

Charters are back in Salalah after 2 years

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PAKISTAN BEAT INDIA IN A WC MATCH FOR THE FIRST TIME



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GAS PRICE SPIKE UNLIKELY TO BE SUSTAINED: CEO



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MUSCAT

OMAN ATTENDS MGI SUMMIT IN SAUDI

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, left for Riyadh to lead the Sultanate of Oman delegation at the launch of the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), scheduled to be held on Monday. The summit will bring together prominent regional and international leaders with the aim of enhancing cooperation and rallying efforts towards implementing the common environmental commitments. The MGI initiative aims at combating climate change in the Middle East and promoting investment, as well as transferring knowledge to face relevant challenges. — ONA

NEW ARBITRATION CENTRE HQ OPENS

The new headquarters of Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre (OAC) was inaugurated on Sunday at a ceremony held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal affairs, in the presence of Prince Dr Bandar bin Salman al Saud, Honorary Chairman of the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre, and Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). On this occasion, Al Saleh stated: “OAC provides some services related to arbitration, mediation and conciliation to settle domestic and international commercial disputes, in addition to other alternative dispute resolution means agreed upon by the disputing parties.” **DETAILS ON P2**

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Second list of government-subsidised jobs announced

MUSCAT: In implementation to Royal directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to expedite the implementation of the employment initiatives including that for supporting the wages the new entrants to the labour market among Omanis, the Ministry of Labour announced 332 job opportunities in the private sector allocated to job-seekers who have never been employed.

VACANCIES
The new job vacancies include 243 jobs for college graduates, 18 jobs for higher diploma holders, 37 jobs for holders of the above-GED, 4 for vocational diploma holders and 30 for GED holders.

The move is aimed to support and encourage the private sector establishments to employ Omani job-seekers and also within the framework of the ministry’s constant efforts to supply the labour market with national competencies.

This is the second advertisement for job opportunities provided by the private sector which had registered to benefit from the initiative for supporting wages of Omanis directed by His Majesty and targets the new entrants to the labour market.

As per the initiative, the government will subsidise the salaries of Omani employees by RO 200 for two years, while the employer pays the difference of the agreed salary provided that the employment period is not less than four years. — ONA

AIR FRANCE FLIGHT ARRIVES IN MUSCAT AFTER 27 YEARS



Muscat International Airport received the first flight of Air France from Paris on Sunday, which started the direct air route between the two capitals. “Air France will operate three flights a week from Charles de Gaulle Airport in the French capital, Paris, to Muscat International Airport on Sunday,” the official statement said. The Paris-Muscat route was last operated in 1994 using the Airbus A310. The flight will utilise a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner three times a week on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. **DETAILS ON P13**

RO 154 million surplus in revenues

SAMUEL KUTTY
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For the first time in 2021, on the back of increase in crude prices, the Sultanate of Oman has achieved surplus revenues of RO 154.1 million in August.

The surplus comes with the rise in oil prices, as the average price of Oman crude per barrel for August reached \$71.7, bringing oil revenues to more than 83 per cent from RO 365 million in July to RO 670 million in August.

With this surplus revenue, the Sultanate of Oman’s budget deficit dropped to RO 1.051 billion in the first eight months of the current year from RO 1.957 billion during the corresponding period of 2020.



According to figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, total public spending, by the end of August, stood at RO 7.382 billion, which is 1.7 per cent less compared with RO 7.511 billion during the same period in 2020.

The total revenue during the eight month period from January

to September registered a rise of 13.95 per cent thanks to the surge in oil and gas revenues. Total revenues rose to RO 6.330 billion during the period against RO 5.554 billion registered during the same period of 2020.

According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), the economy is set to recover in 2021, with non-hydrocarbon GDP growth of 1.5 per cent as vaccine roll-out gradually restores domestic activity along with the recovery of external demand.

In the beginning of this month, the Ministry of Finance revealed in its monthly bulletin that oil revenue amounted to RO 3.309 billion while gas revenue reached RO 1.231 billion during the period. **TURN TO P5**

Identity card mandatory for everyone above 10 years

VINOD NAIR
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The civil identity card and the resident card is mandatory for all citizens and residents aged 10 years and above.

Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, issued a decision on Sunday, amending the executive regulations of the Civil Status Law.

The decision states that the identity card will be issued within 30 days of the person attaining the age of 10 years (for Omanis as well as residents).

If the resident (above 10 years) is coming from outside the Sultanate, he/she will have to get the card within 30 days of the date of entering the country.

For children below 10 years of age, the card will be issued to both residents and Omanis as per the regulations set by the director-general.

The decision No 235/2021 amends some provisions of

The Civil ID will be valid for five years, while the Resident Card will be for a period not exceeding three years

LT GEN HASAN BIN MOHSIN AL SHRAIQI
Inspector General of Police and Customs

the executive regulations of the Civil Status Law issued by Royal Decree No 66/99 and to the Executive Regulations of the Civil Status Law issued by Resolution No 40/2007.

This decision shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall take effect from the day following the date of its publication. **TURN TO P5**

Reaching climate deal will be tough, says COP26 chief

LONDON: Securing a global climate deal in Glasgow will be “really tough,” warned Britain’s Alok Sharma, president of this year’s United Nations COP26 conference. He said sealing any agreement to reduce emissions with be harder “on lots of levels” than signing the Paris Agreement of 2015. Countries are under pressure to increase their greenhouse gas emission cuts as the world is far

off track to meet globally agreed targets to limit temperature rises and curb dangerous warming.

The COP26 summit, which starts in Glasgow, Scotland on October 31, is the effective deadline for countries to bring forward more ambitious national climate plans in a five-year process under the Paris climate treaty.

Sharma told *The Guardian* newspaper in an interview: “What



we’re trying to do here in Glasgow is actually really tough. It was brilliant, what they did in Paris, it was a framework agreement, (but) a lot of the detailed rules were left for the future.”

“This is definitely harder than Paris on lots of levels” but added: “What we have going for us is that there is an understanding that we need to deal with this (climate crisis).” — dpa



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Sultanate, Senegal explore ways to enhance economic cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, received in his office here on Sunday Amadou Hott, Minister of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation of Senegal.

The two sides discussed prospects for boosting economic cooperation and means of promoting bilateral relations to serve the common interests between the two countries.

The Senegalese minister affirmed his country's interest in supporting cooperation between the two sides, which would contribute to enhancing the economic growth of the two countries, particularly in light of the developments of the global economy.

Also on Sunday, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, received Amadou Hott.

The meeting reviewed aspects of the bilateral relations. It also explored cooperation opportunities in the fields of economy, investment and trade exchange. — ONA

New headquarters of Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre opens

THE CENTRE PROVIDES ARBITRATION, MEDIATION AND CONCILIATION SERVICES

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

The new headquarters of Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre (OAC) was inaugurated on Sunday at a ceremony held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, in the presence of Prince Dr Bandar bin Salman al Saud, Honorary Chairman of the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre, and Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Board Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

On this occasion, Al Saleh stated: "OAC provides some services related to arbitration, mediation and conciliation to settle domestic and international commercial disputes, in addition to other alternative dispute resolution means agreed upon by the disputing parties. The vision of the centre is to be a trusted choice for settling disputes using alternative means according to the best international standards and practices by embracing the values of integrity, impartiality, independence, governance, transparency, professionalism, speed and efficiency."

"The centre, which was established by virtue of Royal Decree No 26/2018, goes in line with Oman Vision 2040 directions. It supports the legislative environment and is considered to be a main pillar for encouraging investments and attracting capital to the Sultanate," he added.

"We hope and strive to turn OAC into a beacon for boosting the trust of investors and businesspeople in the commerce and investment sector in the Sultanate. We expect that the



centre will work hand in hand with other governmental institutions to attract more investments, as well as domestic, regional and international capital. This in turn will contribute to achieving the desired economic, social and human growth in the Sultanate. Furthermore, it will support the outstanding legislative and investment environment in the Sultanate," Al Saleh explained.

The Board Chairman of OCCI clarified that the Chamber has strived to establish this administratively and financially independent entity as soon as possible and to provide it with unlimited support to carry out its work and services. Immediately after the Royal Decree was issued, OCCI formed the founding committee of the centre at the chamber to complete the establishment of the centre. These efforts were culminated with the issuance of the OAC work system by virtue of decision number 37/2019. After that, the first directors of OAC board were appointed.

Hamad bin Mohamed al Sharji, Board Chairman of OAC, said: "The Sultanate recognises the

importance of arbitration and other alternative means for settling disputes particularly in the field of international trade. OAC attempts to mitigate the burdens suffered by our judicial authorities and seeks to streamline the arbitration procedures in the Sultanate."

"Oman Arbitration Centre has achieved a tangible progress during the past two years by issuing the work system of the centre. The rules of arbitration, mediation and conciliation were also developed, approved and published, in addition to the regulations and international decisions of OAC", he added.

"Arbitration is important because it is a factor for attracting foreign investments across borders and continents. It also contributes in boosting the economic system," Al Sharji explained.

Arbitration also provides the entities that invest in the Sultanate with guarantees that are consistent with their orientations. International organisations have always requested adopting arbitration procedures because they save time and efforts, in addition to protecting capital and investments.

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Former UN Habitat III official received

MUSCAT: Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, received in his office here on Sunday Dr Joan Clos, former Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), within the framework of his visit to the Sultanate.

The meeting reviewed the Sultanate's experience in the fields of housing and the sustainable urban development, besides exchanging relevant expertise and knowledge.

Dr Clos will give a lecture on "Transformation into Attractive



Cities for Living" at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).
The visit aims at enhancing the

global communication of Oman in the fields of housing and urban planning. — ONA



Changes to residency, multiple entry visa rules for foreign investors

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The Inspector-General of Police and Customs has issued a decision 234/2021 amending some provisions of the Executive Regulations of the Foreigners Residence Law.

As per the decision, the investor visa is granted to a foreigner who wishes to invest his money in the country, based on an approval issued by the competent authority.

A Residency visa will be granted to the foreigner's spouse investing in the Sultanate and his first-degree relatives upon his request and under his responsibility, in accordance with the controls set by the competent authority.

The competent authority may convert the visas stipulated in this article to any type of visa followed by residency if its conditions are met and in accordance with the regulations set by the competent authority and after payment of the prescribed fees.

The decision states that those who obtain an investor and the residency visa, in accordance with the regulations set by the

director-general, are excluded from the age requirement.

The residency of a foreigner who owns a real estate unit in a complex shall expire if he decides to dispose of that unit or legally transfer the ownership.

Accordingly, the residency of his wife, children and relatives accompanying the investor will also be terminated automatically.

THE FEES:

Investor's visa for ten years - RO 500 (every 3 years)

Investor's visa for five years RO 300 (every 3 years).

A new paragraph is to be added to Clause (5) "Multiple Trip Visa" of Article (10) of the Regulations.

The Multiple visit visa will be granted to the wife and the children of the investor, which will be valid for a period not exceeding one year, subject to extension of a similar period based on the approval of the competent authority. The visa holder can reside in the country for a period not exceeding three months each time.

The visit or entry visa for ten years - RO 100 (every 3 years)

The visit or entry visa for five years - RO 50 (every 3 years).



RAO RECEIVES NEW BATCH OF YOUTHS

MUSCAT: In implementation of the Royal directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to expedite the employment of Omani job-seekers, and in continuation to the national efforts by the Sultan's Armed Forces to open the door for citizens to join the military service, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, on Saturday received a new batch of citizens amidst precautionary measures against Covid-19.

Having passed the

evaluation stage, medical fitness tests and personal interviews, the new recruits will undergo the basic military programme which qualifies them to join various units of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO).

The Royal Army of Oman has employed its capacities, experiences, specialised manpower, administrative requirements and means of transport to ensure seamless implementation of the required procedures for joining the military service. — ONA



New ROP recruits join training institute



MUSCAT: A new batch of citizens has joined the Institute of Police Recruits at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences after passing evaluation tests, interviews and medical fitness examinations, to join the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The new batch comprises holders of the general education diploma (GED) and holders of post-GED qualifications in mechanics, electrical engineering, chemical engineering, accountancy, finance, human resources, networks and

telecommunications engineering, electronics, IT technology, among others. ROP, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, continues to conduct evaluation procedures for national holders of GED who are willing to join the police services. The fundamental

training programme for the new police affiliates includes military training as well as knowledge and sciences, law and police sciences and mental and physical training that enables them to perform their police duties and tasks.

— ONA

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Charters are back in Salalah almost after two years

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

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Charters are back in Salalah almost after a gap of two years. The first charter that landed in Salalah after Covid-19 took the world into its grip was from Slovakia on October 16. The hospitality and tour operators were the happiest to receive the first lot of 174 charter tourists at the Salalah Airport.

Since then, one charter has been coming every week from Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Mohammed Abdul Hakeem, Head of Operation Meeting Point, called it a moment of joy to see the tourists coming back to Salalah. The charter operation, according to him, is picking up slowly, with bookings done on a weekly basis.

Earlier, it was a different scenario. People had to plan at least six months in advance to get a slot in Salalah-bound charters.

"Still we are happy that from October 16 onwards charter tourists are coming from Slovakia and Czech Republic. Some 600-700 tourists have checked in, as we are expecting more during the season, which has just started," said Abdul Hakeem.

Both the hotels and tour



operators are expecting a boost in the charter movement this season due to successful Covid-19

vaccination globally and a very good vaccination percentage in the target group in Oman.

Meeting Point, which is doing ground handling agent of the charter operations, is taking care

We are happy that from October 16 onwards charter tourists are coming from Slovakia and Czech Republic. Some 600-700 tourists have checked in, as we are expecting more during the season

ABDUL HAKEEM

Head of Operation Meeting Point

of all the pandemic protocols along with hotel partners.

Charters from Poland and France were the charters last seen in Salalah during the pre-pandemic days in the month of February 2020. They were the latest additions to the Salalah charter system besides regulars from Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Italy.

Soon after the pandemic announcement in early 2020, the

charter operation had to stop mid-way, and many guests had to reschedule arrival and departures.

Salalah has always been popular among European tourists due to its weather during the winter season. Tourists love to head to Salalah to beat the harsh winter in their countries.

More than 40,000 tourists stated to have arrived in Salalah during the 2019-2020 season. Operators had to wind up the 2020-2021 season in a huff due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The arrival of charters from Slovakia and the Czech Republic in the 2021-22 season has given the hospitality industry some hope of "something is better than nothing", and they expect it to stabilise gradually.

A report published in the *Observer* suggested the arrival of 108 charters in the 2016-2017 season. They brought more than 28,000 tourists from Germany, Italy, Slovakia and Czech Republic. This is besides many other individual tourists from the same destinations, who decided to take their own flights and make independent tour schedules but depended on the tour operators' ground services.



A dark resin secreted from Aquilaria trees carries immense fragrance when a fungus called phialophora infects them. This is used in many perfumes today. Many perfumes are composed of oud wood, also called ‘agarwood’, ‘oudh’, ‘aloe’ wood, ‘jinko’ or ‘gaharu’ and others, and the price sometimes hits millions

Woody fragrance

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousuf

Can chipped wood pieces and chiselled waste wood be used to make the best perfumes?

Surprisingly, many perfumes we wear regularly are made of these wooden bits and pieces, which otherwise are considered useless by many.

It has been found that a dark resin secreted from the trees called Aquilaria carries immense fragrance when a fungus called phialophora infects them. This is used in many perfumes today.

Today, many perfumes are composed of oud wood, also called ‘agarwood’, ‘oudh’, ‘aloe’ wood, ‘jinko’ or ‘gaharu’ and others, and the price sometimes hits millions.

“There are 23 types of Aquilaria situated in South East Asia. The trees produce oil for protection when attacked by a certain fungus, and that is the oil. It is not the disease but the medicine. One drop of oud in a big mug of coffee is good for health, but it must be pure oud without any chemical or additions”, says Talal al Amri, an Omani perfumer.

As for the Sultanate, the chips of the fragrant dark resinous wood are important as the country has many ladies specialised in making bukhoor as a village industry and SME. They are sold in “Thola” just like the oud oil.

“Wood notes have always held an important place in the perfumer’s palette, who will often count on this broad olfactory family to create the heart or base of his or her fragrance”, says Olaf Larsen, senior perfumer and the brain behind the Eurofragrance concept which created their first captive named Lame du Bois with an innovative raw material that is a breakthrough addition to the family of ingredients.

A wood found in the forests of South East Asia became a luxurious necessity for perfumes and became part of an ancient culture that continues its status till today. But what is fascinating is that this fragrance is formed as

a result of the Agarwood fighting a mould infection. If the tree is not infected, it will be pale in colour and will lack odour.

At a conference held over the olfactive ingredients of woods, he told the *Observer* that this new perfumery ingredient is significant for the perfume lovers of the world in three respects.

“Firstly, it fills an interesting gap in the woody notes, olfactive family, by providing a high impact composition that harmonises with other ingredients in the fragrance formula and highlights their individual characteristics.”

Secondly, it is made from wood waste that has been naturally upcycled into a precious raw material. And finally, this new ingredient has a genderless olfactive profile that makes it of particular interest for today’s consumers of high-end fragrance experiences.

According to Joseph Thomas, a perfume quality specialist, woods are not only an ingredient of the best perfumes in the world but are used as medicine for its healthcare properties.

“We honoured nature by creating a new olfactive expression for wood that provides the building blocks for future fragrance creations. The name associated with woods for perfumes is prestigious, and it should be preserved for all premium product categories, be it fine fragrance, home or personal care”, says Felipe San Juan Tejada, Research and Development Scientist, who led the joint team of Perfumers and R&D experts for three years on this project.

These premium perfumes that are made out of simple saw dust and chips and pieces of woods by employing the art of recycling, are today decorating the closets of many perfume lovers across the world and help the people who are in love with life to unleash a statement of their own with their presence.



Identity card must for everyone above 10 years

FROM P1

Article (1) states that amendments will be made to the first paragraphs of Articles (19), (20), (and 21) of the Executive Regulations.

The first paragraph of Article (19) states that the Civil ID and resident cards shall be issued within 30 days from the date of the person attaining the age of 10 years for Omanis and residents, and from the date of entry of the resident to the Sultanate if his age is more than 10 years.

The card will be issued to those under the age of 10 years as per the regulations set by the Director-General.

Article 20 states that to obtain the card, the presence of the individual concerned is required, and exception will be made in special cases. To get a Civil ID, the individual must submit original birth certificate, original ID card of the parents, the letter of the competent authority for the person who has acquired Omani nationality. For resident cards,

original passport, a notification from the competent authority, and in case of renewal of the resident card, both the documents shall be attached with the original expired card. In all cases, the card will be issued in the official dress for Omanis, and appropriate clothing for foreigners as per the rules set by the director-general.

The Civil ID will be valid for five years, while the Resident Card will be for a period not exceeding three years, from the date of issuance or renewal.

The owner of the card will have to renew it within 30 days from the date of its expiry.

The fee structure is as follows:

New Civil Card: RO 5; Civil ID renewal: RO 5; Replacement of a damaged or lost Civil ID card: RO 10; New Resident Card: RO 5 (for each year); Resident Card renewal RO 5 (for each year); Damaged or lost Resident Card: RO 20 and the failure to get a Civil ID/Resident card within the specified deadline — RO 5 fine for each month.

Sultanate sees RO 154m surplus in revenues

FROM P1

“Oil production is projected to increase after the current Opec+ agreement expires in April 2022”, the IMF said in a report.

Data from the NCSI shows that the Sultanate’s oil

production reached 232,942,500 barrels till the end of August 2021, compared to 233,575,200 barrels till the end of August 2020.

Global rating agency Moody’s in its estimates in the second week of this month said that

higher oil prices will account for around half of the expected reduction in the fiscal deficit to less than 2 per cent of GDP in 2021 from 18 per cent of GDP in 2020.

During the last one year, the Sultanate of Oman has adopted

a number of fiscal measures to support the economy including interest-free emergency loans, tax and fee reductions and waivers, the flexibility to pay taxes in instalments and a Job Security Fund to support citizens who lost their jobs.

Military officials prepare for GCC meeting

MUSCAT: A meeting of the Preparatory Committee of Assistant Chiefs of Staff for Operations and Training was held on Sunday in preparation for the meeting of the Supreme Military Committee of GCC Chiefs of Staff.

The two-day meeting, to be held via video-conferencing, will be participated by Brigadier Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Manthri, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, other GCC



Assistant Chiefs of Staff and Maj Gen Ahmed bin Ali al Ali, GCC Assistant Secretary General for Military Affairs.

The meeting will discuss a spectrum of topics in the fields of military cooperation between GCC countries. Those

topics will be submitted at the upcoming meeting of the Supreme Committee of GCC Chiefs of Staff. — ONA

Balqees al Hassani featured among 100 successful Omani women

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 24

Balqees bint Sulieman al Hassani, president of the leading community knowledge sharing platform, Knowledge Oman, and head of Well-being at a leading private school in the country, Al Sahwa School, has been featured in an international book that highlights 100 of the leading women who have contributed to the development of the Sultanate of Oman. A book launch event is scheduled to take place at the Al Bustan Palace, Ritz Carlton Hotel, on November 3.

“I am thrilled and honoured

to be recognised internationally for the kind of work we do for the benefit of the community and the school. I attribute this success to the Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, for supporting women development and success in the Sultanate of Oman”, said Balqees.

Amidst the pandemic crises, Knowledge Oman has launched a series of webinars, under Balqees’ direct leadership, that aimed at enriching society with knowledge, enhancing skills and raising awareness on different aspects of personal and professional life. The platform allowed students and



faculty members from both the private and public sector to attend the sessions for free.

“We wanted to ensure that free educational sessions in the form of webinars from international experts

Amidst the pandemic crises, Knowledge Oman has launched a series of webinars, under Balqees’ direct leadership, that aimed at enriching society with knowledge, enhancing skills

were available for students, faculty members and their parents via our Knowledge Oman platforms”, said Balqees. The webinar series were open free for public and were broadcast bi-weekly via platforms

managed by Knowledge Oman team. The webinars were launched in support of the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik towards Oman’s Vision 2040 on building knowledge and upskilling the nation.

“Balqees’ activities, engagements and great determination at transforming Sultanate of Oman into a knowledge-based society is perfectly fit and in line of the goal of this book especially for motivating women to excel and prosper to success. We are honoured to have selected Balqees among the 100 successful Omani women”, noted Kathleen Nejad, author of the book.

This book, which will be available during the exclusive event at Al Bustan Palace, will reveal the stories of 100 empowering Omani women, their experiences, thoughts and inspiration in the form of challenges they have faced, success that they have enjoyed throughout the course of their lives, and the contribution towards the development of economy.

“We hope to empower other women worldwide by sharing personal knowledge, experience and thoughts of the Omani women that are making difference in society” added Kathleen.



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570/2021/ MOH/ DGRHP-27	SUPPLY OF STATIONARY ITEMS FOR THE ROYAL HOSPITAL	04/11/2021	BEFORE 9 AM ON TUESDAY 07/12/2021	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
571/2021/ MOH/ DGRHP-28	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF WASHER DISINFECTOR	04/11/2021	BEFORE 9 AM ON TUESDAY 07/12/2021	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS

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560 foreign firms operate in Al Wusta

HAIMA: Abdoon bin Mohammed al Harsoosi, Director of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in the Governorate of Al Wusta, said that 560 foreign companies were operating in the governorate by the end of September 2021, with their capital investments totalling RO 1.3 billion. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Harsoosi said that the governorate seeks to benefit from the Industrial Strategy, which will propel economic growth through economic diversification, notably by activating converting industries, introducing technology and knowledge, developing smart products and expanding the geographical circulation of converting industrial products to cover new regional and international markets. The Industrial Strategy keeps pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and aims to upgrade the level of technology used in industrialisation, said Al Harsoosi, adding that the number of industrial licences registered in Al Wusta during the first nine months of 2021 stood at 177. — ONA



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Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/20/074	2021/MM/ QS-18	Supply of LED Street Light (E-Tender)	Rial 25	18/11/2021	02/12/2021	Excellent
PRE/21/079	2021/MM/ QS-19	Supply and Install of Thermoplastic Pre - Heater with Gas Fired Heating System (E-Tender)	Rial 25	18/11/2021	02/12/2021	Specialized

Tender Conditions:-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the Tender Bond Box (B) for E-Tendering in the First floor at Muscat Municipality HQ, Darsait before **10:00 am** as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

Critics say says
expulsions a
distraction from
economy woes

ISTANBUL: President Tayyip Erdogan's political opponents said his call to expel the ambassadors of 10 Western allies was an attempt to distract attention from Turkey's economic difficulties, while diplomats hoped the expulsions might yet be averted.

On Saturday Erdogan said he ordered the envoys be declared 'persona non grata' for seeking philanthropist Osman Kavala's release from prison. The foreign ministry has not yet carried out the president's instruction, which would open the deepest rift with the West in Erdogan's 19 years in power.

The diplomatic crisis coincides with investor worries about the Turkish lira's fall to a record low after the central bank, under pressure from Erdogan to stimulate the economy, unexpectedly slashed interest rates by 200 points last week.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the main opposition CHP, said Erdogan was "rapidly dragging the country to a precipice".

"The reason for these moves is not to protect national interests but to create artificial reasons for the ruining of the economy," he said on Twitter.

Kavala, a contributor to numerous civil society groups, has been in prison



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan

for four years, charged with financing nationwide protests in 2013 and with involvement in a failed coup in 2016. He denies the charges and has remained in detention while his trial continues. "We've seen this film before. Return at once to our real agenda and the fundamental problem of this country, the economic crisis," said opposition IYI Party deputy leader Yavuz Agiralioğlu.

Erdogan said the envoys were impudent and had no right to demand Kavala's release, stressing that the Turkish judiciary was independent. Sinan Ulgen, chairman of Istanbul-based think tank Edam and a former Turkish diplomat, said Erdogan's timing was incongruous as Turkey was seeking to recalibrate its foreign policy away from episodes of tension in recent years. — Reuters

Sudan pro-civilian rule faction
warns of 'creeping coup'

US ENVOY MEETS LEADERS TO REAFFIRM SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY



Demonstrators protest against prospect of military rule in Khartoum, Sudan. — Reuters

KHARTOUM: A Sudanese faction calling for a transfer of power to civilian rule warned of a "creeping coup", during a press conference that an unidentified mob attack sought to prevent.

Sudan has been undergoing a precarious transition marred by political divisions and power struggles since the April 2019 ouster of president Omar al Bashir.

Since August 2019, the country has been led by civilian-military administration tasked with overseeing the transition to full civilian rule. The main civilian bloc — the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) — which led anti-Bashir protests, has splintered into two opposing factions.

"The crisis at hand is engineered — and is in the shape of a creeping coup," mainstream FFC leader Yasser Arman, said in a press conference in Khartoum.

"We renew our confidence in the government, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, and reforming transitional institutions — but without dictations or imposition," Arman added. The press conference at the official Suna news agency premises was delayed when a crowd of protesters tried to stop it going ahead.

The FFC's mainstream faction backs a transition to civilian rule, but supporters of the breakaway faction have ratcheted up calls for "military rule".

Last Thursday, tens of thousands of protesters rallied across Sudan to counter a week-long encampment supporting pro-military rule in central Khartoum.

Critics have charged that the rival sit-in has been orchestrated by senior figures in the security forces, Bashir sympathisers and other "counter-revolutionaries".

Tensions between the two sides have long simmered, but divisions ratcheted up after a failed coup on September 21.

Hamdok has previously described the splits as the "worst and most dangerous crisis" facing the transition.

On Saturday, Hamdok denied rumours he had agreed to a

cabinet reshuffle, calling them "not accurate".

The premier also "emphasised that he does not monopolise the right to decide the fate of transitional institutions."

Also on Saturday, US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman met jointly with Hamdok, the chairman of Sudan's ruling body general Abdel Fattah al Burhan, and paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

"Feltman emphasised US support for a civilian democratic transition in accordance with the expressed wishes of Sudan's people," the US embassy in Khartoum said. — Agencies

Under Israel's blockade, Gaza's fishermen struggle for a catch

GAZA CITY: Crashing through the Mediterranean's waves at sunset, Palestinian fisherman Mohammed al Nahal leads a convoy of rickety boats out for another risky night under the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Forced to stay close to shore due to Israeli restrictions on powerful engines, the men complain they must seek a catch from overfished shallow waters with declining stocks.

"If we catch 200 kilos of sardines, that would be great," Nahal says. "But we can also come back empty-handed."

High prices of fuel in the enclave means that fishing operating costs are crippling, making them stay closer inshore.

"The further we go, the more we pay for fuel without guarantees about the catch," Nahal says, leading a line of five boats, the air heavy with the stench of diesel and sardines.

For Gaza, fenced in from three sides by Israel since Hamas took power in 2007, the open sea seems to offer the promise of freedom — but it is deceptive. Israel's navy fully controls the waters off Gaza's 40 km-long coastline, and regularly



Palestinian fishermen unload their catch off the coastline of Gaza City. — AFP

restricts or expands the size of the fishing zone in response to security conditions.

After months of relative calm following an 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas in May, the permitted fishing zone was expanded last month to 15 nautical miles, its maximum under the blockade, including deep water with richer fish stocks.

But Nahal's crew does not venture that far. Six miles is their outer limit, good for sardines, but too close to shore for the bigger value fish such as tuna.

"We fishermen do not have

appropriate engines to reach a distance of 15 miles," Nahal says. "Currently, we are not allowed to enter Gaza with these modern engines."

Some Palestinian fishermen are also fearful of heading out too far to sea. In the past, Israeli gunboats have opened fire and damaged nets to enforce access restrictions.

Making a living requires resourcefulness, and Nahal has repurposed a car engine to power the boat and run the powerful lights — which the fishermen shine into the night waters to attract the sardines. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TELAVIV

Israel to build new 1,300 W Bank settler homes

Israel plans to build more residences for Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, a government ministry said on Sunday, adding to those announced in August by the new ruling coalition.

"Tenders for 1,355 homes in Judea and Samaria have been published," a construction ministry statement said, referencing the biblical names used widely in Israel for the West Bank. The new accommodation adds to the more than 2,000



residences which defence sources said in August would be authorised for settlers in the West Bank. Final approval is expected from the defence ministry this week for those homes.

RIYADH

Coalition says killed over 260 Yemen fighters

The coalition fighting in Yemen said on Sunday it had killed more than 260 Ansar Allah fighters in the past three days near the strategic city of Marib.

The deaths are the latest among hundreds that the coalition claims have been killed in recent fighting around the internationally recognised government's last bastion in oil-rich northern Yemen.

But the group rarely comment on losses and AFP could not independently verify the toll.



"Thirty-six military vehicles were destroyed and more than 264" fighters were killed in strikes in the past 72 hours, the coalition said, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency.

TEHRAN

Iran's leader pardons, commutes sentences

Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei has granted pardons or commuted the sentences of more than 3,450 prisoners, his website reported.

Khamenei "has approved... pardons and sentence reductions for 3,458 people convicted" by various Iranian courts, a statement said. The measure, at the suggestion of the head of the judiciary, coincides with the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birthday, and that of Imam Sadeq, one of



the most holy figures in history. Iran's supreme leader routinely grants collective pardons on major religious holidays, in coordination with the head of the judiciary.

In brief

NEW DELHI



INDIA'S MODI TO JOIN GLASGOW CLIMATE SUMMIT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending the COP26 climate change summit in Scotland, the Ministry of External Affairs confirmed on Sunday. Modi's presence will provide a boost for the summit that starts on October 31.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will not be attending and Chinese President Li Jinping is also unlikely to be present.

China, the US, India and Russia are the world's largest emitters of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

US President Joe Biden will be attending the leaders segment scheduled on November 1 and 2.

COLOMBO



SRI LANKA BANS CONTAMINATED FERTILISER

Sri Lanka has barred a Chinese ship carrying desperately needed organic fertiliser that experts have found to be tainted with harmful bacteria, officials said on Sunday.

The action comes as Sri Lanka battles food shortages caused by a currency crisis while farmers have said a government ban on chemical fertiliser could ruin their crops this year.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said the National Plant Quarantine Services had tested a sample from the unnamed Chinese vessel and "confirmed the presence of organisms, including certain types of harmful bacteria".

SEOUL



US ENVOY URGES NORTH KOREA TO ACCEPT OFFER OF TALKS

North Korea's recent ballistic missile tests were "concerning and counterproductive" for efforts to reduce tensions, and Pyongyang should instead engage in talks, the US envoy for North Korea said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with his South Korean counterpart in Seoul, Special Representative Sung Kim said the United States is committed to exploring "sustained and substantive diplomacy" with North Korea.

"Our goal remains the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula," Kim said.

— Agencies

China warns of spread in latest Covid-19 flare-up



Children leave a school in Shekou area of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China. — Reuters file photo

76% of population have received complete doses of vaccines

BEIJING: China's latest Covid-19 outbreak is increasingly likely to spread further, a health official said on Sunday, as authorities urged all regions to step up monitoring and called for a reduction in travel across provinces.

China has largely contained the virus but it is determined to stamp out any sporadic local outbreaks, particularly in the run-up to the 2022 Winter Olympics in February.

More than 100 locally transmitted cases have been confirmed over the last week across 11 provincial areas, with most linked to 13 different tour groups.

There is increasing risk that the outbreak might spread further, helped by "seasonal factors", Mi Feng, spokesman at the National Health Commission, told reporters on Sunday.

The Delta variant causing the outbreak is also highly transmissible, said Commission Deputy Director Wu Liangyou, adding that sequencing showed it to be different from the source of

an earlier outbreak, and suggesting that the new cases came from a new source from abroad.

Authorities have banned travel agencies from arranging cross-provincial tours that involve regions deemed of higher virus risk, and has imposed nationwide suspension on some travel services linking multiple tourist attractions.

The capital Beijing has said it will impose strict restriction on travels to the city by people who have been to counties with at least one infection.

Health authorities also said on Sunday that about 75.6 per cent of China's population had received complete vaccine doses as of October 23, or some 1.068 billion people.

China is giving booster shots to adults whose last dose was at least six months earlier, with priority groups including essential workers, older people and those with weaker immune systems. Data showed antibodies elicited by vaccines, including the most-used shots from Sinovac and Sinopharm, declined within months.

Wang Huaqing, chief expert for the immunisation programme at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said China would not keep giving people booster shots indefinitely.

"Even if it needs to be

strengthened later, the number of boosters is limited", Wang told the briefing. "We hope in the future there will be better vaccines and better vaccination procedures to achieve solid protection among the public."

Meanwhile, the Wuhan Marathon, which had been due to take place on Sunday, has been postponed at short notice as worries increase over a coronavirus resurgence in china ahead of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

China reported 26 new domestic Covid-19 cases on Sunday, in an outbreak that has become the latest test of the country's zero-tolerance approach with just over 100 days until the start of the Games.

Authorities have been racing to contain virus infections via mass testing of residents and targeted lockdowns.

But with the rise in cases, organisers of the Wuhan Marathon said in a statement released late last week that they would postpone Sunday's event in the central Chinese city "to prevent the risk of epidemic spread". The marathon was expected to have 26,000 participants taking part in races including full and half marathons in the city where coronavirus was first identified towards the end of 2019. — Agencies

Pakistan considers expulsion of envoy to halt march

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's radical party on Sunday agreed to suspend its days-long march towards the capital after the government offered assurances it would consider the expulsion of the French ambassador and release its jailed leaders.

Thousands of protesters from the banned far-right party Tehreek-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) have been marching en masse from the eastern city of Lahore to the capital to make these demands.

"The issue of expelling the French ambassador will be taken to parliament for debate", Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said, trying to defuse a protest that threatened to spiral out of control.

At least three policemen and seven TLP supporters died in clashes that erupted along the journey since Friday.

Ahmed announced that the government would drop charges and release jailed TLP members,

including its chief Saad Rizvi.

In return, the TLP agreed to suspend its march but its supporters would continue their sit-in at Muridke, a small town near Lahore, until the commitments are honoured.

Authorities have used shipping containers and trenches in order to choke off the path of the protesters, including blocking one of the country's main transport arteries, the GT Road.

TLP chief Rizvi was arrested in April for leading protests seeking the ambassador's expulsion over the publication of some cartoons.

The government refused to expel the ambassador and instead banned the TLP under the country's anti-terrorism laws in April, in a move that bracketed the party with outlawed Al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban.

The TLP initially rose to prominence in 2017 as a staunch supporter of Pakistan's strict blasphemy laws. — dpa



A supporter of the banned political party Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) runs amid the smoke of tear gas during a protest in Lahore, Pakistan. — Reuters

Myanmar says committed to Asean peace plan

YANGON: Myanmar's military rulers pledged on Sunday to cooperate "as much as possible" with a peace plan agreed with Asean, despite a stern rebuke of the regional bloc for excluding the country's top commander from a summit this week.

In an announcement in state media on Sunday, the junta said it upholds the principal of peaceful coexistence with other countries and would cooperate with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in following a five-point "consensus" agreed in April, a plan backed by the West and China.

Asean foreign ministers decided on October 15 to sideline Min Aung Hlaing, leader of a February 1 Myanmar coup, for his failure to implement that plan, which included ending hostilities, initiating dialogue, allowing

humanitarian support and granting a special envoy full access in the country.

The junta struck back late on Friday, accusing Asean of departing from its principals on consensus and non-interference. It refused to agree to send a politically neutral Myanmar representative instead of Min Aung Hlaing.

Asean chair Brunei has not responded to Myanmar's rejection.

SENSITIVITY

A spokesman for Thailand's foreign ministry declined to comment on Saturday, citing the sensitivity of the matter, while Indonesia's foreign ministry spokesperson, Teuku Faizasyah, said Asean's consensus on who would represent Myanmar at the summit was the "common guide for all Asean members".

The exclusion is an



Monks visit Shwedagon Pagoda during the Thadingyut festival, which is held on the full moon day of the Burmese lunar month of Thadingyut, in Yangon. — AFP

unprecedented snub from a bloc long criticised for being tardy and ineffective at dealing with member governments accused of atrocities.

More than 1,000 civilians have been killed in a post-coup crackdown in Myanmar, with

thousands more detained, many tortured or beaten, according to the United Nations, citing activists. The junta is accused of using excessive military force against civilian populations.

The junta has insisted many

of those killed or detained were "terrorists" determined to destabilise the country. The junta chief last week said opposition forces were prolonging the unrest.

Asean's special envoy, Erywan Yusof of Brunei, had sought a meeting with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, but the military government said that was impossible because she was detained and charged with crimes.

The junta warned Erywan not to engage with opposition forces it has outlawed, including the shadow National Unity Government, an alliance of pro-democracy and armed ethnic groups, Japanese broadcaster NHK said, citing an unpublished report.

A Myanmar military spokesman and Erywan's office did not immediately respond to separate requests for comment on Sunday on the reported warning. — Reuters

Cinematographer remembered as police probe Baldwin shooting

ALBUQUERQUE: The crew was setting up a difficult shot during filming on the New Mexico set of “Rust”, and the movie’s cinematographer, Halyna Hutchins, wasn’t quite satisfied.

She turned to Lane Luper, a member of the camera crew, who suggested some adjustments that she found worked perfectly. That kind of collaborative spirit, Luper said at a candlelight vigil on Saturday, was what made Hutchins such a joy to work with.

“Her photography was beautiful, and every day, everybody on the camera team was proud to be there for her, because we were proud of what we were creating — what she was creating,” he told the crowd, two days after Hutchins was killed in an accident when actor Alec Baldwin fired a prop gun on set.

Luper said he would have been lucky to work with her again. “And I don’t get to. And it sucks,” he said, breaking into tears.

While organisers emphasised that the vigil in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was to honour Hutchins’ memory, rather than focus on her death, some in the crowd held signs that read “Safety on Set,” a reminder that the circumstances surrounding Thursday’s shooting remain murky.

Details have emerged suggesting the production was troubled before the accident. Several crew members walked off the set at the Bonanza Creek



Members of the local film community mourn the loss of cinematographer Hutchins, who died after being shot by Alec Baldwin on the set of his movie ‘Rust’ at a vigil in Albuquerque. — Reuters

Ranch, south of Santa Fe, just hours before the incident, protesting what they saw as poor working conditions, several media outlets reported.

Last week, Baldwin’s stunt double accidentally fired two rounds with a prop firearm after being told it was “cold,” an industry term meaning a weapon is not loaded with ammunition, the *Los Angeles Times* said. At least one employee complained to a production manager about gun safety on set, the newspaper reported, citing unnamed crew members.

The same mistake may have occurred on Thursday, according to court records. An assistant director, Dave Halls, handed Baldwin the prop gun and told

ABOUT 200 MOURNERS ATTENDED SATURDAY’S VIGIL, INCLUDING SET DECORATORS, PROP MASTERS AND COSTUME DESIGNERS

him it was a “cold gun”, according to an affidavit from the Santa Fe County Sheriff’s Office.

When Baldwin fired the gun, Hutchins was fatally struck in the chest, according to the sheriff’s office.

It is unclear why the gun contained a projectile. The person in charge of weapons on set is known as an armourer. The armourer for “Rust,” Hannah Gutierrez, had set up the gun and two others, according to the

affidavit. Halls and Gutierrez could not be reached for comment on Saturday.

Rust Movie Productions said in a statement on Friday it had not been aware of any safety concerns but was investigating the incident.

“Though we were not made aware of any official complaints concerning weapon or prop safety on set, we will be conducting an internal review of our procedures while production is shut down,” the company said. Baldwin is among the film’s producers.

About 200 mourners attended Saturday’s vigil, including set decorators, prop masters and costume designers. The actors Jon Hamm and John Slattery, who co-starred in the television hit “Mad Men” and are working on a movie in nearby Belen, also joined.

Slattery, who is directing the movie starring Hamm, said members of his crew were friends with Hutchins, and Hamm said the pair “came to support our community”.

A speaker at the vigil also read aloud a statement from Hutchins’ husband, Matt.

“Halyna inspired us all with her passion and vision, and her legacy is too meaningful to encapsulate in words,” he wrote. “Please take time to remember her, and we will all work together to honour her memory and emulate her determination and her creativity.” — Reuters



A crime scene following a bomblast last night is secured by the Ugandan police in Kampala. — AFP

Ugandan president says deadly blast a ‘terrorist act’

KAMPALA: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said on Sunday an explosion in the capital Kampala that killed one person and injured five was “a terrorist act”, vowing to hunt down those responsible.

Police said a “serious blast” occurred at around 9 pm on Saturday at a grilled pork joint in Komamboga, a northern Kampala suburb popular with roadside diners. Museveni said he had been briefed that three people left a plastic shopping bag at the scene that later exploded, killing one person and injuring five others.

“It seems to be a terrorist act but we shall get the perpetrators,” Museveni said on Twitter.

He said investigators were still combing the bomb site and more details would be released later, including advice for the public about “dealing with these possible terrorists”.

“The public should not fear,

we shall defeat this criminality like we have defeated all the other criminality committed who don’t respect life,” Museveni said. Masked anti-terrorism police dressed in black fatigues held journalists and members of the public several hundred metres back from the blast site on Sunday.

Police forensic officers in white overalls could be seen examining areas close to the scene. The explosion occurred about two hours after the start of a nationwide dusk-to-dawn coronavirus curfew.

Security forces rushed to the scene in Komamboga, a fast-growing suburb about eight kilometres north of Kampala city centre.

Roadside eateries with plastic furniture cater to local residents there, particularly young professionals moving into newly-constructed apartment buildings in the once-rural area. — AFP

Uzbek leader expected to win

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan votes in a presidential election on Sunday in which incumbent President Shavkat Mirziyoyev faces no genuine opposition and is almost certain to win a second term.

Mirziyoyev’s predicted victory will allow him to deepen his largely successful reform campaign and likely lead to Uzbekistan opening up further to foreign trade and investment — while retaining a highly centralised political system.

The 64-year-old leader has rebuilt the resource-rich country’s ties with both Russia and the West which had become strained under his predecessor Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan’s first post-independence president.

“I voted for Shavkat Mirziyoyev, basing my decision



Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev casts a ballot at a polling station during a presidential election in Tashkent. — Reuters

on the real situation,” said 42-year-old Tashkent resident Ahmadjon Turdimurodov.

“We have seen what he has done over the past years... the change has come even to our

doorsteps. I do not want to say some pompous words, but is a fact that we have witnessed positive changes in all sectors.”

Mirziyoyev has also lifted some restrictions on religious practices, reined in the powerful security services and oversaw a release of some political prisoners who had ended up behind bars due to Karimov’s zero-tolerance approach towards dissent.

However, no genuine opposition parties have been registered so far and while bloggers and media can now criticise senior officials and raise sensitive issues, they never target the president himself.

The four candidates running against Mirziyoyev have been nominated by parties which support the president.

— Reuters

LOOKS SET FOR A ROSY START



French Socialist Party (PS) candidate for the April 2022 presidential election Anne Hidalgo holds her party’s emblem, a rose, at the end of her speech during her formal inauguration as candidate at the Grand Palais in Lille. — AFP

LAS VEGAS

Picasso masterpieces fetch \$108.9m at Sotheby’s

Eleven masterpieces by Pablo Picasso fetched \$108.9 million at a Sotheby’s auction in Las Vegas. The works went under the hammer at the Bellagio hotel and casino, known for its extensive art collection, ahead of what would have been the Spanish painter’s 140th birthday.

The jewel in the crown of MGM Resort’s auctioned collection was ‘Femme au beret rouge-orange’ one of the last portraits by the artist of Marie-Therese Walter, who he began



an affair with when she was 17 years old, and inspired many of his most celebrated works. It sold for nearly \$40.5 million after a starting price was estimated at \$20-30 million. — AFP

KOUROU

France launches state-of-art military satellite

France has successfully launched a state-of-the-art satellite into orbit, designed to allow all of France’s armed forces across the globe to communicate swiftly and securely. Paris created a space force command in July 2019, amongst concerns that rival countries were heavily investing in space technology, seen as a new military frontier.

The satellite “is designed to resist military aggression from the ground and in space, as well as interference,” French air and



space force spokesman Colonel Stephane Spet said. The Ariane 5 rocket carrying the Syracuse 4A satellite took off from Kourou, in French Guiana late on Saturday

— AFP

ROME

Berlusconi says early polls would be ‘irresponsible’

Early elections in Italy would be “irresponsible,” former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi said on Sunday, reiterating his support for the coalition government led by Mario Draghi. In an interview with the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper, the scandal-plagued leader of the centre-right Forza Italia party also expressed frustration with political infighting on the right that contributed to the bloc’s poor showing in recent mayoral contests around the country.



“This government is taking Italy out of the health and economic emergency,” Berlusconi said of the national unity government led by Draghi.

— AFP

A rare respite in war-torn Yemen

In Yemen’s easternmost province, far from the front lines of the war that has devastated the country, the lush greenery of the Hawf nature reserve offers a rare respite.

The years-long conflict between the government and Ansar Allah fighters has not breached the perimeters of Hawf in Al Mahra province. But the area — known as a “fog oasis” in the mostly arid Arabian Peninsula — faces other threats.

Aerial footage of the reserve shows an endless expanse of trees across the landscape of mountains and valleys, with cows roaming freely and the occasional vehicle parked alongside an unpaved road.

“Like many other protected areas in Yemen, the main threats come from the social, governance and economic factors that the conflict has created, rather than the fighting itself,” Doug Weir, research and policy director at the UK-based Conflict and Environment Observatory, said.

“In the case of Hawf, the conflict has constrained how the park is managed, and this has knock-on effects for the environment. These include pressure from visitors, overgrazing, overharvesting and hunting.”

But for Mohammed al Ammari, from the neighbouring province of Hadramaut, the nature reserve is a sanctuary where he can go and relax, far from the everyday struggles of war.

Since 2014, Yemen has been embroiled in a conflict that has triggered what the United Nations describes as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

“Everything here is beautiful,” Ammari said. “You feel the nature, you are breathing in the nature.” Sabah Zeid, another local visitor, shared the same sentiment as Ammari as she walked along the green paths.

“It’s really the only place in Al Mahra where we can take a long leisurely stroll and enjoy our time with our families,” she said.

Both, however, said that the area was in desperate need of maintenance and basic infrastructure such as roads and shops.

According to Weir, any management plan for Hawf must be developed by and for the community if it is to be sustainable and effective. — AFP

In the case of Hawf, the conflict has constrained how the park is managed, and this has knock-on effects for the environment. These include pressure from visitors, overgrazing, overharvesting and hunting

DOUG WEIR
A research and policy director



BACK FROM SCHOOL

School children walk as they return to their homes after attending school along a roadside at Sperwan village in Panjwai district, Afghanistan, on Sunday. — AFP

People are recovering, so is life...



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

As the world’s battle with Covid-19 pandemic is in a final round and game is soon to be over, life is gradually limping to normalcy. It is steadily coming back as people and businesses have started recovering from the pandemic’s aftershock. The back to normal daily life is taking a slow, but thoughtful step forward. The light at the end of the tunnel has already flashed out, bringing a sign of hope to revive good old days. The lesson is learned, experience is gained and force is geared for a better future.

Though the pandemic has changed people’s life and attitudes, the best part of life is yet to come. Regardless of all what the world has witnessed over almost two years of struggle, people are getting stronger and life is being better! A key concern stands as how will people live when it is all over? The new normal reflects the new format of lifestyle post coronavirus pandemic as well as people’s attitude, new regulations, technology advancements and other aspects that nations and individuals will have or implement.

What matters is the changes and lessons that will last with people as insightful experiences! For instance, the precautionary practices, which people have learned and committed to during the past two years, might continue for sometime

post the pandemic until it is fully safe to quit them. Though, such healthy measures convey a good lesson on the importance of personal hygiene, cleanliness and safety. Life and people have adapted themselves to return back to the normal life; each is resuming back to what keeps them busy prior the pandemic.

The work-from-home approach is no more an option for government employees and some other corporates too. All have resumed offices since the first day of September, responding to the decision of the Supreme Committee, concerned with following up the developments of the coronavirus. Being all vaccinated, as a compulsory condition to report to office, it paved the way for safe return of all employees. Thus, all have come on board playing their role to serve the nation in full force as they had been before the pandemic attack.

Likewise, students are back to school as well, but on rotation system until things are fully safe to have a full strength at schools. They have been longing for the old days at school where they have good time and share memorable moments with friends and teachers. Post the 3-semester of online learning, students are passionately returning back to classrooms. Similarly, kindergartens and nurseries are

also back to business, welcoming children and infants. Being operational after almost a 2-year break marked a relief for many families and working mothers.

On the other hand, medical staff have also taken the big burden off their shoulder, though there are still some hospitalised patients with Covid-19.

Since the start of the pandemic in the Sultanate, they have been in a rush hour day and night. Nurses and doctors have been putting their lives at risk treating infected or suspected cases. They were also deprived of their usual life, striving not to put others’ life at risk. They have sacrificed their time and efforts to serve patients and take care of them.

Profound thanks and appreciation to the government and all parties concerned for sparing no effort to protect people and nation. Gratitude is extended to the frontline soldiers in every corner of Oman fighting and defending us from the virus.

They have been sacrificing their time and effort, day and night for the sake of saving souls, man and place alike. As life is healing in its own way; let us all heal in our own too. With a positive move on the way to recover, we all should be on a standby mode as life is still gently navigating the right direction.

Colin Powell and the meaning of charisma



CHRIS PATTEN
The author is the last British governor of Hong Kong and a former EU commissioner for external affairs, is Chancellor of the University of Oxford

I have read the obituaries of General Colin Powell, who died last week, with considerable sadness. I got to know this great American soldier-statesman when he was the US secretary of state and I was the European commissioner for external affairs. He was a remarkable man – decent, moderate, and wise – whose career was eventually ended, and his legacy diminished, by his excessive loyalty to president George W Bush.

Powell was charismatic in the true sense of the term. Nowadays, this description is too often used to indicate an ability to attract supporters or generate celebrity interest. Internet lists of those who are regarded as charismatic include characters as varied as Adolf Hitler, Bono, Donald Trump, George Clooney, and

Rihanna. But the ancient Greeks and Saint Paul used “charisma” to describe values-based leadership infused with a charm capable of inspiring devotion. The Greeks believed that this quality was a gift of grace, while Christian theology regarded it as a power given by the Holy Spirit.

Thinking about the people I have met who best exemplified this quality, I am struck by a fact that owes nothing to political correctness and everything to my immediate and sustained reaction. The three most charismatic public figures I have known — Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan, and Powell — were black. This may well have been, in part, a consequence of their experience in coping with political and diplomatic worlds that were dominated by white establishments.

I met Mandela, the hero of South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle, on several occasions but principally in my role as chancellor of the University of Oxford, which had formerly been endowed by the 19th-century British imperial businessman Cecil Rhodes with a scholarship programme for young people from around the world. Mandela had been imprisoned for 27 years by the apartheid regime. But on his release, he paved the way for a peaceful transition to black majority rule in South Africa through his magnanimity and brave efforts to reconcile the mutually hostile elements in the country’s past and present.

One such example was his initiative in establishing the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, a partnership to fund the education of more African students and help

to tackle the inequalities resulting from the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. In 2003, I spoke beside Mandela in Westminster Great Hall to hundreds of current and former Rhodes scholars. He noted that Rhodes was “a part of shaping what present-day South Africa turned out to be,” and, despite his controversial legacy, should be “remembered by posterity” for his philanthropy. Mandela radiated that mixture of grace and authority that is at the heart of charisma.

So did Annan, the first black African to become a UN secretary-general. His tenure spanned the Iraq War, the Aids pandemic, and years of struggle to assert the moral foundations of international action to deal with global political and economic problems. He placed particular emphasis on the

UN development goals, and on the understanding that individual citizens had rights that could not be trumped or trampled on by the states that governed and sometimes abused them.

My best friend from university, the late Edward Mortimer, who was Annan’s speechwriter and head of communications, put the secretary-general’s soft-spoken words into memorable language, strong but never bitter. Annan’s presence in a room exuded calm, but you never forgot his determination to try to mitigate some of the world’s inhumanity.

Powell was US secretary of state while I was representing Europe internationally alongside Javier Solana, then the European Union’s high representative for common foreign and security policy. Copy right: Project Syndicate 2021



Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of India's KL Rahul. – Reuters

INDIA WERE DEFEATED BY PAKISTAN IN A WORLD CUP MATCH FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER

PAKISTAN STUN INDIA

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
DUBAI, OCT 24

Pakistan produced a thoroughly professional performance to register their first ever World Cup victory against India by 10 wickets in their Group 1 match of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday. Shaheen Shah Afridi's explosive

opening spell during India's batting and openers Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan's unbeaten century stand in the chase of 152 runs powered Pakistan to a famous win against their arch-rivals. Pakistan had never beaten India in the previous 12 World Cup encounters since the 1992 ODI World Cup and were under enormous pressure against the

much fancied Indian team. However, the Pakistanis brought their A game when it really mattered and outplayed India completely. **SHAHEEN ROCKS INDIA** Earlier, Shaheen Shah Afridi rocked India in the first over when he yorked Rohit Sharma for a golden duck and in his second over

bowled KL Rahul to leave India reeling. At 6/2, India were in all sorts of trouble and needed the experience of skipper Virat Kohli to bail them out. And when Suryakumar Yadav joined him at the crease, there was an expectancy of rebuilding. However, Hasan Ali had other plans when he scalped Yadav behind the wicket off a peach of a

delivery. It was then the turn of the supremely talented Rishabh Pant's turn to put some pressure on the Pakistani bowlers with some innovative shots. Rishabh slammed two sixes and a couple of boundaries in his 39-run innings that gave some momentum to the Indian batting. Kohli chugged along nicely as

well until Pant went for the big one and misjudged the turn off Shadab Khan to get caught and bowled. The Indian captain scored 57 with five boundaries and a six as he ensured India got to a competitive total. Ravindra Jadeja (13) and Hardik Pandya (11) chipped in with useful contributions as India set Pakistan a target of 152.

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates: Sri Lanka defeated Bangladesh by five wickets in a feisty T20 World Cup clash on Sunday, hammering home their status as surprise title contenders.

Chasing an imposing target of 172, the 2014 champions saw Charith Asalanka (80 not out) and Bhanuka Rajapaksa (53) lead them to victory for a fourth successive win after three triumphs in the qualifying round.

Earlier, Mushfiqur Rahim, with an undefeated 57 and opener Mohammad Naim, who hit 62, starred for Bangladesh in the Super 12 game after being put into bat.

England, Australia, South Africa and West Indies are the other teams in the group from where the top two will make the semi-finals.

“I am happy to hit a winning knock for my country,” said Asalanka who got the winning runs off a boundary with seven balls to spare.

“When I faced the first

“When I faced the first ball, it looked like a good pitch and I backed myself to play my natural game. Rajapaksa played a brilliant knock and he changed the momentum

CHARITH ASALANKA
Sri Lankan batsman

ball, it looked like a good pitch and I backed myself to play my natural game. Rajapaksa played a brilliant knock and he changed the momentum.”

Asalanka made his runs from 49 balls, hitting five boundaries and five sixes as he and Rajapaksa put on 86 for the fourth wicket.

Both men were dropped by Liton Das with Rajapaksa reprieved after he had made only 14.

The lone bright spot for Bangladesh in the field was the two wickets in four balls by Shakib Al Hasan to dismiss Pathum Nissanka and Aviskha Fernando.

That allowed the veteran all-rounder go to 41 wickets, surpassing Pakistan’s Shahid Afridi for most victims in T20 World Cups.

“I thought 171 could be defended. Liton and Naim gave us a very good start. Mushfiq played a brilliant innings,” said Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah Riyad.

“We were in the game till the tenth over. But things went wrong for us after that.”

ASALANKA STARS AS SRI LANKA DEFEAT BANGLADESH IN FEISTY CLASH



Sri Lanka’s Bhanuka Rajapaksa (L) and his teammate Charith Asalanka bump their fists. – AFP

Bangladesh had made 40 by the sixth over before they lost their first wicket and the sparks flew.

Liton Das (16) was caught by Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka at mid-off trying to hoist Lahiru Kumara into the outfield.

However, Liton and Kumara then exchanged angry words with fellow Bangladesh opener Naim pushing away Kumara.

Both umpires had to intervene before the game continued.

Kumara went on to bowl a ‘beamer’, clocked at over 140kmh, at Mushfiqur in the penultimate over, forcing the Bangladesh player to take evasive action.

Naim made 62 from 52 balls before he was eventually dismissed in the 17th over, caught and bowled by Binura Fernando.

Naim and Mushfiqur Rahim put on 73 for the third wicket as Bangladesh upped the pace.

The classy Mushfiqur reached his sixth T20 half century off 32 balls with four boundaries and two sixes.

Sri Lanka were without key spinner Maheesh Theekshana who had claimed eight wickets in three qualifying matches as Sri Lanka swept into the Super 12 stage. The 21-year-old had been suffering with a back injury. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
BANGLADESH	
M Naim c & b B Fernando.....	62
L Das c Shanaka b Kumara.....	16
Shakib b Karunaratne.....	10
Mushfiqur (not out).....	57
Alif Hossain (run out).....	7
Mahmudullah (not out).....	10
Extras (B-2, LB-3, NB-3, W-1).....	9
Total (For 4 wkts, 20 overs)....	171
Fall of wickets: 1-40, 2-56, 3-129, 4-150	
Bowling: Karunaratne 3-0-12-1, B Fernando 3-0-27-1, Chameera 4-0-41-0, Kumara 4-0-29-1, Asalanka 1-0-14-0, Hasaranga 3-0-29-0, Shanaka 2-0-14-0	
SRI LANKA	
K Perera b N Ahmed.....	1
P Nissanka b Shakib.....	24
C Asalanka (not out).....	80
A Fernando b Shakib.....	0
W Hasaranga c Naim b Saifuddin....	6
B Rajapaksa b Nasum Ahmed.....	53
D Shanaka (not out).....	1
Extras (W-7).....	7
Total (For 5 wkts, 18.5 overs).172	
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-71, 3-71, 4-79, 5-165	
Bowling: N Ahmed 2.5-0-29-2, M Hasan 4-0-30-0, M Saifuddin 3-0-38-1, Shakib 3-0-17-2, M Rahman 3-0-22-0, Mahmudullah 2-0-21-0, A Hossain 1-0-15-0	

GROUP 1

POS	TEAM	PLAYED	WON	LOST	N/R	TIED	NET RR	POINTS
1	ENGLAND	1	1	0	0	0	+3.970	2
2	SRI LANKA	1	1	0	0	0	+0.583	2
3	AUSTRALIA	1	1	0	0	0	+0.253	2
4	SOUTH AFRICA	1	0	1	0	0	-0.253	0
5	BANGLADESH	1	0	1	0	0	-0.583	0
6	WEST INDIES	1	0	1	0	0	-3.970	0

Al Zubair and Soucek finish fifth in race one

BARCELONA, Spain: Al Faisal al Zubair and Andy Soucek recovered well from first lap drama to finish the first of two International GT Open races in fifth place in Barcelona on Saturday.

The Lechner Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R crew climbed two places from seventh on the grid to earn more valuable experience and championship points, but a sixth-placed finish for rivals Michele Beretta and Frederick Schandorff sealed the 2021 title for the Vincenzo Sospiri Racing Lamborghini crew.

Al Zubair was pushed off the track into the gravel on the opening lap of the race and fought back from 12th to hand the car over to Soucek from seventh place. Soucek then managed to recover another two places to seal a hard-earned fifth.

Martin Kodric and Ethan Simioni claimed victory in the 70-minute race by 0.278 seconds from Jim Pla and Thomas Drouet. Belgium's Baptiste Moulin and Japan's Yuki Nemoto rounded off the podium places in the second of the VSR Lamborghinis.

Al Zubair said: "For race one today in Barcelona, I went out for qualifying and we qualified P7. Considering we did not go on the second set of tyres to save it for the race, I think it worked out in the end.

"Unfortunately, I was pushed out into the gravel in turn one and that dropped me down to 12th place. Then I managed to drive back to seventh before handing the car to Andy.

Andy brought it back in P5, which was a great result considering all the action that happened during the race — pushed out in the gravel in turn one on lap one and getting pushed out midway through my stint. That set a few obstacles for us to pass. Overall it was a good way to end. We will give it our all in the last race on Sunday."



GT Open race action from Barcelona.

2021 International GT Open - overall standings after 13 of 14 races:

1. Frederick Schandorff (SUI)/Michele Beretta (ITA)	142pts
2. Andy Soucek (ESP)	116pts
3. Al Faisal al Zubair (OMN)	98pts
4. Baptiste Moulin (BEL)/Yuki Nemoto (JPN)	97pts
5. Ollie Millroy (GBR)/Brendan Iribe (USA)	70pts
6. Loris Spinelli (ITA)	65pts, etc

Al Zubair qualified the Porsche for the first of the weekend's races in chilly but dry track conditions. The Omani was in the top three through the early minutes and then finished the session in seventh place with a best lap of 1min 44.633sec. Frenchman Jim

Pla dominated the session in the AKKA ASP Mercedes AMG GT3 and qualified on pole position with a fastest lap of 1min 43.152sec. Schandorff left it relatively late in the session to snatch second place with a 1min 43.448sec and Martin Kodric was third.

Kodric and team-mate Ethan Simioni were the surprise package of first official practice and set the fastest lap of 1min 44.989sec in their 2 Seas Motorsport Mercedes AMG GT3. Al Zubair and Soucek ran the Lechner Racing Porsche for 20 laps and a best tour of 1min

45.371sec put them in sixth and just 0.124 seconds behind title rivals, Beretta and Schandorff.

Al Zubair and Soucek enjoyed a better second practice session and a best lap of 1min 45.221sec placed them third in the results behind the session-winning

Beretta and Schandorff and second-placed Loris Spinelli and Florian Scholze in their AKM Motorsport Mercedes. The second 30-minute qualifying session was scheduled for Sunday morning and precedes the one-hour second race in the afternoon.



Foden double inspires Man City to win at Brighton



Manchester City's Phil Foden in action. – Reuters

BRIGHTON, England: Manchester City enjoyed a rampant 4-1 victory at Brighton & Hove Albion helped by England midfielder Phil Foden's double in their Premier League match on Saturday.

After losing their first seven Premier League games against City by an aggregate score of 21-2, in the last meeting between the teams in May Brighton came from 2-0 down to win 3-2.

But, despite making their best-ever start to a top-flight season this term, Brighton had no answer to the City machine in the first half as the visitors had the job all but done inside 31 minutes. The win moved them up to second in the standings.

Pep Guardiola's side battered the Brighton goal from the start, racing into a 13th minute lead through Ilkay Gundogan after a mistake from home goalkeeper Robert Sanchez.

City soon extended their lead as Foden got his first of the match, steering Jack Grealish's square pass into the net in the 28th minute, before the 21-year-old got the final touch on Gabriel Jesus' shot to make it 3-0 three minutes later.

The visitors took their foot

Despite making their best-ever start to a top-flight season this term, Brighton had no answer to the City machine in the first half as the visitors had the job all but done inside 31 minutes

off the gas in the second period, with Alexis Mac Allister's penalty nine minutes from time giving Brighton a consolation goal.

City substitute Riyad Mahrez put the icing on the cake with the fourth goal in stoppage time, sealing a win that moved the champions to 20 points, two points above Liverpool, who visit Manchester United on Sunday, and within two points of Chelsea.

Brighton stay fourth on 15 points from nine games.

GOOD LESSON

"I know what it means coming here against this team, against this manager and this stadium and win here", Guardiola said.

"It is a good lesson that in football it must be played with

the ball and when you don't have it you suffer.

Brighton are so hard to play against for 90 minutes. Against another opponent the game would be over (at 3-0), against this team it was not over."

Brighton's Lewis Dunk had already had to make an acrobatic goal-line clearance to keep City at bay before Gundogan broke the deadlock, with Bernardo Silva hooking the ball into the German's path after Sanchez had failed to gather a cross.

Brighton had only conceded six goals in eight league games prior to City's visit, but they had soon shipped two more, thanks to Foden.

City finished the first half having had nine shots on target — more than any other side in a Premier League match this season — but it was Brighton who started stronger after the break, with Leandro Trossard denied by a smart save from Ederson.

The home side did get a deserved goal through substitute Mac Allister, after Ederson fouled Enock Mwepu in the penalty area, with Foden missing another chance to net his first City treble before he picked out Mahrez to fire home the fourth. — Reuters



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Air France launches direct flights to Muscat

PROMISING START: France is an important source market for tourists spending their holidays in the Sultanate

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

Boding well for the recovery of Oman's pandemic-impacted tourism and hospitality industry, Air France has launched direct flights between Paris and Muscat for the first time.

Top officials of Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, as well as Oman Airports, hosted a celebratory reception to mark Air France's maiden direct flight.

The carrier will operate three flights per week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday), as part of a significant ramp-up of operations to a number of world capitals.



Air France is deploying a Boeing 787 aircraft offering a total of 279 passenger seats distributed across the Business Class, Premium Economy and Economy class segments.

France is an important source market for tourists spending their holidays in the Sultanate. Around 68,000 visitors from France travelled to Oman for leisure and holidays in 2019.

Passengers from Oman can also use Air France to reach Paris before boarding an extensive selection of carriers

to fly elsewhere into Europe. Air France, and alliance partners of the SkyTeam alliance, also offer connections to a wide range of destinations in North and South America.

In a statement, Samer bin Ahmed al Nabhani, CEO – Commercial Operations Unit, Oman Airports, said the new service will boost travel from France and Europe into the Sultanate.

“Oman Airports welcomes all local and international airlines in line with the efforts of the teams concerned

with marketing our airports because they are important regional and international destinations,” said Al Nabhani.

“We offer the highest health and safety standards in accordance with the precautionary procedures in place by the competent authorities and harmonise them to provide all that would ensure a safe and smooth travel experience for all users of Oman Airports during the current period under the protocols and standards of travel adopted internationally.”

Following the lifting of travel restrictions around the world, Air France recently announced a major reopening of its network while also increasing capacity for the winter season (October 2021 – March 2022).

As many as 182 destinations will be served (87 on long haul and 95 on short and medium-haul, with new routes launched on all continents.

Inflation rises 2.46 pc in September 2021

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 2.46 per cent in September 2021 compared to September 2020.

However, the inflation rate decreased by 0.06 per cent compared to August 2021, according to Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The rise in prices in September 2021 compared to the same month of 2020 is attributed to the increase of prices in main groups, such as the transportation group (8.19 per cent), miscellaneous good and services (3.33 per cent), tobacco (2.98 per cent), recreation and culture (2.05 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (1.87 per cent), furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance (1.32 per cent), restaurant and hotels (0.83 per cent), housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels group (0.44 per cent), and clothing, footwear, health and education (0.08 per cent each).

On the other hand, prices of the communication group went down by 0.08 per cent.

According to the NCSI, prices went up in non-alcoholic beverages by 6.61 per cent, fish and seafood by 4.43 per cent, oils and fats by 2.08 per cent, bread and cereals by 1.76 per cent, sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 1.45 per cent, other foodstuff by 1.43 per cent, meat by 1.33 per cent, vegetables by 1.16 per cent, milk, cheese and eggs by 0.29 per cent.

In contrast, fruits prices fell by 0.03 per cent in September 2021 compared to September 2020.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell by 0.06 per cent compared to August 2021.

A decline was recorded in the prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages by 0.45 per cent, clothing and footwear by 0.38 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 0.14 per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 0.06 per cent, transportation by 0.05 per cent, recreation and culture by 0.02 per cent.

Meanwhile, the prices of housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels group increased by 0.33 per cent, furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance by 0.04 per cent.

Moreover, the prices of tobacco, health, communication and education groups remained unchanged.

At the level of governorates, the CPI recorded a rise in September 2021 compared to the same month in 2020.

The Governorate of Dhofar witnessed the highest rate of increase in inflation by 3.54 per cent, followed by the Governorates of South and North Al Sharqiyah by 2.92 per cent, the Governorate of North Al Batinah by 2.91 per cent, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah by 2.80 per cent, the Governorate of Al Dhahirah by 2.65 per cent, the Governorate of Al Buraimi by 2.45 per cent, the Governorate of Muscat by 1.78 per cent. — ONA



Oman to roll out IBAN system for bank accounts soon

MODERNISATION: New international numbering system for banking accounts will ensure greater convenience, safety and security in banking transactions

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has pledged to shortly roll out the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) system — a globally accepted format for numbering overseas bank accounts — in the Sultanate.

The much-delayed initiative will be initiated this year, a high-level representative of the

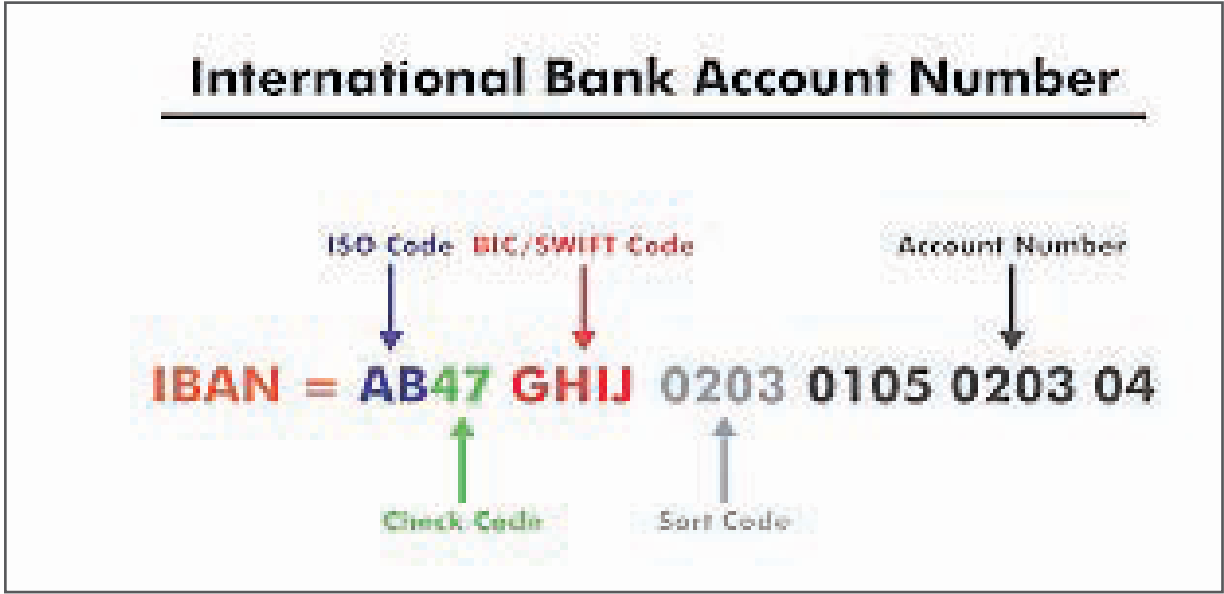
country's apex bank said.

A survey to assess the readiness of local banks to implement the system has been completed, said Ali al Jabri, Manager – Payment Systems, CBO.

“Feedback from the survey has been received from the banks – almost all are ready. We will be able to implement IBAN within six months,” he stated.

Speaking at a banking summit held in the city recently, the official noted that the new system would help enhance the safety and security of banking transactions between customers across national borders.

“The IBAN system will be making payment processing and payment transactions all seamless, more secure and reduce errors in terms of account numbers. It will be based on ISO



international standards,” he said.

Oman currently employs the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) system for identifying banks — a

code that is primarily used to pinpoint a specific bank during an international transaction. In comparison, the IBAN system is used to identify an individual account involved in an overseas

transaction.

The IBAN system affixes a unique alphanumeric code to individual account holders. The IBAN number starts with a two-letter code of the country

in which the account is opened, followed by two colour-coded digits that validate the country code, and a Basic Bank Account Number (BBAN) that contains specific bank and account details.

Launched initially across Europe, the IBAN system has since been popularised across the world, and has come to complement the SWIFT code in securing banking transactions.

However, the United States and Canada have not implemented the system in their respective jurisdictions, but authorise the processing of payments based on the IBAN code.

When eventually implemented in the Sultanate, the IBAN and SWIFT codes will complement each other, according to officials.

Bahwan International Group joins hands with TVS Motor

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Aiming to offer a wide range of mobility solutions to the region, Bahwan International Group LLC (BIG) signed an agreement with TVS Motor Company, a renowned Indian multinational automotive company.

The agreement was signed between Shaikh Ahmed Bahwan, Chairman Bahwan International Group and Sudarshan Venu, Joint MD at TVS Motor Company at the Bahwan International Group,

The tri-party deal arrangement will allow ARATA International FZC in Iraq to be the new distributor for TVS Motor products including two-wheelers and three-wheelers in the Middle East region. Taking it forward, the groups will also explore other avenues of cooperation in Oman and India.



“We are happy to announce the partnership with a multinational brand like TVS Motor Company which will help us in bringing a wide range of mobility solutions to the region and to cater to the requirements of a broad range of customer segments in the

country,” said Abdullah Bahwan, Executive Director, Bahwan International Group.

“The quality prowess of TVS Motor Company combined with our strong understanding of the market will definitely create an impact in mobility space in Iraq”

he added.

ARATA International FZC, a subsidiary of Bahwan International Group (BIG) registered in the UAE enjoys a strong presence in the MENA region. TVS Motor is one of the top five two-wheeler companies

globally with a presence in over 70 countries across Africa, South East Asia, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America and the Middle East.

“We are glad to partner with a reputed group like ‘BIG’, to strengthen our presence in the

MENA region. The vast business experience, deep understanding and diverse industry knowledge of the ARATA International FZC will definitely help us expand and grow together,” said Sudarshan Venu, Joint Managing Director, TVS Motor Company, adding that this association with the BIG is a significant step towards further expanding and bolstering TVS Motor Company’s market presence in Iraq.

Bahwan International Group (ARATA International FZC) and their channel partners plan to operate more than 30 dealerships for TVS Motor Company.

The dealerships will include state of the art 3S dealership facilities in all the major cities of Iraq with after-sales service, and spare parts support in tier-2 cities to expand the TVS presence in Iraq.

Meethaq Islamic Banking celebrates 51st National Day with exclusive offers

MUSCAT: Meethaq the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, has begun the countdown to the Sultanate’s 51st Glorious National Day celebrations with a number of special deals and offers for customers. Customers will be eligible to receive exciting rewards and gifts as part of this special promotion, which shall continue till the end of December 2021.

All existing and new customers of Meethaq are eligible for cash incentive of RO 51 when opening a Term Deposit of RO 5,000 or more for a period of 3 years and above. New Meethaq customers can also get gift voucher of RO 51 on starting a Hafawa Priority Banking relationship with a deposit of RO 30,000 during this period. Meethaq Credit cardholders will also get a chance to win RO 51 every month for a period of three months if they are amongst the 100 highest spenders each month.

Meethaq is also offering an attractive profit rate of only 4.99 per cent to customers who apply for home, auto and personal financing facilities during the National Day campaign. All new and existing Meethaq customers availing fresh financing from the bank can benefit from this



offer, which is available for Omani nationals working in government institutions as well as semi-government and Tier 1 companies.

Another exciting offer is that Hafawa Private Banking Customers will be given free locker services on booking a locker for a full year, while a massive 75 per cent special discount on annual rentals for safe deposit lockers for the 1st year is available to all customers having an account with Meethaq. Customers can book a locker at any Meethaq branch, which offers safe deposit locker services.

On the joyous occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day, Meethaq has allocated total prize money worth RO 51,000 to be given away to 51 lucky winners during the special National Day draw. Eligibility for the draws is based on an average weekly balance of RO 100, and customers will have more chances of winning if they maintain higher balances in their Hibati savings accounts. The bank has invited all its customers to take advantage of the opportunity and win exciting cash prizes by increasing their savings in their accounts.

Meethaq, which has the largest

network of Islamic banking branches in Oman, has over 40 ATMs and CDMs located across Oman, and also facilitates access to Bank Muscat’s network of 740 ATMs and CDMs.

Its Internet banking and Mobile banking app feature a user-friendly interface and facilitates a large number of services, which include utility payments, mobile top-ups, payment of school fees, transfer of funds between own accounts, transfer of funds to third party accounts in Bank Muscat, other bank accounts in Oman as well as international transfers.

Meethaq Islamic Banking, which has been recognised as the Best Islamic Bank in Oman by Islamic Finance News, has adopted the best global practices in Islamic banking and finance to combine a robust model, which protects customers and complements the Islamic banking industry.

Every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia compliance certification by the Sharia Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman. It is continuously extending strong support to all the key economic sectors in the country with innovative Sharia based products.

NBO signs strategic MoU with Saudi EXIM Bank



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

Continuing to pave the way for international relations and support the Sultanate’s economic diversification, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with Saudi Export-Import (EXIM) Bank. Under the agreement, the two institutions will establish a framework of cooperation that includes, but is not limited to, exploring the possibility of knowledge sharing, staff training, and providing financing, investment and other services in their respective countries.

The partnership is a major milestone, adding impetus to the bank’s efforts to foster and promote bilateral trade and development.

Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, said, “Our cooperation with Saudi EXIM Bank will undoubtedly provide a solid foundation for realising our goals and enhancing mutual benefits.”

Saad al Khalb, Chief Executive Officer of Saudi EXIM Bank, added, “Our nation’s long-standing and friendly relationship with Oman has opened up many new opportunities for us, including our latest with NBO, one of several partnerships we have pursued with local commercial banks. Through them, we aim to develop and grow the export financing solution and the overall Saudi international trade system in the non-oil exports in line with the Saudi 2030, all while tapping into the tremendous potential of the region’s banking industry.”

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MUSCAT: The Lexus NX with its sleek, sharp and very attractive design, makes more than just a mark where ever it goes. Designed and engineered to encourage users to make the most of every moment, the NX is a brilliant combination of luxury, contemporary design and enjoyable driving dynamics.

The NX’s advanced turbocharged 238hp, 2.0-liter engine combines fuel efficiency with outstanding power output, generating exhilarating acceleration for sporty driving, together with exceptional fuel economy.

It is also available with

features offering both driver and passengers comfort and convenience such as Head-Up Display (HUD), a dual zone air conditioner, a power folding 60:40 split rear seat, in addition to a hands-free power backdoor to name a few.

The interior of the NX exudes a sportier nature and a more luxurious feel. There is also a focus on the ease of use, convenience, and comfort of the equipment features, faithful to Lexus’ commitment to the principles of Omotenashi (hospitality).

The first thing you are bound to notice is the 10.3 inch multimedia display on the



dashboard. The central analog clock, with a clearer face and a more pronounced outer ring adds to the luxurious ambience.

14 speakers Mark Levinson Sound system adds an unique dimension to entertainment on

the move with its crystal-clear audio quality. Nearly all the controls and switches inside the NX, including the drive mode selector, shift knob, and door handles, have a metallic satin finish, enhancing the premium

look and feel of the cabin. Even the audio knob and window switches feature a metallic coating.

Reflecting Lexus’ utmost commitment to passenger safety, the NX300, comes equipped with a comprehensive suite of active and passive safety features complemented with the addition of the preventive safety package, Lexus Safety System+, which integrates active safety technologies, such as the Pre-Crash Safety System Adaptive Cruise Control System Lane Departure Alert and Adaptive High Beam. Apart from the Lexus Safety System+, other

safety features are also available, including Blind Spot Monitor, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Panoramic Back View Monitor and Tyre Pressure Warning System to name a few.

The most athletic NX trim level, the performance-minded F SPORT, is distinguished by its pronounced mesh grille with jet-black plating and exclusive Alloy. Inside, it has specially textured ornamentation, which provides a high sense of elegance and sporty flair. The F SPORT also features Sports tuned suspension, Sporty steering wheel with paddle shifters and exclusive Seat material.



In brief

■ BEIJING

**EVERGRANDE RESUMES WORK ON MORE THAN 10 PROPERTY PROJECTS**

China Evergrande Group said it had resumed work on more than 10 projects in six cities including Shenzhen — a statement that comes after it appeared to avert default with a last-minute bond coupon payment last week. Evergrande, deep in crisis with more than \$300 billion in liabilities, has not disclosed how many of its 1,300 real estate projects across China it has had to halt work on.

The company said on August 31 that some projects were suspended because of delays in payment to suppliers and contractors and it was negotiating to resume building.

— Reuters

■ RIYADH/LONDON

**GAS PRICE SPIKE UNLIKELY TO BE SUSTAINED: CEO**

The chief executive of French company TotalEnergies said the recent gas price spike had been caused by a strong demand rebound post Covid-19 and prices were likely to stabilise after winter. “I don’t think it (gas price hike) is sustainable. Gas prices could come back after winter time”, Patrick Pouyanne said, speaking at the Saudi Green Initiative Forum.

Excluding oil and gas was not the right approach to energy transition, he said, arguing that a lack of investment in hydrocarbons could itself create a crisis.

— Reuters

■ SYDNEY

**QANTAS AIRWAYS TO RESTART FLIGHTS TO MANY DESTINATIONS**

Qantas Airways Ltd said it would speed up plans to restart flights to many destinations and use some bigger planes amid “massive demand” for international flying as quarantine restrictions ease for Australian citizens.

All 11,000 of the airline’s staff idled without pay, around half its workforce, will return to work by early December as domestic and international flying returns to more normal levels, the airline said. Qantas will bring back two of its flagship Airbus SE A380 super-jumbos in April — three months earlier than planned — and is in talks with Boeing Co about the delivery of three new 787-9s in storage to accelerate its international flight plans.

— Reuters

Oman Green Hydrogen Summit to be held in hybrid format

KEY FORUM: Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the 3-day summit will bring together high level representatives of energy companies, regional and international energy groupings, and energy industry thought-leaders and decision-makers from across the world

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

In a significant upgrade from its virtual-only format, the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) will now take place as a hybrid event — a step-up that promises to impart new vigour and buzz to the Sultanate’s premier international forum on clean energy.

Organised by Oman-based Birba Energy, the 3-day event will be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in Madinat Al Irfan, Muscat, from November 29 to December 1, 2021, with the proceedings streamed live to online participants from around the world on a number of platforms.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Green Hydrogen



Summit Oman will bring together high level representatives of energy companies, regional and international energy groupings, and energy industry thought-leaders and decision-makers from across the world. Also taking part will be ministerial delegations from a number of countries in the Arabian Gulf, Europe and the Far East — all seeking to make common cause in the quest to accelerate the development of new, sustainable energy resources that will address pressing climate challenges as well.

For Oman, which has announced an important shift away from fossil fuels and into cleaner fuels, notably green hydrogen, the Summit will cap a year of momentous developments that promise to herald a carbon-free energy future for the country.

A concrete roadmap complete with timelines for the crystallisation

of this sustainable energy future, powered predominantly by green hydrogen, will be unveiled during the Summit.

Setting the tone for the Summit proceedings will be a keynote address by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufti, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy of Minerals.

This will be followed by a series of sessions focusing on the following five themes: Oman’s National Strategy for Green Hydrogen; Oman’s Current Project Development; International partnerships and investment opportunities; Successful learnings from regional and international projects; and latest trends and technological advancements.

Given the immense importance of the Summit’s central theme to the future of the Omani economy, the event has garnered support from a wide array of prestigious organisations from Oman and

abroad.

The line-up includes Oman LNG (Host Sponsor), Petroleum Development Oman and OQ (Main Sponsors), Oman Shell (Platinum Sponsor), Petrofac (Diamond Sponsor), Siemens Energy (Gold Sponsor), Port of Duqm, Majis, TUV SUD, ABB, ONEIC, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Sohar Aluminium and Worley (as Silver Sponsors) and OTTCO and Linde (as Session Sponsors).

Backing the event as Associate Partners are the International Energy Agency (IEA), the German Emirati Joint Council for Industry & Commerce (AHK), and Desert Energy (Dii).

Oman Society of Petroleum Services (OPAL) and AUSDE have signed on as Supporters.

In conjunction with the Summit, a series of Masterclass Workshops focusing on key aspects of the green hydrogen economy will be held as well.

“This is a must-attend event for decision-makers and other professionals who wish to part of a transformative journey that Oman and other countries in the region are embarking on as they prepare to embrace a sustainable energy future”, said Dr Abdullah al Abri, Head of Energy Renewals and Chairman — Executive Committee, GHSO.

Interested participants can attend online by registering via www.greenhydrogensummitoman.com

CCED taps Omani drone operator for inspections

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

Esbaar, an Omani company specialised in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Autonomous Systems solutions, has partnered with CC Energy Development Oman (CCED), an independent international oil and gas operator, to conduct drone inspections and collect accurate aerial data safely and quickly for key CCED assets in Blocks 3&4.

Utilising Esbaar’s latest and innovative technologies, the acquired data will provide CCED with deeper insights to address operational and HSE challenges, resulting in cost-savings, greater efficiency, and more informed decision-making.

Part of the collaboration, the



project included inspection of 98 km pipeline for CCED and two telecom towers, in addition to a topographic survey, and aerial photography.

It was managed and completed by an all-Omani Esbaar and CCED teams from drone pilots, data analysts to management, while achieving its target of a zero-Incident rate.

“Since our launch, Esbaar continues to build on its strengths

of deploying innovative drone and AI technology solutions for our partners. The goal is to provide them with credible and clear aerial data for all general inspections of their operations and/or facilities across a multitude of industries, in a safer, more efficient manner, and no operational down time”, said Sami al Adawi, Chief Executive Officer of Esbaar. “We value our partnership with CCED and

will continue to support their digital transformation efforts offering our solutions that improve operational reliability and ultimately, enable higher investment return.”

Walter Simpson, Managing Director of CCED, said, “CCED is a firm believer in accelerating digitalisation, as well as the adoption and scaleup of disruptive and multipurpose robotic technologies that deliver safer, cost-effective, and efficient processes. In the oil and gas sector, AI is becoming a vital tool enabling us to optimise our production. Drones can also be deployed for pipeline integrity management, as they can quickly cover vast stretches of pipeline, which is ultimately helping us improve asset management and maintenance.”

BMW to phase out fossil fuel burning engines

BERLIN: BMW will stop making internal combustion engines at its main plant in Munich by 2024, its head of production said last week at a conference marking the start of production of its electric i4 model.

The ICE engines currently made in Munich will be produced in BMW’s factories in Austria and the UK in future, Production Chief Milan Nedeljkovic said, though cars using the engines will still be assembled at the Munich plant.

Still, by 2023 at least half the vehicles produced in Munich would be electrified — either battery electric or plug-in hybrid, the company said.

BMW has set itself a target for at least 50 per cent of new global car sales to be electric by 2030, and CEO Oliver Zipse said at a conference last week the company would be ready with an all-electric offering if any market banned ICEs by then.

The i4 battery-electric car was made on a joint assembly line with ICE and hybrid models such as the BMW 3 Series Sedan and Touring, the company said, a shift that cost €200 million (\$233 million) of investment in production infrastructure.

A similar mixed assembly line is already under way at the automaker’s Dingolfing plant, which produces the BMW iX alongside hybrid and ICE models.

The new model will be prioritised in decision-making over where to allocate scarce chips, the plant chief Peter Weber said.

The company was well-stocked in other raw materials, Nedeljkovic added.

BMW has previously said it expects to produce 70,000 to 90,000 fewer cars than it could have sold this year because of the chip shortage that has plagued automakers worldwide.

It also committed to reducing emissions from transport logistics at the Munich plant, the company’s biggest, to zero in the next few years, without giving a specific date.

— Reuters

Pact signed for environmental protection at Duqm

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries (OQ8) signed on Sunday an agreement covering a technical cooperation programme to exchange expertise and information on environmental protection and pollution control.

The pact was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Theeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic



Zones and Free Zones and Eng Wael bin Khalid bin Salmeen, Operation CEO of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company.

The technical cooperation programme stipulates building local capacities in environmental disciplines, opening communication channels to

exchange expertise and scientific information between the two sides in the field of environmental protection and pollution control. It also includes organising awareness

programmes and environmental events, and holding regular meetings under the name of — the green table — to discuss common environmental issues and find the appropriate solutions to relating challenges.

The pact also stipulates preparing annual action plan to translate areas of cooperation disciplines into achievements to be implemented and followed up throughout the year by the departments concerned in environmental protection and pollution control in both sides.

Jet market stretches rich buyers as climate clouds gather

Private jet demand has boomed during the pandemic as the wealthy took control of their travel, yet the flight to luxury could have limited runway as some buyers spend beyond their means and the sector presents a prime target for climate critics.

Bidding wars for second-hand planes and premiums for early delivery of new ones dominated chatter at the National Business Aviation Association's (NBAA) show in Las Vegas last week.

It's a boon for publicly traded corporate planemakers who are increasingly selling aircraft without the discounts that had become pervasive after the industry fell from favour in the 2008-2009 financial crisis.

General Dynamics Corp's Gulfstream Aerospace, Bombardier, Textron and Dassault Aviation are

leaders by value of deliveries, which supplier Honeywell values at \$238 billion over the next decade.

"I'm hearing from people every day who are interested in getting into private aircraft," said Stephen Hofer, president of Aerlex Law Group, which does aircraft transactions.

But the influx of new entrants, often wealthy individuals and families who upgraded their travel from first-class airline tickets during the pandemic, brings some new risks.

One veteran broker described a new buyer who had purchased a plane at prices he could only afford by leasing the aircraft for part of the time to other travellers. If leasing demand wanes, the buyer could have difficulty paying for the jet, warned the broker who spoke candidly on condition of anonymity.

"These are people who have never got a \$1 million maintenance bill before," said the broker, adding such practices are reminiscent of market activity before the 2008 crash. Still, US business jet flight hours rose 16 per cent during early October compared with October 2019, itself the strongest month for activity since 2008, according to consultancy WingX.

And many executives, analysts, aviation lawyers and brokers are confident the rebound will continue into 2022.

"The activity rebound in 2021 is increasingly being seen as a green light for faster industry growth the next few years, not just a one-off bounce from the pandemic," said WingX Managing Director Richard Koe.

Deliveries are set to rise from around 700 a year now to roughly 900 by 2025, but still have room to grow given the peak 1,300 planes delivered in 2008, analyst Brian Foley said.

— Reuters

The activity rebound in 2021 is increasingly being seen as a green light for faster industry growth the next few years, not just a one-off bounce from the pandemic

RICHARD KOE

WingX Managing Director



AUTONOMOUS TECHNOLOGY

Team members of Black & Gold Autonomous Racing check their car prior to the Indy Autonomous Challenge race at the Indianapolis Speedway in Indianapolis. There will be cars on the track at the famous Indianapolis Speedway racetrack, but no driver in them; that won't stop the cars, in autonomous driving, from reaching 250 km/h, a new stage in the development of driverless vehicles.

— AFP

Energy crisis fuels commodity rally despite growth concerns



OLE HANSEN
Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank

The month-long run-up in commodity prices shows no sign of easing with the main engine continuing to be the global energy crisis and its direct impact on other sectors, not least the energy-intensive industrial metal sector.

Shortages of fuel leading to record-high prices has forced reductions in metal production from China to Europe, thereby exacerbating price gains for several key metals, many of which are important components in the global push to decarbonise economies.

The continued rally has however by now also started to raise concerns about its impact on consumers and whether high prices eventually will dampen the prospect for demand, thereby supporting more balanced markets.

Global growth is already seeing regular downgrades with rising energy prices acting as a direct tax on consumers. Adding to this are higher inflation and a slow resolution of supply bottlenecks around the world as well as the need for an even greater medical effort to combat a not yet under control virus.

In addition to the price-induced demand destruction and the impact of energy/power cost inflation on disposable incomes, a slowdown in the Chinese property market and cuts to Chinese industrial production could be forces that in our opinion may slow but not curb further commodity gains during the coming months.

EU gas and power prices traded mostly sideways following the early October spike, but at five times the seasonal

average gas prices are still well above levels that will cause economic hardship across the region while at the same time hurting growth as heavy energy-consuming industries scale back their production.

As temperatures continue to cool across the northern hemisphere, the market remains exposed to price spikes in the event of a colder winter. A 25 per cent tumble in coal prices following intervention from several branches of the Chinese government helped, at least temporary, to alleviate some of the fears of runaway prices.

With the power crunch in China showing signs of easing as coal powered plants are incentivised to produce more power, the prospect for more LNG shipments reaching Europe has also received some attention.

Overall, however, Europe is still facing a grim winter unless high prices kill demand, the winter turns out to be mild and windy, and most importantly Russia decides to ship more gas.

Unfortunately, such a decision increasingly looks like it's being linked to a swift approval by Germany of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline. With this in mind, global energy prices look set to remain elevated with gas-to-oil substitution adding an additional layer of support for several fuel products from heating oil and diesel to propane.

Crude oil's six-week rally showed signs of running out of steam in response to lower US gas prices and the slump in coal prices. From a technical perspective, the combination of Brent and WTI crude oil

both reaching overbought territory and hedge funds turning net sellers into the rally helped trigger some long overdue profit taking.

According to the latest Commitments of Traders report covering the week to October 12, hedge funds cut their exposure in Brent crude oil, the global benchmark, by 10 per cent to 300 million barrels, less than half the record 632 million barrels recorded back in 2018, the last time the price traded above \$80/b.

WTI crude oil meanwhile rallied to the highest level since 2014 with stocks at Cushing, the important delivery hub for WTI crude oil futures, rapidly draining to a 2018 low and well below average levels.

As a result, the futures curve has moved deeper into backwardation, a formation where market tightness drives the spot price higher than the deferred prices. An example being the \$10.4/b spread between the two nearest December futures contracts, a level that was last seen in 2013.

In our Q4-2021 outlook published on October 5, we raised our target range for Brent crude oil by 10 dollars to a \$75 to \$85 range. Having reached the upper end of this range already, and well before winter developments and a lack of additional Opec+ action potentially tightens the market further, the risk to our forecast remains clearly skewed to the upside.

Continued selling by hedge funds, however, needs to be watched as it removes a key source of demand in the "paper" market.

GLOBAL ENERGY PRICES LOOK SET TO REMAIN ELEVATED WITH GAS-TO-OIL SUBSTITUTION ADDING AN ADDITIONAL LAYER OF SUPPORT FOR SEVERAL FUEL PRODUCTS

Tech giants' earnings may be another test for markets at new highs



LEWIS KRAUSKOPF
Correspondent at Thomson Reuters

Investors are homing in on a flood of earnings reports from Wall Street's tech and Internet giants, as the high-growth stocks that have led markets higher for years face pressures from regulation, supply-chain snags and rising Treasury yields.

Apple Inc, Microsoft Corp, Google parent Alphabet Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Facebook Inc are all set to report earnings this week. Collectively, those five names account for over 22 per cent of the weighting in the S&P 500, giving their stock moves enormous sway over the broader index.

Overall, companies representing 46 per cent of the

S&P 500's market value are due to post quarterly results next week, according to Goldman Sachs.

Strong earnings reports have helped lift the S&P 500 (.SPX) to fresh record highs, with the benchmark index rising 5.5 per cent so far in October. In September, the index posted its biggest monthly percentage drop since the pandemic began in March 2020.

While investors expect most of the big technology firms to show robust profits, many will also be listening for indications of whether they will be able to sustain that growth.

Also in focus will be any forecasts regarding supply

bottlenecks, such as the chip shortage that has affected a broad swath of global industries, as well as their views on how sustainable the recent surge in consumer prices will be.

There have already been some signs that tech companies may have a high bar to clear. Intel and IBM fell sharply after their reports disappointed this week. read more

Meanwhile, shares of Facebook fell 5 per cent on Friday after Snap Inc, the owner of photo messaging app Snapchat, said privacy changes implemented by Apple on iOS devices hurt its ability to target and measure its digital advertising. read more

"I would expect the potential for more volatility," said James Ragan, director of wealth management research at DA Davidson. "We just might get the possibility for some of these big companies to disappoint a little bit."

The market's gains this month have been led by sectors seen as particularly sensitive to swings in the economy, including energy and financials, which have gained 11 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively.

The S&P 500 technology sector is up 6 per cent month-to-date. Many tech-focused companies received a boost in the wake of the pandemic, amid a

shift in consumer behaviour amid economic lockdowns and a move to working from home.

"The question then becomes, can they keep it up?" said Sameer Samana, senior global market strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute. "What do the growth rates look like for large tech?"

A BofA Global Research survey showed earlier this month that fund managers are slightly underweight technology relative to their average positioning of the past 20 years. At the same time, they named "long tech" as the market's most crowded trade for the fourth straight month.

— Reuters

SEPTEMBER SAW THE INDEX POSTING ITS BIGGEST MONTHLY PERCENTAGE DROP SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN IN MARCH 2020

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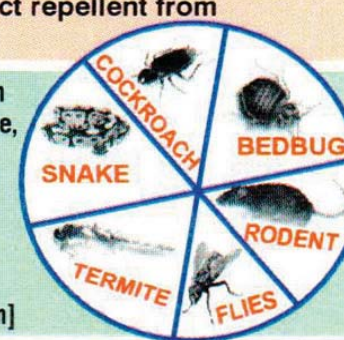
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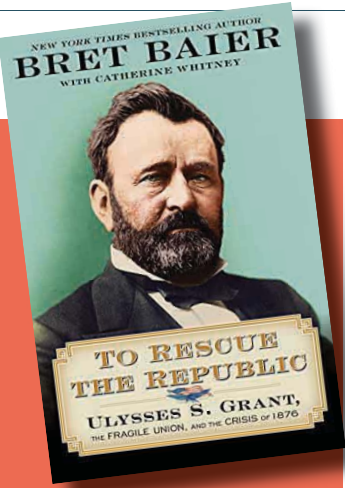
features



4 Things You Should Know About The Oman Pavilion

The Oman Pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai seeks to highlight the different achievements of the Sultanate in different civil and developmental areas and also doubles as a tourism hub showcasing the potential of Oman as a tourism and business destination. Visited by nearly 200,000 people in 20 days, here are some key facts you have to know... **P20**

READ



TO RESCUE THE REPUBLIC

BY BRET BAIER
WITH CATHERINE WHITNEY

The Fox News chief political anchor recounts challenges faced by Ulysses S Grant.

Oslo opens museum to “The Scream” painter Munch

“THE SCREAM”, arguably the most iconic image in art, is the centrepiece of a new museum dedicated to its creator Edvard Munch that opens in Oslo on Friday, but visitors won't know which of its many versions they will see until they arrive.

The figure holding its head in a swirling red sunset was inspired by a stay in Berlin in 1892 when the Norwegian, then aged 28, was a leading light of the Symbolist movement.

Between 1893 and 1910, Munch painted “The Scream” many times using different techniques. The waterfront museum will have access to three of those canvases but show only one at a time as they are very fragile, said its director, Stein Olav Henriksen.

ART

Since Munch's death in 1944 the image had replicated countless time in pop culture, on T-shirts, an as inflatable and latterly as an emoji.

“Anyone could see themselves in that character,” said the museum's curator Trine Otte Bak Nielsen.

“It's not clear if it's a man or a woman, and there is something with that directness and the strong colours and lines, all of it suggesting the figure and the landscape fusing into a very strong symbol.”

While Munch's other best known motifs, including “Puberty” and “Madonna”, also date back to the 1890s, he worked out of his home in the outskirts of Oslo from 1916 and ended up storing two-thirds of his produced artwork there.

He left that legacy to the city, then occupied by German troops, in his will when he died, Henriksen said. “He was afraid of what the Nazis would

do to him as an artist and to his collection,” he told Reuters.

The museum's striking presence in the city has been a subject of debate in Oslo for years.

The 13-floor building's gun metal grey facade and striking top-heavy profile towers over the opera house, a public library and residential buildings - all built in recent years as part of an urban renewal project to replace a busy container port.

While the museum's vast Munch collection will be its main pull, it will house other exhibitions and activities as well, said contemporary art curator Tominga Hope O'Donnell.

“It is going to be a place for cutting-edge new production where we have performance art and where you can come and see some of the best the city has to offer,” she said. — **Reuters**



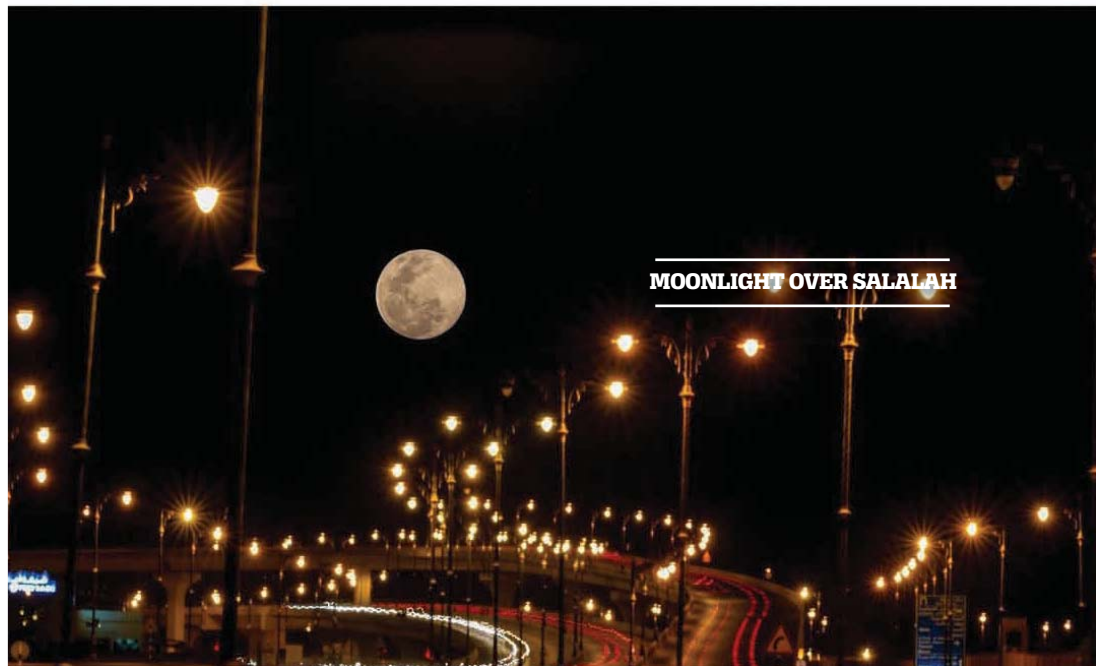


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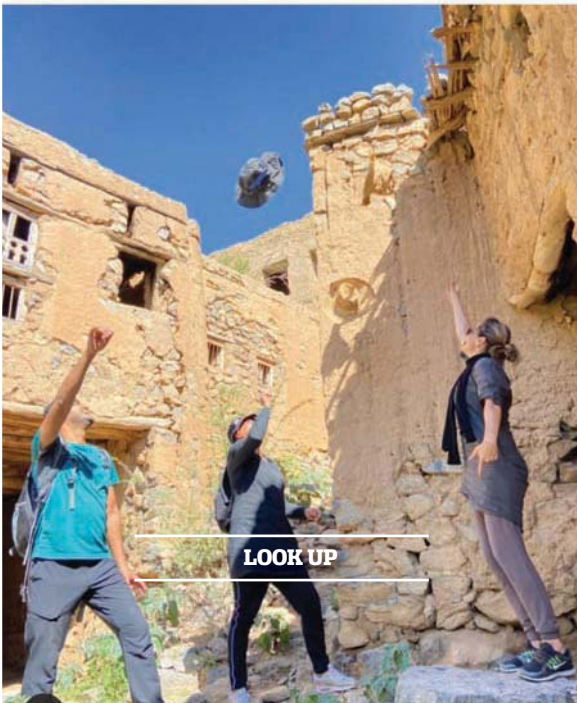
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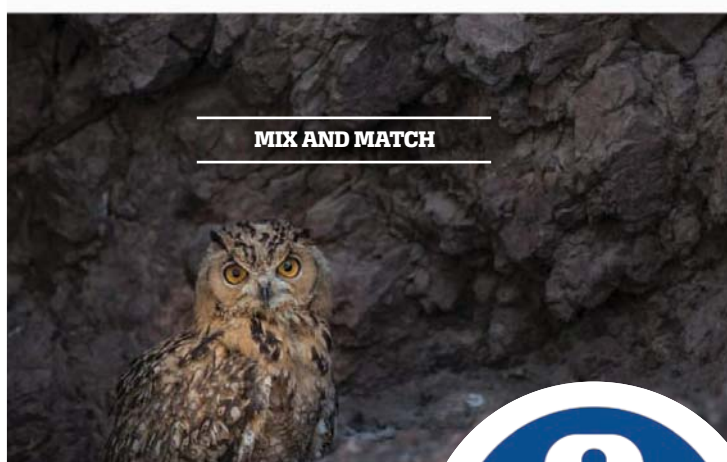
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AROUND THE WORLD

DIGITAL TRENDS

Music fans spend more time listening to tunes during pandemic — study



MUSIC FANS GLOBALLY are spending more time listening to tunes, about 18.4 hours a week on average, and have turned to their favourite artists for comfort during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a survey published on Thursday.

IFPI, the recorded music industry's representative body, said the figure, which equates to listening to 368 three-minute songs, is up from 18 hours in 2019, with listeners mostly turning to subscription audio streaming, video streaming, the radio and short form video apps like TikTok.

The Engaging with Music 2021 study, described by IFPI as the largest of its kind, is based on the views of 43,000 music fans in 21 countries.

"The research finds that not only are fans listening to more music, but that they are also seizing opportunities to engage with new, dynamic, and immersive music experiences," IFPI Chief Executive Frances Moore said in the report.

"Fuelled by record labels' investment, the incredible abundance and growth of music licensed to streaming services is driving this engagement. In addition, music has provided fans with comfort and healing through these challenging times."

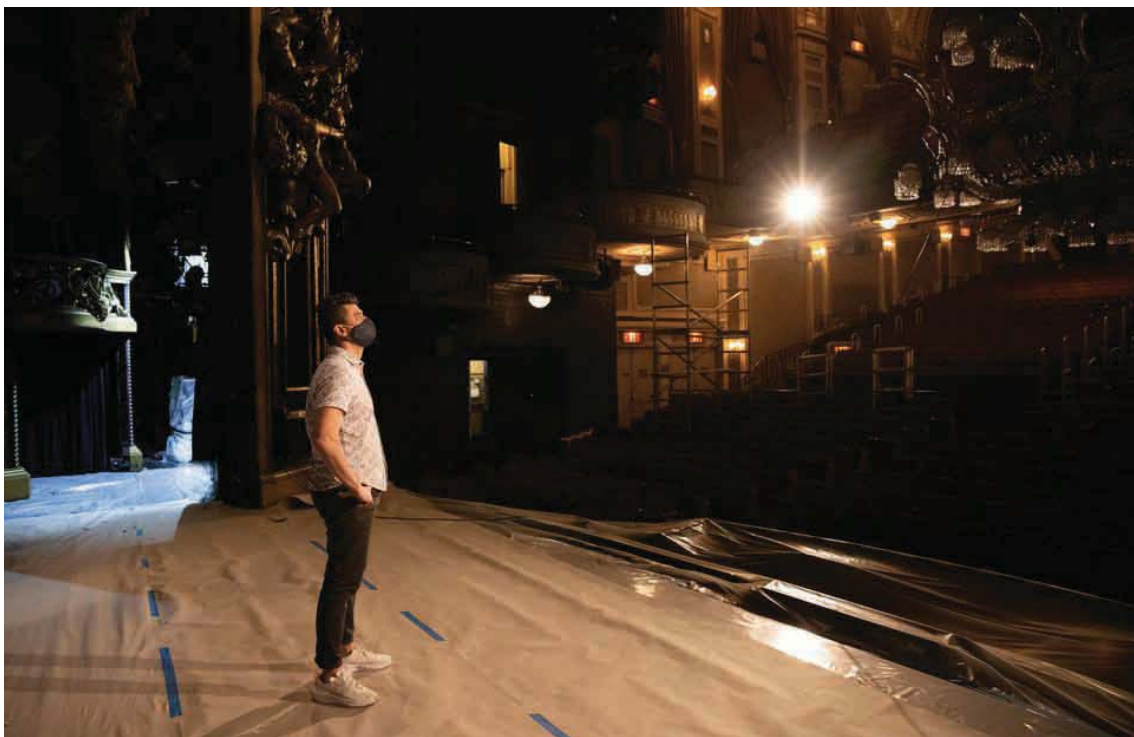
Fans have resorted to streaming for the autonomy and choice, with music listening time through subscription audio streaming rising 51 per cent, the study found, while 68 per cent of those surveyed said they searched for specific songs more than once a week.

Short-form videos, live-streaming and in-game experiences were also popular: the study found one in three people saying they had watched a music livestream in the last year. When it came to genres, more than 300 different kinds of music were named as music people listened to, with examples including electronic dance ggom, from South Africa, and axé, which originated in Brazil in the 1980s.

Around 87 per cent said music lifted their spirits during the pandemic while 68 per cent of 16 to 19-year old said new releases from their favourite singers soothed them during the pandemic.

Highlighting the problem of unlicensed music, almost one in three people surveyed — or 29 per cent — said they had used illegal or unlicensed methods to listen to or download tunes. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT



Broadway's 'Phantom of the Opera' Plots a Cautious Return to the Stage

MEGHAN PICERNO was again at work after 18 months of pandemic limbo, overjoyed to be singing and dancing once more along with her "Phantom of the Opera" castmates as they rehearsed for the return of Broadway's longest-running present.

Because the musical's late October reopening neared, generally all Picerno may take into consideration was making it to the primary curtain name unscathed by the breakthrough Covid-19 circumstances that had sidelined vaccinated actors at different reveals.

Outdoors lengthy days in a cold mirror-lined rehearsal studio close to New York Metropolis's Instances Sq., Picerno had put herself again on what she referred to as lockdown.

"I am a full-on monk now," she stated throughout a rushed lunch break between back-to-back run throughs.

She knew her job got here with dangers of publicity. Taking part in the present's heroine Christine required Picerno to kiss two co-stars each day and to sing full-throated love songs with them unmasked and at shut vary.

"Hopefully, none of us have it, as a result of if certainly one of us have it, all of us have it," she stated.

The crowded Broadway theatres, important to the town's tourism business, had been the primary locations closed by the New York authorities because the coronavirus started to ravage the state. Phrase of the abrupt shuttering got here throughout a "Phantom" matinee on the Majestic Theatre on March 12, 2020, as some solid and crew themselves had been falling sick.

Now, after an unprecedented shutdown, the theatres are among the many final workplaces to reopen. Their return this fall is considered as a take a look at of the town's efforts to revive some new sense of normalcy.

Reuters watched because the "Phantom" firm ready for its return. The pandemic left unmistakable marks.

Inside a couple of weeks of the present going darkish, Covid-19 had claimed the lifetime of a beloved dresser, Jennifer Arnold, who had been with the present for greater than three many years.

After protests crammed US streets final yr in outrage on the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by a white police officer, newly unemployed Broadway employees pushed the business to make overdue adjustments to extend racial range in theatre corporations.

In August, "Phantom" producers introduced that they had solid the first-ever Black actor to play Christine for the reason that present opened on Broadway in 1988. The actor, Emilie Kouatchou, would make her Broadway debut as an alternate for Picerno.

For the returning solid, there have been tweaks to lyrics and staging to be taught, making it extra simple to solid non-white actors in principal roles. The whole firm was required to be vaccinated and twice every week went to get their noses swabbed at a close-by theatre foyer repurposed as a short lived coronavirus testing website.

Picerno stated she was pleased to embrace no matter was wanted to get again on stage.

In the dead of night days of 2020, residing again in North Carolina along with her mother and father and claiming unemployment advantages, she stated she "virtually felt like a failure."

She sang her half every single day to maintain it contemporary in her thoughts till the singing made her too unhappy and he or she stopped. Emotion once more overcame her on the primary day reunited along with her castmates in late September. Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber had swung by the studio to ship a pep speak to the solid earlier than they sang by

way of the acquainted rating.

Picerno's singing dissolved in tears through the love duet "All I Ask of You."

"Sing alongside! Assist her!" the conductor urged the masked refrain, whose voices carried Picerno till she regained her composure.

'THINK OF ME'

A number of days later, the solid practiced dance steps in a mixture of avenue garments and the bulkier elements of their Nineteenth-century-style costumes.

Picerno drew a shawl by way of her fingers as she danced and sang "Consider Me" in her bell-like soprano. Off in a nook of the studio, Kouatchou silently mirrored Picerno's each transfer.

Kouatchou, the daughter of immigrants from Cameroon, grew up within the Chicago suburbs. "Phantom" was the primary Broadway present she ever noticed, on a visit to New York along with her high school. She remembers being transfixed by Christine.

"I may sing that function in my sleep," she recalled considering.

Nonetheless, she apprehensive about stereotyping, that some would see a mismatch in her voice, an operatic soprano, and her look, which was not the form of "petite white woman" who appeared to all the time get solid as a present's ingenue or heroine.

"I did not really feel like I had a spot in musical theatre as a result of I did not see anybody who regarded like me who sung like me," she stated.

Covid-19 had each upended dwell theatre and made house for progress.

"The pandemic was horrible," Kouatchou stated. "However we would not have the ability to have conversations like this and alter issues like this if it hadn't been for the pandemic."

Now, because the Phantom begins making his terrifying presence recognised in Act One, a frightened ballet dancer turns to the heroine and sings: "Christine, are you alright?"

Earlier than the pandemic and Kouatchou's casting, the lyric had all the time been: "Your face, Christine, it is white!"

The previous, creepy Christine doll that stood within the Phantom's lair, her options unmistakably white, additionally was out. A brand new doll, designed to be racially ambiguous, would debut on reopening night time. Later that week, Kouatchou bought her first glimpse of one of many new Christine wigs designed to match her hair texture.

"It is curlier and frizzier and I like it," Kouatchou stated. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Discovery of ancient Peruvian burial tombs sheds new light on Wari culture



A TEAM OF archeologists in northern Peru discovered the remains of 29 people, including three children, that could help experts rewrite the history of the pre-Incan Wari civilisation, the lead researcher said on Friday.

The skeletons were buried more than 1,000 years ago in Huaca Santa Rosa de Pucala, an ancient ceremonial center in the coastal region of Lambayeque, 750 kilometres to the north of Lima. The burials of the three children and a teenager at the front of the tem-

Pucala enclosure, in the form of the letter 'D', was built between 800 and 900 AD.

"We found a ceremonial temple with 29 human remains, 25 belonging to the Mochica era and four to the Wari culture," said Bracamonte.

The Mochica, or Moche, culture developed from 100 to 700 AD on the northern Peruvian coast. The 25 Mochica remains were found in clay tombs and burial chambers in a temple. Researchers also found pieces of pottery and the



ple indicated they were human sacrifices from the Wari culture, Edgar Bracamonte, the lead researcher, said.

It is the first time a dis-

remains of camelids — such as llamas and alpacas — and guinea pigs.

One of the most significant discoveries related to the Mochica culture was in



covery linked to the Wari civilisation has been made this far from their area of influence, said Bracamonte.

"These discoveries allow us to rethink the history of the Lambayeque region, especially the links to Wari and Mochica occupations in the area," said Bracamonte.

The Wari culture flourished in the central Peruvian Andes from the seventh to 13th centuries.

The Huaca Santa Rosa de

2006 with the unearthing of another mummy, the third century Lady of Cao mummy, that showed the civilisation included female leaders.

The 1987 discovery of another mummy, the third century Lord of Sipan, is considered by experts one of the most significant archeological discoveries in the last few decades, as the main tomb was found intact and untouched by thieves. — AFP



4 Things You Should Know About The Oman Pavilion

Since its opening at the beginning of October, the Oman Pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai proves to be a sure hit among visitors registering nearly 200,000 visits in only 20 days.

The pavilion which seeks to highlight the different achievements of the Sultanate in different civil and

developmental areas also doubles as a tourism hub showcasing the potential of Oman as a tourism and business destination.

Divided into five sections reflecting the life cycle of frankincense (Boswellia sacra tree), the pavilion will become a venue for distinct

Omani performance events including scientific, artistic, cultural presentation and economic seminars over the next six months.

We reviewed information from the team that manages the pavilion to check the 4 things you must know about it.

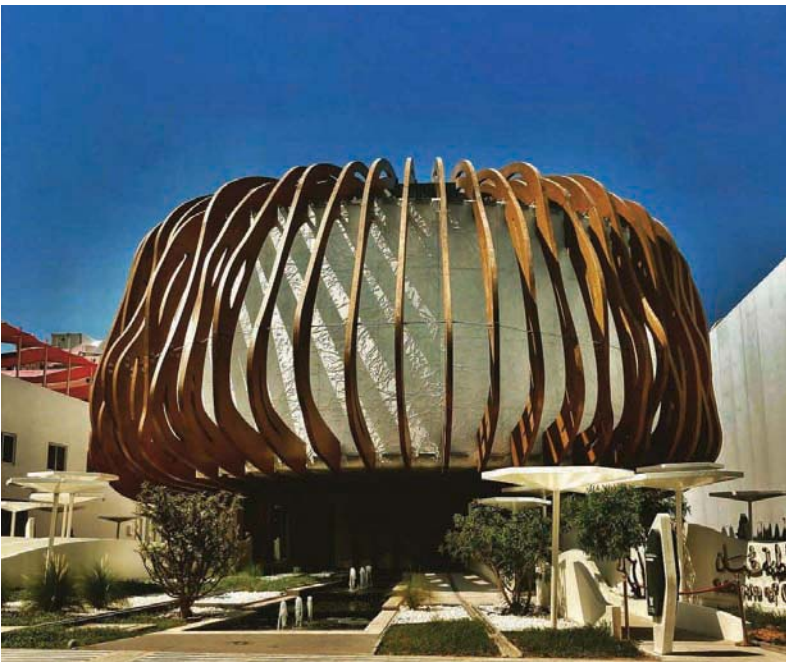


REFLECTING THE FRANKINCENSE TREE

Even in history, Oman has been well-known as home to the frankincense tree. The pavilion has been designed by two young Omani architects, Alya al Battashi and Rihab al Zakwani and is an abstract representation of the beloved frankincense tree taking inspiration from the low-hanging branches of the tree and communicating its spiritual, cultural and commercial significance to the country.

The pavilion has an asymmetrical, flowing appearance, its wooden panels curving inwards.

As per the team, Frankincense symbolises Oman's incredible history of innovation, outward-focused, collaborative approach to opportunity, connectedness to other cultures and openness to dialogue and exchange.



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Other than showcasing the country as an attractive holiday destination, the pavilion is also the perfect place and opportunity to tackle economic development. As such, the team has designed certain weeks to be dedicated to a specific field that will maximise economic gains. From showcasing Omani products, SMEs in Oman will also be given an opportunity to take part in the exhibit. It will be followed by a series of other meet and greet events with the Omani Investment Week being the highlight where different interested parties can preview the promising investment opportunities in Oman.

EXPERIENCING A NATION

The Oman pavilion will take the visitors on a journey connecting people and minds across time and place, in a modern telling of the story of Oman, rooted in a respect for the richness of the past, inspired by the innovation of the present and confidence in the future by showcasing the real opportunity in Oman: The People.

The Omani culture is one of the richest cultures in the Arab region and not only for the ancient history and the grand civilisations built by Omani people but also for the great norms and traditions people have developed and still hold to this day

Over the next six months, the pavilion will be hosting a series of Omani events. As a sample, during Omani Women's Day, the pavilion became an extension of the celebration being made in Oman. More will come in the coming weeks with numerous performances that demonstrate what makes Oman different culturally but also showcase the beauty of the Sultanate through the interaction with its people.



SOUVENIRS OF OMAN

Divided into five sectors covering Transportation, Knowledge, Manufacturing, Sustainability and Exploration, the pavilion offers augmented and mixed reality technology supporting the available interactive experiences. While going through the different sectors will help a visitor to have a general idea of Oman, all of these experiences eventually commence at the souq area where visitors can buy souvenirs from the different Omani crafts stores. With more than 2,000 trinkets created by about 400 SMEs, it is also a great opportunity to interact with Oman's artisans as most of the products were well-curated offerings from women and families who specialised in each of the display crafts.

