



P10

DHOFAR, OMAN
PLAY OUT
GOALLESS DRAW;
SEEB WIN



P15

THE OMAN AMERICAN
BUSINESS COUNCIL
CONTINUES TO ENHANCE
BILATERAL TRADE TIES



P20

JUST JAM SESSIONS
REIGNITING
MUSCAT'S MUSIC,
POETRY SCENE



MUSCAT

HM SENDS CABLES
OF GREETINGS

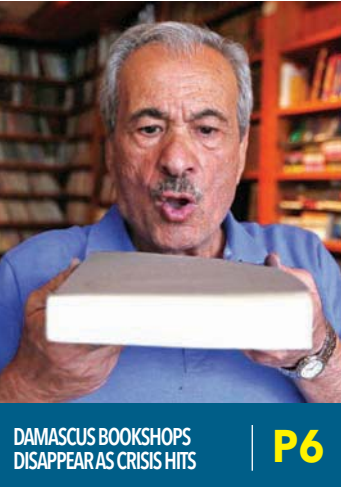
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of the Republic of Turkmenistan, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Berdimuhamedow. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Turkmenistan further progress and prosperity. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to Dame Susan Dougan, Governor General of St Vincent and the Grenadines on her country's National Day. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to Susan Dougan and the friendly people of her country permanent progress and welfare. — ONA

HM CONGRATULATES
UZBEK PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on being re-elected as his country's president. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Mirziyoyev in leading the friendly people of Uzbekistan towards further progress. His Majesty also wished the friendly relations between the two countries further development and growth. — ONA



INSIDE



OMANI YOUTH DAY CELEBRATED



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on behalf of the Omani youth, has expressed thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of the Omani Youth Day. HH Sayyid Theyazin presided over a virtual celebration of the Omani Youth Day on Wednesday. Delivering a speech on the occasion, he said that His Majesty accords great attention to Omani youth and that the designation of October 26 every year to mark the Omani Youth Day stems from the belief on the leading role of the youth. **SEE ALSO P3**

Sultanate sees rise in
inbound travellers

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Around 83,000 visitors came to the Sultanate of Oman in September this year, while 262,000 departed the country the same month, according to the latest figures of the National Centre of Statistics and Information (NCSI).

There was an increase of 220,000 outbound visitors compared to the same period last year, and Omanis accounted for 145,000 of them.

The total number of inbound visitors has increased 12 times compared to the figures same period in 2020. The Gulf visitors accounted for most of the inbound travellers (52,025 or 62.4 per cent), followed by Indians (12.6 per cent), Yemenis (7.4 per cent) and Pakistanis (2.1 per cent).

Over 252,000 visitors

There was an
increase of 220,000
outbound visitors
compared to the
same period last
year, and Omanis
accounted for
145,000 of them

NCSI

arrived in the Sultanate in September this year, compared to one million visitors who departed from the country in the same month.

It may be noted that the total number of hotel guests in three to five stars in the Sultanate until the end of September was 834,255, compared to 604,940 guests registered during...

Majlis office reviews job
opportunities for youth

REPAYMENT OF LOAN INSTALMENTS BY COVID-AFFECTED REVIEWED

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash'shura reviewed the replies of the Council of Ministers on a number of issues raised by Majlis Ash'shura including the stated desire to postpone the instalments of the personal, consumption and housing loans for Omanis. In its reply, the Council of Ministers said that the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), after studying the proposals and regulations, issued directives to the banks and financing institutions to delay the payment of instalments and loan interests for the segments affected by Covid-19 pandemic for up to 18 months.

The Office of Majlis Ash'shura held its 26th ordinary meeting of the second annual session (2020-2021), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali

office also reviewed a reply to the council's report on dismissal of Omanis in the private sector. In its reply, the government affirmed that it had taken a number of measures in this regard, and that the relevant authorities are making constant efforts to address the issue and find suitable solutions. The office reviewed the action

plans of the standing committees for the third annual session 2021-2022. The standing committees presented detailed reports about their action plans that included their executive programme for each committee.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The office also reviewed the annual report of the Ministry of Labour for 2020 which included a statistical report about the job opportunities in the private sector according to the economic activity, educational level and the distribution of manpower in the governorates.

The office reviewed the reply of the minister of labour to a question on the sponsor's responsibility in cases of absconding workers. In his reply, the minister said the ministry is going to revise the ministerial decision regarding absconding cases. **TURN TO P2**

UN warns world set for 2.7°C rise on today's emissions

LONDON: Current commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions put the planet on track for an average 2.7 degrees Celsius temperature rise this century, a United Nations report said on Tuesday, in another stark warning ahead of crunch climate talks.

Governments will be in the spotlight at the COP26 conference next week to meet a deadline of this year to commit to more ambitious cut pledges, in what could be the last chance to put the world on track to limiting warming to below 2°C above pre-



industrial levels and ideally to 1.5°C.

As extreme weather events from wildfires to floods have hit countries around the world, a UN report in August warned that global warming due to greenhouse gas emissions could breach 1.5°C

in the next two decades. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Monday it was "touch and go" whether the most important round of UN talks since the Paris Agreement in 2015 will secure the agreements needed to tackle climate change. — Reuters



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Rise in inbound travellers

FROM P1
the same period in 2020, registering an increase of 37.9 per cent, according to statistics issued by the NCSI.

The hotel revenues until the end of September amounted to RO 59,273,000, a decrease of 11.7 per cent compared RO 67,136,000 during the same period in 2020. The occupancy rate improved to 35 per cent this year compared to 27.3 per cent in 2020.

As per the statistics, the number of Omani guests in hotels increased by 115.8 per cent to 619,194 from 286,867 in the same period last year, followed by Asians — 98,752 guests (55,040 in 2020) with Arabs from non-Gulf countries — 32,151, Europeans - 29,732, Americas — 13,259, GCC nationals — 13,452, Oceania — 3,916, Africa — 2,868, and other nationalities — 20,933.

Survey over in 3 wilayats

MUSCAT: The field teams of the Ministry of Social Development have completed the survey of the affected houses from Shaheen in Al Musannah, Al Khabourah and Saham. The survey in Al Suwaiq is expected to finish on Thursday. The Ministry of Social Development introduced a new compensatory mechanism for sorting out affected houses, in cooperation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Department of Civil Status at ROP.

Commerce Minister takes part in investment summit

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion will be taking part in a Summit on Future Investment Initiative, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from October 26 to 28.

The 5th session of the initiative is held under the theme “Invest in Humanity”. It covers five fields, namely artificial intelligence (AI),



robotics, education, healthcare and sustainability. The Future Investment Initiative Institute is partnered with 16 different major companies and institutes worldwide.

Moreover, the Future of Investment Initiative gathers leaders of countries and companies, policy makers, investors and innovators from all over the world in a global forum to explore pioneer solutions for challenges facing society. It also aims to realise those solutions. The initiative's conferences will lay emphasis on investing in education, as well as investing in Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) principles.



Postponement of loan installments

FROM P1
Regarding the oversight tools, the office reviewed a request for briefing presented to the Minister of Education regarding identifying the requirement for teaching staff. The request included an inquiry about the number of applicants for teacher jobs who have passed the tests. The office also reviewed a request for briefing presented to the Minister of Energy and Minerals on the measures taken to ensure the quality of fuel and

the names of companies operating in the mining sector.

It also reviewed a request for discussion presented to the Minister of Education on the incidents of students being lefin school buses, and a request for discussion presented to the minister of health on the contract signed with eMushrif technology solutions company and the tasks assigned to the company such as the health isolation system.

OMAN-BRITISH JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE BEGINS



Maj Gen Mattar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), on Tuesday inspected the location of the joint Omani-British military exercise Khanjar Oman, being conducted by RAO, represented by Oman Reconnaissance Regiment at the 11th Infantry Brigade with the participation of 4th Infantry Brigade of the British army.

SQU researcher wins Unesco grant

MUSCAT: A research team led by Mariam bint Said al Bartamaniyah, doctoral researcher in history and an employee at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), has won a Unesco grant for silk road studies, a new initiative launched by Unesco with the support of the People's Republic of China.

Titled ‘The Maritime Silk Road from the 11th to the 19th Century and its Role in the Omani-Chinese Civilisation Convergence Through the Journeys of Abdullah al Suhari and Zheng He’, the winning research was focuses on the results of cultural interactions and exchanges between the Sultanate of Oman and China. The research team comprises Mariam bint Said al Bartamaniyah, lead researcher, Dr Fatima Balhawari, Dr Ali al Hajri, Dr Mohammed Bushaikha and Iman al Rashidiyah.

This study mainly targets to shed light on the Maritime Silk Road and the role it played in establishing political, commercial and cultural relations between the Sultanate of Oman and China, especially from the 11th to the 19th century. It also aims to highlight the role of missions, travellers, Omani and Chinese merchants in maintaining and developing these relations.



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N O	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR
1	SIPC 2021/205	Consultancy Service – Market Analysis & Development	OMR 105/-

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00am on Wednesday, 27/10/2021 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 11/11/2021.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

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Account Number	3101-007970-500
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Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted	

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents.

All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:

sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by email. The Technical and Commercial Proposals must be in separate, marked “ Technical and Commercial” addressed to: SOHAR Port and Freezone. Bid Opining Committee Tender Reference No SIPC 2021/205 Tender Title: Consultancy Service – Market Analysis & Development

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMES are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents
- For any clarification regarding the tenders, kindly send an e-mail to: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com



In brief

MUSCAT

OMAN, ITALY HOLD POLITICAL TALKS

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, on Tuesday held a session of political talks with Manlio Di Stefano, Italian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. They reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation in the economic, scientific and cultural areas and ways to enhance them in all fields. The two sides also exchanged views on a range of current regional and international issues of common interest. The session was attended by officials from both countries.

HUNGARIAN

DELEGATION VISITS SQU

HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), received a delegation from the Hungarian Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT). The Hungarian delegation was headed by Dr Marton Ugrosdy, IFAT Director. They reviewed joint areas of cooperation in the fields of economy, political sciences and academic exchange, as well as exchanging students and research.

TENDER RESULTS OF T-BILLS ANNOUNCED

A tender of government treasury bills, issue number 157, worth RO 60.4 million was announced this week. The total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 60.4 million, for a maturity period of 182 days from October 27 to April, 22, 2022. The average accepted price reached 99.615 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.610 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.77311 per cent and 0.77610 per cent. It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with CBO is 0.75 per cent.

RIYADH

MEETING OF GCC UNDER-SECRETARIES

The 19th meeting of GCC under-secretaries responsible for antiquities and museums was on Tuesday held via video-conferencing. The meeting discussed coordinating stances in international fora. It also underscored the importance of actively combating trafficking of antiquities and their illegal smuggling.



THEYAZIN GREETES YOUTH

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, addresses the event in Suhar to mark the Omani Youth Day on Wednesday. He said that His Majesty accords great attention to Omani youths and that the designation of the 26th of October each to mark the Omani Youth Day stems from the belief on the leading role of the Omani youth.

RO 2.3 million funding for 446 research projects

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) approved RO 2.3 million to fund 446 research projects as part of the Block Funding Research Programme.

The projects were submitted by researchers belonging to 53 institutions from the research, academic, government and private sectors of the Sultanate of Oman. A number of these research projects were from Omani students studying abroad at their own expenses.

The projects are from Education and Human Resources, Information Systems and Communication Technologies, Health and Community Service, Cultural and Social Sciences, Energy and Industry, and Environmental and Biological Resources.

A total of 149 research projects by PhD holders were funded this year at an overall cost of RO 1,750,000. Within the Graduate Research Grants (GRG) category of holders of Bachelor and Master's degrees, 81 research projects were funded at a cost of RO 210,000, with each awarded RO 3,000.

In addition, 186 research projects were funded within the Undergraduate Research Grants (URG) category with a total cost of quarter million Omani riyals, with RO 1,500 per project. With regard



The projects are from Education and Human Resources, Information Systems and Communication Technologies, Health and Community Service, Cultural and Social Sciences, Energy and Industry, and Environmental and Biological Resources

to the Omani students studying abroad at their own expenses (Graduate Research Grants-Abroad), MoHERI approved to fund 30 research projects at an estimated cost of approximately RO 90,000.

It is worth mentioning that during the current phase of the programme, the Block Funding Programme received 663 research

proposals of which 446 were (representing 67 per cent of the total) approved for fund. Out of the received 663 research proposals, 270 were by Phd holders. 149 of them (representing 55 per cent of the total) approved for funding. With regard to the support offered to the holders of Bachelor and Master's (Graduate Research Grants), the Block Funding Programme received 107 proposals and funded 81 of them (representing 76 per cent of the total).

Within the Undergraduate Research Grants (URG) category, 243 research proposals were received and 186 (representing 77 per cent of the total) approved for funding. The programme also received 43 research proposals from Omani students studying abroad at their own expenses and 30 of these research proposals were approved for funding.

Innovative products made of dates draw visitors at exhibition

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

Dates energy bars displayed at the dates exhibition organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources at Oman Avenues Mall drew the attention of most of the visitors on Tuesday. The exhibition will continue till October 31.

The energy bar is the brainchild of Abdullah bin Saif al Jabri, founder of Tamar, a food innovation company.

"Our factory produces two products and one of them is dates with a combination of oats and peanut butter. It is vegan, with no preservatives, no added sugar, and it is cholesterol-free. The product is a high protein diet, and we use the best quality peanuts. We add a bit of sea salt for the sake of international taste. Our Omani flavour is in other products as it has dates with roasted sesame and coconut with oats. This, of course, is a flavour much enjoyed by people in Asia, Middle East and North Africa. The sesame gives the distinct flavour of Tahini."

Abdullah's team has begun with two products because some people have sensitivity with peanuts, so they have other option. "We will have different flavours soon," he said, adding he cannot wait to reach out to other markets.

Another exhibitor, Atheela Ahmed, meanwhile buys dates from the government outlets, works from home and produces different products such as date sweets.

She called the exhibition an opportunity for her and other small and medium entrepreneurs. "It is very nice and we really need these opportunities," she said.

"My production comes under home business, so I also mostly sell through Instagram and WhatsApp," she pointed out.

Her products have other ingredients such as roses, pistachios and other flavours.

"Mostly, I create gift packs, and this also has an objective to encourage children to have the nutritious dates to create attractive gifts such as bags to pack the date products," Atheela pointed out.

They could take date fruit products to school as snacks.

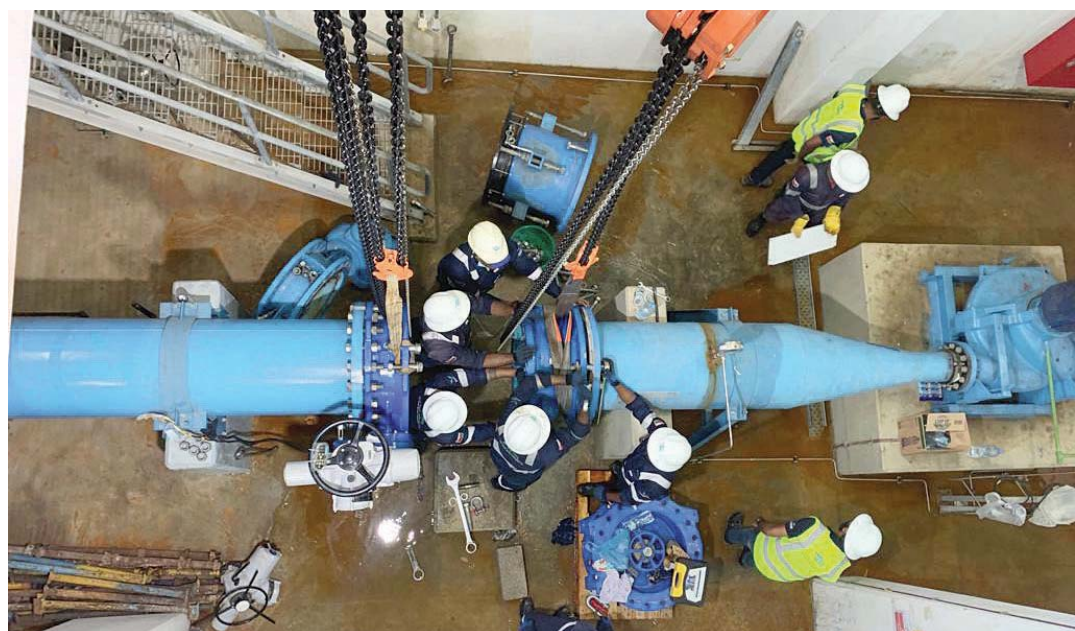
Majid bin Abdullah al Jaffery from Bahla chose to display his products at a corner with three fountains of Tahina.

"The first is natural Tahina, then we have Tahina with pistachio, and the third one is Tahina with peanuts. Tahina is very popular while consuming dates. It balances the sugar. Eating dates with Tahina is a popular practice in Oman. It is all natural and zero cholesterol," Majid explained.



Abdullah bin Saif al Jabri with dates energy bar.

Water supply resumes in Al Dakhiliyah, S Al Batinah



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

Abdullah bin Ahmed al Arafati, Senior Operations Manager, at the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, said the improvement works in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Wilayats of Nakhl and Wadi al Maawil in Al Batinah South which started on Monday, were completed within 12 hours and the water supply resumed gradually.

"The works included 19 sites in the two governorates

and were completed within 12 hours. We are proud that the company achieved the implementation in record time. Thanks to the top management and the team who worked during the implementation either on the sites or in the operations rooms," Al Arafati added. He said water was already being pumped into the two lines feeding Al Dakhiliyah and South Al Batinah, and supply through them would resume gradually to reinforce the water reservoirs in the two governorates.

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FOOD TO AVOID COLON CANCER

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COLON CANCER

cases, which was previously limited to advanced ages, are rising among youths in the Sultanate of Oman

and the whole world. Dr Adhari al Zaabi, a cancer researcher, said infection in 20-40 age group is severe and mainly detected at an advanced stage when treatment options are limited due to the lack of an early diagnostic examination for this age. There are no apparent symptoms that could alert the patient and the doctor.

For the Sultanate of Oman, breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in females, while prostate cancer and colorectal cancer are among the most common types of cancer among males.

“The genetic causes leading to colon cancer represent only 10 per cent, while the non-genetic causes include 90 per cent, which include lifestyle, type of food, water or food contamination, lack of exercise, radiation, high cholesterol, excessive use of antibiotics and also the so-called Chinese salt”, she explained.

The doctor, who is also a Founder of Siyaj initiative concerning awareness on cancer, added that a considerable percentage of patients with this disease do not have familial genetic mutations. This category is still being studied to find out the causes and factors associated with these infections.” “In some cases, the infected have a family history of the disease, indicating genetic mutations that increase

the rate of infection”, she explained. Al Zaabi advised these patients to resort to early diagnostic tests to detect the mutation causing the disease,

followed by specific tests to detect the disease early. Early detection, according to her, increases the rate of complete recovery from it. “Mutation carriers should not ignore any abnormal symptoms that could suggest changes in the colon, such as persistent constipation, weight loss, appetite and others”, she asserted.

She indicated that millions of beneficial bacterial tribes live in the colon that maintains its function and human health. “These bacteria are very sensitive to what we eat. They like fruits, vegetables, fibre, white meat and a balanced diet. They dislike processed meat, red meat and junk food. Colon health depends a lot on the balance of these bacterial tribes”.

Studies have found that the disruption of the diet, especially among the young, has led to an imbalance in these tribes and thus weakened their ability to protect the colon, which led to an increase in the colon’s infection with mutations, and tumours. To minimise risk of catching colon cancer, doctors advise adopting healthy lifestyle, eating balanced diet, exercising and drinking plenty of water. “Go to the doctor when strange symptoms appear, such as chronic constipation, acute anaemia of unknown cause, weight loss and appetite”, Dr Al Zaabi added, stating that these symptoms may be similar to other diseases. However, she advised taking the necessary tests if the

symptom lasted more than two weeks and did not respond to the initial treatment. She also recommended following a healthy diet to maintain the health of the digestive system.

DOCTORS ADVISE ADOPTING
HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, EATING BALANCED DIET,
EXERCISING AND DRINKING
PLENTY OF WATER



Officials take stock of school facilities in Dhofar

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

Majid bin Saeed bin Sulaiman al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs, concluded his visit to schools in Dhofar. His visit aimed to review the progress made in the educational sector to achieve the desired goals.

Al Bahri interacted with educational officials in the governorate and reviewed important developments, mechanisms and plans to implement administrative and financial decisions.

He also held meetings with the schools' administrative and teaching staff members and

took stock of educational work there. He visited classrooms to assess facilities and level of students.

Yaqoub bin Saif bin Muhammad al Shehimi, Director-General of the General-Directorate of Education in the Governorate of Dhofar, the ministry's general directors, officials and educators accompanied the under-secretary during the visit.

The under-secretary praised the efforts towards improving the educational institutions in the governorate. He put stress on coordination between various authorities in the ministry and the governorate's educational institutions.



Lead Poisoning Prevention Week highlights health risks

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Disease Surveillance and Control, is joining the world in the celebration of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW), observed every year from October 24-30.

The week highlights the efforts of countries and partners to prevent lead exposure, particularly in children, and the serious health effects of lead exposure, in addition to accelerating efforts to eliminate lead paint gradually.

The MoH's Environmental and Occupational Health Department is organising many events and activities to increase lead poisoning prevention awareness in communities.

A symposium on measuring the health effects of lead exposure and national efforts in this area is planned. Moreover, outreach materials are developed about the health effects of lead exposure and ways of prevention.



Oman participates in ConvEx-3

The National Centre for Emergency Management (NCEM) is representing the Sultanate of Oman at the international ConvEx-3 rehearsal exercise on nuclear emergencies. The two-day drill, held via video-conferencing, due to be hosted by Barakah plant, the United Arab

Emirates, will be attended by representatives of many military, security and civil agencies concerned. ConvEx-3 exercise is carried out in response to safety measures set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for member states. The exercise offers an opportunity to examine the system of communications and

procedures to address related emergency incidents in participating states. The process involves the reception of data via the designated electronic website in accordance with international agreements and national plans regulating this matter. The overall aim is to exchange information and resources among GCC member states.

Australia to allow return of int'l students next year

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

A large number of foreign students studying in various colleges and universities of Australia will be finally allowed to return and resume offline studies from next year.

"The Australian Federal Government will allow the return of international students studying in various universities in Canberra from the beginning of the academic year 2022," the Sultanate of Oman's consulate in Australia said.

According to reports, Australia will allow the return of students in a phased manner depending on the institutions and their states in where they are located.

The students will be exempted from home and institutional quarantine, provided they provide proof of receiving two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine and submit a

PCR certificate issued no more than 72 hours before travel, the official statement said.

Australia recently announced the implementation of the national plan to reopen international borders in three main phases. The first stage will include all citizens, permanent residents and their families.

The second stage will cover international students and business owners, while the third stage will allow the entry of tourists. The states of Victoria and New South Wales in Australia will allow the return of citizens, permanent residents and their families from November 1, 2021.

"The students will be exempted, provided they provide proof of receiving two doses of the coronavirus vaccine and submit a PCR certificate issued no more than 72 hours before travel," the two states said.



Recall/Special Service Campaign



Date of Campaign : 27/10/2021
Campaign Type : Recall/Special Service Campaign
Product Description : Supra equipped with 3.0L engine

Production Period	Brand	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle Range	Nos. of Affected Vehicles
July 31, 2018 through June 21, 2021	TOYOTA	SUPRA	WZ1DB4A0XLW020650 to WZ1DB0A01MW036469	30

Description:

According to BMW, under certain engine start conditions, engine management software could cause the oil/vacuum pump, which supplies vacuum for brake assistance (brake boost), to become damaged. The specific engine start conditions consist of either 1) pressing the engine start/stop button two times in rapid succession, or 2) depressing the brake pedal very briefly while pressing the engine start/stop button. This could result in a loss of brake assist. However, based on Toyota's evaluation of this condition, prior to a loss of brake assist, the full brake assist function is available for approximately four full brake applications, or approximately nine partial brake applications. Fully mechanical braking (without assist) is not affected and remains available. An increase in stopping distance could occur, which could increase the risk of a crash.

Procedure:

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C.R. 1703412

Ban on heavy trucks on Suhar-Yanqul road

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), has issued a decision banning movement of trucks weighing more than 7 tonnes on Suhar-Yanqul road, with effect from the beginning of November. The decision is aimed at organising and managing the movement of trucks on the main roads in the Sultanate of Oman. It also aims to reduce road accidents and ease vehicular movement.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (46/2021)

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

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/21/061	2021/MM/QS-20	Maintenance Works for A'Seeb Central Market	Rial 25	15/11/2021	05/12/2021	First
PRE/21/064	2021/MM/QS-22	Maintenance Works for Fish Market Building in A'Seeb	Rial 25	15/11/2021	05/12/2021	First
PRE/21/068	2021/MM/QS-23	Proposed Public Walkway in Qurayat (Daghmar / Kreeb)	Rial 30	15/11/2021	05/12/2021	First
PRE/21/077	2021/MM/QS-24	Proposed Grills Village in AL Amerat	Rial 25	15/11/2021	05/12/2021	Second

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.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Internal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, 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@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).



US Climate Adviser John Kerry with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Summit of the Green Middle East Initiative in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. – Reuters

Saudi pledges more than \$1 billion in ‘green era’ initiatives

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia pledged more than \$1 billion for new global environmental initiatives on Monday, taking further steps to bolster the green credentials of the world’s top oil exporter.

Two days after targeting carbon neutrality by 2060, and ahead of next week’s COP26 global climate change summit, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced two initiatives to fund the “circular carbon economy” and provide “clean fuel” to help feed 750 million people worldwide.

The two initiatives were targeted to cost 39 billion riyals (\$10.4 billion). Saudi Arabia will contribute 15 per cent and seek the remainder from regional funds and other countries, Prince Mohammed said.

“Today we are initiating a green era for the area, believing that these changes are not only for the environment but also for the economy and security,”

he told heads of state and other senior officials at the Middle East Green Initiative Summit in Riyadh.

“We will work on establishing an investment fund in solutions with circular carbon technology in the region and a global initiative which will supply solutions for clean fuel to provide food for more than 750 million people globally.”

The “circular carbon economy” is a concept promoted by the Saudis which aims to remove and store carbon for reuse in other products.

The summit, which also featured the leaders of Qatar and Pakistan, and US climate envoy John Kerry, follows Saturday’s Saudi Green Initiative where Prince Mohammed announced a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2060.

COP26 aims to set the world on a path to net zero by mid-century. — AFP

Khartoum locked down after coup triggers deadly unrest

SUDAN GENERAL SAYS PM IS ‘AT MY HOME’ AFTER COUP

KHARTOUM: Roads were blocked, shops were shut, phones were down and mosque loudspeakers blared calls for a general strike in Sudan on Tuesday, a day after the army seized power in a coup that triggered unrest in which at least seven people were killed.

Plumes of smoke rose over Khartoum from tyres set ablaze by protesters. Life came to a halt in the capital and in its twin city Omdurman across the Nile, with roads blocked either by soldiers or by protester barricades.

The night appeared to have passed comparatively quietly after Monday’s unrest, when protesters took to the streets after soldiers arrested Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and other civilians in the cabinet. A health ministry official said seven people had been killed in clashes between protesters and the security forces.

On Monday, takeover leader General Abdel Fattah al Burhan dissolved the military-civilian Sovereign Council set up to guide Sudan to democracy following the overthrow of long-ruling ruler Omar al Bashir in a popular uprising two years ago.

Burhan announced a state of emergency, saying the armed forces needed to protect safety and security. He promised to hold elections in July 2023 and hand over to an elected civilian government then. On Tuesday he dissolved committees that govern trade unions, Arabic news channels reported.

The Sudan information ministry, still loyal to Hamdok, has called the takeover a crime and said Hamdok



A demonstrator carrying a national flag walks by roadblocks on a street in Khartoum on Tuesday. – AFP

is still the legitimate leader. Hamdok and his missing cabinet members were still being held in an unknown location, the foreign minister of the ousted government said in a message posted on the information ministry’s Facebook page on Tuesday.

Main roads and bridges between Khartoum and Omdurman were closed to vehicles by the military. Banks and cash machines were shut, and mobile phone apps widely used for money transfers could not be accessed.

PAYING THE PRICE

Some bakeries were open in Omdurman but people were queuing for several hours, longer than usual.

“We are paying the price for this

crisis,” a man in his 50s looking for medicine at one of the pharmacies where stocks have been running low said angrily. “We can’t work, we can’t find bread, there are no services, no money.”

In the western city of El Geneina, resident Adam Haroun said there was complete civil disobedience, with schools, stores and gas stations closed. The Sudanese Professionals Association, an activist coalition that played a major role in the uprising that toppled Bashir, has called for a strike.

Western governments have condemned the coup, called for the release of the detained civilian leaders and threatened to cut off aid, which Sudan needs to recover from an economic crisis.

The United States has said it was

immediately pausing delivery of \$700 million in emergency support.

Sudan has been ruled for most of its post-colonial history by military leaders who seized power in coups. It had become a pariah to the West and was on a US terrorism blacklist under Bashir, who hosted Osama bin Laden in the 1990s and is wanted by the International Criminal Court in the Hague for war crimes.

Since Bashir was toppled, the military shared power uneasily with civilians under a transition meant to lead to elections in 2023. The country had been on edge since last month when a failed coup plot, blamed on Bashir supporters, unleashed recriminations between the military and civilians.

— Reuters

Damascus bookshops disappear as crisis hits culture

DAMASCUS: The Damascus bookshops and publishing houses that once stood as beacons of Syria’s intellectual life are being replaced with shoe shops and money changers, as culture falls casualty to crisis.

Syria is home to some of the Arab world’s literary giants, and Damascus boasted an abundance of busy bookshops and publishing houses printing and distributing original and translated works. But the city’s literary flare has faded.

A decade-old civil war, a chronic economic crisis and a creative brain drain that has deprived Syria of some of its best writers and many

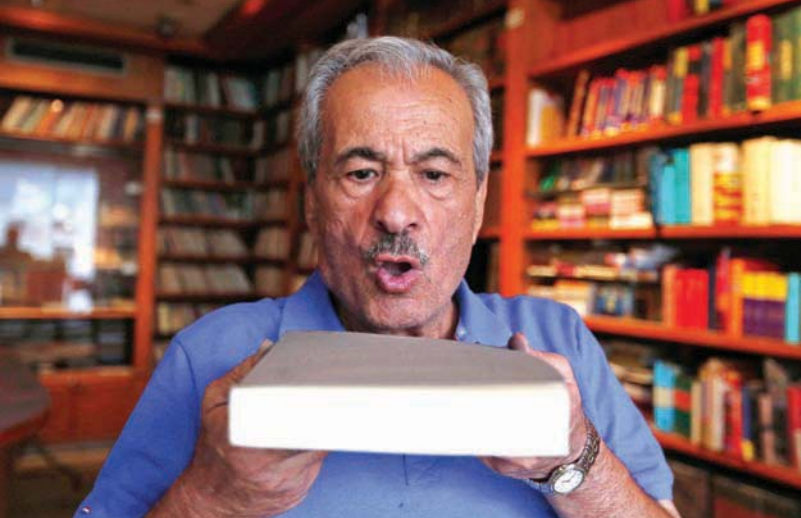
of their readers, have compounded worldwide problems facing the industry, such as the growing popularity of e-books.

“People can’t afford to read and bookstores can’t cover the expenses of staying open,” said Muhammad Salem al Nouri, 71, who inherited one of the capital’s oldest bookshops from his father.

Last month, the iconic Nobel bookshop in Damascus, founded in 1970, closed its doors.

The Al Yaqza bookshop, founded in 1939, shut seven years ago, with a shoe store now taking its place.

A money exchange office has



Muhammad Salem al Nouri blows dust off a book at the Dar al Maarifa library in Damascus. – AFP

replaced the Maysalun bookshop which was open for four decades.

The Al Nouri bookstore, founded in 1930, is at risk of meeting the same fate. “We wanted it to remain for our children and grandchildren,” Nouri said. “But the Al Nouri bookshop is threatened with closure, as are other bookstores.”

The Nouri family currently runs two bookshops in central Damascus. Three years ago, the family was forced to close a third bookshop they had opened in the capital in 2000 because of poor sales and growing costs.

Its stock remains in place, gathering dust on fully stacked shelves. On a

wooden desk, old photos of celebrity customers, including politicians, artists and poets, are placed on display. For Sami Hamdan, 40, the cultural heyday of the 1950s and 1960s is long gone.

“The war has destroyed what was left” of a cultural scene that was already in retreat, said the former owner of the Al Yaqza bookstore. With 90 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and prices skyrocketing in the face of the plummeting value of the Syrian pound, “no one is going to invest in a bookshop during conflict,” Hamdan said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

ISTANBUL

EU envoy to Turkey welcomes easing of crisis

The head of the EU delegation to Turkey welcomed on Tuesday the de-escalation between Ankara and some Western nations over the ambassadors expulsion threat following a call for the release of a key jailed philanthropist.

“I think everyone found a face-saving way out (of this crisis),” Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut said in Istanbul. The top EU envoy said he hopes the sides will continue working together based on common interests and despite the challenges. Turkish President



Recep Tayyip Erdogan has over the weekend threatened to expel the ambassadors from 10 Western countries, including Germany and the United States, stirring a new spat with some of Ankara’s key trade and political partners.

TEHRAN

Iran says cyberattack blocks supply at petrol stations

A cyberattack in Iran interrupted petrol distribution at the country’s service stations on Tuesday, state television said, citing the Islamic republic’s top security body.

“The Supreme National Security Council confirmed that there has been a cyberattack against the petrol distribution computer system,” the television said. It had earlier reported that the interruption was due to “disruptions to the computer system”. “Details of the attack and its source are under investigation,”



it added, without giving further details. The Fars news agency linked the breakdown to the upcoming second anniversary of deadly November protests sparked by a hike in petrol prices.

CAIRO

Sisi ends state of emergency for the first time in years

Egypt’s state of emergency will be lifted for the first time in years, President Abdel Fattah al Sisi said. Egypt imposed a state of emergency in April 2017 after deadly bombings of churches and has since routinely extended it at three-month intervals, despite an improved security situation.

“Egypt has become... an oasis of security and stability in the region,” Sisi wrote in a Facebook post. “Hence it was decided, for the first time in years, to cancel the extension of the state of



emergency in all areas of the country.” The state of emergency granted authorities sweeping powers to make arrests and crack down on what they call enemies of the state.

In brief

■ PHNOM PENH



CAMBODIA TO RE-OPEN TO INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS

Foreign tourists will soon roam Cambodia's ancient Angkor Wat temples once again, after officials on Tuesday flagged a partial reopening to vaccinated travellers.

The coronavirus pandemic and travel restrictions put the brakes on Cambodia's burgeoning tourism industry — revenue plummeted to \$1 billion last year, down from nearly \$5 billion in 2019 when the country attracted 6.6 million visitors. The Cambodian tourism ministry on Tuesday announced a November 30 reopening for popular beach spots Sihanoukville and the island of Koh Rong, as well as Dara Sakor — a Chinese-developed resort zone.

■ GENEVA



REVIEW OF INDIA'S COVAXIN SHOT UNDER WAY, SAYS WHO

A World Health Organization technical advisory group was reviewing data on India's Covaxin shot against Covid-19 on Tuesday with a decision on its emergency use listing likely soon, a spokesperson said.

"If all is in place and all goes well and if the committee is satisfied, we would expect a recommendation within the next 24 hours or so", Margaret Harris told journalists at a UN press briefing.

Millions of Indians have taken the shot produced by Bharat Biotech but many have been unable to travel pending the WHO approval.

■ KUALA LUMPUR



MALAYSIA PREPS POST-PANDEMIC BUDGET

Helped by surging prices for gas exports, Malaysia is expected to unveil an expansionary budget on Friday as it looks to spur post-pandemic recovery and set the stage for an election that could be called as early as the middle of next year.

Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, who took office in August, has agreed not to dissolve parliament before the end of July 2022 as part of a cooperation pact signed with the opposition in order to maintain political stability as the country recovers from the Covid-19 crisis.

The deal includes a commitment from opposition lawmakers to support or abstain on the government's 2022 budget.

Myanmar rebuked by leaders after Asean summit no-show



Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong speaks during the virtual Asean Summit, hosted by Asean Summit Brunei, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Indonesia president says junta showed 'unwelcome attitude'

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Southeast Asian leaders sharply criticised Myanmar's junta as a regional summit opened on Tuesday without a representative from the country, following its top general's exclusion for ignoring a peace roadmap agreed six months ago.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) had said it would accept a non-political figure from Myanmar, but the junta on Monday rejected that, saying it would only agree to its leader or a minister attending.

In an unprecedented snub to the leader of a member state, Asean had decided to sideline junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, who led a February 1 coup that spiralled into violence and nationwide chaos, for his failure to cease hostilities, allow humanitarian access and start dialogue with opponents, as agreed with Asean in April.

The decision was a huge

insult to Myanmar's military and a rare, bold step by a regional grouping known for its code of consensus, non-interference and engagement. "Today, Asean did not expel Myanmar from Asean's framework. Myanmar abandoned its right", said Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who will become the group's chairman next year. "Now we are in the situation of Asean minus one. It is not because of Asean, but because of Myanmar."

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Asean had a slot ready for Myanmar, but it chose not to join.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo in his remarks to leaders lamented Myanmar's "unwelcome attitude" towards Asean's diplomatic efforts, Retno said. "Asean's decision to invite a Myanmar representative on a non-political level was a heavy one, but it had to be done", she said.

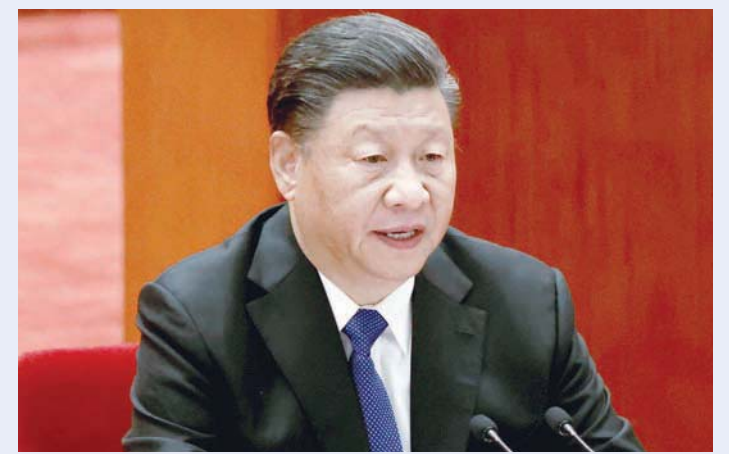
"The president reminded that it's important for us to honour the principles of non-interference. But on the other hand, we're obligated to uphold other principles... like democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and a constitutional government."

Myanmar's military, which ruled the country for 49 of the past 60 years, has objected strongly to Asean's uncharacteristically strict response, accusing it of departing from its norms and of allowing itself to be influenced by other countries, including the United States. Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a retired general considered the Asean leader closest to Myanmar's coup-makers, urged the country to implement a five-point roadmap it agreed with Asean. He said the issue was crucial for the bloc's reputation and a test of its resolve.

CREDIBILITY AT STAKE

"Asean's constructive role in addressing this situation is of paramount importance and our action on this matter shall have a bearing on Asean's credibility in the eyes of the international community", Prayuth said.

Asean made the call days after its special envoy Erywan Yusof said the ruling State Administrative Council (SAC) denied him sufficient access, including to ousted, democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is charged with multiple crimes. — Reuters



China's Xi will not attend Rome G20 summit in person

ROME: Chinese President Xi Jinping will not attend a Rome summit of the Group of 20 leading economies in person, a source close to the matter said on Tuesday.

China will be represented at the summit on Saturday and Sunday by its foreign minister while Xi, whose presence had been in doubt for some time, will join the summit remotely, the source said.

The Kremlin said last week that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not be in Rome for the summit, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador have also said they will not come. The source said the absences would not compromise the chances of making good progress at the summit, which will focus mainly on climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The gathering hopes to achieve recognition from G20 leaders of the importance of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the source said, and a commitment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by "around the middle of the century."

The wording on these issues will be closely watched for whether it is stronger than at a meeting of G20 energy and environment ministers in Naples in July.

At that meeting, ministers

The G20 also aims to underline that rich countries should stump up \$100 billion per year to help poorer nations adapt to climate change

failed to reach unanimous agreement on setting dates for ending fossil fuel subsidies and phasing out coal power, and the Italian presidency asked leaders to try to bridge the differences at the Rome summit.

India also distanced itself from the part of the communiqué underlining the need to achieve net-zero emissions around mid-century, and suggested that emissions should be considered on a per capita basis.

The G20, whose countries account for 80 per cent of global carbon emissions, is considered an important stepping stone before the United Nations COP26 climate summit next week in Scotland.

The G20 also aims to underline that rich countries should stump up \$100 billion per year to help poorer nations adapt to climate change.

This goal was supposed to be achieved by 2020, according to an agreement reached in 2009, but has not been met. — Reuters

Afghan all-female orchestra keeps music alive in exile

DOHA: For the first time in months, members of Afghanistan's all-female Zohra orchestra have reassembled in Doha, their music once again filling the air as they face an uncertain future.

While grateful to be safe in Qatar, their escape from Taliban rule is bittersweet, as the girls leave behind friends from the orchestra and their "old companions" — their instruments.

Last week marked the first time in three months that Marzia Anwari, along with other members of the Afghan music community who escaped to Qatar, played live for an audience.

"Most of the girls from the Zohra orchestra are here with me in Qatar, but some of them are still in Afghanistan", the 18-year-old violinist said. "I hope that they can join us here as soon as possible and we can be together and rebuild our orchestra."

Zohra, Afghanistan's first all-



Shogofa Safi, percussionist and conductor of the Zohra orchestra, plays along with other members of the Afghan music community, during a concert in Doha. — AFP

female orchestra, was established in 2016.

The group of 35 young musicians aged 13-20, some orphans or from poor families, gave a culture-crossing performance at the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos that overcame tradition and death threats in their homeland.

Now in exile, and with new instruments, the musicians are hoping to keep their cultural heritage alive after the Taliban seized power in August.

Music was banned when the Taliban last ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, and since their return, women's freedoms and education have again been abruptly curtailed.

"In Afghanistan, they consider everything forbidden for women, particularly music", Anwari said.

It was difficult to be a working musician even before the takeover, she said, with many conservative Afghans believing that girls belong

in the home.

The Taliban have been trying to win backing and financial support for their regime, promising a more flexible rule than last time.

But since they overthrew Afghanistan's former US-backed government, high school girls have been blocked from returning to classes, while many women have been banned from returning to work.

Shogofa Safi, a percussionist and conductor of the Zohra orchestra, said she was happy to be out of Afghanistan.

The 18-year-old said of her harrowing escape, with Taliban manning Kabul airport before her evacuation flight.

"The situation in Afghanistan was really dangerous and it was scary to leave", she said.

The Taliban "didn't know we were musicians", she said, adding that "if they had known", they would have killed them. — AFP

Activists disrupt Paris climate finance meeting before COP26

PARIS: Activists disrupted a green finance summit in Paris on Tuesday, saying that French President Emmanuel Macron had failed to get serious on investing in combating climate change.

Macron's government says it is committed to meeting its climate targets, including going carbon neutral by 2050, in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

Protesters intervened shortly after a speech by French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, with one holding a banner reading "Macron: champion of fossil fuel finance", images published online by action group Les Amis de la Terre showed.

Le Maire said he supported allocating tax revenues from fossil fuels to finance the transition to a greener economy, an idea the government has flagged since early in Macron's mandate.

"If we guarantee that every euro of tax revenue on petrol, diesel, gas and fuel oil will be allocated... to the fight against global warming, I am convinced that will facilitate financing the ecological transition and make the tax system more acceptable," Le Maire said.

About 18 activists set off alarms and chanted 'Your finance, our lives', while in a nod to Greta Thunberg, they complained of the "blah, blah" rhetoric they



Police officers remove a supporter of the climate protest group 'Extinction Rebellion' for blocking traffic near Vancouver International Airport in Richmond, British Columbia. — Reuters

said was coming from Macron's government, echoing the words of the environmental campaigner at a pre-COP26 event in Italy last month.

A French court this month ordered the state to honour its promises on climate change, insisting it take measures to repair ecological damage and to prevent a further increase of carbon emissions by the end of December 2022 at the latest.

Macron's government, which is due to attend the COP26 meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, next month, was fined 10 million euros (\$12

million) by France's highest administrative court in August for failing to improve air quality.

France will decide soon whether to build new nuclear EPR reactors, Environment Minister Barbara Pompili told a separate event.

France and several other countries have pushed to label nuclear energy as green investments in the European Union's upcoming sustainable finance rules.

Meanwhile, climate change poses "an existential challenge" for democratic governments and

could lead to more authoritarian rule if efforts to curb global warming founder, fuelling a surge in catastrophic impacts from hunger to heatwaves, researchers warned on Tuesday.

Worsening disasters and the resulting societal upheaval could "be used as an excuse for autocratic... regimes to curtail democratic freedoms, as experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic," warned a report from the nonprofit International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

— Reuters



Baerbel Bas is congratulated by parliamentary group leader of The Left left-wing party Dietmar Bartsch after being elected as new president of the Bundestag in Berlin. — AFP

Germany's new-era parliament convenes

BERLIN: German lawmakers gathered on Tuesday, as a new parliament featuring more women and members from ethnic minorities than ever before met for the first time while outgoing chancellor Angela Merkel looked on from the visitors' gallery.

Comprising lawmakers of the youngest ever average age and including the first two transgender women deputies, the lower house chamber, or Bundestag, convened to elect a speaker and other members of its presidium. Merkel's conservatives suffered their worst ever result in the national ballot of September 26, when the new deputies were elected but in which she did not stand.

Her own approval ratings remain high, and she will stay in office in a caretaker capacity until the Bundestag chooses her successor, likely to be Olaf Scholz of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD).

The SPD, who finished first in the election, are in talks to form a coalition government with the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats by December 6 that would oust Merkel's conservatives after 16 years. The three parties are depicting their coalition — which would be the first of its kind at national level — as a new start for Germany that would have a focus on modernising Europe's largest economy and combating climate change.

In negotiations so far they have projected a more consensual front than many expected, particularly given the ideological differences between the FDP and the more left-leaning Greens and SPD.

That could allay fears in Germany and beyond that the departure of Merkel, the dominant European leader of her generation, could herald a period of political instability.

— Reuters

FUEL SHORTAGE HITS HAITI



A Haitian National Police officer removes rocks from a barricade during a general strike and lack of transportation, amid a fuel shortage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. — AFP

Police arrest 150 people globally in web sting

THE HAGUE: Police around the world arrested 150 suspects, including several high-profile targets, involved in buying or selling illegal goods online in one of the largest-ever stings targeting the dark web, Europol said on Tuesday.

Operation Dark HunTOR also recovered millions of euros in cash and bitcoin, as well as drugs and guns. The bust stems from a German-led police sting earlier this year taking down the "world's largest" darknet marketplace.

Dark HunTOR, "was composed of a series of separate but complementary actions in Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States," the Hague-based Europol said.

In the United States alone, police arrested 65 people, while



47 were held in Germany, 24 in Britain, and four each in Italy and the Netherlands, among others.

A number of those arrested "were considered high-value targets" by Europol. Law agents also confiscated \$31 million in cash and virtual currencies, as well as 45 guns and 234 kilogrammes of drugs, including

25,000 ecstasy pills.

Italian police also shut down the "DeepSea" and "Berlusconi" marketplaces, "which together boasted over 100,000 announcements of illegal products", said Europol, which coordinated the operation together with its twin judicial agency Eurojust.

German police in January

closed down the "DarkMarket" online marketplace, used by its alleged operator, an Australian, to facilitate the sale of drugs, stolen credit card data and malware.

Europol said the arrest of the alleged operator, caught near the German-Danish border at the time, and the seizure of the criminal infrastructure provided "investigators across the world with a trove of evidence".

German prosecutors at the time said DarkMarket came to light in the course of a major investigation against the web-hosting service Cyberbunker, located in a former Nato bunker in southwest Germany.

Europol's European Cybercrime Centre EC3 has since been compiling intelligence packages to identify the key targets, the continent's policing agency said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

LONDON

Queen carries out first duty since hospital stay

Britain's Queen Elizabeth carried out her first official engagement on Tuesday since spending a night in hospital and being ordered to rest by her doctors. The 95-year-old queen, the world's oldest and longest-reigning monarch, stayed overnight at London's King Edward VII private hospital last Wednesday after undergoing "preliminary investigations" for an unspecified but not Covid-19 related ailment.

It was Elizabeth's first overnight hospital stay for years, but



royal officials said she was in good spirits and she returned to her Windsor Castle home the following day where she got back to carrying out light duties.

— Reuters

PIETERMARITZBURG

Court rejects Zuma's bid to remove prosecutor

A South African court on Tuesday threw out former president Jacob Zuma's bid to remove the chief prosecutor in his long-running corruption trial over a 1990s arms deal. Zuma had asked to have state prosecutor Billy Downer dropped from the case, arguing that he was neither independent nor impartial.

Sitting in the High Court in Pietermaritzburg, judge Piet Koen said he was not "persuaded that Mr Downer lacks the title to prosecute or should be removed



as prosecutor". "It has not been shown that Mr Zuma's rights to a constitutionally fair trial have been impaired, or that there is a real possibility that his rights will be impaired," he said. — AFP

PARIS

Covid cases and deaths on the rise again in Europe

Covid infections and deaths are on the rise again in Europe, with Russia, Ukraine and Romania registering the highest fatalities on the continent, an AFP tally showed on Tuesday. About 1,672,000 new cases have been registered on the continent over the past week, an average of about 239,000 per day.

That was an increase of 18 per cent on the previous week, according to AFP's data, compiled from official sources from 52 countries and territories in the



region. The increase in cases was a 60-per cent jump from August and September, when were about 150,000 new registered cases per day, the data showed.

— AFP

Sudan generals determined not to lose long-held power

By ousting senior civilian figures and disrupting a transition to democracy, Sudan's generals have ensured they maintain control in the East African country, as they have for most of its post-independence history, analysts say.

On Monday, security forces detained civilian leaders, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who have shared power with the military following the ouster of the autocratic president Field Marshal Omar al Bashir more than two years ago.

General Abdel Fattah al Burhan declared a state of emergency and dissolved the cabinet, as well as the ruling Sovereign Council of military and civilian figures which he has led since August 2019. The Council was supposed to pave the way for full civilian rule.

Since its independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956, Sudan has experienced rare democratic interludes, but overwhelmingly years of rule under military leaders.

The latest putsch “looks very much like an attempt by the security forces to maintain control over economic and political interests, and to resist the flip” to a civilian order, said Jonas Horner of the International Crisis Group.

The army’s move “epitomises their fears” of civilian rule “in a country which was under the control of the military for 52 out of its 65 years of independence,” Horner said.

To Magdi el Gizouli of the Rift Valley Institute “the coup was far from surprising”.

The Sovereign Council ruled the country alongside a transitional government led by Hamdok, an economist, but the role of civilian leaders had been receding. The main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) which led anti-Bashir protests, splintered into two opposing factions, one of which held demonstrations in support of the military. Critics alleged those protests were being driven by members of the military and security forces, and involved counter-revolutionary sympathisers with the former regime. — AFP

The latest putsch looks very much like an attempt by the security forces to maintain control over economic and political interests, and to resist the flip to a civilian order

JONAS HORNER
International Crisis Group



CULTURE AT ITS BEST

College girls perform a traditional Punjabi folk dance 'Giddha' during an event in Amritsar, India, on Tuesday. — AFP

Is climate diplomacy possible?



JOHN KAMPFNER
The author is a consulting fellow at Chatham House

Climate change is the ultimate test of whether it is possible for countries both to compete for global dominance and collaborate to save the world. If the United States and China cannot work together on this issue, they cannot work together anywhere. Together, the two powers are responsible for over 40 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions.

Hence, many worry that without Sino-American cooperation to reduce emissions, no meaningful progress will be made. We will all be doomed. Even though both sides know that they must act rapidly to prevent a climate catastrophe, the latest evidence suggests that conventional diplomacy is not working.

In the first US-China meeting of the Biden era, in Alaska in March, China's senior foreign affairs official, Yang Jiechi, launched a tirade against US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Then, in April, Biden's climate envoy, former secretary of state John Kerry, became the first senior administration official to visit China, where he met with his counterpart, Xie Zhenhua. The two have talked more than a dozen times since, yet it is not clear that

they have achieved anything.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that there is little chance of one side coaxing the other to improve its performance through traditional diplomatic channels. The US strategy has three fundamental problems.

For starters, the international community has factored into its own strategic calculus the possibility that Donald Trump – or at least Trumpism – will return to power in the US. Second, the Biden administration is insisting that climate policy be separated from other issues. But China insists that “climate cooperation cannot be separated from the wider environment of China-US relations.” That leaves the two at loggerheads.

The third problem is the most intractable. Even before the Afghanistan debacle, American power – hard and soft – was no longer what it used to be. US exhortations to China and other countries simply do not have the effect they once did.

For all the attention being paid to high-level diplomacy in the run-up to next month's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, the truth

is that the drivers of meaningful change lie elsewhere. The world's response to climate change will succeed or fail on the basis of national self-interest.

The question for the coming decades is which country – which system – will seize the mantle of the green global citizen. Who will be first to harness the economic benefits arising from green technologies?

The race for green tech will initially be about great-power rivalry. But self-preservation also will become a key factor. At what point will populations begin to see that climate inaction endangers them? How bad will conditions have to become before people demand radical change even in authoritarian states?

China's national response so far has been a mixed bag. In September 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping told the United Nations that his country would reach peak emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060, putting it ahead of the US in formally committing to a target date for achieving net-zero emissions. But Chinese announcements since then have been less impressive.

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A bottom-up approach to education reform



MIROSLAV BEBLAVÝ
The author is a visiting lecturer at Sciences Po, and a scientific coordinator at the European Expert Network on Economics of Education

Covid-19 has accelerated the digitalisation of the global economy. According to OECD estimates, nearly one-third of all jobs globally are likely to be transformed by technology in the next decade. And the World Economic Forum estimates that 133 million new jobs will be created in major markets by the end of next year to meet the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These jobs will require workers to have knowledge and skills that educational systems are not yet providing. Preparing the workforce of the future will require a change in what students are being taught – and how.

Educational reform traditionally has been viewed as a top-down process that begins with national governments and is implemented with the goal of

improving institutional results, as measured by student performance. This practice is well established. Recent examples from the European Commission include recommendations to expand the role of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in school curriculums in Belgium and Spain; proposals to increase the teaching of digital skills in schools in Bulgaria, Portugal and the Netherlands; and plans to reduce social inequalities in accessing the education system in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Romania.

More in-depth reviews of educational strategy, such the OECD Education Policy Outlook, monitor the progress of proposed reforms and provide detailed guidance on specific aspects, including the quality of teaching

and learning, professional development for teachers, pedagogical leadership, school curricula, vision, expectations and student assessment.

But, overall, these proposed reforms either have not materialised or have frequently been a source of disappointment. They have failed to spur systemic change and produce the desired improvements.

The metrics available for monitoring educational outcomes demonstrate this lack of progress. Results from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures the performance of 15-year-olds around the world in science, math and reading, show little change in educational attainment over the past decade. And efforts to modernise the

curriculum by including digital topics also have come up short. For example, a PISA report on digital literacy revealed that even though 88 per cent of students in OECD countries have access to a computer connected to the Internet and are active online, only slightly more than half reported studying how to spot disinformation.

This lack of progress demonstrates the problem of relying too heavily on government-administered education reform as the only avenue for improving human capital. For years, national governments in the region have talked about the need to build knowledge economies but have shown little progress in doing so. But grassroots initiatives run by companies or NGOs, for example, can offer alternative

ways to increase educational achievement, thereby filling the gaps left by public policy. Novel approaches and pilot programmes developed by such organisations can be picked up, adapted and expanded by governments, ultimately improving formal education systems.

When we conducted a recent audit of such programmes in Central European countries, we were surprised by the number, quality and impact of initiatives that were developed from the bottom up. Some programmes offer targeted support in specific areas where traditional educational systems are falling behind, such as languages, digital skills, or critical thinking. Others provide full-fledged alternatives to the mainstream educational system.

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Dhofar, Oman play out goalless draw; Seeb win

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Salalah giants, Dhofar, was held to a goalless draw by Oman club on Tuesday at Seeb Stadium in third week matches of 2021/2022 Omantel League.

The runner up of the last season missed the chance to pick up full points from three matches as they registered two successive victories against Muscat and Nizwa in the previous rounds. With the draw, Dhofar bagged seven points while Oman recorded their first point in the league this season after two defeats from Bahla and Al Nasr.

Defending champion, Seeb, broke successive wins of Al Nahdha as they edged the latter 2-0 on Monday at Seeb Stadium.

Marwan Taieb and Abulaziz al Maqbali netted the winners. The

triumph took Seeb to the seventh point in Omantel League while the Al Buraimi representative were stuck in their previous credit at six points after the third-round matches that concluded on Tuesday.

It was the second successive win for Seeb in the league after edging Muscat 3-0 in the previous week while Al Nahdha registered strong start in the top-tier league with two wins against Al Musannah (3-1) and Saham (4-0). However, the dreams blocked to extend the lead in the top as they defeated by Seeb.

The northern Al Batinah derby between Sohar and Saham ended for the former by 2-1 on Monday at Sohar Sports Complex. Sohar's Abdullah Kofi was the star of the match as he scored both goals for the team while Rashed Somaila reduced the gap for Saham in the

It was the second successive win for Seeb in the league after edging Muscat 3-0 in the previous week while Al Nahdha registered a strong start in the top-tier league with two wins against Al Musannah (3-1) and Saham (4-0)

dying minutes.

The victory raised Sohar's kitty to fourth point and returned the team to the winning ways after they suffered to a 3-1 loss from Al Musannah while Saham received their second successive defeats in the league after the first defeat from Al Nahdha and snatched one point from a draw against Seeb in the opening round.

Nizwa and Muscat failed to taste their first win in the season as the match ended in a goalless draw on Monday at Nizwa Sports Complex.

Both teams are positioned in the bottom of the order as they have only one point. Nizwa suffered two defeats from Dhofar and Al Nasr in the previous weeks.

The capital city club began the league on a losing note from Dhofar and the second defeat from Seeb.



ASIF STARS IN CRUCIAL PAKISTAN WIN

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, OCT 26

A superb late surge from Asif Ali (27, 12b, 1x4, 3x6) helped Pakistan beat New Zealand by five wickets and take giant strides towards the semifinal in the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, in Sharjah on Tuesday.

Shoaib Malik (27, 20b, 2x4, 1x6) assisted Asif towards the latter stages of the game and Asif kept going even after being hit on the helmet.

It was a fighting performance from Pakistan, typical of their yesteryears, to defeat a New Zealand team that made the Pakistanis work really hard for the 135-run target.

Pakistan were off to a cautious start with their star openers Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan putting on 28 runs in five overs.

Southee struck in the sixth over casting Babar as Pakistan lost their first wicket of the World Cup.

No 3 Fakhar Zaman was strangled by the New Zealand bowlers before getting out lbw to Ish Sodhi. Experienced bat Mohammad Hafeez slammed a six off his very first ball but was sent back after a sensational catch by Devon Conway off Mitchell Santner. Pakistan were in real trouble at 63/3 in 11 overs.

And before long, it was 69/4 when Sodhi got Rizwan out plumb in front as Pakistan's plans were coming apart. Imad Wasim and Shoaib Malik had a short partnership going before Imad was lbw to Trent Boult with Pakistan at 87/5.



Pakistan's Asif Ali and Shoaib Malik (R) talk during the ICC T20 World Cup match against New Zealand at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. – AFP

GROUP 2

POS	TEAM	PLAYED	WON	LOST	N/R	TIED	NET RR	POINTS
1	PAKISTAN	2	2	0	0	0	+0.738	4
2	AFGHANISTAN	1	1	0	0	0	+6.500	2
3	NAMIBIA	0	0	0	0	0	+0.000	0
4	NEW ZEALAND	1	0	1	0	0	-0.532	0
5	INDIA	1	0	1	0	0	-0.973	0
6	SCOTLAND	1	0	1	0	0	-6.500	0

NZ STRUGGLE WITH BAT

Pakistan could not quite get New Zealand on the mat as they did against India. The searing pace and swing of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf started well but wickets eluded them until the end of the powerplay.

New Zealand did not get off to a flying start but ensured they kept wickets in hand. Martin Guptill and Daryl Mitchell struck a few boundaries to keep the scoreboard

It was a fighting performance from Pakistan, typical of their yesteryears, to defeat a New Zealand team that made the Pakistanis work really hard for the 135-run target

ticking. It was in the sixth over when Rauf got Guptill to inside edge a delivery onto the stumps as the Kiwis lost their first wicket with the score on 36.

Daryl Mitchell was out caught by Fakhar Zaman off Imad Wasim in the ninth over for 27 as New Zealand were in a spot of bother.

Zaman was again the centre of attention when he plucked a catch at mid-wicket off Mohammad Hafeez to send James Neesham back to the pavilion.

Skipper Kane Williamson and Devon Conway had to stitch a partnership together to get New Zealand back on track.

Conway was particularly severe on Shadab Khan in his third over when he carted him for three consecutive boundaries in the 13th over of the match.

Disaster struck for NZ when skipper Williamson was run out after a direct him from bowler Hasan Ali when he took off for a non-existent single and fell short.

Conway was eventually out for 27 caught by Pakistan captain Babar Azam at cow corner off Haris Rauf as New Zealand looked to accelerate in the 18th over.

Glenn Phillips fell to a slower ball by Rauf in the third ball of the 18th over when Hasan Ali snapped him up.

The Kiwis really struggled to get going in the last five overs of their innings as Seifert was taken out by Shaheen Shah Afridi. Rauf bowled Mitchell Santner in the last over as New Zealand wrapped up their innings at 134/8 in 20 overs.

S Africa down Windies after De Kock refuses to take knee

DUBAI: South Africa hammered holders West Indies by eight wickets in a game overshadowed by Proteas star Quinton de Kock's refusal to take the knee prior to Tuesday's Twenty20 World Cup clash.

Aiden Markram smashed 51 to lead South Africa's chase of 144 in an unbeaten 83-run third-wicket stand with Rassie van der Dussen (43) to achieve their target with 10 balls to spare in the Super 12 contest.

South Africa bounced back from their opening loss to Australia, while two-time champions West Indies have lost both their matches.

Cricket South Africa ordered its players to kneel in Dubai and lend their support to the anti-racism movement but De Kock pulled out of the game due to "personal reasons".

Temba Bavuma's team took the knee after their decision to field first.

Opener Evin Lewis hit 56 in West Indies' 143-8 as they suffered another heavy loss, having made just 55 in a crushing defeat by England three days ago.

Fast bowler Dwaine Pretorius



South Africa's Aiden Markram (L) and Rassie van der Dussen celebrate their victory. – AFP

took three wickets as West Indies again failed to fire after a painstaking 16 off 35 balls from Lendl Simmons at the top of the order.

Skipper Kieron Pollard hit a useful 20-ball 26 before falling to Pretorius, who was on a hat-trick only for Dwayne Bravo to hit a boundary.

After a sedate start, Lewis took the attack to South Africa by smashing boundaries off pace bowler Kagiso Rabada and

Cricket South Africa ordered its players to kneel in Dubai and lend their support to the anti-racism movement but De Kock pulled out of the game due to "personal reasons"

spinner Markram, who opened the bowling.

The left-handed Lewis reached his 10th T20 fifty with a six before getting out to Keshav Maharaj.

Maharaj struck again with his left-arm spin to send back Nicholas Pooran for 12 and Rabada ended



South Africa's Aiden Markram hits a six. – Reuters

Simmons' struggle the following over.

West Indies dropped Chris Gayle from three to four in the batting order but the change in position barely helped as the big-hitter fell for 12.

Anrich Nortje bowled the

powerful Andre Russell for five and returned economical figures of 1-14 from his four overs of pace.

In reply, South Africa lost Bavuma, run out for two, but Reeza Hendricks and Van der Dussen put the chase back on track with their partnership of 57.

Hendricks fell to Akeal Hosein for 39.

Van der Dussen was joined by Markram and the two helped South Africa cruise across the line in a game that began with the

SCOREBOARD

WEST INDIES	
L Simmons b Rabada.....	16
E Lewis c Rabada b Maharaj.....	56
N Pooran c Miller b Maharaj.....	12
C Gayle c Klaassen b Pretorius.....	12
K Pollard c van der Dussen b Pretorius..	26
A Russell b Nortje.....	5
S Hetmyer (run out).....	1
D Bravo (not out).....	8
H Walsh c Hendricks b Pretorius.....	0
A Hosein (not out).....	0
Extras (LB-1, NB-1, W-4).....	7
Total (For 8 wickets, 20 overs).....	143
Fall of wickets: 1-73, 2-87, 3-89, 4-121, 5-132, 6-133, 7-137, 8-137	
Bowling: Markram 3-1-22-0, Rabada 4-0-27-1, Nortje 4-0-14-1, Maharaj 4-0-24-2, Shamsi 3-0-37-0, Pretorius 2-0-17-3	
SOUTH AFRICA	
T Bavuma (run out).....	2
R Hendricks c Hetmyer b Hosein.....	39
R van der Dussen (not out).....	43
A Markram (not out).....	51
Extras (LB-1, W-8).....	9
Total (For 2 wickets, 18.2 overs).....	144
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-61	
Bowling: Hosein 4-0-27-1, Rampaul 3-0-22-0, Russell 3-2-0-36-0, Walsh 3-0-26-0, Bravo 4-0-23-0, Pollard 1-0-9-0	

shocking news of De Kock's pull out.

The South African board later said they "await a further report from team management before deciding on the next steps."

Markram raised his fifty in 25 balls with a six off Russell and then hit the winning runs. — AFP



Andy Murray celebrates after winning against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz (not in picture) during the men's singles match at the Erste Bank Open. – AFP

Andy Murray secures hard-fought landmark win

VIENNA: Andy Murray secured his first win over a top 10 player in 14 months on Monday after the former world number one beat Hubert Hurkacz 6-4 6-7(6) 6-3 at the Vienna Open.

Murray had lost to the world number 10 in Cincinnati and Metz earlier this year but got the better of the Pole at the third attempt, emerging with the first-round victory after a gruelling contest lasting two hours and 41 minutes.

It was the 34-year-old's first top 10 win since the three-time Grand Slam champion beat Alexander Zverev in Cincinnati in August 2020.

"It was a good match that could have gone either way," said Murray, who had hip surgeries in 2018 and 2019 and is currently ranked 156th.

"I was disappointed to drop serve in the opening game of the third, but thankfully I was able to get the break back in the next game and from there I probably deserved to get over the line. It was a good win in tough circumstances."

Murray will face 18-year-old Carlos Alcaraz of Spain in the second round.

BERRETTINI SEALS ATP FINALS SPOT

Matteo Berrettini has become the sixth player to qualify for the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin next month after the Italian reached the second round of the Vienna Open on Monday, the ATP said.

The 25-year-old, who will make his second appearance at the ATP Finals, defeated Australia's Alexei Popyrin 7-6(3) 6-3 in the opening round. The ATP Finals is played between the top eight men's singles players and doubles teams and will be held from November 14-21.

"My words aren't going to describe the happiness I feel in my heart," said the world number seven. "2020 was a tough year for me on and off the court. Here I am about to play my second (ATP) Finals and I can't believe it."

"I always have to remember where I started. I didn't dream



Italy's Matteo Berrettini returns the ball to Australia's Alexei Popyrin (unseen) during the men's singles match at the Erste Bank Open. – AFP

about this, because it was so big, but now it's happening. I want to do my best."

Berrettini joins world number

one Novak Djokovic, US Open champion Daniil Medvedev, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Alexander Zverev and Andrey Rublev in

sealing spots for the ATP Finals, with Casper Ruud and Hubert Hurkacz next in line to qualify.

Rafa Nadal is eighth in the

I was disappointed to drop serve in the opening game of the third, but thankfully I was able to get the break back in the next game and from there I probably deserved to get over the line. It was a good win in tough circumstances

ANDY MURRAY
Former World No 1

standings but the 20-time major winner has already ended his season due to injury. Berrettini's compatriot Jannik Sinner is also in contention with the 20-year-old 10th on the leaderboard after winning in Antwerp. — Reuters

Oman racing icon Al Harthy and MHD ITICS announce new partnership



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's number one racing driver Ahmad al Harthy announced a new and exciting partnership with MHD ITICS — the Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC — until at least the end of 2022.

Confirmed this morning during a prestigious event at the Al Bustan Palace Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Muscat, leading sportsman Al Harthy was joined by MHD ITICS chairperson, the honourable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish, and senior members of the MHD ITICS management structure. The brand new partnership between Al Harthy and MHD ITICS is an incredibly exciting development

for Oman Racing, as the Sultanate of Oman's premier racing driver begins to put in place his plans for the remainder of the year and also his 2022 motorsport season.

Al Harthy, who has been proudly flying the flag for the Sultanate of Oman this year across a variety of motor racing championships including the Asian Le Mans Series, the Intelligent Money British GT Championship, 'Road to Le Mans' and the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS Endurance Cup, is elated to be partnering with MHD ITICS and excited by the opportunities which lay ahead.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:
"I'm delighted to be welcoming

MHD ITICS to our portfolio of partners, over the past several decades MHD ITICS has actively contributed to the economy of our nation. It is, indeed, a great pleasure to have a company of its stature on board as an important strategic partner of the Oman Racing team and this partnership has only increased the stability of the team."

"This means a lot to me, plus the concept the company has of supporting sports individuals such as myself — it is a great honour to have their support. Our new partnership encourages us to continue what we are doing at the highest level we can in motorsport, seeing the Sultanate of Oman flag flying proudly wherever we race around the world."

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New strategy to boost Oman’s Islamic banking sector

STRONG GROWTH: Islamic banking assets rise to RO 5.7bn, representing 15.13pc share of total banking sector

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced that it is developing a strategy to align the robust growth of the Islamic banking sector with the country’s national growth objectives.

CBO Executive President Tahir bin Salim al Amri said the strategy will help contribute to, among other objectives,

foreign investment inflows and collaborative partnerships with international players, while also sustaining the growth of the Islamic banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Delivering the keynote address at the opening of the IFN Oman Forum 2021 on Tuesday, he said: “I believe that outlining the strategic direction of the Islamic banking industry will promote the healthy and balanced growth of the sector, attract foreign investors, and ease the path for collaboration between international and regional partners, Islamic finance standard setters and multilateral organisations for training, awareness building and transfer of knowledge.”

The new roadmap will help provide new impetus to the growth of an industry that has continued to thrive notwithstanding the global economic downturn and the pandemic, said the Executive President.

“Despite unprecedented macroeconomic developments and Covid-induced challenges, Oman’s Islamic banking sector demonstrated a robust and consistent performance,” Al Amri noted.

“During 2021, Islamic banking sector assets reached RO 5.7 billion as of June 30, 2021, with a market share of 15.13 per cent. Similarly, the market shares of Islamic banking in gross financing



Tahir al Amri, CBO

and total deposits reached 16.9 per cent and 16.8 per cent respectively by the same date. This robust growth has been backed by high asset quality with a low non-performing financial ratio of less than 2 per cent. This remarkable growth in the Islamic banking sector in

the Sultanate of Oman has led it to become the 15th largest Islamic banking market at the international level.”

Given this pace of growth, coupled with its rising market share, Islamic banking and finance are well-placed to make a greater contribution to the achievement of the country’s strategic national objectives, said Al Amri.

“The CBO is aiming for Islamic finance to be the key contributor to the national development agenda to foster technology adoption, financial deepening and inclusion in the Sultanate of Oman,” he affirmed.

The strategy will also incorporate feedback gleaned from Islamic banking entities

and other industry stakeholders, covering legal and regulatory issues, awareness building and talent development initiatives required in the market.

The recommendations, further supported by expert studies and benchmark assessments, broadly looked at three key issues:

(i) a legal framework for Islamic banking (ii) a sharia governance framework, and (iii) implementation of international standards such as of the prudential standards issue by the Basel committee on banking supervision and IFSB accounting and auditing standards by IFRS and AAOFI, and to conduct product documentation standards.

TURN TO P15

هيا hiyya

بنك العز الإسلامي alizz islamic bank

ALIZZ ISLAMIC BANK EMPOWERS WOMEN WITH ITS NEW FEMALE BANKING SEGMENT HIYYA
MOHAMMED AL GHASSANI: OUR VISION IS CRYSTALIZED IN ENSURING THE PROSPERITY OF OMANI WOMEN



Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

Launch of Hiyya Female Banking

Upholding the bank’s tradition of observing the Omani Women’s Day with symbols of appreciation and empowerment, a ceremony was held at Shangri-La Bar Al Jissah Resort under the auspices of H.E Asila Al Samsami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion and in the presence of the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, Sulaiman Al Hatrthi. During the ceremony, Alizz Islamic Bank announced the launch of an exciting new female banking segment called ‘Hiyya’, featuring a bouquet of banking products and services that are designed exclusively for women.

Celebrated annually on October 17th, Omani Women’s Day, this year, will mark a new chapter in the history of Alizz Islamic Bank, as ‘Hiyya’ is crafted to meet all the investment, health and financial needs of female customers; it will provide customers with a tier based savings account to enhance their profits. The Shari’a compliant account is based on the principle that the customer is the ‘rab-al-mal’ (investor) and the bank is the ‘mudarib’ (investment manager), wherein the bank invests the funds within a common investment pool, including other partner accounts.

As per the arrangement, profits will be shared between customers and the bank according to the previously agreed distribution ratios. In addition to that, instant debit cards will offer exclusive benefits, as the main intent is to ensure an open platform for women to enjoy a host of discounts and special offers at spas, beauty salons and beauty

products, while availing deals from health clubs, fitness centers and perfume stores. Exclusive stores and branded outlets for clothing and accessories, home décor, restaurants and flower shops are all pegged onto the account, which also includes priority express service at all Alizz Islamic Bank branches.

What is more, women who opt for the Hiyya account will get free Takaful insurance services – this is designed specifically for women, as it covers some of the most common cancers that affect women, such as breast cancer, ovarian cancer, fallopian tube cancer, uterine cancer and other types of cancer. It will also include insurance cover to obtain a second medical opinion.

Additionally, it will also cover insurance on hand luggage and travel, the Takaful insurance provision also assures compensation for the loss of hand luggage while traveling anywhere in the world. It will also provide compensation for the loss of personal documents or keys on account of the loss of handbag; the onus will be on the insurance company to reimburse the customer for the expense incurred in obtaining new personal documents/keys.

The only condition for availing the Takaful insurance; that has some of the best offers to meet the health needs of women and add value to their lives is that the customer should be between the ages of 18 to 65 years and that they should be an Omani national or a resident expat with a valid Oman residence.

THE SCOPE OF HIYYA IS TO ENSURE THAT IT IS INSPIRATIONAL AND TOUCHES THE HEARTS OF ALL WOMEN CUSTOMERS WITH ITS INBUILT OFFERS OF DISCOUNTS AND FACILITIES.



Honouring the winners of the Hiyya Awards

AWARDS

During the Launch Alizz Islamic Bank also announced the winners of the ‘Hiyya’ awards for women. The award for the Best New Female Owned Business went to Natasha Events, owned by Natasha Al Wahaibi, while the Most Inspirational Business Woman award went to Sayyida Asila Al Said the owner and founder of Party Fever Oman, a comprehensive company that provides event management and party planning and has become an essential part of society. As for the Made in Oman award for the best female owned business that manufactures and produces goods locally, it went to Lama Al Kharusi, the founder of Lama Sweet Company which is the first Omani homemade ice cream company in Oman and run by 10 year old entrepreneur Lama Al Kharusi. The Best Customer Service Award for the Best Customer Service in a female owned Business was awarded to Bodour Boutique by Taqwa Al Lawati. The Social

Responsibility Champion of the year Award for Women went to Nada Al-Moosa, who devotes much of her time, effort and money to raising awareness and drawing attention to the issue of animal welfare. The award for Best Online Business was awarded to Mazoon Al Jabri for her Graphic Design business @designbymaz that has set an example in the success of startups in Oman and has boosted the quality of graphic design work in Oman. Finally, the award for the role model of the year for the woman who sets an example for leadership and success was awarded to Asma Al Hajry who used to run a business that was only 12 square metres, with her diligence and perseverance today the shop has an area of 4,000 square metres. Commenting on the launch of the Hiyya Female Banking Segment, Mohammed Al Ghassani, AGM – Chief Consumer Banking officer at Alizz Islamic Bank,

said: “Our vision is crystalized in ensuring the prosperity of Omani women without compromising our Islamic values. And, as we have proven previously, we do not make a product without putting in it maximum benefits for the customer, and this is what our Hiyya Female banking segment promises to do: meet our female customers’ needs and aspirations.”

Explaining further, Al Ghassani noted that the segment would meet all the banking needs of women. “The scope of Hiyya is to ensure that it is inspirational and touches the hearts of all women customers with its inbuilt offers of discounts and facilities. We have a clear understanding of women’s banking needs and services, and thus we have resolved to make seventeenth of October a special day for Omani women through the launch of Hiyya.”

BankDhofar, Dar Al Atta'a sign pact to support Shaheen affected

MUSCAT: Cementing its position as a socially responsible organisation, and within the context of its ongoing support to the national efforts aimed at mitigating the impact caused by tropical cyclone Shaheen, BankDhofar has signed an agreement of cooperation with Dar Al Atta'a Association to finance a project worth RO 500,000 towards reconstruction and maintenance of damaged homes in cyclone-hit areas.

The agreement was mutually signed by Abdulhakeem bin Omar al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, and Honourable Maryam bint Issa al Zadjali, Chairperson of Dar Al Atta'a, in the presence of a number of officials from both parties. Accordingly, BankDhofar is to finance the reconstruction and maintenance of damaged homes with RO 500,000 previously announced as part of the bank's contribution to the cause.

During the signing ceremony, BankDhofar's CEO Abdulhakeem bin Omar al Ojaili reiterated the bank's commitment to practice its social responsibility which



stems from its core belief in the importance of solidarity and togetherness in such time. "Being an integral part of our Omani society, we have always been keen in supporting humanitarian initiatives. Hence, we joined hands with Dar Al Atta'a Association today to support families impacted by cyclone Shaheen. We would like to see them return to their homes as soon as possible, and we are happy to finance restoration and reconstruction of their damaged properties", he said.

Eelier, when cyclone Shaheen

hit the northern part of the Sultanate of Oman in October 2021, BankDhofar's Board of Directors unanimously approved the allocation of RO 10 million as interest-free loans for affected customers, in addition to deferment of loan instalments for up to 5 months.

This initiative highlights BankDhofar's leading role in supporting various social and economic causes.

The bank had provided support during previous natural disasters that hit the Sultanate, including Cyclone Gonu and Cyclone

Mekunu that caused drastic damages to the infrastructure and affected local communities. BankDhofar continues to showcase its commitment by launching several strategic sustainable CSR initiatives, ensuring sustainable benefit and ongoing development, while simultaneously strengthening its ties with the local community.

To learn more, check out BankDhofar pages on social media or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the call centre 24/7 on 24791111 for inquiries.

10 Omani trainees graduate from MBti training programme

MUSCAT: A two-year training programme by MB training Institute (MBti) has succeeded in qualifying its trainees for four different types of careers in the oil and gas sector.

MBti, which is part of the Mohammed Al Barwani Group of Companies, recently graduated a batch of 10 Omani trainees under the Assistant Driller Training Programme for its client Gulf Drilling.

Upon completion of the two-year programme that focused on preparing the candidates to be future leaders of Gulf Drilling, some trainees were hired as assistant drillers.

However, MBti's training also qualified some of the graduate to work as company men at hoists, others as performance engineers, assistant drilling engineers at rig sites for Gulf Drilling and on behalf of clients, and some as Business Development Contract Engineers.

Hamdoon al Jabri, Training Manager at MBti, said: "Our training programmes are all centred around providing the trainees with the expertise needed to operate in the field.



Bringing this comprehensive training to them means that trainees become multi-talented and can operate at different positions."

Salim al Harthy, CEO of MBPS, which Gulf Drilling is a part of, added, "We at Gulf Drilling were able to take on our need of Assistant Drillers, but also fill other needed positions. In our type of industry, we are always looking for people who are flexible and can manage more than one role."

Ahmed al Riyami, one of the trainees who is now working as a Business Development Contract Engineer, said: "The theory prepared us for the practical component, which then gave us the experience we need. I'm proud that the experience prepared me to be a Junior Business Development Contract Engineer."

LuLu Financial Holdings MD appointed adviser

MUSCAT: UAE's first licensed digital-only bank, Al Maryah Community Bank LLC, has appointed Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of Abu Dhabi-based LuLu Financial Holdings to the position of Adviser to the Board Members.

Adeeb, whose investments in financial services and digital payments span 11 countries in the GCC, Indian sub-continent and APAC regions, is an established and recognised industry name, known for his far-reaching contributions to the development of the global payments ecosystem.

A member of the prestigious World Economic Forum's South Asian Regional Strategy Group, Adeeb additionally sits at the helm of companies in retail, F&B and luxury hospitality.

Al Maryah Community Bank, which started operations earlier this year, is a community oriented financial services



Adeeb Ahamed

provider committed to improving the quality of life of the UAE community by operating with integrity and using innovative smart technologies.

The Board comprises leaders from diversified sectors of economy, and Adeeb's inputs as an Adviser will help improve the bank's strategic direction. Al Maryah Community Bank is also heavily invested in digital solutions and elevation of user experience for the UAE community, and Adeeb's vision for the payments ecosystem will be of much support in this regard.

ahlibank holds 3rd quarter draws with prizes worth more than RO 300,000

MUSCAT: ahlibank's popular prize scheme Wafra 2021 continues to change the lives of an increasing number of customers, rewarding them with frequent and more cash prizes.

The bank has rewarded the lucky winners in the Wafra 3rd quarter draws with prizes totalling more than RO 300,000, including one winner of the grand 'Salary for Life' prize of RO 250,000 (RO 1,000 monthly for 250 months), which went to Jai Hasnani from Al Khoudh Branch. The event was streamed live on the bank's official social media pages.

Muneer al Balushi, AGM-Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank said, "At ahlibank, the role of Wafra savings accounts is not only to give various customer segments special rewards, but also to encourage them to save more in order to achieve their future aspirations. Through multiple



categories of draws and at multiple timelines, Wafra prize scheme has been systematically designed to encourage individuals of various income brackets to try their luck by adopting prudent financial practices. We aim to continue our journey to bring smiles on the faces of more winners."

Highlighting the bank's commitment to its customer-first approach, Al Balushi said, "The consistent growth

witnessed by the bank over the past years has come as a result of innovation to provide high quality products and services, and the development of banking technologies, especially those that are geared towards enriching the experience of our retail customer base. Additionally, the Wafra prize scheme helps us to maintain close relationships with our customers, and impactfully engage with them, while the

savings enhancement nature of the scheme supports their personal socio-economic goals."

In addition to the grand prize winner, the bank also announced the winner of the quarterly prize from Al Nukhba and Exclusive accounts worth RO 25,000, as well as the winner of the quarterly draw of Imtiyaz accounts with a prize of RO 10,000.

For customers who maintained an average quarterly balance of at least RO 5,000 in their accounts, the bank presented a special quarterly prize of RO 25,000 to five winners (RO 5,000 per winner).

In order to expand the winning base among its customers, the Bank announced during the third quarterly draws' event the names of two winners in the monthly salary transfer draws, where each winner received a prize of RO 1,000.

Muzn sponsors Islamic Finance News Forum 2021

MUSCAT: Playing a pioneering role in the development of the Islamic finance industry, Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, recently sponsored the Islamic Finance News (IFN) Forum 2021.

Salima al Marzouqi, Muzn's Head of Islamic Banking, was part of a panel entitled 'Oman Vision 2040 and The Islamic Economy: Improving Livelihoods and Creating Prosperity'. The sixth edition of the annual forum brought together leading Islamic finance

practitioners and regulators from around the region to connect, converse, and further develop the market.

Al Marzouqi said, "The Sultanate of Oman's Islamic finance industry continues to flourish, while playing an ever-expanding role in the country's vision for economic diversification and development. As the first Islamic banking window, Muzn is committed to supporting this role, particularly through social impact products and strategies that promote entrepreneurship



and financial inclusion in Oman, thereby creating jobs and improving livelihoods."

The forum opened with a keynote address from Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority, and welcomed 18 speakers, covering topics such as green, transition and sustainability-linked finance, sukuk and investment funds, Islamic fintech and crowdfunding platforms and the issues facing Islamic banks and Islamic financing in the Sultanate of

Oman.

Launched in 2013, Muzn Islamic Banking was the first Islamic Window to operate in the Sultanate of Oman. Today, it holds a leading position in driving the sector's growth and was recently named Islamic Bank of the Year — Oman 2021 by The Banker.

With a comprehensive Sharia-compliant banking portfolio that delivers financial solutions to a growing customer base, Muzn ensures innovative, competitive and quality services that are accessible to all.



In brief

■ COLORADO

BLUE ORIGIN, BOEING
CHART COURSE FOR
'BUSINESS PARK' IN SPACE

Billionaire Jeff Bezos-owned Blue Origin unveiled plans to develop a commercial space station called 'Orbital Reef' with Boeing aiming to launch the spacecraft in the second half of this decade. The venture will be built in partnership with Sierra Space, the spaceflight wing of defence contractor Sierra Nevada Corp, and will be backed by Redwire Space, Genesis Engineering Solutions and Arizona State University.

Orbital Reef will be operated as a "mixed use business park", and plans to provide the infrastructure needed to scale economic activity and open new markets in space, Blue Origin and Sierra Space said. — **Reuters**

■ STOCKHOLM

VOLVO CARS GIVES
ITSELF \$18 BN PRICE TAG
AS CUTS IPO SIZE

Volvo Cars shrank its initial public offering on Monday, pricing it at the bottom of a previously announced range and valuing the Geely-owned business at just over \$18 billion.

European and US IPO markets have been hit by cancellations as inflation and global supply chain crunches have increased stock market volatility, while many more companies are reported to have pushed back plans rather than risk U-turns. - Volvo Cars, which had previously said its IPO would be priced within a range of 53 crowns (\$6.2) to 68 crowns per share, said it was now opting for 53 crowns. Carmakers have been hurt by production disruptions due to a semiconductor shortage, with several cutting production targets. — **Reuters**

OABC continues to enhance bilateral trade ties

KABEER YOUSUF

@kaberyousef

The Oman American Business Council (OABC-US Chamber of Commerce affiliate in the Sultanate of Oman) has been striving to enhance the trade relations between the two countries and has achieved milestones in bolstering the bilateral trade ties, according to its executive director.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Rebecca Olson, Executive Director of OABC, said that the recent statistics released by the US Census Bureau is a clear indication that the Sultanate of Oman-US trade is on the right path with more areas to improve.

"The Sultanate of Oman is one of only two GCC countries that have free trade agreements (FTA) with the United States, and there are only three countries in

the MENA region that have FTA with the US, Bahrain, Jordan and Morocco. Trade relations with the Sultanate of Oman are backed by the long-standing FTA with the US. This year's figures are highly promising and the balance of trade is very positive", said Olson.

The report says that the bilateral trade relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the US have surpassed \$2bn, an overwhelming figure that helped the Sultanate of Oman run a trade surplus of \$151 million worth of exports to the US that included aluminium, plastics, chemicals, other commodities, and finished products and goods in transit to Canada, according to the statistics released by the US Census Bureau.

"The partnership between our countries is deep-rooted in strong historical ties of friendship, bolstered by a flourishing economic relationship and the



Rebecca Olson

increased trade is a sign of the overall strength of the US-the Sultanate of Oman relationship", said Leslie M Tsou, the US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, adding that "We see this increase as a sign of the Sultanate of Oman's desirability as a destination for US investment."

Olson further said that the Sultanate of Oman is capable of building on this impressive

BOLSTERING THE
TRADE TIES BETWEEN
THE TWO IS POSSIBLE
BY ESTABLISHING
A COMMERCIAL
PRESENCE FOR THE
SULTANATE OF OMAN
IN THE US, WHICH WILL
MAKE IT EASIER FOR
OMANI EXPORTERS
TO EXPLORE THE US
MARKET

growth in 2021, and taking this success to even greater heights as the report further says that the trade between the two friendly nations has seen a significant increase since the end of 2020 and the total trade touched a whopping \$2 billion till the end of August 2021, which is more than

the total for all of 2020.

"Our imports to the US in January 2021 alone surpassed \$200 million of Omani products", Ali Daud, President and Chairman Emeritus of the Oman American Business Council (US Chamber of Commerce affiliate in the Sultanate of Oman) told the *Observer*.

"This is more than twice the average we've seen in the past ten years. The trade surplus is a very healthy indication that the world's largest economy, with which the Sultanate of Oman has a unique trade agreement, is buying Omani products", he added.

He further said that bolstering the trade ties between the two is possible by establishing a commercial presence for the Sultanate of Oman in the United States, which will make it easier for Omani exporters to explore the US market.

RO 9m contract for repair
of Al Batinah Highway

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

Well-known Omani construction firm Galfar Engineering and Contracting SAOG has announced that it has been awarded a contract valued at RO 9 million for the reinstatement and rehabilitation of the Al Batinah Highway, parts of which were damaged in flooding triggered by Tropical Cyclone Shaheen

recently.

The client is the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT).

An official said in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) that the contract was part of national efforts spearheaded by the government to restore and rehabilitate infrastructure damaged by the storm in the North and South Al Batinah governorates.

New strategy
to boost
Oman's Islamic
banking sector

FROM PAGE 13

Earlier, Al Amri noted that Islamic banking entities (IBEs) had continued to expand their operations in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. IBEs have already established 94 branches with some more under process, in addition to onsite banking facilities, mobile banking units, 150 ATM/CDMs, and online and mobile banking platforms.

The sector is expanding its outreach and widely offering its services to individuals, businesses and public sector customers."

IFN Oman 2021, held under the auspices of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), was organised by RedMoney Events.

OFA announces relaunch of
monthly events on Nov 1

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Omani French Friendship Association announces the relaunch of the monthly events, starting the season with the third edition of the 'Inspirational Women of Oman' on November 1, 2021 at Hormuz Grand Muscat at 6 pm.

OFA places great emphasis on this meeting that aims at giving opportunities to women to address general issues affecting the entire society.

OFA strongly believes that highlighting their successful stories, Omani women can encourage other women to follow their own passion with determination.

OFA is delighted to welcome three exemplary women to share their stories.

Nutaila al Kharousi, Managing Director and Psychotherapist at Al Harub Medical Center, Nadia Sultan, Educational Psychologist at Inspire Educational Consultancy and Dr Zayana Aisri, Team Lead for the



Regional Geology Team at PDO.

The panel discussions will be moderated by Sara al Lamki, Communications Consultant.

Their testimonials will be based on their academic profile, background, what they owe to others and to themselves, their reaction to challenges, cultural barriers, taboo subject, Covid-19 pandemic and so on.

OFA is a non-profit organisation registered with the Foreign Ministry and fully supported by the French Embassy. OFA aims at strengthening the bilateral relations between French and Omani business and social communities active in the Sultanate of Oman.

AIIB to fully align with Paris Agreement goals by mid-2023

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) announced today that it will align its operations with the goals of the Paris Agreement by July 1, 2023.

The bank currently estimates its cumulative climate finance approvals to be \$50 billion by 2030. This amount would represent a fourfold increase in annual climate finance commitments since AIIB started publicly reporting the number in 2019.

Earlier this year, AIIB announced it would target at least a 50 per cent share of climate finance in actual financing approvals by 2025. Today's announcement marks

an important step towards achieving this goal.

"We are at a defining moment in history — one which calls for bold, fast and wide-ranging collective action if we are to limit global warming and protect our fragile planet", said Jin Liqun, President and Chair of the Board of Directors at AIIB.

"Today's announcement reinforces AIIB's long-standing pledge to support climate action in line with the Paris Agreement. We think the way forward needs greater participation by the private sector on all fronts, so that we can collectively deliver on the promise of building an inclusive, equitable and sustainable future."

Speaking at a press conference on the sidelines of the 2021 AIIB Annual Meeting hosted by the United Arab Emirates, President



Jin said enhancing investments in adaptation and resilience for low-income members and fostering emerging technologies to drive action on climate change are key focus areas.

The Paris Alignment commitment would apply to sovereign and non-

sovereign projects, including investments made via financial intermediaries.

AIIB is currently testing a rigorous process to ensure projects meet low-carbon and climate-resilient standards consistent with the Paris accord. The approach draws on the

international standards and frameworks currently being developed in collaboration with other multilateral development banks.

In the lead-up to COP26 in November, more than 130 countries have set or are considering a net-zero carbon emissions target by 2050. However, the current level of ambition set out in these plans is, in aggregate, still far too low for the international community to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5 degrees, compared to pre-industrial levels. AIIB sees leveraging emerging technologies as key to raising climate ambition.

"As an MDB located in the hub of innovation, we believe that

technology can act as a lever to curb greenhouse gas emissions. However, this will require a more focused approach to the adoption of new technology as an essential element of any comprehensive response to global climate change. Ultimately, we need the private sector and institutional investors to come to the table to partner with us so that we can combat the worst impact on climate change", said President Jin.

An expanded focus on adaptation and resilience will complement the bank's ambitious target of having climate finance represent 50 per cent of AIIB's financing approvals by 2025. Climate finance accounted for 41 percent of the bank's infrastructure portfolio in 2020.

From zero to \$12 bn;
investors chase
Trump stock hype

Donald Trump has united some of his supporters and detractors in buying shares in his new company and hoping to score a big win.

Anthony Nguyen, a 49-year-old software consultant from Austin, Texas, is a Republican who refused to vote for the former US president in last year's election.

Last week he joined the millions of online day traders who drove up the value of the company that will house Trump's new social media venture to almost \$12 billion.

The company's app has yet to be rolled out even on a trial basis, and Nguyen said he invested because he wanted to make a quick profit, not because he believed in the business.

"Is Trump's social network going to work out? Probably not. But that doesn't mean you can't make money in the meantime," Nguyen said.

Shares of Digital World Acquisition Corp have risen 842 per cent since the blank-check acquisition company announced on Wednesday it would merge with Trump Media & Technology Group, which aims to launch a social media network called TRUTH Social.

Trump Media was worth \$8.2 billion based on the closing price of Digital World shares on Friday, while the company that would be created with the merger would have a close to \$12 billion valuation.

This assumes Digital World valued its shares in the deal at \$10, as is customary for special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs). A detailed regulatory filing that will allow a precise calculation is expected this week.

Many of the investors snapping up the shares are political supporters or fans of Trump. Shane Springer, a 28-year-old salesman from Norristown, Pennsylvania, is holding on to the \$1,300 worth of stock he bought on trading app Robinhood last week until it goes "to the moon".

He bought the shares for \$13 and refused to sell even when they reached a high on Friday of \$175.

"Trump has a strong history of making people a lot of money and winning. If this was an election I would have lost, but it's not, it's business," Springer said.

Nguyen, on the other hand, said he invested in the SPAC because he saw similarities with GameStop Corp, the video game retailer whose shares skyrocketed in January after an army of retail investors on Reddit and other social media platforms took on hedge funds betting against the company.

The retail investors also piled into other "meme" stocks, from movie theatre operator AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc to home supplies retailer Bed Bath & Beyond Inc.

— Reuters



Trump has a strong history of making people a lot of money and winning. If this was an election I would have lost, but it's not, it's business

SHANE SPRINGER
Salesman from Norristown



MACRON VISITS ROBOTICS FACTORY

French President Emmanuel Macron visits the factory of the Sileane company in Saint-Etienne, central-eastern France.

— AFP

Sharp price growth in UK
property market



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

ALTHOUGH MORE PROPERTIES WERE COMING TO THE MARKET, THERE WAS STILL NOT ENOUGH TO MATCH HIGH LEVELS OF DEMAND

The UK property market has continued to grow in spite of the end of the stamp duty holiday in September, with property prices rising for every kind of buyer and in every region of Britain including the capital city London, where prices had stagnated at one point some months ago.

Across Britain, home sellers were asking for £344,445 on average, £5,983 more than in September.

There has been growth across the entire spectrum, from first time buyers to those at the very highest rung of the property ladder. The average UK house price is up 6.5 per cent in October last year, despite the end of the stamp duty holiday.

Property platform Rightmove put the resilience of the market down to a rush to do a deal and lock in lower fixed mortgage rates before a Bank of England rate rise as well as fast turnover of property for sale.

Some people had feared the end of the stamp duty holiday taper, as the tax returned to full whack. Such fears appear to have proved unfounded. The stamp duty holiday in England and Northern Ireland was tapered from July this year, before ending completely at the end of last month.

Rightmove's director of property data

Tim Bannister said the full house effect was an "extremely rare event".

He added: "The stock shortages started after the first (Covid) lockdown, and they look set to continue with the underlying housing market fundamentals remaining strong, and an additional incentive to buy and fix your mortgage interest rate before a widely expected rate rise."

Bannister said although more properties were coming to the market, there was still not enough to match high levels of demand. Director of estate agents Benham and Reeves, Marc von Grundherr, said a return of staff to the workplace and foreign buyers coming back in was boosting London property prices.

He said: "Don't be surprised to see London regain the property price growth top spot before the year is out. Homes are selling fast and for a very good price." Some London boroughs which were lagging behind, witnessed the highest annual growth in prices.

The latest UK House Price Index shows that London house prices climbed by 5.6 per cent between August last year and July – a £27,810 leap. The average UK house price was £25,000 higher in August than a year earlier, according to the Office for

National Statistics (ONS). The figures showed property values increased by 10.6 per cent over the year to August 2021, up from 8.5 per cent in July.

A breakdown of the different regions in the UK shows the increases specifically in each area. The average house price in Scotland surged by 16.9 per cent to a record high of £181,000. Average house prices increased over the year in England (as opposed to UK) to £281,000 (a 9.8-per cent annual increase), in Wales to 195,000 (12.5 per cent) and in Northern Ireland to 153,000 (9 per cent).

However, London's average house price remained the highest of any region in the UK at an average of £526,000 — the highest on record, the ONS said.

The North had the highest annual house price growth in England, with average prices increasing by 13.3 per cent, though the region continued to have the lowest average house price at £149,000.

The largest increase in housing value has been in the South East of the UK, with a jump of £294 billion over the past five years, while the value just in London increased by £214 billion.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

Senior industry leaders need to learn about AI



BRADLEY MERRILL THOMPSON

The author is a member of Epstein Becker Green in the Washington, DC, office and serves as Chairman of the Board and Chief Data Scientist of EBG Advisors, Inc

Imagine this. You are President of the United States. It's your dream job, because you have more power than anyone else in the world, and nobody ever criticises you. It's nothing but four years of Nirvana (the transcendent state, not the Seattle Grudge band).

In walks your Secretary of State to tell you about a new policy that the US adopted to impose sanctions on France to address the fact that their wine tastes too good. Apparently, the French didn't take it very well, and are retaliating with their own sanctions. You ask who put the US policy in place, and the Secretary explains that it was Jake, a junior analyst on the France desk. You ask

why such an important decision was made by a junior analyst, and the Secretary explains, "He knows French."

Honestly, this happens every day in corporate America, but instead of US/France sanctions, it's adopting the use of algorithms that play important business functions that, when done incorrectly, can lead to liability. For example, when algorithms that facilitate selection of qualified individuals for employment, promotion, credit, or for the provision of medical care, government services, or even entrance into office buildings, are created in a way that could lead to adverse disparate impact on racial

and ethnic minorities, women, or other protected groups, such algorithms not surprisingly may violate the law. Further, quite apart from discriminatory impact, algorithms that simply do not work as intended could cause injury and actionable claims.

In both events, there is substantial risk of federal or state enforcement action. Consider:

- The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and similar agencies have explained that deficient AI can violate employment discrimination laws (Commissioner Keith Sonderling spoke at a September 1 webinar, sponsored by the EEOC Chicago, Houston

and Miami Districts, on "The EEO Implications of Using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Employment Decisions").

- Defective algorithms can violate federal and state fair credit and consumer protection laws. For example, according to a Federal Trade Commission report on "Big data: A Tool for Inclusion or Exclusion?" "one credit card company settled FTC allegations that it failed to disclose its practice of rating consumers as having a greater credit risk because they used their cards to pay for marriage counseling, therapy, or tire-repair services, based on its experiences with other consumers and their

repayment histories."

- Poorly designed and inadequately tested algorithms used by customers can result in class action product liability and governmental and private attorney general instituted litigation.
- Algorithms that are not transparent and deceptively mislead consumers in advertising can run afoul of various federal and state unfair trade practice prohibitions.
- Delegation of data preservation and access to deficient AI, or the improper use of private data, can implicate federal, state, and even international (the General Data Privacy Regulation) law and result in ruinous fines. — Reuters

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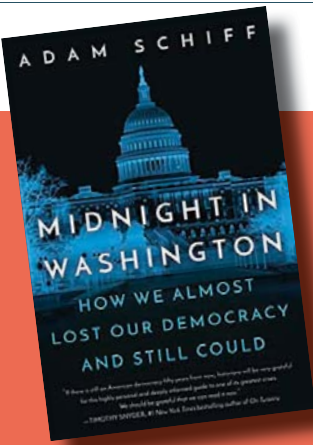


Just Jam Sessions reigniting Muscat’s music, poetry scene

With an emphasis on showcasing local talents, Just Jam Sessions headed by Ghazi Balucci had been helping their clientele to visualise and create out of the box ideas and bring them to life with the support of the young creatives of the country. But Covid-19 has dramatically affected their small, emerging industry. Check out what they’re doing to reignite the music and poetry scene in Muscat... **P20**

AUCTION

READ



MIDNIGHT IN WASHINGTON

BY ADAM SCHIFF

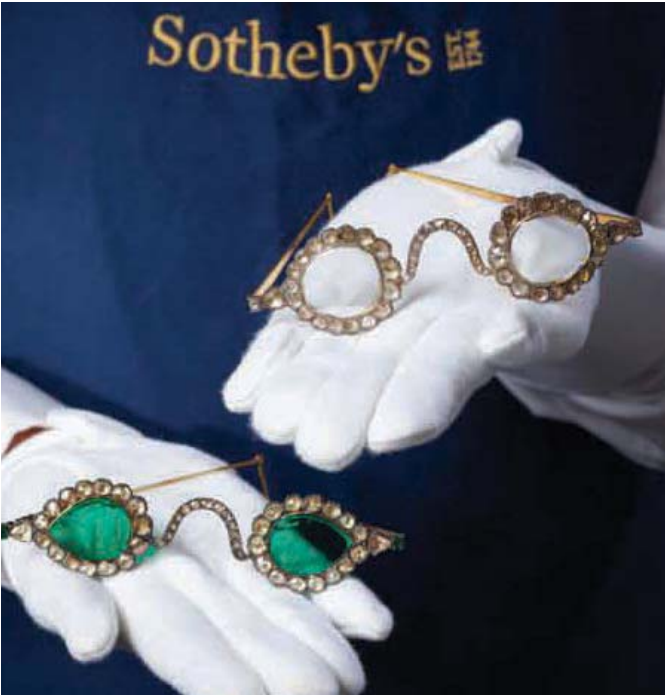
The congressman from California describes risks to our democracy and the resurgence of autocracy.

Bejeweled Mughal-era glasses expected to fetch up to \$3.5 million at auction

TWO PAIRS OF bejewelled Mughal-era spectacles set with diamond and emerald lenses are expected to fetch up to \$3.5 million each when they are auctioned in London on Wednesday. The glasses were commissioned by an unknown 17th century prince, auction house Sotheby's said, with the precious stone lenses believed to boost spiritual enlightenment. One pair, named "Gate of Paradise", features emerald lenses set in diamond-mounted frames. The second, called "Halo of Light",

has diamond lenses set in diamond-mounted frames. The lenses are said to date from the 17th century while the frames are from the 19th century. "There are so many stories behind this spectacles. The emeralds came all the way from Colombia in the 17th century through Portuguese merchant ships to the Mughal empire, the Mughals absolutely loved gemstones," Alexandra Roy, specialist in the arts of the Islamic world at Sotheby's, said.

"The diamonds came from the Golconda mines (in India) and at the Mughal court, these were cleaved from stones which originally would have weighed two to three hundred carats... They were re-fashioned in their current 19th century spectacle-like fashion." Both pairs are being offered at Sotheby's Arts of the Islamic World & India sale on Wednesday, with a price estimate of £1.5 million to £2.5 million (\$2 million to \$3.4 million). "We have to be extraordinarily careful when it comes to the provenance of lots, we have actually known about these spectacles for a very long time, since the '80s," Roy said. "They go through a vigorous internal due diligence before we are able to offer them for sale. They have been examined by historians so they've been published in the academic world before. This is the first time we are offering them for sale but amongst academic circles they're well known." — Reuters





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

'The Crown' season five to include Diana's bombshell interview



THE FIFTH SERIES of Netflix drama "The Crown" will dramatise the headline-making 1995 Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, according to reports.

That interview, conducted by then-BBC journalist Martin Bashir, made global headlines as the princess spoke openly about her marriage to the Prince of Wales, famously telling Bashir "there were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded."

Earlier this year, a report by Lord Dyson concluded that the BBC covered up "deceitful behaviour" used by Bashir to secure the bombshell interview and led to a call from the Duke of Cambridge for it never to be aired again. According to The Sun, an insider said: "The Crown's creators see the interview as the keystone moment in series five."

"To the writers, the stormy marriage between Charles and Diana led up to her outpouring on Panorama, and the aftermath of that decision defined her final months."

"They are making a huge investment in that. The Crown has a track record of delving into areas of the Royal Family's history they'd rather be left alone."

Lord Dyson's report concluded that Bashir was in "serious breach" of the BBC's producer guidelines when he faked bank statements and showed them to Diana's brother Earl Spencer to gain access to the princess for the interview.

Following the report, William and the Duke of Sussex both issued statements condemning the BBC's actions, with the Duke of Cambridge saying: "It brings indescribable sadness to know that the BBC's failures contributed significantly to her fear, paranoia and isolation that I remember from those final years with her."

The BBC wrote to the royal family to apologise for the circumstances surrounding the interview and Bashir also issued an apology, saying faking the documents was "a stupid thing to do," and "an action I deeply regret," but maintained it had "no bearing whatsoever on the personal choice by Princess Diana to take part in the interview."

The fifth series of the lavish royal drama, due to air in November 2022, will see Dominic West star as the Prince of Wales and Elizabeth Debicki as Diana.

"The Wire" star West takes over the role of Charles from Josh O'Connor, while "The Night Manager" actress Debicki will replace Emma Corrin.

Imelda Staunton will take over the role of the Queen from Olivia Colman, while Jonathan Pryce will replace Tobias Menzies as the Duke of Edinburgh and Lesley Manville will take on Princess Margaret, following in the footsteps of Helena Bonham Carter.

"The Crown" was due to end after the fifth series, but the show's creator and writer, Peter Morgan, later said it will be extended to include a sixth series.

In 2020 it was reported that Harry and wife Meghan Markle had signed a deal with Netflix, reportedly worth 100 million dollars, to produce a range of films and series for the streaming service. Netflix has said it is not commenting. — **PA Media/dpa**

DISCOVERY

Remote-sensing reveals details of ancient Olmec site in Mexico



AERIAL REMOTE-SENSING of a large region of Mexico has revealed hundreds of ancient Mesoamerican ceremonial centers, including a large one at an important site for the ancient Olmec culture that is known for its colossal stone heads.

The remote-sensing method, called lidar, pinpointed 478 ceremonial centres in areas that were home to the ancient Olmec and Maya cultures dating to roughly 1100-400 BC, researchers said on Monday. The study was the largest such survey involving ancient Mesoamerica, covering all of the state of Tabasco, southern Veracruz and bits of Chiapas, Campeche and Oaxaca.

Lidar, short for Light Detection and Ranging, uses a pulsed laser and other data obtained while flying over a site to generate three-dimensional information about the shape of surface characteristics. It penetrates vegetation and pinpoints structures that otherwise might not be seen from the air or the ground.

A large ceremonial center was spotted at the early Olmec site called San Lorenzo, which is located in Veracruz in the lowlands near the Gulf of Mexico and was at its peak from roughly 1400-1000 BC. The Olmecs represented the oldest-known major Mesoamerican civilisation and are thought to have influenced later cultures, including the Maya.

University of Arizona archaeologist Takeshi Inomata, who led the study published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*, said lidar spotted a large and previously unknown rectangular earthen ceremonial space at San Lorenzo.

It measures about 3,300 feet by 900 feet (1,000 meters by 275 meters), with 20 platforms around the edge slightly elevated above it. Its purpose remains unclear but it may have been a

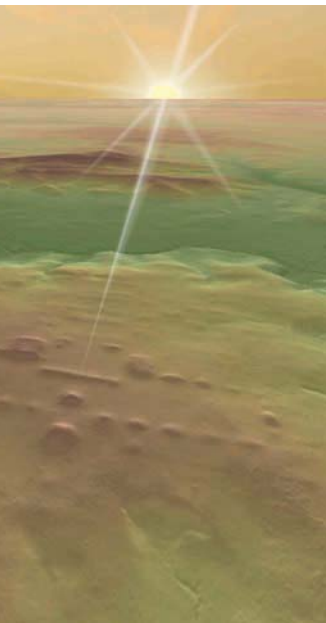
plaza where large numbers of people gathered for some type of ceremonies, while the platforms surrounding the plaza may have had residences, Inomata said.

The Olmec heads, each fashioned from a single basalt boulder, are among the most evocative pieces of art from ancient Mesoamerica. The naturalistic facial features are carved in such a way that experts suspect they are representations of actual ancient Olmec rulers.

Ten of the heads have been discovered at San Lorenzo. Inomata said there may be more of them undiscovered at related sites.

Many of the hundreds of ceremonial complexes identified in the study share common layouts like the one at San Lorenzo. Many appear to have been built with orientations aligned with the direction of sunrise on specific key ceremonial dates.

"These centers were probably the earliest material expressions of basic concepts of Mesoamerican calendars," Inomata said, noting that such calendars were based on a unit of 20 days — matching the number of platforms around the San Lorenzo ceremonial center. An even larger ceremonial center https://www.reuters.com/article/us-science-maya/oldest-and-largest-ancient-maya-structure-found-in-mexico-idUSKBN23A2EH, described by Inomata and his colleagues last year, was found at a site in the Maya region called Aguada Fenix in Tabasco near the Guatemalan border. Dating to slightly later than the one at San Lorenzo, it and others found in the study suggest that Olmecs and other peoples in the region exchanged ideas.



"The advantage of lidar is that it provides a three-dimensional, birds-eye view of the landscape and modifications to it made by humans - ancient and modern — in the form of building, transportation, agricultural and water control infrastructure," said lidar engineer and study co-author Juan Carlos Fernandez-Diaz of the University of Houston's National Center of Airborne Laser Mapping.

"Lidar also allows us to 'see' the landscape and infrastructure that in many parts of the world is hidden under forest cover," Fernandez-Diaz added. — **Reuters**

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Can we understand the meaning of life?

SOMETIMES PEOPLE come and ask questions hoping to understand what life is all about. Some assertively live their lives and others always trying to figure out why they do what they do. I think to make your dreams come true, it is better to find the meaning of your life.

People who think they know the meaning of their lives have greater well-being than those who don't. Interestingly, this was associated with fewer symptoms of depression and a higher

another value or dimension in our life, that feeling that our life matters. You can think of these three dimensions as macronutrients: the elements we need for a balanced, healthy sense of life's meaning.

For instance, if you tell me you've just changed your eating habits and aren't feeling well, I'll ask your nutritional profile — whether you're consuming enough fat, proteins and carbohydrates, and in the right balance. Likewise, feeling that your

If you haven't found yet the meaning of your life, how can you search for it without searching too much? Maybe you can do this more effectively — and without too much obsession — by evaluating your life in three dimensions from a psychological point of view

positive impact.

If you haven't found yet the meaning of your life, how can you search for it without searching too much? Maybe you can do this more effectively — and without too much obsession — by evaluating your life in three dimensions from a psychological point of view.

Here you will need first of all to realise that events fit together. To say it in simpler terms, this is understanding that things happen in your life for a reason. This doesn't necessarily mean that you can fit new developments into your novel as they happen, but you are usually able to do so afterwards, so have faith that you will eventually.

Moreover, think about the purpose as the second dimension of your life. Definitely, you need to believe that you are alive to do something. More importantly, when we look to the significance as

life lacks meaning should raise the question of whether you have a deficit of coherence, purpose, or significance. Ask yourself these questions: Do you feel out of control — fluctuating through life with no rhyme or reason? Do you lack big plans and dreams for your future that excite you? Do you feel that it doesn't matter if you disappear, as if the world wouldn't be any worse (or perhaps better) if you did?

In end, each of us must decide whether we believe that this is true about our lives. The irony of the untestable premise is that even if we strive, we can never be sure that we have found what is true about life. But one thing is certain: we won't find anything unless we look.

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



Just Jam Sessions reigniting Muscat's music, poetry scene

BY TITASH CHAKRABORTY

Sitting shoulder to shoulder, dimly lit with fairy lights and serenaded by some of the Sultanate of Oman's best musicians was a signature of Just Jam Sessions. Of course, all of this changed the moment the pandemic rolled in 2020. The pandemic has become an overused and overworked term and yet here we are, in a world recovering from uncharted territories with vaccine passports and crushed economies, people are getting increasingly impatient to go back to normalcy after nearly two years of being stuck at home.

OMAN DAILY OBSERVER in conversation with Ghazi Balucci, founder of Just Jam, explored what this post-pandemic world meant for them and their fellow creatives and their audiences.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND:

In 2016, a group of young musicians decided that it was time that people left their homes and brought their talent out into the public. Whilst every creative idea they had wasn't the most feasible, this group decided that they would kick start things with what they already do — Music!

Tapping into their network of musicians, Just Jam Sessions was born. A homely setting with floor seating, dim lights and beautiful music — the sessions quickly gained momentum. Starting with a hand full of artists to full audiences, moving venue to venue Just Jam Sessions became a popular destination for the young and creative of the Sultanate of Oman.

Along with the music nights, Just Jam Sessions also introduced Poetry Nights — An intimate event with a mix-bag of newbies, amateurs and experienced writers and poets, sharing their thoughts and experiences through poetry in a safe, comfortable environment of like-minded beings.

"We are a small community here, and often we have similar or shared experiences that aren't often spoken about, and these artists can share their vulnerabilities in a space with known strangers through poetry", said Ghazi Balucci.

As Just Jam Sessions took hold of the music and poetry scene, Other collaborators joined the scene creating more space for a completely different demographic of creatives like True Story Tent founded by Abdullah al Maawali for hard-hitting and inspirational storytellers and Humour Infection founded by Abbas al Lawati for local comedians. The Sultanate of Oman in the past few years has seen a drastic shift in the local entertainment scene with more local talent finding new ground on their home soil.

"Music events for the longest time in the Sultanate of Oman were focused on bringing international artists, but to us, the

emphasis has always been on showcasing local talent. "Local" is a term we emphasise in everything we communicate through our public existence — Local to us includes everybody that currently resides in the Sultanate of Oman, anybody, and everybody." He added. Just Jam, 5 years on, has outgrown their sessions and rebranded. Now it isn't just about showcasing talented musicians but creating an experience for its audience. Today, they are a fully-fledged Talent and Event agency that helps its clientele visualise and create out of the box ideas and brings them to life with the support of the young and creative of the Sultanate of Oman.

"We also hope to work and collaborate with local businesses like SMT Acoustics who custom build scientifically designed acoustic setups along with other entities in the Sultanate of Oman that have supported local artists and creatives like us over the years. Redbull and Redbull Mobile have not only been our corporate clients over the years but also creative collaborators to our initiatives along with many others like Majid Al Futtaim and LuLu Group International", he said.

THE LOFT:

Just Jam has always lived a Bohemian life, moving from venue to venue, popping up at events, and hosting gigs in different parts of the country and region for the longest time believed that space is the fundamental requirement for an artist to work on their skills. A space just for them where they can work on their own skills or collaborate with others, learn and grow, and hopefully turn their talent into a trade. That's where the Loft comes in. A Just Jam collaboration with SABCO, the Loft is a co-working space, by creatives for creatives — A physical and visual representation of the previously virtual entity Just Jam.

Currently, a work in progress, the Loft aims to become a hub for artists, musicians, clients, SMEs and any and all creative entities. Ghazi explained, "The Loft will not only become a space for creatives to use, but also to learn from. We hope to host workshops that will help our local creatives grow. Some of us have been a part of this industry for a long time and believe we could help newer entrants into the scene to not make the mistakes that we made whilst we navigated through this space. We hope that through these workshops we can help creatives turn their talent into a profitable skill. In Today's world, it isn't just enough to be good at something, you also need to create yourself into a brand to make you stand out. And we want to make this happen."

POST COVID-19, WHAT ARE THE PLANS FOR JUST JAM?

Ghazi: "We want to work towards enhancing the local experience for both creatives and the clients that hire these creatives. Since day one, our mission has been to be the bridge between creatives and the corporate, less focused on the financial incentives and more to create a space for local creatives to gain opportunities in the local market. We want our creatives to be able to meet client demands whilst also ensuring that the client creates a healthy space for its creatives. The pandemic may have shut the world down, but it also gave rise to many creatives that were often left out and we have been lucky enough that even after things had slowed down, we had enough creatives around us, supporting us constantly to bring operations back to where they were before the pandemic. In a small community such as ours, it is increasingly important to not only build each other but welcome competition in a healthy environment that will support the growth of all creatives and those around them. Although the lockdowns seemed endless, and often dreary, they also gave people a chance to tap into their creative sides and which is why we see so many more artists creating, we have seen the rise of singers, artists, painters and creators alike, and this power is something we hope to harness in the following months."

"Sell your work, sell for commissions, sell ideas and sell your designs, this includes your sound, music and words. I believe that in the upcoming months and years, the entertainment industry in the Sultanate of Oman will see a huge shift in not only the style of events but also the quality. There is immense talent locally and now will be the time they flourish. To upcoming artists, entrepreneurs and musicians, I repeat, sell your work, sell for commissions, sell ideas and sell your designs, this includes your sound, music and words", he added.

Find out more about upcoming events, Jam nights, and poetry sessions follow their Instagram @justjamsession & @theloft.om.

