**OMAN DAILY**

**FRIDAY | DECEMBER 3, 2021 | RABEE AL THANI 1843 AH**

**Oman participates in UNWTO meetings**

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is currently participating in the 24th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) held in Madrid, Spain. The Omani delegation is headed by His Excellency Dr. Mohamed bin Sultan bin Al-Mahruqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. The General Assembly is attended by tourism ministers from UNWTO member states and the Secretary-General of the organization.

**Oman reaffirms legitimacy of Palestinian cause at UN**

NEW YORK: While stressing its support to efforts of peace in the Middle East and other areas of the world, the Sultanate of Oman underscored the fairness of the Palestinian cause and the legitimacy of Palestinian people’s demands for independence. In a speech before the United Nations (UN) 76th session here, the Sultanate of Oman supported the two-state solution and the Palestinian people’s call for the establishment of their own state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the international law, resolutions issued by the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative. At the UN session, dedicated to Clause 39 (Palestinian file), Dr. Mohammed bin Jawad al Hassan, Oman’s Permanent Representative to UN, said, “This is not the first time that the UN meets to discuss the Palestinian issue, which remained a key issue on the UN agenda since 1945.” He said that, despite all international resolutions issued by the Security Council and global support for the termination of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the occupation still persists, and so do settlement practices and other forms of exacerbation and provocation that arouse Palestinian sentiments, especially where it pertains to sacred lands. — ONA

**Many immeasurable violations were committed against the Palestinian people and their capabilities**

DR MOHAMMED AL HASSAN
Permanent Representative to UN
Oman celebrates UAE’s 50th National Day

The Sultanate of Oman on Thursday joined the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in marking the UAE 50th National Day. In this context, the Secretariat General of National Celebrations (SGNC), in cooperation with Royal Oman Police (ROP), organised a ceremony at Al Va’iqa boarder checkpoint. The ceremony included many activities, in addition to some musical pieces played by the ROP Music Band. Those arriving from UAE were received at Al Va’iqa checkpoint with sonorities in celebration of this occasion. Hussa bin Saleh al Hinai were declared as best speakers.

SULTANATE: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is currently participating in the 24th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) held in Madrid, Spain.

Mohammed bin Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UAE, has expressed his country’s keenness to promote tourism, logistics, and digital transformation, in line with the Sultanate of Oman’s Vision 2040

The Omani delegation is headed by Sultan bin Mhamoud Al Muhairi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. The General Assembly is attended by tourism ministers from UNWTO member states and the Secretary-General of the organisation. The meetings highlight various topics in the fields of innovation, education and rural development.

UNWTO will launch its Digital Futures Program for SMEs which will accelerate the economic recovery of the tourism sector. The Digital Futures Program will focus on 5 digital tracks: business growth, connectivity, e-commerce, big data and its analysis, payments and security. On the sidelines of the meetings, a number of ministers and tourism officials will participate in a discussion panel on the impact of entrepreneurship projects in rural communities, besides exploring ideas and experiences that would serve the tourism sector. — ONA

‘Oman-UAE relations based on ancestry, common history’

Mohammed bin Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman, has affirmed that the Oman-UAE relations are deep-rooted and based on ancestry and common history.

He said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) and Oman TV, that these relations have reached advanced level in all spheres, thanks to the wise keenness of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President, who spared no effort in pushing these relations towards wider horizons.

In the investments front, the UAE Ambassador pointed out that his country tops the Arab and GCC list of investors in the Sultanate of Oman. The volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE in 2010 touched AED 50 billion in 2021 from AED 8 billion in 2010, said the ambassador.

He underscored his country’s keenness on investment in non-oil sectors, such as tourism, logistics, and converting industries. This drive, the ambassador affirmed, comes in line with the Sultanate of Oman’s approach to diversify sources of income within the context of Oman Vision 2040.

With regard to the UAE celebrations of the 50th National Day, the UAE Ambassador to Oman said, ‘My country moves with steady strides towards achieving further development in various sectors. This march is inspired by the Founder of the State, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It is led by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and members of the UAE Supreme Council’ — ONA

Sultanate participates in UNWTO meetings

AMAL AL RYAMI

The student debate competitions by the Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah concluded at the Training and Professional Development Center in the Wilayat of Nizwa.

The competition was organised and supervised by the Educational Activities Department of the Vocational Guidance and Student Counselling Department. Eight teams representing the governorate’s eight wilayats took part in the final. These teams were selected after the preliminary qualifiers that took place earlier this year. The final evaluation committee was chaired by Khaimah bin Said al-Sayegh, Deputy Director of the Educational Activities in the ministry.

Khalid bin Said bin Saif al Hinai was chosen as the best speaker in the final round. Maimonah bint Nasser bin Khalfan Al Hinai and Shamsa bint Khalid bin Saif al Makhtat were declared as best speakers.

In the semifinal round, the topic was on “this council believes that population regulation works to reduce the crises that countries face”.

Aayan bint Zahrain bin Saif al Hamramy, Sarah bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Faruq, Maimonah bint Nasser bin Khalfan Al Hinai and Shamsa bint Khalid bin Saif al Makhtat were declared as best speakers.

In the final round, the topic was on “this council will punish street vendors”. Maryam bint Mohammad bin Masoud Al Sulaimani and Khalid bin Hamad bint Salem Al Hinai were judged best speakers.

The final round debated on the necessity of allocating grades in the evaluation system for students participating in educational activities. Mohammad bin Nasser bin Khalid Al Hinai was chosen as the best speaker in the final round.

Mohammed bin Saif Al Mansuri, Director of Vocational and Student Counselling Department in the Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, congratulated the winners and members of the jury.

The aim of the competition was to raise the spirit of research, develop thinking and increase knowledge of students. It also improves listening skills and gives students an opportunity of expressing their ideas.

The debates work on refining the students’ talents, increasing their self-confidence, helping them to master the art of rhetoric and motivating them to helping them to mastering the art of rhetoric and motivating them to

Student debate competition concludes in Nizwa

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IRAN REPRAYS 433 MORE MIGRANTS FROM BELARUS

Iran said on Thursday it was bringing home 433 more migrants who had been stranded in Belarus in an attempt to enter the European Union (EU).

Last month, the Iranian government said it would bring back all those who sought to enter voluntarily from Belarus.

At least 15,000 migrants have since been repatriated abroad flights of the national carrier.

The migrants began flying to Tehran on Thursday on an Iranian Airways' flight from Minsk, the Belarusian capital.

For the Iranian Foreign Ministry Ali-Akbar Salehi, without giving further details.

Q&A SESSION

LEBANON

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population.

The head of the United Nations economic team in Lebanon, Philippe Lazzarini, said on Thursday that "the instability and the uncertainty will greatly impact the country's development in the years to come".

The head of the World Bank's Lebanon office, Atif Rostom, added that the country's economy will be facing "a large number of challenges".

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Japan eases blanket ban on new incoming flight bookings

**INDIA ANNOUNCES FIRST TWO CASES OF OMICRON VARIANT**

Sydney: An Australian cabinet minister has been removed from his post while allegations he was abusive towards a former staffer during their relationship are investigated, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on Thursday.

It comes just days after an inquiry found that sexual harassment and bullying are rife in Australia’s parliament, with both male and female politicians and staff accused of bullying the institution’s “saint” culture.

Former government staffer Rachelle Miller on Thursday accused Education and Youth Minister Alan Tudge of emotional and physical abuse during their relationship in 2017—selections were by No 1 V N Ramana said during proceedings.

A drawer looks at Mount Merapi, Indonesia’s most active volcanoes, as seen from Sleman, on Thursday. — AFP

TOKYO/New Delhi: Japan has softened its suspension of all new incoming flight bookings to make it easier for citizens to return, the government said on Thursday, after it announced the more prompted by concerns about the Omicron coronavirus variant.

The transport ministry abruptly said on Wednesday it was asking airlines to stop taking all new incoming flight reservations for a month, in a surprise move affecting citizens and foreign residents.

But on Thursday, government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said it would be amended.

“This request caused confusion among those affected and so the prime minister instructed the transport ministry to examine the issue and consider the needs of Japanese citizens to return home,” he told reporters.

As a result, the ministry “asked airlines to cancel the blanket suspension of new reservations for international flights to accommodate Japanese hoping to return home,” Japan had tight border restrictions throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, banning almost all foreign arrivals.

It has began to ease those rules slightly last month to allow some students and business travellers entry, but reversed that decision after the emergence of the Omicron variant.

It has also barred non-citizens from entering the country if they are coming from 10 southern African countries.

All arrivals in Japan must quarantine for 14 days at home, with people coming from dozens of locations required to spend two days of that two-week period in designated facilities.

After a summer surge in cases, Japan is registering only double-digit infections nationwide most days, and has logged around 18,800 deaths during the pandemic.

Around 77 per cent of the country’s population is now fully vaccinated, and booster shots began rolling out on Wednesday for people who received their second dose at least eight months ago.

NEW VARIANT IN INDIA

Meanwhile, India announced its first two cases of the Omicron Covid variant on Thursday, months after a devastating wave of the virus killed more than 200,000 people around the country.

Top health ministry official Ashok Bhushan said it would be amended.

“The deferral leaves Kyaw Moe Oo, appointed by Aung San Suu Kyi’s government, in place as Myanmar’s envoy.

He made headlines shortly after the patch by making the three-finger salute of democracy protesters from his UN chair, bravely defying the junta’s insistence that he no longer represents the country.

In August UN prosecutors said they had charged two Myanmar citizens in a plot to attack him. The junta has denied any involvement and chosen former soldier Aung Thura as its envoy to the UN body.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy government, sparking huge democracy protests which have triggered a bloody crackdown from the junta.

“The Tukker in September asked the UN to accept its former, dual-based envoy and spokesperson Taw Hsaw Naing to succeed Gholam Isaczai, a cabinet minister, “ defined by a relationship” that was “defined by no respect, “ Chief Justice N V Ramana said during proceedings.

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They were in a lifeboat, she said.

It’s an important that these matters be resolved fairly and expeditiously, “ said the minister.

“Tit for tat is the appropriate action for me to take under the ministerial standards. I note that Minister Tudge has welcomed this outcome.

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WHO warns of ‘toxic mix’ as EU chief mulls mandatory jabs

A baby was found dead in one of five migrant boats intercepted off Spain’s Canary Islands in the Atlantic with nearly 300 people on board, officials said on Thursday.

Migrants arrivals on the Canaries have surged since late 2021 after increased patrols along Europe’s southern coast dramatically reduced crossings to the continent via the Mediterranean.

In the latest incident, the Spanish coastguard rescued 282 sub-Saharan African migrants from five inflatable dinghies off the coast of Fuerteventura, one of the seven islands that make up the Canary Islands.

UKRAINE CRISIS BUILDS TOWARDS BIDEN-PUTIN TALKS

Momentum was building on Thursday for direct talks between US President Joe Biden and Russian leader Vladimir Putin as both sides sought to avoid a “negative and dangerous confrontation” over Ukraine. The Russian and US foreign ministers came face to face in London to discuss recent allegations levelled by Kiev and its Western allies that Russia could invade or launch an attack on Ukraine.

Biden said the talks would have a “personal, private, and not public” format, which would be a “first step” to defuse tensions and keep communication lines open.

In a Monday address to the nation, Putin said combo attacks on the Russian Federation and any aggressor “will get nothing.”

He warned that a Western-led invasion “will achieve nothing” and would lead to “unprecedented results” and “crushing consequences” for all the aggressors.

LONDON: Meghan Markle on Thursday called for a reform of tabloid newspaper culture after what she alleged was a “toxic and enervating” campaign against her by a British newspaper group for breaching privacy.

But Associated Newspapers, which also出版了 The Mail on Sunday, 以及 Express, published a letter to the duchess’s lawyer saying the newspaper group had no intention of changing its ways.

The British newspaper group’s high court败主appealed against a ruling that it had to pay the dukin’s legal costs and to print a front-page statement acknowledging the decision was “in the public interest.”

The 51-year-old former US actress, who is married to Prince Harry, has long been at the centre of legal battles with the press over her privacy.

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**Opinion**

UN fears sectarian violence could tear Ethiopia

Ethiopia risks descending into sectarian violence and experiencing a chaotic Kibera-style exodus if the year-long conflict spreads to the capital Addis Ababa, according to diplomats.

In an interview with AFP, Martin Griffiths expressed deep concern for the stability of a nation of 115 million people composed of more than 80 ethnic groups.

Griffiths, the UN under-secretary for humanitarian affairs, said the conflict in Ethiopia has sparked, perhaps for the world’s most worrying humanitarian crisis.

He warned that a battle in the capital Addis Ababa and increasing communal violence could worsen the situation “exponentially.”

Humanitarian organizations have been scrambling to respond to soaring needs in Ethiopia, and laying contingency plans in case the crisis escalates.

“The worst I think from a humanitarian perspective would be if there is a battle for Addis or turmoil around there, leading to increased communal violence across the country.”

**Nigeria recruits churches, mosques to speed up mass vaccinations**

Prayers and hymns filled the Ikoyi Baptist Church at a recent Sunday service before the pastor delivered a message from the pulpit: Do the right thing and get the jab. Dominant in the church is the wealthy Ikoyi area of Nigeria’s economic capital Lagos, word-spreaders in their Sunday finest lined up to register for a first shot of a Covid-19 vaccine.

“Going for the vaccine is now etched in the minds and hearts of Nigerians,” Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu said in a statement.

“The state is currently receiving 14,185 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine daily which is enough to vaccinate 1.42 million people.”

**Fortune**

Entitled “Backcombing with the US Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste,” the report was mandated by Congress as part of the Safe Oceans 20 Act, which became law in December 2020.

“The success of the 20th century miracle invention of plastics has also produced a global scale deluge of plastic waste seemingly everywhere we look,” wrote Margaret Spring, chief scientist officer of Monterey Bay Aquarium, who chaired the committee of experts that compiled the report.

The added global plastic waste was an “environmental and social crisis” that impacted the mainland district of Alausa, Friday prayers and hymns filled the Ikoyi Baptist Church at a recent Sunday service before the pastor delivered a message from the pulpit: Do the right thing and get the jab. Dominant in the church is the wealthy Ikoyi area of Nigeria’s economic capital Lagos, word-spreaders in their Sunday finest lined up to register for a first shot of a Covid-19 vaccine.

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**GLOBAL PRODUCTION**

Global plastic production rose from 20 million metric tonnes in 1969 to 381 MMT in 2015, a 20-fold increase over a century, the report said.

Initially, attention to ocean plastics focused solely on ship and marine-based sources, but it is now known that almost any plastic on land has the potential to reach the oceans via rivers and streams, the report added.

Research has shown nearly 90% of widely dispersed species of marine life are susceptible to plastic entanglement or ingesting microplastics, which then make their way through the food web back to humans.

The report said an estimated 8 MMT of plastic waste enters the ocean annually, “the equivalent of dumping a garbage truck of plastic waste into the ocean every minute.”

At the current rate, the amount of plastics discharged into the ocean could reach up to 53 MMT per year by 2030, roughly half of the total weight of fish caught from the ocean annually it said.

Part of the reason is that while the generation of plastic waste in municipal solid waste has exploded, particularly since 1980, very little has been collected and the amount of plastic entering the oceans has not kept up, resulting in more and more plastic finding its way into landfills.

**United States is world’s biggest plastic polluter, says study**

The report offered a number of steps to address the crisis — first among them, reducing virgin plastic production, for example by establishing a national cap.

**SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

Other suggested actions include using materials that degrade more quickly and are more easily recycled, the reduction of certain single-use plastics, and improved waste management, such as techniques to recover microplastics from wastewater.

Improving waste capture technology would stop plastics in waterways, while steering plastic disposal directly into the ocean itself also remains a priority.

**PM’S VISIT**

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Economic diversification will help Oman achieve developed country status by 2040: WTO

LONDON: Oil prices rose on Thursday as investors adjusted positions ahead of an OPEC+ decision on supply policy, though gains were capped by fears that the Omicron coronavirus variant could hit fuel demand.

Brent crude futures rose 35 cents, or 0.5 per cent, to $69.22 a barrel by 0715 GMT while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 29 cents, or 0.4 per cent, to $65.86.

Global oil prices have lost more than $10 a barrel since last Thursday when news of Omicron first shook investors.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, together known as OPEC+, are likely to decide on Thursday whether to release more oil into the market as previously planned or to ease supply.

The meeting is scheduled to start at 1500 GMT.

Since August, the group has been adding an additional 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) of output to global supply each month, gradually opening down record cuts agreed in 2020.

The new coronavirus variant, however, has complicated the decision-making process.

Sources within OPEC+ and elsewhere had differing views on the likely outcome, ranging from a pause to a planned January increase, the previously agreed 400,000 bpd rise to go ahead and even one saying he expected a cut in production.

Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA, said he believed that the collapse in oil prices and uncertainties surrounding Omicron will prompt OPEC+ to call a temporary halt to production.

“Then that removes a mechanism in oil markets,” he added.

While the impact of the Omicron variant rose after the first case was reported in the United StatesFOK

US Deputy Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said on Thursday that President Joe Biden’s administration could adjust the timing of its planned release of strategic crude oil, depending on global economic developments.

Global oil prices fell substantially.

Gains in oil markets on Thursday were overshadowed by a weak US inventory data showed that US crude stocks fell less than expected last week, while gasoline and distillate supplies rose more than expected while demand weakened.

World food prices stay at 10-year peak: FAO

ROME: World food prices rose for a fourth straight month in November to remain at 10-year highs, led by strong demand for wheat and dairy products, the UN food agency said on Thursday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization’s food price index, which tracks international prices of the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 154.4 points last month compared with a revised 152.3 for June.

The October figure was previously given as 153.2.

The November reading was the highest for the index since June 2011. On a year-on-year basis, the index was up 27.3 per cent last month.

Agricultural commodity prices have risen mostly in the past year, driven by harvest setbacks and strong demand.

The FAO’s cereal price index rose by 3.1 per cent in November from the previous month and was 23.2 per cent higher than its year ago level, with wheat prices hitting their highest level since May 2011.

FAO said wheat prices were supported by concerns about unsaivable rains in Australia and uncertainty over potential changes to export measures in Russia.

The dairy price index posted the largest monthly rise, up 3.4 per cent from the previous month.

“Strong global import demand persisted for butter and milk powders as buyers sought to secure spot supplies ahead of the holiday season,鲭7a,” said the FAO.

Global sugar prices rose 3.4 per cent in the month and were up nearly 40 per cent year-on-year. “The increase was primarily driven by higher ethanol prices,” FAO said.

The meat price index posted its fourth consecutive monthly decline, shedding 0.9 per cent on the month, while world vegetable oil prices fell 0.1 per cent on October levels, but international palm oil prices remained firm, FAO said.

Rome-based FAO cited its projection of global cereal production in 2021 to 2.791 billion tonnes from 2.79 billion estimated a month ago, according to its crop production outlook report.

However, the expected world cereal output would still represent a record, FAO said.

“The month-to-month downside is primarily the result of an unexpectedly smaller global coarse grains outlook, reflecting reduced forecasts for barley and sorghum production,” FAO said.

World cereal utilisation in 2021-22 was forecast to rise by 1.7 per cent above the 2020-21 level, hitting 2.810 billion tonnes, FAO said.

FAO forecast for world cereal stocks by the close of seasons in 2022 stood at 822 million tonnes, up 2.9 million tonnes since November but still down 0.7 per cent from opening levels. — Reuters
Wall Street dives as Omicron arrives in US

Grabs $40 bn Nasdaq debut to set tone for SE Asian tech listings

SINGAPORE: Grab, Southeast Asia’s biggest ride-hailing and delivery firm, makes its market debut on Thursday after a record $4 billion merger with a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC), in a listing that will set the tone for other regional offerings.

The backdrop listing on Nasdaq marks the high point for the nine-year-old Singapore company that began as a ride-hailing app and now operates across 455 cities in eight countries, offering food deliveries, payments, insurance and investment products.

The biggest US listing by a Southeast Asian company follows Grab’s April agreement to merge with US tech investor Altimeter Capital Management Inc. SPAC, Altimeter Growth Corp and raise $4.5 billion, including $700 million from Altimeter.

There is scope for many players in the fragmented food delivery and financial services market in Southeast Asia, a region of 650 million people, but the road to profitability could be a long one, analysts say.

Grab’s flotation “will provide a bigger cash buffer” to its “cash burn”, SPK Global Ratings said in a note. But the company’s “credit quality continues to be constrained by its lack of making operations, and free operating cash flows could be negative over the next 12 months.”

Southeast Asia’s Internet economy is forecast to double to $360 billion in gross merchandise value (GMV) in 2022, growth from $185 billion, including regional Internet firm Sea Ltd and Indonesia’s GoTo-Group, to double up.

— Reuters

US is world’s biggest plastic polluter, report finds

WASHINGTON: The United States is by far the biggest contributor to global plastic waste in the world, according to a new report submitted to the Federal government on Wednesday that called for a national strategy to tackle the growing crisis.

Overall, the US contributed around 47 million metric tonnes (MMT) in plastic waste in 2016 — more than twice as much as China and more than the countries of the European Union combined, according to the analysis.

On average, every American generates 130 kilograms (286 pounds) of plastic waste per year, with a total of 876 million tons of waste at 88 kilos per year.

Entitled “Beckoning with the US Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste,” the report was mandated by Congress as part of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act, which became law in December 2020.

“The success of the 20th century miracle invention of plastics has also produced a global-scale deluge of plastic waste seemingly everywhere you look,” wrote Margaret Spring, who chaired the committee of experts that compiled the report.

Global plastic production rose from 20 million metric tonnes in 1966 to 361 MMT in 2015, a 20-fold increase over half a century, the report said.

Initially, attention to ocean waste focused solely on ship and marine-based sources, but it is now that almost any plastic on land has the potential to reach the oceans via rivers and streams, the report added.

Research has shown nearly a thousand species of marine animals are susceptible to plastic entanglement or to ingesting microplastics, which then make their way through the food web back to humans.

The report said an estimated 8 MMT of plastic waste enters the world annually. “The equivalent of dumping a garbage truck of plastic waste into the ocean every minute.”

Waste from the fast-food industry — once the largest source of plastic waste — has been reduced.

At the current rate, the amount of plastics discharged into the ocean could reach up to 53 MMT per year by 2030, roughly half of the total weight of all fish caught from the ocean annually, it said.

The problem is that while the generation of plastic waste in municipal solid waste has exploded, particularly since 1980, the scale of recycling has not kept up, resulting in more and more plastic finding its way into landfills.

The report offered a number of steps to address the crisis — especially reducing virgin plastic production.

Other suggested actions include using materials that degrade more quickly and measures to repair and recondition the reduction of certain single-use plastics, and improved waste management, such as increased use of off-site to remove microplastics from wastewater.

Improving waste capture technologies would stop plastics before they reach the ocean and extend its use as a material, the report added.

This is the most comprehensive and damning account on plastic pollution ever published,” said Judith Erik, president of the Beyond Plastics nonprofit.

“It is a code red for plastics in the ocean and documents how litter stoppers are not going to save the ocean,” she continued, adding that it was urgent that policy makers and business leaders read the report and take action. — AFP
IRAQ LEADS FIRST DAY COMPETITIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TENT PEGGING MEET

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT DISC 2

As many as 33 riders took part in the International Tent Pegging Traditional championship which began on Thursday in Duqm. Iraq team won the title of the first day competitions while Sudan team was positioned as runner up. United Arab Emirates team finished in third place.

The championship, which is under the organisation of International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF), started with tent pegging events through Individual lance, Pairs lance and team lance (above).

In the Individual competitions, Iraq's rider Abdullah Hamza Rashied claimed the first place title while UAE's AbdulHameed Rasheed claimed second place award. Mohammed al Hammadi clinched the second place award under auspices of HH Sayyid Loay bin Ghalib al Said in presence of the ITPF Chairman, Mohammed bin Isaa al Fares and top officials.

"Hosting of International Tent Pegging Traditional championship and presence of more than 16 countries in the event is enhancing the Sultanate of Oman attendance in the sporting mega events. These sporting events assist the Sultanate of Oman to prepare for a challenge in the FIA T4 honours in Saudi Arabia, co-driver Matthieu Baumel is taking part in a circuit race with historic cars in Dubai this weekend.

The event has been in and out of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship since 1984 and the closest an Omani of sorts has ever come to winning was when Oman-based Lebanese driver Tony Georgiou secured the win with the late Tom Steele in 1992.

Oman drivers have graced the podium, but Al Rawahi has an excellent chance to enter the record books when the 12-stage event gets underway on Friday morning. He wheels out his new Volkswagen destroyed in a fire in Cyprus, he was able to clinch the title with a round to spare.

Al Rawahi bids to become first Omani to win home FIA rally

MUSCAT: Abdullah al Rawahi has a superb opportunity to become the first ever local winner of the Oman Rally Sohar International 2021 this weekend.

The event has been in and out of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship since 1984 and the closest an Omani of sorts has ever come to winning was when Oman-based Lebanese driver Tony Georgiou secured the win with the late Tom Steele in 1992.

Oman drivers have graced the podium, but Al Rawahi has an excellent chance to enter the record books when the 12-stage event gets underway on Friday morning. He wheels out his new Volkswagen destroyed in a fire in Cyprus, he was able to clinch the title with a round to spare.

Al Rawahi bids to become first Omani to win home FIA rally

Seven FIA crews and four teams competing in the Oman National Championship were flagged away from the ceremonial start at Al Qurum on Thursday afternoon.

The 17-time regional rally champion Nasser al Attiyah was one of four international drivers to feature on the original entry list but will not start this weekend. The Qatari secured his latest title with the cancellation of the rally in Kuwait in November and, despite seeing his Volkswagen destroyed in a fire in Cyprus, he was able to clinch the title with a round to spare.

While Al Attiyah prepares for next week's FIA World Cup finale in South Arabia, co-driver Matthieu Baumel is taking part in a circuit race with historic cars in Dubai this weekend.

Kuwait’s Meshari al Atya is the main threat to Al Rawahi’s bid for a first win. The Qatari secured his latest title with the cancellation of the rally in Kuwait in November and, despite seeing his Volkswagen destroyed in a fire in Cyprus, he was able to clinch the title with a round to spare.

The riders who are taking part in the championship are representing different countries including: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Malayasia, Iraq, UK, Germany, Norway, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, Canada, USA, Jordan, Sudan, Palestine, Syria and the hosts the Sultanate of Oman.

As part of the championship, umpiring and coaching courses took place in presence of more than 40 referees and 25 coaches. The educational courses are presented by certified lecturers to boost the sporting information to the participants. Many local participants also took part in the workshops to enhance and to be updated with the latest data and information.

Abdullah al Rawahi

Al Rawahi bids to become first Omani to win home FIA rally

Abdullah al Rawahi

Khaled is absent from the start list and so is fellow countryman Henry Kahy. The latter’s absence means that a finish for Jordan’s Asem Arif will be sufficient to secure the MERC3 title.

Tomorrow (Friday) crews tackle three gravel special stages on two occasions with the action getting underway at 09.30hrs with the first run through Al Qurum and, despite seeing his Volkswagen destroyed in a fire in Cyprus, he was able to clinch the title with a round to spare.

While Al Attiyah prepares for next week’s FIA World Cup finale in South Arabia, co-driver Matthieu Baumel is taking part in a circuit race with historic cars in Dubai this weekend.

Kuwait’s Meshari al Atya has already secured the 2021 MERC3 title and he also masses Oman to prepare for a challenge for FIA T4 honours in Saudi Arabia next week.

Likewise, Lebanon’s Ahmad
India seek clarity on SA tour with Omicron spread

MOMBASA: India skipper Virat Kohli said on Thursday his side were seeking clarity about the upcoming tour of South Africa, which is in doubt over the spread of the Omicron variant.

Kohli returns for the second Test against New Zealand in Mumbai starting on Friday after he stepped down as Twenty20 captain at the end of India’s World Cup campaign and took a short break.

New Zealand hung on to draw in the opening Test of the two-match series.

India are expected to fly to South Africa for a full series including three Tests from December 17 but the highly infectious new Covid variant has put plans on hold.

“The players who are not part of this group right now who will be entering quarantine to join the team,” Kohli told reporters a day out from the Mombasa Test.

“It’s a learning process that we want to seek clarity as soon as possible.”

A tour by India is easily the biggest money-spinner for South African cricket and is believed to be worth hundreds of millions of rand.

On Tuesday the South African government had pledged to take all precautions necessary to keep players safe and praised the “dedication” of India’s cricketers in choosing to continue with the tour.

But the Board of Control for Cricket in India has also said it will await a government nod on the Pretoria tour before making a final decision.

Kohli insisted their focus is on the final Test while staying connected with the board over the Pretoria trip.

“At the end of the day we understand, our focus from the Test match will not shift regardless,” he said.

“We have been talking to the board and we are pretty sure within a day or two we will have absolute clarity as to what is going on.”

“So we need to be realistic about what we can, we just cannot ignore the things that potentially could put you in a controversy where no one wants to be there.”

SAHA FIT

Top South African, who boat India to win the inaugural World Test Championship in June, have never won a Test series in India and last won five days there in 1988, also in Mumbai.

— AFP

Napoli collapse at Sassuolo as Milan rivals close gap

Gianluca   another

We

MILAN: Sassuolo’s Gian Marco Ferrari (C) celebrates after scoring an equaliser during the Serie A match against Napoli.

Gianluca was half-back in his team’s run-in to title contention.

Junior Mionato continued his incredible run with a brilliantly taken brace either side of half-time at the Stadio San Paolo after Zlatan Ibrahimovic had equalised in a perfect free-kick to give Milan a 10-minute lead.

Brazilian Miania, a 30-year-old former fringe goalkeeper who is only in his second Serie A season, helped Sassuolo rebound from a 0-1 defeat to Atalanta.

Sassuolo’s Gian Marco Ferrari (C) celebrates after scoring an equaliser during the Serie A match against Napoli. (Image: AP)

Just as Sassuolo were looking to make their point, they were well beaten.

Kalinjski’s late strike, the final of the first half, was the only difference.

But it would have been a shame to not draw a match that I think we played on equal footing with Napoli, we kept playing at 2-0 and we deserved to draw,” said Sassuolo coach Alessio Dionisi to DAZN.

To make matters worse for Napoli, who were already without Victor Ozenhen and Andre-Frank Zambo Anga, they lost Ruiz and defensive midfielder Lusilu Kodjali through to muscle injuries, and Spalletti suggested the pair would not be available for the visit of high-flying Atalanta.

“Rui (Rui) is having issues in his leg,” he said to DAZN.

“Will he be difficult to get them back in time, but we’ll see because we have good doctors here.”

Miania’s form continues — Milan took full advantage with their 3-0 stroll at Genoa despite starting centre-back Simon Kjaer being substituted off early with a muscle injury, while Inter ran out 2-0 home winners over Spal.

“Roberto Gagliardini and Lautaro Martinez struck in each half for Inter at a freezing San Siro as Simone Inzaghi’s side extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 10 games.

The win was their fourth on the bounce with a much changed line-up as Inzaghi shuffled his deck with a host of defensive injuries and a trip to Roma coming on Saturday.

Spal have conceded a whopping 34 goals in 15 games and were breached inside an hour side which was without several starters and in second gear for much of the night.

Julian was, level on 24 points with Juventus and Fiorentina after Mattia Savarino finalised them to a 1-0 won over Jose Mourinho’s Roma.

Swogle Swarren bagged a second goal from distance to move Sinisa Mihajlovic’s side to within one point of fifth-placed Roma.

Ruiz’s strike was the final of the first half, was the only difference.

The result is also great news for Atalanta, who after their won over Verona on Tuesday are six points away from their nearest challenger for fourth and the final Champions League spot.

— Gagliardini

Gritty De Silva ends West Indies hopes in Sri Lanka

GALLE, SRI LANKA: Dhananjaya de Silva ended the West Indies hopes of a maiden win on Sri Lanka soil with a brilliant six-hour spell at the crease in Galle to finish day four with an unbeaten 153 on Thursday.

The tourists wobbled throughout the final session, with Lasith Embuldeniya routing out a record 107-run partnership.

Sri Lanka finished on 328 for eight at stumps and are ahead by 279 runs. No team has chased that many to win a Test match in Galle.

“Target close to 300 runs is a little bit difficult especially on a wicket that is tough to bat on,” said West Indies coach Phil Simmons.

“De Silva batted really well and there was one chance and we couldn’t hold it. He played us out of the game.

De Silva’s batto the wall knocked helped the hosts out of trouble when he walked in to bat at 73-3, a lead of just 24.

Having first put up a 178-run stand with overnight batsman Pathum Nissanka, de Silva then went on to eke out a crucial partnership of 51 with Ramesh Mendis.

Pulla of Sai de Silva’s eighth Test ton and the 30-year-old tackled over 150 in style by bowling Nikhilkumar Bonner for four.

The West Indies were running a dropped catch off de Silva when he was five, with wicketkeeper Joshua De Silva spelling the chance.

The batsman made the tourists pay with an excellent counter-attack.

He added 109 for Vieraamurthy Perumal dropped de Silva off his own bowling when he was on 116.

The West Indies trail the two-Test series 0-1.

The highest successful run chase in Galle is 268 by Sri Lanka in 2019 against New Zealand.

The tourists introduced pace to unsettle the West Indies, but with a couple of coupled boundaries off Kemar Roach, de Silva ensured that Sri Lanka had the momentum.

Openers Nissanka, playing his sixth Test match, posted his third half-century in the series with a conservative approach.

Nissanka made 66 before a Roston Chase delivery saw him dismissed on the last ball before lunch.

Mendis and then his Sikh wicket and Angelo Mathews — struggling with a hamstring injury — came in but hit the fall of the seventh wicket.

He managed just one run.

Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said no decision had been made about when to declare.

“Maybe we will try to give the bowlers a bit more cushion,” he said.

Just checked with the two batters and they were saying that it was not too tough to bat. We are on top now and we can put them under pressure.”

— AP

Gritty De Silva ends West Indies hopes in Sri Lanka
Antetokounmpo fuels NBA champion Bucks

LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo drove for the game-winning layup with two seconds left on Wednesday, lifting the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks to a 127-125 victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

Antetokounmpo, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and MVP of the 2021 Finals, scored 40 points with 12 rebounds and nine assists as the Bucks rallied for an eighth straight win.

It was on fire early at Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, making 10 of 17 three-pointers in the first quarter.

They led by as many as 18 points in the first half, but couldn't maintain the torrid pace, Milwaukee closing the deficit to 68-60 at halftime.

The Bucks took the lead for the first time with 2:26 remaining in the third quarter, when George Hill three-point play put them up 91-90.

They led by two going into a fourth quarter that developed into a back-and-forth battle that featured 10 lead changes.

Khris Middleton, who scored 21 points for the Bucks, drained a three-pointer with 12 seconds remaining to give a 122-121 lead.

Khris Ball, who led the Hornets with 36 points, drained a three with 5.9 seconds left — enough time for Antetokounmpo to get the ball out of a timeout and drive for the winning basket.

There was little suspense in New Orleans, where the Dallas Mavericks led virtually all the way in a 139-107 rout of the Pelicans.

Luka Doncic scored 28 points and handed out 14 assists and Kristaps Porzingis added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Mavs, who were coming off a 114-96 loss to Cleveland.

The Mavs — who had lost five of their past six — shook off their recent shooting woes in a big way, connecting on 57 of 85 shots from the floor, including 18 three-pointers.

Their 68.7 shooting percentage was a franchise record for a game, breaking the previous high of 68.6 set in 1983.

“Tatum was playing his best defense. He’s a guy that plays defense. That was the difference in the end,” Doncic said. “He played defense. There was a screen on that shot, but Trae backed off and let it go. Now, when he backpedaled, we got this lead back. So we have to just be better from there.”

Deandre Ayton, who scored 10 points and 10 rebounds in the first half to join Damian Lillard and Trae Young as the only players with multiple 20-point, 10-assist halves since the 2018-19 season.

“We came out with a lot of energy,” Doncic said. “Those shots were open, so we knocked them down.”

Celtics EDGE SIXERS

It was close in Boston, where Jayson Tatum scored 26 points and pulled down a career-high 16 rebounds as the Celtics held on for an 88-87 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Tatum scored 11 points in the fourth quarter and Robert Williams Hocked a shot from George Niang at the buzzer to secure the win for the hosts.

Boston improved to 9-4 defensively andSensor big man Joel Embiid was held to three of 17 shooting, scoring 13 points and pulling down 18 rebounds.

Donna Schroder drove to the basket for a layup to put Boston up 88-84 with 37.1 seconds remaining.

Danny Green drained a three-point shot to trim the deficit to one point and after Schroder came up empty on another drive Philadelphia grabbed the rebound and got the ball to Biang.

Williams deflected his shot, and Celtic got the win in their first game since November 3 with a full complement of players.

“Hopefully we can continue to keep guys healthy and see how good we can be,” Tatum said.

In Miami, the Heat got an unforeseeable look at what they can expect from their updated roster.

Bam Adebayo and Jimmy Butler, filling 11-85 to the starting Cavilers.

Adebayo is expected to miss some six weeks after thumb surgery, and Butler missed his second straight game with a bruised tailbone that could sideline him another couple of contests.

Tyler Herro led the Heat with 21 points and Dejounte Deltin added 15 points and 15 rebounds, but it wasn’t nearly enough against the Cavaliers, who pulled down 46 rebounds to Miami’s 28 and drained 16 three-pointers.

Kevon Lovv came off the bench to lead the Cavaliers with 22 points, one of six Cleveland players to score in double figures. — AP

ILCA 6 Radial Worlds opener disrupted by lack of wind

MUSCAT: The opening day of the 2021 ILCA 6 World Championship fell victim to an uncharacteristic lack of wind in Barcelo Muscatum Resort, resulting in the scheduled races being cancelled. Action will resume tomorrow with 72 ILCA 6 pods and formula Gold Events set to go when the conditions allow.

Racing is due to take place every day until December 6, 2021.

A diverse teamsheet features several of the world’s top ten female sailors in the class, including 2020 Laser Radial Olympic Champion, Anna-Marie Rindom of Denmark, world number two and 2018 World Champion, Emma Plasschaert of Belgium and world number four, Elena Verebrev of Croatia.

Agata Barwinska of Poland, currently ranked sixth in the world, Maja Lender of the Netherlands, ranked eighth. Varvara Karakhadze from Greece, ranked ninth; and Marie Barrere from France, tenth in the world going into the tournament, will also be taking part.

The event includes Abdulrahim Al Himsi, Almustash Al Fateh, Hafid Al Saadi and Ali Bars Al Noori, four of Oman’s best ILCA 6 sailors, who will all be looking for a strong showing on home waters.

Richard Marcus Arge, Karl Bottrich and Tristan Zariklin all representing Estonia, Nik Platkov of Slovenia and Umut Eryilmaz of Turkey will provide tough competition over the next five days. Hamid al Yahmadi, ILCA 6 World Championship project manager, said, “We are disappointed not to have any racing today but this is the nature of the sport. We are all the memory of the elements and we have no choice but to wait. This is a good opportunity to conduct some final equipment checks, rest and recover before racing commences.

The sailors enjoyed two days of excellent practice beforehand so we are sure that when the wind picks up again, they will be ready to go and we will see the high standard of sailing expected from some of the worlds best in the ILCA 6 class.”

The event is supported by national carrier Oman Air, OQ and the Barcelo Muscatum Resort as official partners, and Beih as environmental supporter.

The Mineral Water Company Waterfall Water provided all essential water supplies for the event while the Royal Navy of Oman provided medical support throughout.

Double crown for Shantanu in ISC annual tennis tennis tourney

Shantanu Srim (L) and Advait Kappil

MUSCAT: Talented Upharg Shantanu Srim grabbed the limelight of ISC annual tennis tournament by winning U14 and U16 crown by beating Advait Kappil who was the challenger in both events.

Undoubtedly both Shantanu and Advait are best players at the Indian Social Club and have played brilliant all-round tennis and fought even till the last to reach the summit clash by Boys and girls combined U14 and Boys under U16 singles. In a highly thrilling and closely contested U16 final, Shantanu had to muster all his resources to stay off the determined challenge of Advait before emerging winner with scores of 6-2, 7-6, 6-8. Having shared the first two sets, the third set tie breaker was a nail bitting affair. Both Shantanu and Advait were at their best plundering power-packed ground strokes as scores went neck-and-neck before Shantanu held his nerves to pip Advait narrowly to win the U16 title.

In other matches of Girls and Boys combined U14, Shantanu bat Rolini in the semifinals scoring 6-0, 6-1. In another semifinals Advait bat Devudit Subbaiah 6-0, 6-0. Nalin S bat Rahil N 6-3, 6-2. Rohith N bat Kashyap 8-5 and Dasu bat Neil 9-8.

In U16 Boys singles, Shantanu S bat Devudit in a thrilling match scoring 7-6, 5-7, 3-2 in semifinals and in other semifinal Advait Kappil bat Kashyap H 7-6, 6-2 and Devudit S bat Rolini N scoring 8-3.

Shantanu Srim (L) and Advait Kappil
MADRID: World number one Novak Djokovic performed double duty to lead Serbia into the Davis Cup semifinals for the fifth time on Wednesday with a come-from-behind win over Kazakhstan.

Djokovic and Filip Krajinovic, preferred by Troicki over higher-ranked Dusan Lajovic and Filip Krajinovic, had been on court for the opening clash.

“Novak is an inspiration, he’s one of the best in the world. They gave us the Davis Cup, it’s about these kind of matches. We love the Davis Cup, it’s about these kind of matches. We’re honoured to play for my country. Our fans see the best in the world. They give this kind of support for so many years. I was fighting a bit, it was such a difficult match.”

Tennis player Novak Djokovic performs double duty to lead Serbia into the Davis Cup semifinals for the fifth time on Wednesday with a come-from-behind win over Kazakhstan.

“I can’t be prouder of our fighting spirit. We dropped in level, stay calm and turn the tide,” said Djokovic.

He dropped a 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 in the decisive doubles. Gojko Kukushkin and Aleksandr Nedovyesov beat Nikola Cacic to see off Andrey Golubev and Aleksandr Nedovyesov in 2016.

Djokovic, a 33-year-old Russian-born Serbian, has been on court for the opening clash.

Novak, a 35-year-old left-handed player, had not won a Davis Cup doubles match since 2015 and went into Wednesday’s decider in the day’s second set.

“While we now know where Peng is, I have serious doubts that she is free, safe, and not subject to censorship, coercion and intimidation,” Simon said.

“In good conscience, I don’t see how I can ask our athletes to compete there when Peng Shuai is not allowed to communicate freely and has seemingly been pressured to contradict her allegation of sexual assault.”

Djokovic’s support for Peng Shuai was in line with his support behind the WTA threat to cut lucrative business ties with China over concerns about the safety of female player Peng Shuai, who accused a top Communist Party official of sexual assault.

“I support fully the WTA’s decision to relocate or cancel all its events in China this year before the end of the year and the 2022 schedule has yet to be released,” Simon said.

He added: “In good conscience, I don’t see how I can ask our athletes to compete there when Peng Shuai is not allowed to communicate freely and has seemingly been pressured to contradict her allegation of sexual assault.”

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