking and contribute to the economic prosperity of the Sultanate as it achieves the goals highlighted in Oman Vision 2040."

With its well-devised 2025 strategy for growth in place, Bank Nizwa will continue to focus on growing the balance sheet in a controlled manner, diversifying revenue streams, controlling expenses, improving margins, enhancing its digital capabilities and expanding its products and client base.



Maisarah sponsors IFN Oman Forum 2021

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its position as a key player in the Islamic finance industry in the Sultanate of Oman, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services has sponsored and participated in the 6th edition of IFN Oman Forum.

Organised by REDmoney, the full day event took place in Muscat recently under the auspices of Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of Capital Market Authority, and was attended by Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of Central Bank of Oman, along with prominent bankers, industry experts, potential investors and leaders from around the region.

During the forum, Nasser Said al Bahantah, Chief Retail Banking Officer, reiterated Maisarah's seamless efforts to contribute to the growth of Sharia-compliant financial solutions, increase competitiveness of the industry and expand the market share of Islamic banking service providers in the Sultanate of Oman.

"Since the inception of our operations in 2013, we have been keen in supporting various initiatives that lead to the improvement of Islamic finance industry in the Sultanate of Oman.

There is a growing appetite for Islamic banking solutions across the globe, and we are working towards accelerating the competitiveness of this market in the Sultanate with state-of-the-art products, cutting-edge technology and world-class financial solutions", he stated.

The forum highlighted a selection of fundamental topics, including Oman Vision 2040 and the Islamic economy, green

transition and sustainability-linked finance, Sukuk and investment funds, issues facing Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman, disrupting and enabling Islamic fintech and crowdfunding platforms among other discussions.

Meanwhile, Maisarah put in display a bundle of products, services and financial solutions that were available for its retail and business customers and potential investors. During the event, Mohsin Shaik bin Sehu Mohamed, Senior Executive Manager, & Head Investment Banking at Maisarah, participated in the panel discussion on Green, Transition and Sustainability-Linked Finance, Sukuk and Investment Funds in the Sultanate of Oman.

Over the years, Maisarah has maintained a prominent position as a leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman. The Islamic banking window of BankDhofar maintains standards of corporate governance, research and development, corporate social responsibility and customer service.

Maisarah aims to distinguish itself with outstanding customer experience, investing in Fintech, developing innovative products and launching state-of-the-art financial solutions. As part of its future growth plan to reach to a wider base of customers across Oman, Maisarah is planning to expand its branch network and to introduce more banking facilities.

It currently serves customers through 10 dedicated branches in Athaiba, Al Khuwair, Greater Muttrah, Al Hail, Suhar, Birkat Al Mouz, Araqi, Sur, Salalah and New Salalah, in addition to a wide network of ATM/CDM facilities nationwide.

Ahli Islamic opens new branch in Ibri

MUSCAT: Continuing its Strategic network expansion across the Sultanate of Oman, Oman's premier Islamic banking institution, Ahli Islamic has celebrated the official inauguration of its new branch in the Wilayat of Ibri, Al Dhahirah Governorate.

Najeeb bin Ali al Rowas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, graced the occasion with his presence as the guest of honour.

Over the last few years, Ahli Islamic has been on a consistent, strategic roadmap of growing its presence in the market for closer customer interface, ease of engagement and to offer enhanced sharia-compliant banking services to a larger customer base.



Speaking on the occasion, Yousuf al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of Ahli Islamic said, "At Ahli Islamic, we believe in the importance of continuing to innovate in products and enhance the level of banking services provided to our customers, to make these more comfortable and accessible to our

retail and corporate customers. Our growing branch network enables us to do so, and not only helps to expand our customer base, but also reaffirm existing client relationships. The new branch in Ibri reflects the bank's commitment to grow while adding value to the country and its people."

Ahli Islamic has been recognized as one of the fastest growing branch networks in Oman, providing an extensive portfolio of Sharia-compliant banking solutions that are compatible with the different banking needs of customers.

Ahli Islamic's new branch in Ibri is characterised by its innovative design and advanced infrastructure, like other branches of the bank, in addition to having well-trained team of banking professionals to attend to the needs of the customers and a spacious waiting area to accommodate the requirements of physical distancing. Ahli Islamic is committed to deliver a seamless customer-centric experience.

Toyota Mirai's zero emission journey sets new Guinness Record

MUSCAT: Toyota's deep-rooted commitment to sustainable mobility was in the spotlight recently as the 2021 Toyota Mirai set a new world record for the longest distance travelled by a hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) without refuelling. The class-leading vehicle achieved an unprecedented 1,360 km on a single, five-minute complete fill of hydrogen during a round trip tour of Southern California to claim the *Guinness World Records* title and set a new distance milestone for zero emission vehicles.

The official record attempt was closely monitored by *Guinness World Records* in accordance with its strict rules and documentation procedures. The

efficiency-focused journey took place on August 23 and 24, with the Mirai logging an impressive 64.6 km/L and producing water as its only emission. To ensure total transparency, *Guinness World Records* adjudicator Michael Empric validated the vehicle's fuel tank with a seal at both the beginning and end of the journey.

"We are delighted to achieve this landmark for sustainable mobility with the Mirai, a pioneering vehicle that heralds a new era of efficient electrified and hydrogen-driven transportation. This comes as part of our continuing drive to develop diversified mobility solutions that offer people more ways to move safely, responsibly, and in harmony



with the environment", said Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation.

The Mirai was driven by professional hypermiler Wayne Gerdes and co-piloted by Bob Winger. Its two-day trip commenced at the Toyota

Technical Centre (TTC) in Gardena, California, home of Toyota's fuel cell development group. The duo travelled south to San Ysidro and then north to

Santa Barbara cruising through Santa Monica and Malibu beach along the Pacific Coast Highway. The vehicle returned to TTC that evening having logged 761 km with only two driver swaps.

On the second day, the team pushed through 599 more kilometres of morning and afternoon rush hour traffic on the San Diego freeway until the Mirai had no hydrogen left and coasted into TTC with a grand total of 1,360 km driven, as witnessed by *Guinness World Records* adjudicator Michael Empric.

"As a *Guinness World Records* adjudicator for 10 years, I've had the opportunity to witness incredible attempts, including several distance-related feats", said Empric.



In brief

■ KUALA LUMPUR

**AIRASIA INTERESTED
IN POTENTIAL AIRBUS
A321NEO FREIGHTER**

Malaysia's AirAsia Group Bhd is in talks with Airbus SE about its interest in the manufacturer developing a new freighter version of its A321neo passenger plane, the head of its logistics arm said. AirAsia would seek to convert a 'meaningful chunk' of its 362 orders for the passenger version of the A321neo narrow body to a dedicated freighter, said Pete Chareonwongsak, CEO of AirAsia logistics division Teleport.

"For a lot of the markets that we need to reach both in range but also in capacity, it's a great product," he told reporters of the potential freighter. "Would we be the launch customer? I don't know. We'll see." — Reuters

■ DUBAI

**SAUDI NON-OIL PRIVATE
SECTOR OUTPUT
HIGHEST IN 4 YEARS**

Saudi Arabia's non-oil private sector notched a 14th month of consecutive growth in October as output expanded at the fastest rate since December 2017, signalling the sector's continued strengthening, a survey showed.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 57.7 in October from 58.6 in September but remained well above the 50.0 mark that separates growth from contraction.

It was also above the series average of 56.9 and with the exception of the September reading was the fastest pace of growth since November 2019.

— Reuters

■ MUNICH

**BMW RAISES TARGET
FOR 2021 AFTER STRONG
THIRD QUARTER**

Upmarket German carmaker BMW posted sharply increased profits in the third quarter — despite continuing problems with sourcing computer chips — on the back of higher sales prices, in results released in Munich. Profits for the quarter rose by 42 per cent to \$2.99 billion, a new record.

The semiconductor shortage throughout the automotive sector has led to a shortage of vehicles for sale and higher prices as a result.

"We are on target for our annual prediction and look to the future with confidence", chief financial officer Nicolas Peter said. — dpa

Pact to explore potential for pharma complex in Nizwa



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 3

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) signed on Wednesday a cooperation programme with the University of Nizwa seeks to study the possibility of establishing a complex for pharmaceutical industries in Nizwa Industrial City.

The pact was signed by Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn, with Dr Ahmed bin Khalfan al Rawahi, Chancellor of the University of Nizwa.

The cooperation programme with University of Nizwa stems from the significance of joint cooperation to boost expertise and capabilities exchange from both sides, crystallise public-private partnership, contribute in enhancing the Sultanate's position as a leading regional centre of manufacturing, innovation and entrepreneurship excellence and attracting industrial investments. This cooperation programme

also comes along the lines of the efforts made to achieve Oman Vision 2040, economic diversification, and sustainability based on knowledge, innovation and research.

Under this cooperation programme, the University of Nizwa will study the possibility of establishing a complex for pharmaceutical industries in Nizwa Industrial City in line with the objectives of the two sides to establish an incubator industrial base for pharmaceutical industries to achieve an added value in considerable production of pharmaceutical raw materials in the Sultanate of Oman.

This cooperation shall also contribute to providing technical and industrial support and solutions to the operating factories as well as encouraging investments in this sector, and consequently creating more job opportunities.

Moreover, the cooperation programme with University of Nizwa includes proposing and

developing a technical training programme for the employees in the companies and factories based in Madayn's industrial cities in addition to Al Mazunah Free Zone and Knowledge Oasis Muscat. This shall also facilitate access to practical training opportunities for the students of University of Nizwa according to their specialisations in the various companies and factories, and encourage these companies and factories to offer scholarships for general diploma graduates to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Nizwa in specialisations that meet the employment requirements of the companies and factories.

As per the programme, Madayn officials will take part in advisory boards at the University of Nizwa with the objective of expertise exchange and contribution to the development of academic programmes in line with the needs of the labour market.

CMA issues warning to leading audit firm

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 3

In its efforts to enhance the accountability in the audit profession as a whole in the Sultanate of Oman, the Capital Market Authority (CMA) issued a warning on Tuesday against the audit firm Crowe Mak Ghazali.

The warning is a result of CMA's supervision over some listed entities where major financial and accounting irregularities were investigated by CMA team.

This had prompted CMA to enforce immediate corrective measures in those listed entities to protect investors and other stakeholders. CMA undertook a comprehensive review of the causes that included understanding the reason of the non-discovery and non-reporting of such misstatements by the auditors.

This review established shortfalls on the part of audit firm that warranted disciplinary measures against them in the interests of the investors and other stakeholders.

CMA concluded that Crowe had failed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence and to apply sufficient professional scepticism in certain areas of the audit. CMA advises the accredited firms to adhere to International Standards on Auditing (ISA) while also ensuring that the financial reporting is strictly in compliance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) that are mandatory in the Sultanate.

CMA expects from the audit firm against whom the recent disciplinary measure has been taken, is to carry out comprehensive internal reviews to identify causes and make required course of corrections.

CMA also advises the accredited firms to implement robust internal quality control procedures to avoid such occurrence in future. This can go hand in hand with the adoption of proactive and holistic quality management system as detailed in ISQM 1, ISQM 2 and ISA 220, which will become effective in December 2022.

Stocks steady before Fed decision on stimulus

LONDON: Stock markets steadied and the dollar retreated on Wednesday, with investors biding their time ahead of a hotly-anticipated Federal Reserve announcement on tapering its vast stimulus propping up the economy.

World oil prices sank as concerns about China tempered demand expectations.

"If there is no sign of stress across... markets, it's mostly because we all think we know what will come out from today's (Fed) meeting: A gradual start of the tapering of the bond purchases

programme", said SwissQuote analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

A third straight day of record highs for Wall Street's three main indices on Tuesday provided little inspiration in the face of long-running fears about surging inflation and the prospect of higher interest rates.

With prices rising at rates not seen for years, central banks are being forced to row back the vast financial support put in place at the start of the pandemic, which has been credited with sending equities to records and helping the economic recovery. — AFP

Oman's economy on recovery path

FROM PAGE 13

The 10th five-year plan, he said, seeks to achieve several overall objectives, including achieving a real average GDP growth rate of around 3.5 per cent and increasing the private sector's contribution to investment to about 60 per cent. At the same time, the real growth rate of non-oil activities is projected to rise to 2.3 per cent annually, and an increase in the investment rate to about 20 per cent of GDP.

Commenting on the results of the Medium-Term Fiscal Balance Programme in improving the economic situation, Dr Al Saqri said the initiative seeks to tackle fiscal challenges stemming from low oil prices, the collapse of public revenues, the rise of the deficit, increased public debt, the decline in the credit rating of sovereign loans, the maintenance of macroeconomic performance, including economic growth, the performance of the economic sectors and the maintenance of the purchasing power of the Omani rial.

The programme seems to restore confidence in the performance of



public finances, which is directly related to the private sector and improve financial performance, which leads to improved credit rating for sovereign loans and enable the government to borrow to implement investment and development projects. Maintaining financial balance is key to economic performance, he said.

Stimulus measures introduced by the government also have had a positive impact on the business environment, he said. An evaluation carried out by the Ministry of Economy showed

that the measures helped alleviate negative impacts to the economy, while also helping many medium enterprises and strategic projects to continue to perform despite the challenges. A large number of jobs were also created as well, besides stimulating the country's economic performance.

In cooperation with the SME Authority, the ministry has undertaken a number of programmes to stimulate economic activity, generate jobs, and support SME-led initiatives, such as the Winter Nights Festival programme.

This coordination has also led to the establishment of an incubator for the creative and transformation industries and a number of initiatives related to the establishment of enterprises in the agricultural field and an educational platform for entrepreneurship and legal consultancy.

Commenting on inflation trends, he said inflation in the country is within reasonable limits, reaching 1.9 per cent in the first half of 2021. According to macroeconomic performance indicators, inflation is expected to reach within 2.7 per cent going forward, which is reasonable as it will not lead to a significant increase in the cost of production.

However, if inflation rises sharply, direct intervention is needed to reduce its impact on the purchasing power of the Omani rial and the cost of production and income of individuals.

Asked about private sector receivables from the government, he said the issue was dealt with once and for all, with all outstanding settled, with the exception of those that are still the

subject of clarifications.

A total of RO 800 million has been paid over the recent past, he said.

Turning to SMEs, he said the sector's contribution to the GDP reached 17 per cent. "We seek by the end of the 10th five-year plan to lift this to 30 per cent, as the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman will stimulate the growth of the SME sector and drive growth."

He added that the ministry has carried out an integrated study to determine why SMEs do not benefit from a government directive mandating 10 per cent of government contracts to be allocated to SMEs. This is being resolved through discussions with commercial banks to encourage them provide funding support for these small operators.

In concluding, he said the ministry will prepare a roadmap to enhance economic and bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and various countries of the world to encourage mutual protection of investments as well as benefit from memberships in international organisations.

Facebook whistleblower sits atop publicity juggernaut

Ex-Facebook worker Frances Haugen strode on stage to roaring applause in Portugal, the latest step in a trajectory that has diverged sharply from that of other high-profile whistleblowers who wound up in exile or ruin.

Haugen's leak of company records has benefited from well-oiled communications machinery, powerful backers and a lucky crypto currency bet — even if it's far from certain whether she will induce her stated goal: to reform Facebook.

The internal reports captured by her smartphone camera and handed to journalists have already resulted in a deluge of damning stories with the common argument that Facebook executives knew the platform could hurt teens, ethnic minorities, or democracy but were more concerned about profits.

Yet instead of winding up destitute or fearing prosecution, 37-year-old Haugen has become a media-savvy figurehead on a world tour of the backlash against the leading social media giant.

"It's definitely not a David versus Goliath situation — she is so much more organised and in a position to have power," said Vigilencia Abazi, a senior international fellow at Government Accountability Project, a US whistleblower protection organisation.

In a matter of weeks Haugen has testified before the US Congress and the British Parliament, with European Union lawmakers inviting her for a November 8 appearance.

In between, she made the time to be interviewed on stage before a clapping, full house at the Web Summit tech conference in Lisbon.

"I originally did not plan to ever come out, right like I said before. I don't like attention," Haugen said, as she recounted her journey from working on Facebook's anti-misinformation team to international renown.

One of her key decisions was aligning with Whistleblower Aid, an organisation that says it helps workers "report and publicise their concerns — safely, lawfully and responsibly."

"They had many, many weeks and months of conversation about what it was that drove her to this... what her evidence looked like," the group's CEO Libby Liu said on stage with Haugen in Portugal. "Then she retained us."

Yet money is always the question — and Haugen, despite resigning from Facebook in April — says she is living in Puerto Rico and doing alright.

"For the foreseeable future, I'm fine, because I did buy crypto at the right time," she told *The New York Times*, referring to the volatile but currently booming digital monies.

— AFP

I originally did not plan to ever come out, right like I said before. I don't like attention

FRANCES HAUGEN
Facebook whistleblower



BOOST FOR STARTUP

Founder and CEO of Imaguru, member of the Coordinating Council of Belarus Tanya Marynich (C), Lithuanian Minister of Economy and Innovation Ausrine Armonaite and Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya (R) during the opening ceremony of the Imaguru Startup and Solidarity HUB. A few days after Belarusian startup hub Imaguru was kicked out of its office in Minsk this year, founder Tania Marinich received an unexpected phone call. — AFP

Unlocking the job creation potential of the renewable energy sector



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY SCENARIO DEVELOPED BY THE ILO FORECASTS THE NEED FOR NEW JOBS TO REACH 25 MILLION BY 2030

In recent years, the world has witnessed many developments related to renewable energy as economies and organisations explore new ways to increase energy efficiency and manage consumption prudently — actions that underscore the critical role of energy in driving economic development and business growth.

At the heart of these efforts is the goal to achieve energy sustainability, which also stimulates the interest of young people in finding new innovative solutions to the global energy challenge.

International institutions are also playing an important role in this effort. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have pointed to the potential for employment in these sectors and to support a just transition towards change.

Last year, about 12 million people were employed in the field of renewable energy worldwide, up from 11.5 million in 2019, according to data from the report 2021 of the two institutions.

As is well known, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused delays in business and created disruptions in the supply chain, resulting in different impacts on jobs. But

job opportunities have become available in the field of solar and wind energy, which continued to grow and lead in upsurge in global employment in this sector.

Today, there are several countries working to harness solar and wind energy, thereby providing business opportunities to professionals in this key space.

China accounts for a 39-per cent share of renewable energy jobs worldwide in 2020, followed by Brazil, India, the United States, and members of the European Union.

The ability of renewable energy to create jobs and achieve goals is beyond doubt, in the words of Francesco La Camera, Director-General of IRENA, who called on governments to raise their level of ambition in these sectors and increase investments in a just and inclusive transition with the aim of reaping the full social and economic benefits offered by these sustainable energy resources.

In this regard, ILO Director-General Guy Ryder believes that the potential of renewable energy to generate decent work is a clear indicator, and we must choose between environmental sustainability on the one hand and job creation on the other, he said.

Achieving renewable energy jobs

depends on a country's ambitious strategies as well as policies to support deployment, empowerment and integration of the sector itself, working to overcome structural barriers in the broader economy and reducing potential imbalances between job losses and gains during the transition.

The global sustainability scenario developed by the International Labour Organisation forecasts the need for new jobs to reach 25 million by 2030. This opens up opportunities for about 5 million workers who will lose their jobs in other fields but will find new openings in these same tasks in new industries.

The ILO also expects the global renewable energy sector to provide employment to 43 million people by 2050.

To achieve these forecasts, governments and private institutions will need to implement industrial policies, support education and training strategies to create a skilled workforce, improve labour market measures along with retraining and rehabilitation, provide social protection to help workers and communities that are dependent on fossil fuels, and enhance public investment strategies to support regional economic development and diversification.

Will deglobalisation fuel inflation?



DALIA MARIN
The author is a Professor of International Economics at the Technical University of Munich's School of Management, and a research fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research

Inflation seems to be on everyone's mind nowadays. The debate usually centres on whether America's massive monetary and fiscal stimulus will de-anchor inflation expectations and cause prices to spin out of control. But there is another trend that could also generate inflationary pressure: deglobalisation.

Deglobalisation has been occurring since the 2008 global financial crisis. But the coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the trend significantly. Using data from the financial crisis, Kemal Kilic and I predict that the Covid-19 shock is likely to lead to a 35-per cent decline in cross-border value chains — the main factor driving globalisation over the last three decades.

A recent survey by the Munich-based ifo Institute supports this conclusion. The study showed that about 19 per cent of German manufacturing firms plan to reshore production.

Of these, 12 per cent will begin acquiring inputs from German suppliers, and 7 per cent will produce them in-house.

Rising transport costs are likely to accelerate the shift away from global value chains.

During the pandemic, the cost of containers used to ship goods from Asia to Europe and the United States has risen nearly tenfold, and transport workers, facing increasingly harsh working conditions, have been leaving their jobs. Overall, the price of

moving goods for businesses is up to ten times higher than it was just a year ago. These developments have diminished the profitability of global value chains significantly. Firms embraced offshoring to take advantage of far lower wages in post-communist Europe, and in China, especially after it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001.

And a revolution in the transport sector, containerisation, facilitated the process by helping to keep transport costs low enough that they didn't offset wage differentials.

Today, those differentials are smaller, and transport costs are much higher, weakening firms' incentive to keep their activities in far-flung locations. Moreover, onshoring (or 'near-shoring')

reduces their vulnerability to global shocks.

According to Charles Goodhart and Manoj Pradhan, the resulting retreat from globalisation, together with population aging in China and the advanced economies, is a recipe for inflation. In their view, globalisation held down prices for three decades: when production moved to low-wage countries, wages everywhere were suppressed. As cheap labour becomes increasingly difficult to find, both at home and abroad, the bargaining power of labour in high-income countries will rise, compounding inflationary pressures.

Are they right? Will consumer price inflation and wages pick up

after the pandemic, as the world enters a new era of deglobalisation?

The answer depends, first, on the extent to which the upheaval in the transport sector persists. If, as some observers argue, the sector is undergoing a fundamental transformation, during which costs will remain high, this could induce a wage-price spiral in rich countries, as workers seek to be compensated for rising prices.

But if firms reshore their activities, the impact of higher transport costs will be significantly diminished. Moreover, the argument that wage pressures will fuel inflation might not hold much water.

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features



Oman Skate hunts down Sultanate's best skaters

After closing for renovations, Oman Skate, the first-ever skatepark in the country, is opening with a bang launching Oman's Best Trick Contest this Friday, November 5. Owner and founder Hytham al Wahaibi shared they hope to see some amazing tricks this year... **P20**

ENTERTAINMENT

READ



THE LAST KIDS ON EARTH
BY MAX BRALLIER
ILLUSTRATED BY DOUGLAS HOLGATE

Jack and his friends fight for their lives through the zombie apocalypse.

Singer Diana Ross teases first music video in over a decade

SINGER DIANA ROSS made fun of her music video for the first time in more than a decade while preparing to release her new gratitude-themed studio album, 'Thank You,' later this week. The 77-year-old Ross, who made a name for herself as the lead singer of The Supremes, a very successful women's group on Motown Records in the 1960s, recorded a video of her new song "All Is Well."

This clip shows a studio set

being built over time, and Ross in a black dress sitting in a chair singing the opening lyrics of the track. "My sons gave me the confidence and encouragement to make this video," Ross said in a statement on Wednesday. "After nearly two years of not performing and not in front of the camera, they made it easier for me to be around a lot of people." Ross will release her first stu-

dio album "Thank You" on Friday since "I Love You" in 2006. She recorded a new track in her studio during the Covid-19 pandemic. "I've recorded new music over the past year. It reflects the joy, love and gratitude I feel every day. It's a great appreciation album for life and all of you," said Ross. "It was urgent for me to make a meaningful album and work on what is happening in our world. Through the power of music, we make our choices and the decisions we make. I'm creating a new kind of conversation to support." It is said that not only reflective songs but also bright songs such as "If the World Just Dance" accompanied by videos of dance fans all over the world are recorded. — Reuters





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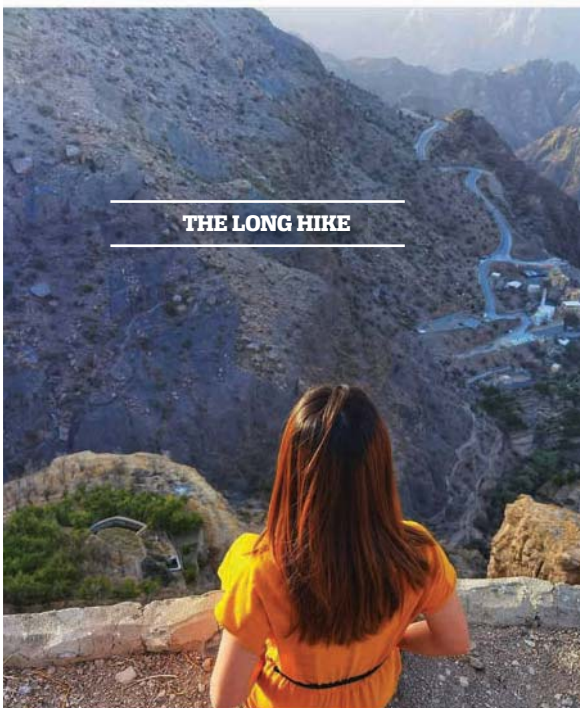
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Kristen Stewart on playing Princess Diana: 'I had to give it a shot'



AMERICAN ACTRESS Kristen Stewart was scared at the prospect of playing Britain's Princess Diana in the new movie "Spencer," but it was a challenge she could not refuse.

"Even if people hated it and it ended up being like a sort of misfire, we tried the best we could," said Stewart. "This wasn't something I could pass up. I had to give it a shot."

"Spencer," arriving in US movie theatres on Thursday, is directed by Chile's Pablo Larraín who has described it as an imaginative portrait of Diana rather than a biography.

It starts with the words "A fable from a true tragedy."

The movie is set during the 1991 Christmas holidays at Queen Elizabeth's Sandringham estate when Diana has all but given up on her marriage to Prince Charles.

It portrays her as increasingly isolated from the rest of the royal family and longing to break free from rules she sees as suffocating.

Charles and Diana divorced in 1996 and Diana died in a Paris car crash a year later.

"We absorbed her the best that we possibly could, read everything, looked at everything. I emotionally connected with her. I love her. I'm not alone in that. She is loveable. She is very easy to feel protective over," Stewart, 31, said.

"There are things that we just can't know but we'll be endlessly curious about," she added.

Films and television portrayals of Princess Diana have not always been well received. Newcomer Emma Corrin won awards for playing a younger version of Diana in "The Crown," but the Naomi Watts film "Diana" in 2013 got poor reviews. The new Broadway musical "Diana" was roasted by critics.

Stewart's performance, on the other hand, has won rave reviews and could bring the actress her first Oscar nomination next year. The Guardian described her performance as "entirely compelling," while the Hollywood Reporter said Stewart was "incandescent." — **Reuters**

COMMUNITY

Haitians hold voodoo rituals to honour ancestors amid crisis



HAITIANS HONOURED their ancestors to mark the Day of the Dead on Tuesday in colourful voodoo rituals that offered a respite from the tough day-to-day reality of fuel shortages, gang violence and rising malnutrition.

Voodoo followers in the Caribbean nation gathered

More than half of Haiti's 11 million people are believed to practice voodoo, a religion brought from West Africa by enslaved men and women and practiced clandestinely under French colonial rule.

It is closely identified with the struggle against slavery in Haiti, which

we do the work of the spirits, they protect us."

For decades voodoo has been portrayed in Western films as a black magic cult, but it was officially recognised as a religion by Haiti's government in 2003 under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Haiti has for nearly two



in cemeteries, many dressed in white and some with their faces covered in white powder, to sing and dance as part of rituals that involve communing with ancestral spirits.

"Voodoo, if you want to define it, is the means at your disposal to establish harmony between you and everything that surrounds you, both visible and invisible," said Carl-Henry Desmornes, the religion's "ATI" or supreme leader, in an interview.

declared independence from France in 1804 following what is widely considered the world's only successful slave revolt.

"Despite the difficulties caused by the lack of gasoline, people have made the trip to the cemetery. As I speak, my car is out of gas," said Valcin Antoine, a voodoo priest or "ougan" known as "Toutou," who led a ceremony on Monday at a cemetery in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Petion-ville.

"We are not afraid when

weeks suffered severe fuel shortages. Gang blockades have prevented trucks from reaching fuel terminals, forcing some businesses to shut their doors and hospitals to limit services.

A wave of gang kidnappings, including the abduction last month of a group of American and Canadian missionaries, has spurred local outrage and led several transport industry groups to call general strikes. — **Reuters**

OUT OF THE BOX



Yeru Ebuén
IG: yru_here

Will you pay for an award?

THERE WAS A TIME when an award meant something. There was a time when it puts the right people in the proper spotlight; that to win one, you have to meet very high, very strict criteria. There was a time when winning an award was a form for others to be motivated. Inspired by the great works of the masters, that candidates strive hard to become worthy of being in the same spot as the person that they look up to.

There was a time when the world only awarded excellence. That after looking through very rigorous criteria, only the best minds and performances are elevated against their peers. Not everyone is given a gold star just for doing something, they actually have to do something meaningful and lots of it.

But the world has shifted to disappointing mediocrity that awards no longer mean anything — except as a door holder or an inanimate object standing on a pretty shelf or hanging by a wall made beautiful by pretty lights. The world has shifted so much that even in kindergarten, you get a gold star just for submitting a lousy artwork.

In today's world, any form of constructive criticism is considered bullying and everyone is offended when they are not made to feel special enough. This has been particularly true for some overzealous parents. I have teacher friends complaining that some parents verbally attack them when their children do not get a medal. So all the hard work, all the proper efforts, all the dedication of other kids fly out of the window and mean nothing because, in today's educational system, you get awarded just for about anything without even a proper definite measure. An award is supposed to help guide the young ones towards excellence. But what have we become?

This is nothing different in the professional world. There had been two notable incidents in the last two months that prompted this writing.

For instance, the organisation that I looked up to so much since I was little, the same award-giving body who properly recognised the brilliance of achievers and society-shakers like Einstein, Curie, Mandela and Gabriel Garcia Marquez now include amongst them a purveyor of fake news and a peddler of lies. The Nobel Prize, just like that, had taken a very disappointing turn and made millions of Filipinos like me question whether it bowed down to pressure from a certain government.

While there were dozens of journalists in the Middle East putting their lives in actual danger to tell accurate stories, the world awarded a fraud. It made me realise, that in the last decade, the way that achievements are measured had drastically changed that the work of earlier masters and thinkers are also put to shame because award-giving bodies are themselves destroying their legacy. I would never look at the Nobel Prize in the same way ever again.

The second incident was the recent power list that an influential magazine based in Dubai has released. With insider information as to how several people on the list performed, it was unbelievable that anyone can be on it just like that. It made me realise too that at the end of the day, it was more of positioning the magazine as a friend to all so that it can keep getting the financial support it badly needs even though it meant cheapening the whole initiative.

Browsing through the list, I can't help but be disappointed again because the people who actually did excellent jobs were made to sit besides names and personalities who were as mediocre as they can get.

If an award can be bought or paid for, if an award becomes nothing more but a memento, or a gold star for not doing anything, is it really worth awarding or receiving it? Have we become a society that needed validation so badly that we can just award it to anyone even if they don't deserve it? If any Pontius Pilate can buy themselves an award and award-giving bodies just give it like cheap peanuts, what does that say about our society?



Oman Skate hunts down Sultanate's best skaters

BY TITASH CHAKRABORTY

On Friday, November 5, the best skaters in the Sultanate of Oman will gather at the Oman Skate arena in Wadi Kabir to compete for Oman's Best Trick Contest.

The first-ever skatepark in the country, which has also gone through pandemic challenges, is expecting to double the number of participants in this year's edition. The massive renovations in the last six months was a great way to ready the ground for the participants.

Talking to Hytham al Wahaibi, the owner and founder of Oman Skate, he is proud of the renovations they made and had transformed the park 2x better than it was before.

The event on Friday, November 5 will see numerous participants doing different tricks with only the best performers taking home some of the special awards they prepared.

"During our first-anniversary celebration, we have about 40 skaters who joined the event. In year 2, we grew to 70 skaters, we're hoping to double that in Friday's contest", he said.

Asked what kind of tricks they were hoping to see, Hytham said that the Sultanate of Oman's skaters are some of the most innovative in the world. With many of the tricks accessible via videos on YouTube or social media, he is excited to be blown away by different performances.

"We've seen some really cool tricks performed in the park since we opened it. We are excited to see what kinds of tricks the participants will perform this year", he said.

For those who are new to the sport, Hytham shared these tricks are some of the cooler ones

you can check out:

OLLIE — This is the first basic trick you usually learn and it will take you to other tricks. Simply described, it's "a jump with your skateboard."

BOARDSLIDE — Aka Railside. This involves sliding on the centre of the board between the trucks facing forward. Older skateboards had plastic rails on both sides between the wheels, so you use them to slide on the rails or do a rail slide. We use boardslide now as the skateboards slides are on the board now.

THE 5-0 — This is half of a 50-50 where the back truck grinds the edge. The tail can be in contact with the edge. For really good 5-0's, you balance on the truck.

HEELFLIP — This involves using your heel to flip the board to the toe side while doing an ollie. This trick will come easy if you have mastered the kickflip.

FRONTSIDE 180 KICKFLIP — This is a mix between a Frontside 180 Ollie and a Kickflip. Both tricks are needed as a foundation and you should have them on lock before you try to go for an FS Flip. Once on lock, this trick is not only stylish by itself but also a good flip to combine with grinds. You see, it's getting more ambitious!

Wanna take it up a notch? Any trick can be done with an extra spin or flip and can be done with the opposite foot. This can easily make it go from a medium trick to a hard one or from hard to an extremely hard one.

The Skate Park Journey

If you plan on learning to skateboard in The Sultanate of Oman, then now is a perfect time! Today, anyone who wants to start skating can easily buy a quality skateboard from the local skate shop and then go to the local skatepark to meet other skaters and even take lessons to learn how to skate!

It wasn't always this easy though, as before the opening of the skatepark and skate shop in March 2018, people who wanted a quality skateboard would have to order one online or go all the way to Dubai to buy it and it was the same if they wanted to use a skatepark or to take skate lessons. All these things were non-existent in the Sultanate of Oman so it made it extremely hard to get into the sport in the country.

Today, three years after opening the skatepark and skate shop, people no longer struggle to get into the sport as they can find the skateboard, the place to use it and someone who teaches it... all in one place.

The young (and old) of the Sultanate of Oman are now offered a safe space to do what they are most passionate about. From those with experience, they learn not only how to ride a board but on how to do proper skating techniques limiting injuries and ensuring that they have a clean, enjoyable sport with amenities that allow them to display and practice tricks.

This combined with the growing popularity of skateboarding in social media has caused the skateboarding scene in the Sultanate of Oman to rapidly grow to more than 10x its size before 2018 and we expect this growth to just keep building up more and more as the popularity of the sport spreads especially now that skateboarding got recently recognized as an official sport at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The Sultanate of Oman would have never been able to form a team and compete before 2018 as it lacked everything, now it got a skate shop, a skatepark and skate coaches that might produce the Sultanate of Oman's next Olympic skate team.

Follow Oman Skate for updates and information about their space and upcoming events on Facebook and Instagram @Omanskate



OLLIE



THE 5-0



FRONTSIDE 180 KICKFLIP



HEELFLIP

BOARDSLIDE