Oman at Future Investment Initiative Summit

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Oman’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Minister of Commodities, Industry and Investment Promotion, will be taking part in a Summit of Future Investment Initiative, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on October 26-28. The Summit is the initiative held under the theme Vision for Humanitarian Development.

IMH SENDS CABLES OF GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of greetings to President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow 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. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president.

IMH CONGRATULATES UZBEK PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of congratulations to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on being re-elected as President of the Republic. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to his country’s president. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to his country’s president. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to his country’s president. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to his country’s president.

Oman's Youth Day celebrated

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of greetings to President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan on the occasion of the Omani Youth Day. HH Sayyid Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, 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. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president. In his country’s president.

Sultanate sees rise in inbound travellers

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 (52,023 or 64.4 per cent), followed by Indians (12.6 per cent), Yemenis (7.4 per cent) and Pakistanis (2.1 per cent). Omanis accounted for 14,000 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 (52,023 or 64.4 per cent), followed by Indians (12.6 per cent), Yemenis (7.4 per cent) and Pakistanis (2.1 per cent). Omanis accounted for 14,000 of them.

Majlis office reviews job opportunities for youth

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Sentiment

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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 1.9°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

Decree ratifies Maritime Labour Convention

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Tues-day issued a Royal Decree No 62/2021 ratifying the Sultanate of Oman’s joining the Maritime Labour Convention 2006.

Article (1) ratifies the Sultanate of Oman’s joining the amended Maritime Labour Convention 2006, endorsed on February 17, 2006 at the International Labour Conference’s 94th session in Geneva, in accordance with the version at- tached to this Decree.

Article (2) instructs the de-partments concerned to depo-sit the Joining Document for the above-mentioned agreement in line with its provisions.

Article (3) notes that this De-cree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. — OMAN

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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 NSCl.

The hotel revenues until the end of September amounted to RO 59,257,000, a decrease of 11.7 per cent compared to 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 288,867 in the same period last year, followed by Asians — 98,752 guests (50,640 in 2020) with Arabs from non-Gulf countries — 32,151, Europeans — 29,732, Americans — 13,259, GCC nationals — 13,432, Omanis — 3,916, Africa — 2,688, and other nationals — 26,933.

Survey over 3 wilayats

MUSCAT: The field teams of the Ministry of Social Development have completed the survey of the affected houses from Sulaibikha in Al Musannah, Al Khubairah and Baban. The survey in Al Sawadi 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 ROH.

OMAN-BRITISH JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE BEGINS

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 Mines 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 left school buses, and a request for discussion presented to the minister of health on the contract signed with eHealth technology solutions company and the tasks assigned to the company such as the health isolation system.

SQU researcher wins Unesco grant

MUSCAT: A research team led by Mariam Bint Said Al Barumashty, doctoral research student in history and an employee at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), has won a Unesco grant for a research project launched by Unesco with the support of the People’s Republic of China.

Titled “The Maritime Silk Road from the 11th to the 16th Century and its Role in the Omani-Chinese Civilisation Convergence Through the Journeys of Abdullah Al Sehri and Zheng He,” the winning research was focused on the results of cultural interactions and exchanges between the Sultanate of Oman and China. The research team comprises Mariam Bint Said Al Barumashty, lead researcher, Dr Fatima Balhawan, Dr Ali Al Hayy, Dr Mohamed Rosbaith and Imran Al Rashidy.

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 missionaries, traders, Omanis and Chinese merchants in maintaining and developing these relations.

COMMERCE MINISTER TAKES PART IN INVESTMENT SUMMIT

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Talal, Qaboos bin Mohammad al Said, 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, inventors and innovators from all over the world in a global forum to explore pioneer solutions for challenging facing society. It also aims to make these solutions. The initiative’s conferences will be emphasis on investing in education, as well as investing in Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) principles.

Postponement of loan installments

From P1

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In brief

OMAN, ITALY HOLD POLITICAL TALKS
Sheikh Mubarak bin al-Habshi, Foreign Minister of Oman, held talks with 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 QACH
His Excellency Dr. Mena Hafez Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Affairs at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), received a delegation from the Hungarian Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFA). The Hungarian delegation was headed by Dr. Marton Ughorody, BUD Director. They discussed joint areas of cooperation in the fields of science, economy, 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 108.6 million was announced this week. The total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 93.3 million, for a maturity period of 108 days from October 27 to April 23, 2012. The average accepted price reached 99.63 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 93.10 per RO 100. The average discount of courses on the average yield reached 0.7711 per cent and 0.7710 per cent. It is 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 0.77 per cent.

NIYASCH MEETING OF GCC UNDER-SERECTARIES
The 19th meeting of GCC under-secretaries responsible for antiques and museums was on Tuesday held via video-conferencing. The meeting discussed coordinating stances in international files, and also underscored the importance of actively combating trafficking of antiques and their illegal smuggling.

Innovative products made of dates draw visitors at exhibition

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmiak

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

The energy bar is the brainchild of Abdulla bin Saif al Jabri, founder of Shaim, a flour innovation company.

“The 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 Oman flour is other products at its dates with roasted sesame and coconut oil. Thus, this is a flavour that’s enjoyed by people in Asia, Middle East and North Africa. The sesame gives the distinct flavour of Tahina,”

Abdulrahim’s team has begun with two products because some people have sensitivity to peanuts, so they have other option. “We will have different flavors too,” he said, adding that he cannot wait to reach out to other markets.

Another exhibition, Abdulla 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 WhatsApps,” she pointed out.

He has products other than sweats such as rose, pistachios and other flavors.

“Messily, 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 push the date products,” Abdulla pointed out.

They would take date fruit products to schools as snacks.

Majid bin Abdulla al Jaffery from Bahla, decides to display his products at a corner with three fruits.

“The first is natural Tahina, then we have Tahina with peanuts, 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.

Water supply resumes in Al Dakhiliyah, S Al Batinah

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT OCT 31

Abdullah bin Ahmad al Araifi, Senior Operations Manager, at the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, said that the improvement works in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Wilayats of Nahd and Wadi al Bani Ash Shari 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 site or in the operations rooms,” Al Araifi 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.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT OCT 31

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHEIR) 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 55 institutions from the research, academic, government and private sectors of the Sultanate of Oman. A number of these research projects were from Oman 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, 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 1,756,000. 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 2,600.

In addition, 166 research projects were funded within the Undergraduate Research Grants (URG) category with a cost of quarter million Oman riyals, with RO 1,500 per project. With regard to the Oman students studying abroad at their own expenses (Graduate Research Grants (GRG) Award), MoHEIR approved to fund 30 research projects at an estimated cost of approximately RO 10,010.

It is worth mentioning that during the current phase of the programme, the Block Funding Programme received 663 research proposals of which 466 were (representing 67 per cent of the total) approved for funding. 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, 245 research proposals were received and 186 (representing 77 per cent of the total) approved for funding. The programme also received 43 research proposals from Oman students studying abroad at their own expenses and 30 of these research proposals were approved for funding.

PROFESSIONAL

THEYZAZIN GREETS YOUTH

His Majesty the Sultan and the Prime Minister have congratulated the youth of Oman on Youth Day on Wednesday. He said that he mayy the students and the youth and the progress and the development of the future of this nation.

Water supply resumes in Al Dakhiliyah, S Al Batinah

Residential, Commercial
Land with an area of 5,000 sqm, located on the first line of Highways/adjacent to Oman Mall-South Al Gubrah-Wilayat of Baitarah in Square phase2.
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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. "Yes to the doctor when strange symptoms appear, such as chronic constipation, acute anaemia of unknown cause, weight loss and appetite," Dr Al Zaini 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
Lead Poisoning Prevention Week highlights health risks

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 entirely.

The MoHi’s Environmental and Occupational Health Department is organizing many events and activities to increase lead poisoning prevention awareness in communities. Activities are focusing on educating the health effects of lead exposure and national efforts in this area, which are planned. Moreover, outreach materials are developed about the health effects of lead exposure and ways of prevention.

Oman participates in ComEx-3

The National Centre for Emergency Medicine (NCEM) is representing the Sultanate of Oman at the international ComEx-3: nuclear 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 civilian agencies concerned. ComEx-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.

Ban on heavy trucks on Suhair-Yanqul road

Australia to allow return of int’l students next year

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 borders 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 COVID-19 vaccine and submit a PCR certificate issued no more than 72 hours before travel,” the two states said.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT OCT 26
Majid bin Saed bin Sultan al Bahr, 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 Bahr interacted with educational officials in the government and reviewed important development, mechanisms and plans to implement administrative and financial decisions.

He also held meetings with the school’s administrators and teaching staff members and took stock of educational work there. He visited classrooms to assess facilities and level of students.

Yasir bin Saif bin Muhammad al Shemari, 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.

VINOJ NAIR
STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT OCT 26

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 Senate 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 two states said.
**KHARTOUM** Roads were blocked, shops were shut, phonos were down and mosque loudspeakers blared calls for a general strike in Sudan on Tuesday, a day after security forces opened fire in a coup that triggered unrest in which at least seven people were killed.

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

The night appeared to have passed comparatively quietly until 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 an end 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 this year. The Sovereign Council dissolved committees that govern trade unions, Arabic news channels and radio.

The Sudanese information ministry, still loyal to al-Bashir, has called the takeover a crime and said Hamdok in 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.

The United States has said it immediately paused delivery of $70 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 waited by the International Criminal Court in the Hague for war crimes.

Since Bashir was toppled, the military shared power unsafely with civilians under a transition mandate 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.

Sudanese protest leader Alaa Salah leads a protest in Khartoum on Tuesday. — Reuters

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

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

**kuwait today**

**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 fast” to help fund 750 million world-wide projects.

The initiatives were targeted to cost 39 billion riyals ($10.4 billion). Saudi Arabia will contribute 15 percent and seek the remainder from regional foundations and international partners, Prince Mohammed said.

“We are today initiating a green-era for the area, believing that 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 fixed 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 renewable energy purposes.

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

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

**Damascus bookshops disappear as crisis hits culture**

**DAMASCUS** The Damascus bookshops and publishing houses that once stood as bastions of Syrian intellectual life are being replaced with shoe shops and money changers, as culture fails customary crisis.

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

A decades-old civil war, a chronic economic crisis and a creative brain drain that has left behind Syria’s share of its best writers and many

**EU envoy to Turkey welcomes easing of crisis**

The head of the EU delegation to Turkey welcomed on Tuesday the de-escalation in Ankara and said EU efforts to prevent another round of the ambassador’s expulsion threat following a call for the release of a jailed Moody investor.

“I think everyone found a face-saving solution,” said European Union ambassador to Turkey, Nikolaos Meletiadis. “It was welcomed by the EU and it was welcomed by the Turkish government as well.”

**CAIRO** 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 improvement in security.

“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.”

**TEHERAN** Iran says cyberattacks block supplies at petrol stations

A cyberattack by Iran interrogated petrol distribution at the country’s service stations on Tuesday, state television said, in the latest threat to the 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 in 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, a wooden deck, old photos of celebrity customers, including politicians, artists and poets, are placed on display. For Sami Hamad, 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 Yaqoub bookstore. Well 90 percent of the population living below the poverty line and price skyrocketing in a lack of the plummeting value of the Syrian pound, "no one is going to invest in a bookstore during conflict," Hamad said fully.

**SHORT TAKES**

**ISTANBUL**

**EU envoy to Turkey welcomes easing of crisis**

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“I think everyone found a face-saving solution,” said European Union ambassador to Turkey, Nikolaos Meletiadis. “It was welcomed by the EU and it was welcomed by the Turkish government as well.”

**CAIRO** 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 improvement in security.

“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.”

**TEHERAN** Iran says cyberattacks block supplies at petrol stations

A cyberattack by Iran interrogated petrol distribution at the country’s service stations on Tuesday, state television said, in the latest threat to the 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 in 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, a wooden deck, old photos of celebrity customers, including politicians, artists and poets, are placed on display. For Sami Hamad, 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 Yaqoub bookstore. Well 90 percent of the population living below the poverty line and price skyrocketing in a lack of the plummeting value of the Syrian pound, "no one is going to invest in a bookstore during conflict," Hamad said fully.
**Myanmar rebuked by leaders after ASEAN summit no-show**

Indonesia president says junta showed “unwelcome attitude”

**BANDAR SERIKATI BEGAWAN:** Southeast Asian leaders sharply criticized 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 insisted on Monday that it would only agree to its leader or a minister attending.

In an unprecedented snub to the junta of a member state, ASEAN had decided to sideline junta chief Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who had a February 1 coup that sparked into violence and Nationwide chaos, for being unable 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 compel Myanmar from ASEAN 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 assembled Myanmar’s “unwelcome attitude” towards ASEAN diplomatic efforts, Retno said: “We advise the junta to invite a Myanmar representative on a non-political level as a heavy one, but if it had to be done,” she said.

The junta’s decision to abandon ASEAN’s credibility and a test of its resolve.

**CREDIBILITY AT STAKE**

‘‘We consider the junta’s actions as an attack on ASEAN’s credibility and a test of its resolve. This goal was supposed to be achieved by 2030, but now it seems unlikely that this will happen by the middle of the century. “It’s important for us to honour the principles of non-interference. But on the other hand, we’ve had to uphold other principles...like democracy, good governance,” she said. The junta’s refusal to accept a non-political figure from Myanmar put the bloc’s commitment to non-interference into question.

The junta’s row with ASEAN is a major test of the bloc’s credibility. Asean’s efforts to mediate in Myanmar’s crisis have been met with resistance from the junta, which has refused to accept a non-political figure from Myanmar. The bloc has had to rely on its diplomatic efforts and a five-point roadmap to address the crisis.

The G20 also aims to underline the need to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, with a focus on climate change. The summit is expected to produce a declaration on how rich countries will help poorer nations adapt to climate change.

**Afghan all-female orchestra keeps music alive in exile**

Doha: For the first time in history, 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 Mariia Amna, 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-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 Economic Forum in Davos where traditional music met the modern.

And Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was among the leaders who expressed support for the program.

“Music is a universal language that can bring people together and promote peace,” Abe said. “We hope that the Zohra orchestra will continue to inspire others in Afghanistan and around the world.”

The Taliban “didn’t know we were musicians” said a spokesman, adding that “if they had known, they would have killed us.”

The Taliban had been planning to ban music and cultural events, but the group has since reversed its stance.

“The Taliban are notorious for their brutality and their attempt to suppress the arts,” a Zohra musician said. “But we are determined to continue our music and spread its message of peace and hope.”

**ROMA: China Xi will not attend Rome G20 summit in person**

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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 stop sesions on investing in combatting climate change.

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

Protestors intervened shortly after a speech by French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, with one holding a banner reading “Macron: champion of fossil fuel financiers,” images published online by activist group Les Amis de la Terre showed.

Le Maire said he was supporting allocating tax revenues from fossil fuels to finance the transition to a greener economy, an idea the government has flagged since only in Macron’s mindset.

“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 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 “NaH, NaH” rhetoric they 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, had fixed 10 million euros ($12 million) by France’s highest administrative court in August for failing to stop the surprises.

France will decide soon whether to build new nuclear 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 progress “is an essential demand for democratic governments and could lead to more authoritarian control in countries that fail to control their impacts,” a French government official said.

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British Queen Elizabeth II was admitted to hospital Thursday with what Buckingham Palace said was “persistent headaches.”

The 95-year-old was in contact with her son Prince Charles Wednesday following an apparent fall, after which she was admitted to Westminster. She will not attend the state opening of Parliament next week.

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By routing senior civilian figures and disrupting a transition to democracy, Sudanese 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 Abdullah Hamdok, who has 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 five 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 the military’s control of the country for 52 out of its 65 years of independence, Horner said.

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

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

The latest putsch appears to be 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

Climate change is the ultimate test of whether it is possible for countries both within and outside the global democracy to cooperate to save the world. If the United Nations can’t even get its house in order on this issue, they cannot work together anywhere. Together, the two powers are responsible for over 15 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, Chinese climate envoy, former secretary of state John Kerry, became the first senior administration official to visit China, where he met with President Xi Jinping.

The two have talked more than a dozen times since, yet it is not clear if they have achieved anything.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the US is the dominant one to either influence or reduce China’s efforts to improve its performance through technological changes. The US strategy has three fundamental problems.

For starters, the international community has factored in 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”.

This leaves the two at loggerheads.

The third problem is the most intractable. Even before the Afghan 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-quality 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 responses to climate change will be shaped by leakage, competition, and national self-interest.

The question for 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-interest 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.

Copy right: Project Syndicate 2021
Dhofar, Oman play out goalless draw; Seeb win

ADIL AL BALUSHI

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.

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). 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 Al Muqbali netted the winners. The triumph took Seeb to the seventh point in Omantel League while the Al Batinah 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).

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.

The capital city club began the league on a losing note from Dhofar and the second defeat from Seeb.
S Africa down Windies after De Kock refuses to take knee

**Dubai:** South Africa humiliated holders West Indies by eight wickets in a game overshadowed by Proteas star Quinton de Kock refusing to take the knee prior to Tuesday’s Twenty20 World Cup clash.

Aiden Markram smashed 50 to lead South Africa’s chase of 144 in an unbroken 43-run third-wicket stand with Rassie van der Dussen (43) to achieve their target with 10 balls to spare in the Super 12 opener.

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 to 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 Eoin Lewis hit 36 in West Indies’ 144-9 as he suffered another heavy loss, having made just 55 in a crushing defeat by England three days ago.

Fast bowler Dwaine Pretorius took three wickets as West Indies again failed to fire after a painstaking 16 off 35 balls by Lenald 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 spinner Markram, who opened the bowling.

The left-handed Lewis reached his 10th Twenty20 fifty with a six before getting out to Keshar Maharaj.

Maharaj struck again with his left arm spin to send back Nicholas Pooran for 12 and Rabada ended Simmons’ struggle in the following over.

West Indies dropped Chris Gayle from three to four in the batting order but the change in position hardly 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 Riaas Hendricks and Van Der Dussen put the chase back on track with their partnership of 57.

Hendricks fell to Acknon Holness 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 South Africa vs West Indies

**Points Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Played</th>
<th>Won</th>
<th>Lost</th>
<th>Tied</th>
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**Scoreboard**

South Africa’s Aiden Markram (50) and Rassie van der Dussen celebrate their victory. — AFP

**Afghanistan**

Afghanistan were eliminated from the tournament as they lost to Sri Lanka in the final T20 World Cup match. Afghanistan were looking to reach the semi-finals for the first time, but their hopes were dashed by a strong Sri Lanka performance. Afghanistan's bowlers struggled to contain the Sri Lanka batsmen, who scored an impressive 188. Afghanistan, on the other hand, managed only 147, with no batsman scoring more than 35. Afghanistan's captain Asghar Stanikzai was dismissed for a golden duck, while Mohammad Nabi scored a disappointing 35.

**Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka produced a dominant performance to secure their place in the semi-finals. They bowled Afghanistan out for 147, with Noor Ali Zadran being dismissed in the opening over. Sri Lanka then scored a solid 188, with Dasun Shanaka scoring a crucial 50. The match was played in the UAE and was a thrilling contest between two of the tournament's most exciting teams.
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 6-76(3) 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 2020.

“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.

BERTERETTI SEALS ATP FINALS SPOT

Matteo Berrettini has become the ninth 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 Australian 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 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.

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ANDY MURRAY

Former World No 1

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sport

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 Mohsen Haidar Dawisha 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 chairman, the honourable Lujaina Mohsen Haidar Dawisha, 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 thrilled 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.”

Oman racing icon Al Harthy and MHD ITICS announce new partnership

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CONRAD PRAHIBU

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 offer a solid framework for collaboration between international and regional partners, Islamic finance standard setters and multilateral organizations 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 downturns 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 share of the Islamic banking in gross financing and total deposits reached 16.8 per cent and 16.8 per cent respectively,” he said.

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 by deploying the other technology adoption, financial inclusion, and development of the Islamic banking sector of 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 benchmarking 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 OIC, IFSB, and the Basel III framework.

“This road map is necessarily an evolving process to align the robust growth of the Islamic banking sector with the country’s national growth objectives,” he said.

The scope of this paper is to outline the strategic direction of the Islamic banking industry and its sustainable growth in the Sultanate of Oman, he added.

With total deposits of RO 5.7 billions as of June 30, 2021, the market share of Islamic banking in gross financing and total deposits reached 16.8 per cent and 16.8 per cent respectively.

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“This road map is necessarily an evolving process to align the robust growth of the Islamic banking sector with the country’s national growth objectives,” he said.
BankDhofar, Dar Al Atta’a pact to support Shaheen affected

MUSCAT: Comprising its position as a socially responsible organization, 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 Shaikh Alkhalifa bin Oman Al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, and Honourable Maryam bint Ismail 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 Shaikh Alkhalifa bin Oman Al Ojaili, said, “BankDhofar is committed to practice its social responsibility which stems from its core belief in the importance of solidarity and cooperation during such times. Being an integral part of our Oman society, we have always been keen on 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.

Eater, 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 deferring of loan installments 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 Gonio 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 benefits and ongoing development, while simultaneously strengthening its ties with the local community.

To learn more, check BankDhofar pages on social media or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the call center 247 at 2499111 for inquiries.

10 Ommani trainees graduate from MBi training programme

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

MBi, which is part of the Mohammed Al Barwani Group of Companies, recently graduated a batch of 10 Ommani 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, MBi training also qualified some of the graduate to work as company service at hosts, others as performance engineers, assistant drilling engineers at rig site for Gulf Drilling and on behalf of clients, and some as Business Development Contract Engineers.

Hamdi Al Jabi, Training Manager at MBi, said “Our training programmes are all centered around preparing the trainees with the expertise needed to operate in the field. Bringing this comprehensive training programme to our trainees thus became multilateral and can operate at different positions.”

Salim al Harthy, CEO of MBi, which Gulf Drilling is a part of, added, “We at Gulf Drilling always place a great need 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 Raymi, one of the trainees who is now working as a Business Development Contract Engineer, stated “The theory and practical component, which then gave us the experience we need. I’m proud that the experience provided me to operate as a Business Development Contract Engineer”.

LuLu Financial Holdings MD appointed adviser

MUSCAT: UAE’s first listed digital-only bank, Al Marayih Community Bank LLC, has appointed Adwah Alshabib, Managing Director of Al-Balhaf-based LuLu Financial Holdings to the position of Auditor to the Board Members.

Adwah, whose investments in financial services and digital payments span 11 countries in the GCC, Indian sub-continent and APAC regions, is an established and reputable industry name, known for his far-reaching expertise in various aspects of the development of the global payments ecosystem.

A member of the prestigious World Economic Forum’s South Asia and Middle East Policy Network, Adwah additionally sits at the helm of companies in retail, F&B and luxury hospitality.

Al Marayih Community Bank, which started operations earlier this year, is a customer-oriented financial services provider committed to improving the quality of life of the UAE community by operating with integrity and using innovative methodologies.

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

Adwah Alshabib

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

MUSCAT: Ahlibank’s popular prize scheme Wafa 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 Wafa 3rd quarter draws with prizes totalling more than RO 300,000, including one winner of the grand “Wafa for Life” prize of RO 250,000 (RO 1,000 monthly for 250 months), which went to Ji Huafani from Al Khoudh Branch. The event was streamed live on the bank’s official social media pages.

Mutawar Al Balushi, AGM-Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank said, “At ahlibank, the role of Wafa 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, Wafa 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 Wafa prize scheme helps us to maintain close relationships with our customers, and impactfully engage with them, while the savings enhancement nature of “Wafa” scheme supports our personal socio-economic goals.”

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

For customers who maintained an average quarterly balance above RO 3,000 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 draw the event of two winners of the monthly salary transfer draws, whereas each winner received a prize of RO 1,200.

Muzn sponsors Islamic Finance News Forum 2021

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

Sallam al Marzouqi, INB’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 sector.

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, INB 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 operated with keynote address from Shaikh Abdillah bin Sallam bin Al Salmi, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority, and welcomed 16 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 banking window 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 range of Islamic investment products and funds that delivers financial solutions to a growing customer base, Muzn ensures innovative, competitive and quality services that are accessible to all.
The Oman American Business Council (OABC-US Chamber of Commerce affiliate in the Sultanate of Oman) has announced the trade relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the US have surpassed $32m, an overwhelming figure that helps the Sultanate of Oman run a trade surplus of $15 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 MENA region that have FTA with the US, like 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 Olsen.

The report says that the bilateral trade relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the US have surpassed $32m, an overwhelming figure that helps the Sultanate of Oman run a trade surplus of $15 million worth of exports to the US that included aluminium, plastics, chemicals, other commodities, and finished products.

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

The Paris Agreement commitment would apply to sovereigns and non-sovereign projects, including investments made via financial intermediaries.

Jin said currently 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.

For the lead-up to COP26 in November, more than 130 countries have set or are committed to a net-zero emissions target by 2050. These countries set an ambitious goal to push the world to net-zero emissions in order to combat the worst impacts of climate change.

The aim of AIBC is to complement the work of existing initiatives and catalyze a process of action that the governments and other stakeholders can take to stop climate change in its tracks.

In our view, the US has been a front-runner in the fight against climate change, with its landmark legislation the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which was passed in August 2022.

This act aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030 and it is a significant step towards achieving the Paris Agreement targets. It includes provisions for tax credits, grants, and incentives for renewable energy projects and electric vehicles, which will undoubtedly support the shift towards clean energy and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

The act also contains measures to increase energy efficiency, reduce methane emissions, and support the development of carbon capture and storage technologies.

AIBC is committed to working with partners across the globe to promote and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The group aims to mobilize capital and expertise to support projects and initiatives in energy transition, adaptation, and resilience, aligning with the goals of the Paris Agreement and other international climate frameworks.

The ultimate goal is to work towards a future where the world’s economies are resilient to the impacts of climate change and where the use of fossil fuels is significantly reduced. The Inflation Reduction Act is a significant step towards achieving this goal and AIBC stands ready to support the implementation of its provisions and the broader goals of the Paris Agreement.
From zero to $12 bn: investors chase Trump stock hype

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

Anthony Nexus, a 49-year-old software consultant in 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 traders who drove up the value of the company, which had no assets, and no social media venture to almost $12 billion.

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

‘To Trump’s social network going to work! Probably not. But that doesn’t mean you can’t make money in the meantime,’ Nexus said.

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

Trump Media & Technology Group was worth $8.2 billion 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 $35, as customary for special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs). A detailed regulatory filing that will allow a precise calculation of its current worth has yet to be filed.

Many of the investors snapping up the shares are political supporters or fans of President Trump. Shae Spring, a 28-year-old salesman from Norristown, Pennsylvania, is holding on to $1.38 million worth of stock he bought on trading app Robinhood last week until it goes ‘to the moon’.

He bought the signal for $1.35 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,’ Spring said.

Nexus, on the other hand, said he invested in the SPAC because he saw similarities with GameStop Corp, the video game retailer whose shares have soared over the last four months as a result of retail investors on Reddit and other social media platforms who took on hedge fund bets against the company.

The retail investors also piled into other ‘meme stocks’, from GameStop to AMC Entertainment Holdings via the home supplies retailer Bed Bath & Beyond Inc.

— Reuters

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Salman from Norristown

ALTHOUGH MORE PEOPLE 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 stagnated at one point some months ago.

Across Britain, home sellers were asking for £344,445 on average, £9,983 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 platforms Rightmove put the residence of the market down to a rush to do a deal and lock in lower final mortgage rates before a Bank of England rate rise as well as a faster turnover of property for sale.

Some people had feared the end of the stamp duty holiday tapers, 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 Bartrum said the full house effect was an ‘extraordinary event’.

He added: ‘The shock 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’.

Banister 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. It will be interesting to see London brevities which are lagging behind, witnessed the highest annual growth in prices.

The latest UK House Price Index shows that London house prices climbed by 3.6 per cent between August last year and July — a £27,910 leap. The average UK house price was £255,000 higher in August than a year earlier, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The figures showed property values rose by 5.6 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 £183,000. Average house prices increased over the year in England (as opposed to UK) to £281,000 (a 9.8 per cent annual increase compared 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 £629,000 — the highest on record, the ONS said.

The North had the highest annual price growth in property prices 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 jump in London increased by £214 billion.

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

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

TWO PAIRS of bejeweled 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, the 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 were made in the 17th century, while the frames are from the 18th century.

“There are so many stories behind this spectacle. The emerald came through the Mughal court, the diamonds came from the Golconda mines (in India) and at the Mughal court, these were dressed from stones which originally would have been much larger and very heavy,” the Sotheby’s specialist said.

“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 rigorous 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

The congressman from California describes risks to our democracy and the resurgence of autocracy.
**Remote-sensing reveals details of ancient Olmec site in Mexico**

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.

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Music!
Tapping into their network of
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THE LOFT:
That idea has always broad a
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“All your work, red for com-
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collaborators to our initiatives
have been our corporate clients over
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prise for both creatives
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culture by providing a space
for its creatives to
engage, Today, they are a fully-
flawed Talent and Event agen-
tice, which has always been on
sale, local events. “Local” is
in a term we emphasize in every-
thing we communicate through our
public existence — our mission
that currently resides in the
Sultanate of Oman, is all
around us, supporting us con-
tinuously. Although the lockdown,
and yet here we are, in a world
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lines, but my fellow creatives and
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