

Oman LNG revenues at RO 3.2 bn

Oman LNG's revenues by the end of 2021 recorded an increase by 31 per cent to reach \$3.278 billion compared to 2020. The rise is driven by the global economic revival during 2021 and increasing global energy prices. The company's net income after tax marked an increase by 34 per cent, reaching \$886 million in 2021 compared to \$663 million in 2020 as indicated by the company's recently published annual report. **DETAILS ON P13**



HM, TANZANIA PRESIDENT HOLD OFFICIAL TALKS

LEADERS EXPLORE STRONG BILATERAL RELATIONS BINDING THE TWO COUNTRIES



HM HOSTS DINNER: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq hosted an official dinner at Al Alam Palace in honour of President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, on Sunday. Before the dinner, His Majesty and the Tanzanian President exchanged memorial gifts on the occasion of her visit to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held an official session of talks with President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania at Al Alam Palace on Sunday afternoon.

The talks explored the strong bilateral relations binding the two countries and ways of elevating them towards broader horizons to realise the aspirations of the Omani and Tanzanian peoples.

The two leaders also exchanged views on various matters of common interest.

The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign

HM LEADS WELCOMING PARTY FOR PRESIDENT OF TANZANIA

TANZANIAN PRESIDENT WAS GIVEN A CEREMONIAL 21-GUN SALUTE

TALKS EXPLORE WAYS OF ELEVATING RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

THE TWO LEADERS EXCHANGE VIEWS ON MATTERS OF COMMON INTEREST

Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Head of the Mission of Honour) and Saud bin Hilal al Shidhani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania.

It was also attended from the Tanzanian side by January Yusuf Makamba, Minister of Energy, Dr Pindi Chana, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr Khalid Salum Mohamed, Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, Ambassador Mbarouk Nassoro Mbarouk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Fatma Rajab, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and some Tanzanian officials. — **ONA**



HIS MAJESTY HOSTS DINNER FOR PRESIDENT SAMIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted an official dinner at Al Alam Palace in honour of President Samia Suluho Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, on Sunday. Before the dinner, His Majesty and the Tanzanian President exchanged memorial gifts on the occasion of her visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The dinner was attended by a number of Their Highnesses, ministers, chairpersons of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), senior officers of Royal Oman Police (ROP), ambassadors of friendly and sisterly countries, members of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, under-secretaries and some ambassadors at the Foreign Ministry.

— ONA



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HM leads welcome for President of Tanzania

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania arrived in Muscat on Sunday on a three-day official visit. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the welcoming party for the Tanzanian President.

When the jet of President Samia touched ground at the Royal Airport, His Majesty the Sultan met the guest at the foot of the ramp, welcoming her and wishing her and the official delegation accompanying her a pleasant stay in Oman.

Along with His Majesty the Sultan, the Tanzanian President was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister; Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Head of the Mission of Honour); Saud bin Hilal al Shidhani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania; Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman; and members of the Mission of Honour. Then, His Majesty the Sultan and the Tanzanian President headed to the reception hall, passing through two rows of the guard of honour of the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO).

After a short stay, the motorcade of His Majesty the Sultan and his guest,



President Samia Suluhu Hassan, left the Royal Airport heading to Al Alam Palace for an official reception ceremony. Before the arrival of the main vehicle of the motorcade at Al Alam Palace, a squadron

of cavalry lined the two sides of the road heading to the gate of the Palace. Upon the arrival of the motorcade of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Samia Suluhu Hassan at the entrance of

Al Alam Palace, the RGO band played a welcoming tune, to the accompaniment of trumpets, as the motorcade entered the courtyard of Al Alam Palace. His Majesty the Sultan accompanied the President of

Tanzania to the Dais of Honour where the Royal Anthem of the United Republic of Tanzania was played, while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute for the guest. Then, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying the President of Tanzania, wishing them a pleasant stay. In her turn, the guest shook hands with some members of the Royal Family, Chairmen of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

After that, His Majesty the Sultan and the guest proceeded to the hall where they took Arabian coffee. President Samia Suluhu Hassan is accompanied during her visit to the Sultanate of Oman by an official delegation comprising January Yusuf Makamba, Minister of Energy; Dr Pindi Chana, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism; Dr Khalid Salum Mohamed, Minister of Works, Transport and Communications; Ambassador Mbarouk Nassoro Mbarouk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation; Fatma Rajab, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and East African Cooperation, Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and some Tanzanian officials. During the visit, the two leaders will exchange points of view about ways to realise the aspirations of the two countries and elevate joint cooperation towards broader horizons.

— ONA





شركة الصلان للصناعات الغذائية ش.م.ع.م
Al Sallan Food Industries Co. SAOC

ص.ب. ٩٧٠ صحر - الرمض البريدي: ٣١١ سلطنة عمان - تلفون: ٢٦٧٥٠٠٢٢٣ - فاكس: ٢٦٧٥٠٠٩٤٠

Invitation for attending Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Al Sallan Food Industries Co. SAOC have pleasure in inviting the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting& Extraordinary General Meeting which will be held online (MCD site) 3:00 PM on 27th of June 2022 in case of Quorum is not completed, next meeting will be held on 29th of June 2022 3 PM. to discuss the following agenda:

First: Annual General Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended March 31, 2022.
2. To consider and approve the Auditors' report, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account for the financial year ended March 31, 2022.
3. To inform the related party transactions carried out during the financial year ended March.31, 2022 as per Annexure 1.
4. To consider and approve related party transactions for the year ended March 31, 2023 as per Annexure 1.
5. To appoint Auditors of the Company for the year 2022-23 and to fix their remuneration.

Second: Extraordinary General Meeting:

1. To discuss the financial position of the Company as required as per Article 147 Commercial Companies Law.

A shareholder is entitled to appoint a proxy in writing to attend and vote on his behalf.

All the reports, documents and statements relating to the general meeting are available for the shareholders inspection during working hours at the company's principal place of business in Sohar. For any clarification regarding the matters mentioned in the above agenda, please contact Mr. Ismail Roushdhi on Ph. 26750623.

Vice Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditors

A new chapter in Oman-Tanzania ties

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttv](#)

The relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania is special and unique because of the shared history and common blood and familial ties dating back thousands of years.

The depth of the relations is borne out in the constant links connecting huge swathes of the populations of both nations, as a large number of people in the Sultanate of Oman speak Swahili, for example.

The Sultanate of Oman's participation in the 60th Anniversary celebrations of Tanzania reflects the deep-rooted historic relations between the two countries and is evidence of the two sides' interest in developing bilateral cooperation.

The relations have scaled new heights in the recent past bringing tangible, positive results thanks to the exchange of visits and discussions at various levels aimed at forging closer economic, political and cultural cooperation.

Both countries have rich natural endowments and strategic geographic positions, fostering a diverse economy

resilient to external shocks. As a result, they fared better than many regional peers during the Covid-19 pandemic, albeit with losses due to a decline in tourism and related services.

According to the World Economic Outlook report by the IMF in April last, Oman's real GDP is expected to grow by 5.6 per cent in 2022 from an estimated two per cent growth recorded in 2021. The fund expects Oman's economy to grow by 2.7 per cent in 2023.

At the same time, the IMF projects that Tanzania's real GDP growth will be 4.8 per cent in 2022, 5.2 per cent in 2023, and 6.0 per cent in 2027.

Following two decades of sustained growth, Tanzania reached an important milestone in July 2020, when it formally graduated from low-income country to lower-middle-income country status. Tanzania's achievement reflects sustained macroeconomic stability that has supported growth, in addition to the country's rich natural endowments and strategic geographic position.

Exchange of trade visits in the recent past has helped both countries familiarise

with investment opportunities in the fields of industry, agriculture, fisheries, mining, logistic services, tourism, health, education, renewable energy and information technology.

The two friendly countries hold annual sessions of talks at the political level, the last of which was held last March in Tanzania. The meeting extended support for dialogue and peaceful means in resolving issues and conflicts, if any, in order to stabilise and sustain international peace and security.

Undoubtedly, the wise leadership of the two friendly countries are looking forward, through this visit, to strengthening areas of joint cooperation towards broader horizons.

The current visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the accompanying delegation will open a new page in strengthening the Oman-Tanzania relations, especially in the economic aspects. The meeting between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Samia Suluhu, as observers expect, will play a crucial role in future relations between Oman and Tanzania.



Qarn al Alam records 49.1 degrees Celsius



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The maximum temperature in the Sultanate of Oman touched 49.1 degrees Celsius, while lowest settled at 22.6 degrees Celsius at two different places in the northern and southern parts of the country in the last 24 hours.

Qarn al Alam near Ghaba recorded the highest temperature of 49.1 degrees Celsius, while Qairoon Hirti in the Governorate of Dhofar recorded the lowest (22.6 degrees Celsius).

The second highest temperature was recorded at Zamaim (48.8 degrees Celsius), while temperature in most parts of the country ranged between 31 and 42 degrees.

Due to high humidity, there is big difference in actual and 'feels like' temperature in most parts of the country. Muscat, for example, the temperature ranged between 31 and 38 degrees Celsius, but the 'feels like' temperature due to high humidity was 45 degrees on

Sunday.

The Met Office reported the spread of low clouds over the coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman and the coasts of Musandam Governorate. It predicted partly cloudy skies with isolated rain along the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains.

The weather office predicted mainly clear skies over the rest of the governorates with chance of dust rising over desert and open areas.

There are chances of cloud development and isolated and occasional thundershowers over Al Hajar Mountains. Late night to early morning low-level clouds or fog patches over parts of the Sea of Oman coasts and South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates is also predicted.

The sea is expected to be moderate to rough (2.5m) along the coastal areas of the Arabian Sea and slight-moderate along the rest of the coasts (1.5m).

Oman, Turkey to boost ties on archives

MUSCAT: An official session of talks between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Turkey was held at the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) in Muscat on Sunday. The session dealt with areas related to records, archives, historical studies and cultural spheres. During the session, the Omani side was represented by Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the NRAA, while the Turkish side was represented by Prof Ugur Unal, Director of the State Archives of the Presidency. — ONA

Ministry of Health to consider reducing treatment fee at private hospitals

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday said that they have formed a committee under the Director-General of the General Directorate of Private Health Institutions to study the possibility of reducing treatment fees at private health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Muhanna bin Nasser al Maslahi, Director-General, said the ministry is working on digital transformation of this sector, so that all transactions will be carried out electronically.

He confirmed that there are joint actions with all parties to simplify procedures of the proposed digital transformation.



"A committee has been formed to review service fees at private healthcare institutes and possibilities of reducing

the fee in line with the direction of the government to support investment," he added.

Dr Al Maslahi indicated that

there are approximately 1,600 health establishments in Oman with 11 new private hospitals under construction.

15% power rate cut till August

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabnassri

Electricity companies have started notifying their customers about the reduction in tariffs for consumer segments based on the recent Council of Ministers' decision to provide additional support to reduce electricity consumption costs for subscribers with two accounts or less in the residential category. There would be a reduction of 15 per cent from May 1 to August 31.

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company has issued an alert to its subscribers in the Governorate of Muscat. The company said the tariff for all consumer segments will be reduced by 15 per cent for the basic account (two accounts or less) of the residential category for the summer months, noting that the tariff reduction will not include consumption before May.

The approved tariff for electricity for the residential category includes three segments. The first is for consumption that starts from zero to 4,000 kilowatts at a price of 14 baisas per kilowatt, the second is for consumption from 4,001 to 6,000 kilowatts at a



The tariff reduction will not include consumption before May.

price of 17 baisas per kilowatt, and the third is for the consumption from 6,000 kilowatts at a price of 30 baisas per kilowatt.

In January, the Sultanate of Oman extended the period for gradual lifting of subsidies on electricity for the residential category from five years to ten years while eliminating the distinction between Omanis and

others in calculating the tariff.

According to the results of tariff review and electricity sector governance issued by the Government Communication Centre, Ministry of Information, the period of redirecting the subsidy has been doubled, provided that the electricity tariff approved for the residential category continues during the

current year at the same tariff level in December 2021.

Extending the period of restructuring the electricity subsidy will be paralleled with the rate of increase in the tariff that does not exceed two baisas annually, and with unification of the electricity consumption segments for all accounts of the residential category.

Ministry of Labour launches National System for Innovation and Change Management

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday launched the 'National System for Innovation and Change Management, on Sunday.

By launching the new system, the ministry aims to achieve harmony and integration in administrative work between the units of the civil administrative apparatus and keep pace with developments and modern administrative approaches in managing all divisions and departments of the civil service.

The new system, launched under the auspices of Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary for Labour at the Ministry of Labour, also aims to direct development and training in accordance to the actual needs at the units, design an efficient system for the exchange of knowledge



regarding the best administrative practices at government units.

Shaikh Saud bin Hamad al Hamouda, Director-General of Development and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Labour, stated that the National

System for Innovation and Change Management is one of the enablers of Oman Vision 2040, noting that the ministry embarked upon gradual implementation of the system a while ago.

The Ministry of Labour collected

more than 82 successful practices at various entities in addition to specialised research and studies that aim at administrative development.

The National System for Innovation and Change Management is aimed at enhancing institutional reputation in accordance with the international standards that will be applied from next October to 2025 through an e-platform containing research and studies, the official said.

The event witnessed presentation of visual displays on the theoretical framework of innovation and change management, succession and career pathways and institutional excellence as per the European model, risk management and the balanced performance card.

— ONA



SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH



NOTICE

(Auction No. 1/2022)

The Ministry of Health would like to invite sealed bids for Remove of Sand at Head Quarter and Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect auction documents and specifications from the Directorate of Purchase & Tender at Ministry's Headquarters between 8.30am and 12.30pm during official working hours on or before 20/6/2022.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1000) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bond will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to H.E. the Chairman of the Tender Committee providing the title of the auction viz:
" Auction No. 01/2022 – for the is clearly mentioned on it. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder's name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited in the tenders box kept at the Office of Purchase and Tender in Directorate of Financial Affairs by 9.00 noon on Wednesday the 6/7/2022. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids.



EU faces ‘historic’ decision on Ukraine membership

KIEV: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says member states face a “historic decision” at a June 23-24 summit on whether to grant Ukraine membership status.

“I hope that in 20 years, when we look back, we will be able to say that we did the right thing,” von der Leyen told journalists on her way back from a visit to Kiev.

The challenge would be to emerge from the EU summit later in June with a unified position “that reflects the scope of this historic decision.”

Von der Leyen had travelled to Kiev earlier in the week to discuss with President Volodymyr Zelensky, among other things, remaining points of contention in Ukraine’s application for membership.

The EU executive wants to publish its recommendation at the end of the week on whether the country, which has been resisting a Russian attack since February 24, should be granted EU candidate status.

Ukraine has achieved a lot in recent years, but much remains to be done, said von der Leyen on her way back to Poland.

“Our recommendation will carefully reflect that,” she added.

Von der Leyen said talks she held with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday “will enable us to finalise our assessment by the end of next



Demonstrators hold Ukrainian and EU flags at a rally and human chain around the headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels. – AFP

week” -- the first time the bloc has publicly given a sense of timing.

Zelensky has pressed for rapid admission to the European Union, but officials and leaders in the bloc caution that, even with candidacy status, membership could take years or even decades.

Despite reservations among some member states, EU leaders are expected to approve Ukraine’s candidate status, though with strict conditions attached.

“Russia wants to ruin European unity, wants to leave Europe divided and wants to leave it weak.

The entirety of Europe is a target for Russia.

“Ukraine is only the first stage in this aggression,” Zelensky said, warning it was a “decisive time” for his country and the EU.

Addressing the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in

Singapore on Saturday, Zelensky highlighted the dangers of a food crisis posed by Russia’s blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

He warned of an acute food crisis, adding that the “shortage of foodstuffs will inexorably lead to political chaos.” Also on Saturday,

Von der Leyen who held talks with Ukrainian President says will finalise her assessment by the end of next week

Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday cited reports of Russians loading trucks with Ukrainian wheat and taking it to Russian-controlled areas. Since withdrawing from Kyiv, Russian forces have concentrated their firepower on the eastern Donbas region and the south.

Two civilian deaths and 11 injuries were reported in locations across Donetsk, the regional governor said.

“All major cities in the free territory” of Donetsk “have been without electricity” since Saturday evening, according to the area’s military administration.

Moscow has particularly focused on the key industrial city of Severodonetsk, in Lugansk, which Gaiday said on Saturday was “ruined” by Russian forces.

“This is their tactics — people are not needed, the infrastructure is not needed, houses are not needed, everything should be simply ruined,” he said in an interview posted on Telegram.

— dpa/AFP

Volcano ash blankets Philippine towns

JUBAN: A volcano in the Philippines spewed a huge column of ash into the sky on Sunday, blanketing a region still recovering from last week’s eruption.

The blast from Bulusan volcano lasted 18 minutes, the Philippine seismological agency said, impairing road visibility and forcing airlines to cancel flights.

On June 5, Mount Bulusan sent a grey plume shooting up at least one kilometre and covered 10 villages with ash.

Residents of Juban town in Sorsogon province, still reeling from last week’s eruption, were woken up on Sunday by the volcano’s thundering.

“I thought it was just raining, but when I looked outside there was ash everywhere,” resident Antonio Habitan said. “Our river was once clear but now it is ash-coloured.”

No casualties were reported, but the seismological agency raised the alert level to one on the five-level system, indicating “low-level unrest”. “We still can’t say that it



Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management officers guide motorists passing through an ash-choked highway in Juban town, Sorsogon Province, after the sudden eruption of Bulusan volcano. – AFP

is over. It’s still possible that this eruption could be followed by another one, that’s why we need to be careful with the Bulusan volcano,” agency head Renato Solidum told local radio station DZBB. Emergency workers were deployed to clean ash-laden roads

and guide drivers struggling to see oncoming vehicles.

Five flights in the area were cancelled. Juban’s local disaster office said 366 people were in emergency shelters, with most evacuated days before the eruption due to a series of volcanic

earthquakes. Bulusan volcano has been active in recent years, with a dozen similar eruptions recorded in 2016 and 2017.

The Philippines is located in the seismically active Pacific “Ring of Fire” and has over 20 active volcanoes. — AFP

Australia and China defence ministers hold talks for first time

SINGAPORE: Australia and China’s defence ministers met for the first time in three years on Sunday, with the talks described as “an important first step” following a break period.

Richard Marles, whose centre-left government came to power in May, held talks for over an hour with China’s Wei Fenghe on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore. Marles described the meeting as “an important first step” and “very significant”.

“It was an opportunity to have a very frank and full exchange in which I raised a number of issues of concern to Australia,” said Marles, who is also Australia’s deputy prime minister.

The Chinese government did not offer any immediate comment following the meeting. Relations between Beijing and Canberra have grown frosty in

recent years after the latter called for an independent probe into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic and banned telecom giant Huawei from building Australia’s 5G network.

Marles said the recent interception of an Australian patrol plane in international airspace by a Chinese warplane as well as Australia’s “abiding interest in the Pacific” were among topics discussed.

This included Australia’s focus on ensuring “that the countries of the Pacific are not put in a position of increased militarisation”, he said.

The patrol plane incident, described by Canberra as “very dangerous”, happened on May 26, when a Chinese aircraft intercepted the Australian jet and released a cloud of small aluminium strips, known as chaff.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

RIYADH

Saudi offers \$10m to prevent oil spill disaster

Saudi Arabia on Sunday pledged \$10 million to help prevent an ageing Yemeni oil tanker from unleashing a potentially catastrophic spill in the Red Sea bordering its waters. The decaying 45-year-old oil tanker known as the *FSO Safer*, long used as a floating storage platform and now abandoned off the Yemeni port of Hodeida, has not been serviced since Yemen was plunged into civil war. A military coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 after Ansar



Allah seized Sanaa the previous year. The tanker, which lies south of the border with Saudi Arabia, is in “imminent” danger of breaking up, the UN warned last month. — AFP

KABUL

2 airport workers killed in Afghan bus ambush

Unidentified gunmen fired at a bus ferrying airport employees in northern Afghanistan, killing at least two people and wounding six others, a senior police official said. The bus was ambushed by two gunmen on its way to the Mazar-i-Sharif airport, Balkh provincial police spokesman Mohammad Asif Waziri said. “The vehicle came under attack when the technical team was on its way to the airport,” Waziri said. The ambush was the latest in a series of deadly attacks that



have hit Afghanistan in recent months. Foreign airlines have still not resumed flights to Kabul and other Afghan cities since the Taliban seized power in August. — AFP

KHARTOUM

Thousands of sheep drown as Sudan ship sinks

An overladen ship crammed with thousands of sheep sank in Sudan’s Red Sea port of Suakin drowning the animals on board but with all crew surviving, port officials said.

The livestock vessel was exporting the animals from Sudan to Saudi Arabia when it sank after several thousand more animals were loaded on board than it was meant to carry. “The ship, Badr 1, sank during the early hours of Sunday morning,” a senior Sudanese port



official said. “It was carrying 15,800 sheep, which was beyond its load limits.” The official said the ship was supposed to carry only 9,000 sheep. — AFP



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In brief

■ ABUJA



NIGERIAN PRESIDENT VOWS 2023 VOTE WILL BE TRANSPARENT

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari vowed that next year's presidential election will be "free", "safe" and "transparent" as he marked the anniversary of the country's return to democracy. "I know many of us are concerned with the rise in insecurity due to terrorist activities in parts of the country. As a government, we are working hard to contain and address these challenges and ensure that the 2023 general elections are safe," Buhari said in a televised address. "I am also promising you a free, fair and transparent electoral process," he said. —AFP

■ VATICAN CITY



POPE SAYS HOPES TO RESCHEDULE AFRICA TRIP TO DRC, S SUDAN

Pope Francis said he hoped to visit the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan as soon as possible, after cancelling an upcoming visit due to a knee problem. "Dear friends, with great regret, due to problems with my leg, I have had to postpone my visit to your countries," the 85-year-old said after delivering his weekly Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square. "I truly feel great sorrow for having had to postpone this trip, which means so much to me. I apologise for this. Let us pray together that, with the help of God and medical attention, I will be able to be with you as soon as possible. Let us be hopeful!" — AFP

■ GOMA



HEAVY FIGHTING AS REBELS ATTACK DR CONGO TOWN

Heavy fighting erupted when M23 rebels launched a fresh attack on troops in the town of Bunagana, in the eastern DR Congo, officials said. Most of the population had fled the centre of Bunagana, a key transit point for goods on the Ugandan border, said Damien Sebusanane, the head of a local civilian group. There has been a resurgence in clashes between the army and M23 rebels in the region, which the government has blamed on Rwanda. Rwanda has repeatedly denied backing the rebel group. The army came under attack in Bunagana and the nearby town of Tshengerero, both in North Kivu province. — AFP

Macron seeks majority in parliament vote



French far-right party Rassemblement National leader Marine Le Pen casts her vote at Henin-Beaumont, northern France. — AFP



France's President Emmanuel Macron casts his vote followed by his wife, first lady Brigitte Macron, in French parliamentary elections at a polling station in northern France. — AFP

PARIS: France voted in the first round of parliamentary elections on Sunday with President Emmanuel Macron hoping to win a majority backing his reform plans while a resurgent and newly unified left seeks to thwart his ambitions.

Elections for the 577 seats in the lower house National Assembly are a two-round process, with the shape of the new parliament becoming clear only after the second round on June 19.

The ballots provide a crucial vote to April's presidential election, when Macron won a second term and pledged a transformative new era after a first mandate dominated by protests, the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine.

After a dismal performance in April, the French left has united in a coalition for what its leader Jean-Luc Melenchon dubs "the third round" of the presidential elections.

Opinion polls show the president's centrist alliance, Ensemble (Together), and Melenchon's NUPES coalition of hard left, Socialists, Communists and Greens neck-and-neck in the popular vote — although the actual breakdown of parliamentary seats will depend on turnout in the second round. The abstention rate is predicted to be well over 50 per cent in the first round, in what would be a new record for elections already marked by feeble participation in recent years.

The ballots provide a crucial vote to April's presidential election, when Macron won a second term and pledged a transformative new era

At midday turnout was 18.43 per cent, according to an interior ministry estimate, down 0.8 points from the last election in 2017.

"I voted tactically in the presidential election, and that didn't change a thing," unemployed 59-year-old Alain Mendez said at an outdoor café in Toulouse, southwestern

France. "So today I'd rather do my gardening instead, and cook for my grandchildren."

If the president's alliance retains an overall majority, Macron will be able to carry on governing as before.

Falling short could prompt messy bill-by-bill deals with right-wing parties in parliament, or an unwanted cabinet reshuffle.

A win by the left-wing alliance — seen as unlikely by analysts — would spell political disaster for the president by raising the spectre of a clunky "cohabitation" — where the prime minister and president hail from different factions.

Such a set-up has paralysed French politics in the past, most recently from 1997 to 2002 when

right-wing president Jacques Chirac ruled in tandem with Socialist Lionel Jospin as premier.

Melenchon, a former Marxist, has already made clear his ambition to become prime minister and stymie Macron's plan to raise the French retirement age, a key part of his reform plans.

Polls have indicated that Macron's alliance is expected to win the largest number of seats but is by no means assured of getting over the line of 289 for an absolute majority.

"Some people say that parliamentary elections aren't important but that's not true," Arnaud, a 40-year old engineer, said. "If the president doesn't win a majority he can't get anything done." — AFP

Dozens still missing months after S Africa's worst floods

DURBAN: Nearly 90 people are still missing two months after the worst floods in living memory swept through South Africa's third largest city of Durban and surrounding areas, killing hundreds, government said on Sunday. The death toll from the raging floods and landslides has climbed to 461, with 87 people still unaccounted for, southeastern KwaZulu-Natal provincial government premier Sihle Zikalala told journalists.

"The floods affected 85,280 people with 461 fatalities. A total of 87 people are still reported missing," Zikalala said in media briefing marking two months after the floods raged across the province. The April torrential downpours, was also blamed on extreme weather triggered by climate change, caught by surprise the country traditionally untouched by storms which regularly hit its neighbour like Mozambique.

More than 300 mm of rain fell within a 24-hour period in some parts of the province — nearly a third of Durban's annual rainfall — smashing a nearly three decade record.

The deluge triggered the worst mudslides seen in the country, sweeping away people, bridges, roads and buildings. — AFP

Tunisian journalist in custody

TUNIS: A Tunisian military court has placed a journalist in custody after he made comments about the army during a television broadcast, his lawyer said on Sunday. The military prosecutor's office opened an investigation after Salah Attia, who works for a local daily, made the remarks to Qatari broadcaster Al Jazeera on Friday, his lawyer Samir Ben Amor said.

Attia said Tunisian President Kais Saied had "officially asked the military to intervene against the Tunisian General Labour Union" — a powerful body known as the UGTT — and to surround its offices ahead of a general strike called for June 16.

Attia, who opposes a power grab by Saied that began in July last year, said the army told the UGTT it had refused the president's request.

"It seems as if we're in the final days of the regime of Ben Ali," Attia said, referring to former Tunisian ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali who was ousted in a 2011 uprising.

The military court called Attia in for questioning and decided on Saturday to place him in custody after he refused to reveal his sources, Ben Amor said. Attia is being accused of "harming the army" and "inciting Tunisians to violence", the lawyer added. — AFP

Finnish, Swedish Nato bids may drag on, says Nato chief

NAANTALI, Finland: Turkey's blockage of Sweden's and Finland's Nato membership bids may not be resolved in time for the alliance's summit later this month, Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said on Sunday.

He said Nato was "working hard" to resolve "legitimate" issues raised by Turkey.

Stoltenberg had previously insisted that the two nations would be welcomed "with open arms," but Turkey has thrown a spanner in the works and blocked their bids.

Ankara accuses them of providing a safe haven for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a "fighter" group by Turkey and its Western allies.

"I would like to see this solved as soon as possible," Stoltenberg said during a joint press conference in Finland with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto on Sunday.

However, "the summit in Madrid was never a deadline", he said.

Earlier in June during a visit to Washington, Stoltenberg said his "intention" was to have the issue sorted out before the meeting due to begin on June 28.

Stoltenberg said Ankara had raised "legitimate concerns."

"This is about terrorism. It's about weapons exports", he said.

"We have to understand and remember that no other Nato ally has suffered more terrorist attacks than Turkey.

And also that Turkey is an important ally with a strategic geographic location", he stressed.

Sweden, and Finland in particular, have historically tried to steer clear of angering nearby Russia but shed their reluctance to join Nato after Moscow's war of Ukraine — which had unsuccessfully sought to join the alliance.

Any Nato membership deal must be unanimously approved by all 30 members of the alliance.

The two Nordic countries have repeatedly expressed surprise at Turkey's objections, saying Ankara had conveyed support for their membership bids until they submitted them.

"We have been surprised by the position of Turkey", Niinisto reiterated on Sunday, stressing that Helsinki was taking the concerns "seriously".

— AFP



Finnish President Sauli Niinisto (R) and Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during the Kultaranta Talks in Naantali, Finland. — AFP

Summer time can be a reading treat for young adults



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Literature, SQU

As the sun sizzles and we stay indoors for much of the day, enjoying a much deserved break from school and college, the novelty of this may soon wear off.

The common refrain of boredom sets in by the middle of the summer holidays and parents are often looking for ways to entertain their children, without it costing an arm and a leg.

This is even more true for young adults who have already gone through the phase of playing with friends and exhausted board games, if children are doing any of this anymore. More likely, they are in front of their screens most of the time.

This is where books come in. Research suggests that reading, not

only increases one’s knowledge, but also improves concentration and focus, enlarges vocabulary, increases motivation and reduces stress.

There is no doubt that reading has nothing but benefits, yet the most common complaint is that reading as a hobby has reduced, particularly among young adults. Of course, we do know why. There are too many distractions in the form of online friends, digital games and bite sized entertainment through TikTok, Instagram and Facebook reels.

How can we make young adults spend a bit more time actually reading an extended text, something that is more than a tweet? How can we convince a

GRAPHIC NOVELS ARE THE PERFECT STRATEGY TO GENTLY INTRODUCE A YOUNG ADULT INTO THE WORLD OF FICTION

generation that most often feels it doesn’t have time to read because it is too busy?

For a start, let’s stop blaming them.

Maybe they are not the problem. Maybe reading has not been perceived as being cool, trendy or fashionable. It’s not what friends are

doing, so how would it look if one admitted actually reading a book?

But there is no better time than the summer holidays, with no distractions or excuses to introduce or encourage the reading habit and even make it cool.

Start with graphic novels. An upcoming new genre, graphic novels bridge the gap between word and picture, introducing a plot via visuals that young adults are accustomed to. There is a wide range to choose from — most of the classics have been adapted into graphic form and there is nothing like big pictures to make one enter the magical world of Jane Austen, Guy de Maupassant or Dostoevsky. If all that sounds too serious, try modern classics like ‘Animal Farm’,

‘1984’ or ‘The Secret Garden’.

Graphic novels have really come of age in the Middle East as well.

From ‘West Bank Stories’, ‘Footnotes in Gaza’ and ‘Baddawi’, authors have grappled the many faces of the Middle East with courage and humour. Culturally close to home, their stories resonate among the Arab readers looking for superheroes beyond those of the pop culture in western media.

Graphic novels hit that sweet spot between reading and seeing. They are the perfect strategy to gently introduce a young adult into the world of fiction. Most conveniently, graphic novels are often freely available online and many hours can be spent in the company of great literary friends.

Fiji’s biggest threat ‘climate change, not conflict’

SAM REEVES

Fiji faces its biggest threat from “devastating climate change” rather than conflict, the country’s defence minister warned at a high-level security summit that has been dominated by geopolitical tensions.

This weekend’s Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together defence ministers from around the world, has seen sparring between Washington and Beijing while delegates also voiced concern about the Ukraine war. It comes as Beijing jostles with Western powers for influence over Pacific island nations.

But Fijian Defence Minister Inia Seruiratu sought instead to focus attention on the threat posed by climate change to his Pacific country, which is regularly hit by cyclones.

“Machine guns, fighter jets, ships... are not our primary security concern”, he told hundreds of delegates at the event in Singapore.

“The single greatest threat to our very existence is... human-induced, devastating climate change. It threatens our very hopes and dreams of prosperity.

“Waves are crashing at our doorsteps, winds are battering our homes, we are being assaulted by this enemy from many angles.”

He said security was “broader than many of us have traditionally defined it”, urging other countries to support Fiji’s efforts to combat climate change.

Last September, Fiji passed a sweeping climate change act which declared a climate emergency while setting out the legal framework for the nation’s response.

Low-lying Pacific island nations are some of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world.

Threats range from cyclones that are becoming more regular and powerful, to rising seas.

Ahead of last year’s key climate talks in Glasgow, Pacific states warned they were bearing the brunt of global warming and urged wealthy, industrialised nations to do more.

China has been vying for influence in the region with other nations, including Australia and the United States.

But Fiji was among 10 Pacific nations that last month rebuffed push for a wide-ranging security pact, in a high-profile political setback for Beijing.

While he avoided the topic during his address, Seruiratu was asked about it at a question and answer session afterwards. He said people had asked him “everybody’s coming to Fiji and courting you but when will you get married?”

“Let me say this. Marriage is about... an enduring relationship. Relationships must be enduring and built on trust.” — AFP

Australia’s baby steps toward severing ties with the Queen



Yan Zhuang

The writer is a reporter in NYT’s Australia bureau

For decades, many Australians have found it a curious thing that the country’s head of state is a queen sitting on a distant English throne. Occasionally, in times of controversy, they have even batted about the idea of cutting Australia’s final monarchical ties. But more pressing issues have inevitably prevailed.

Now, change is on the way. Kind of.

Anthony Albanese, the newly elected prime minister, is an avowed republican. He has appointed the country’s first ever “minister for the republic” — a position intended to begin the transition to an Australian head of state. Polling shows that a slim majority of Australians would support a republic if they had to choose yes or no.

But that does not mean that constitutional change on the republican front is anywhere near the top of Albanese’s agenda. The new ministerial position — an assistant minister — is a comparatively minor one, and its role will be limited, at least for the near term, mostly to conversation starter and weather vane.

Dennis Altman, a professorial fellow at La Trobe University in Melbourne and the author of “God Save the Queen: The Strange Persistence of Monarchies”, likened the sentiment to Lewis Carroll’s White Queen, who tells Alice, “Jam tomorrow and jam yesterday — but never jam today.”

MANY AUSTRALIANS WISHED THE COUNTRY HAD BECOME A REPUBLIC WHEN IT ATTAINED ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN IN 1901

Many Australians wished the country had become a republic when it attained its independence from Britain in 1901, he said, and many would like to see it become one in the future.

But, he went on, “there’s not that great a deal of interest, and the reason there’s not much interest is because, in a sense — and I think this is true for a number of countries that have the monarchies — the system isn’t doing anyone any great harm.”

During Queen Elizabeth II’s platinum jubilee over the weekend, there was little celebration in Australia — and thus little to stir up republican passions. Albanese delivered a speech about the constancy of Britain’s royal women and renamed an island in the queen’s honour.

“I think the republican sentiment”, said Ben Wellings, a senior lecturer



The queen during her last visit to Australia in 2011.

in international relations at Monash University in Melbourne, “has settled on this passive republicanism — they’re pleased that we don’t have all those trimmings of monarchy, but at the same time, not motivated enough to really change the current setup, which is like a pale imitation of that.”

The new assistant minister position is “a way of testing the waters”, he said. “He’s got three years” — the time until the next federal election — “to see what sort of enthusiasm there would be for such a change.”

In one small corner, at least — the Australian republican movement — enthusiasm is already high.

The appointment of Matt Thistlethwaite, a longtime Labor politician, as the new assistant minister of the republic “is the biggest breakthrough for the republican movement in 30 years”, said Peter FitzSimons, chairman of the main republican organisation.

The movement has been waiting years for a spark. It suffered a heavy blow in 1999, with the failure of a referendum on whether Australia should elect its own head of state. The proposal was defeated in part because of disagreement over whether an Australian head of state should be appointed or elected.

“Thomas Paine talked about the winter soldiers who kept the dream alive for America to gain independence from England”, FitzSimons said. “We relied, for the first 15 years after that referendum, on winter soldiers of the republican movement to keep the flame alive.” Now, he added, “let the record show we now have a ‘minister of the Crown’ devoted to removing the Crown.”

Thistlethwaite, for his part, describes his role in less stirring terms. It is, he said, “initially one of educating the Australian people about our current constitutional arrangement and the fact that we have the British monarch as our head of state, and explaining that we can have an Australian in this role.” He attributes the lack of support for the idea in recent decades to a lack of political leadership. But the time is right to revive the debate, he said.

— *New York Times*

Keep the world beating



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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

Like all other organs of the human body; blood is also important to individuals' life as to sustain humanity over all. Blood and its products are very essential resources for an effective management of women suffering from bleeding associated with pregnancy and childbirth, children having severe anaemia due to malaria and malnutrition, patients with blood disorders, inherited disorders of haemoglobin and immune deficiency conditions, victims of emergencies, disasters and accidents, as well as patients undergoing advanced medical and surgical procedures.

The need for blood supply is universal and having a sufficient blood supply is, undoubtedly, necessary for every country on earth. Therefore, to ensure that everyone who needs transfusion has access to safe blood, all countries need voluntary, unpaid blood donors who give blood regularly. In fact, many developed countries worldwide are probably able to rely on voluntary, unpaid blood donations to meet their blood supply needs. However, finding those volunteers and making sure that the blood is safe is still a big issue in some developing countries. Hence, they often have to rely on either family, relatives or friends in some cases to donate blood, especially in cases of emergency and surgery.

THE WORLD
COMMEMORATES
THE WORLD
BLOOD DONOR
DAY ON JUNE 14, IT
IS TIME TO ROLL UP
YOUR SLEEVES AND
DONATE BLOOD TO
SAVE LIFE! TEARS
OF A MOTHER
CANNOT SAVE HER
CHILD'S LIFE, BUT
YOUR BLOOD CAN

Usually, there is a constant need for a supply of blood because it can be stored only for a limited period of time before use. Regular blood donations by a sufficient number of healthy people is highly needed to ensure that blood is always available whenever and wherever it is needed in the country.

Accordingly, an effective blood donation programme or public campaigns, with a wide and active participation of the population, is crucial to meet the need of blood transfusion during peace time as well as during emergencies or disasters, when there is a surge in demand for blood or when the normal operations of blood services is affected. Offering an appealing social and cultural atmosphere with strong harmony facilitates development of such an effective programme. It is also widely acknowledged that the act of blood donation contributes to cementing social ties and building a united community.

Blood is the most precious gift that anyone can give to others as a gift of life. The decision to donate your blood can save a life, or even several if your blood is separated into its components that are red cells, platelets and plasma, which can be used individually for patients with specific conditions. Safe blood saves millions of lives each year. Donating blood is a simple procedure that can be done within a few minutes. It is assumed that sparing only 15 minutes to donate blood could save 3 lives of people. Donating blood brings a life back to power!

The donated blood marks a lifeline in an emergency and for people who need long-term treatments. Every drop of blood is like a breath for someone, so one shall never refuse to donate blood if he/she can, as the donors might be the next needy for blood. To give blood, one needs neither an extra strength nor extra food. If you are a blood donor, you are a hero to someone, somewhere, who strongly needs blood. One shall always contribute to keeping the blood bank shelves full as everybody might need blood someday!

The world commemorates the World Blood Donor Day on June 14, it is time to roll up your sleeves and donate blood to save life! Tears of a mother cannot save her child's life, but your blood can. People can get along without teeth or hair, but not without blood. You don't have to have a degree to save life; you have to have a fair degree of humanity and donate blood. The colour of human blood is red all over the world, so you can donate blood anywhere. This lifesaving care starts with one person making a generous donation; the need for blood is endless.



COOLING OFF

A Palestinian child plays in a pool in the town of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday.
— AFP

Oman and Tanzania to open up more avenues in bilateral relations



Ali Al Matani
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The visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, to the Sultanate of Oman has huge political, economic and social significance. Both these countries have a common history in which their social relations are also rooted. Therefore, it is said that there are no borders in their bonhomie and friendship. The warmth and affection which the two countries enjoyed can be a stepping stone to build economic relations and draw investments. This will bring the people of the two countries closer and cement their ties. This can begin with building communication at people-to-people level.

The relations of Oman with the Horn of Africa, particularly Tanzania and Zanzibar, are deeply rooted in history. They still have beautiful ethnic connections. Now the time has come for the people of the two countries or the regions to be allowed to come forward to implement their agenda of reviving this bonhomie.

Oman can play a major role by creating a positive environment for this in cooperation with its counterparts in the Horn of Africa region. The two countries or regions can maximise cooperation in the economic areas by establishing a bloc of the Swahili-speaking countries, for example. This will bolster their cooperation and communication, like many other regional groups in the world. These groups are formed using common elements such as language and social relations.

Undoubtedly, the ground for

THE RELATIONS OF OMAN
WITH THE HORN OF AFRICA,
PARTICULARLY TANZANIA AND
ZANZIBAR, ARE DEEPLY ROOTED
IN HISTORY

developing bilateral relations between the two countries is already available. The only thing we need is some more attention. Oman exported goods to Tanzania worth more than \$36 million in 2021. The volume of imports from Tanzania was more than \$9.5 million. It means the trade balance is in favour of Oman with more than \$27 million. It means that more work is required to bolster bilateral trade between the two countries. It requires serious attention from both sides. Both Oman and Tanzania should work hard to explore more opportunities for expanding economic cooperation.

STATISTICS

The statistics speak volumes. They show that the amount of bilateral trade between Oman and Tanzania was lower compared with their social relations between the two as well as their geographical proximity and shared history. These are the realities which can be utilised for further strengthening and expanding the areas of cooperation

particularly in economic and commercial areas.

Tanzania has a population of 62 million. It has an area of more than 947,000 square kilometres. With a gross domestic product of \$62 billion, it has a growth rate of 2 per cent. There are huge opportunities for cooperation and investment, particularly in mining, raw materials, agriculture and tourism.

Therefore, we should use this historical and cultural ties to add more momentum in the trade exchange and cooperation between the two countries.

Perhaps the formation of a group of Swahili-speaking countries, similar to Francophone, Spanish and Portuguese groups, would help in penetrating African markets and Tanzania in particular. The group can address the real issues of the citizens of the region, utilise their potential in trade and investments for the development and growth of those countries.

The two countries can develop people to people contact and all required facilities should be provided for this. There should be exchange programmes of media persons, research scholars, writers, scholars and students. There should be mutual visits of these countries at this level so that they have first hand experience of each other and build their own ties.

We are confident that the visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan would open up more avenues of bilateral relations at all levels as a prelude to greater ties leading to a regional Swahili association.



Oman exported goods to Tanzania worth more than \$36 million in 2021.

sport

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England and Italy play out goalless draw

PARIS: England are bottom of their UEFA Nations League group without a win after drawing 0-0 with Italy in a repeat of the Euro 2020 final on Saturday, while Germany settled for a point in a 1-1 stalemate in Hungary.

The meeting in Wolverhampton between Gareth Southgate's side and the European champions was played before just 3,000 people, largely schoolchildren, as a punishment for the incidents that marred the Euro 2020 final between the same nations at Wembley last year.

UEFA rules say a match ordered to be played behind closed doors can still be attended by children accompanied by an adult, as happened last weekend when Hungary beat England in Budapest.

England followed that reverse by drawing 1-1 in Germany and another draw at Molineux leaves them bottom of League A, Group 3 with just two points from three outings before they host Hungary at the same venue on Tuesday in their final game of a long campaign.

Mason Mount hit the bar early on for England, while Aaron Ramsdale produced a fine save to deny Sandro Tonali for an Italy side featuring just two starters who also lined up in the European Championship final.

"We had two or three really good chances we need to score, but just lacked that sharpness in front of goal," said Southgate.

Roberto Mancini's Italy are rebuilding after failing to qualify for the World Cup and are top

of the group after Hungary and Germany cancelled each other out in Budapest.

Zsolt Nagy gave Hungary an early lead, smashing in after Manuel Neuer had palmed out a Rolland Salai header.

However, Germany needed just three minutes to draw level as Borussia Moenchengladbach's Jonas Hofmann latched onto a long ball forward and rounded the goalkeeper before slotting in.

"I said beforehand that this was the hardest game you could have after England," Germany coach Hansi Flick told RTL after his side's third consecutive 1-1 draw.

"But we are in a development process. We have to see that we learn the lessons from this game."

DEPAY MISSES LATE PENALTY

The Netherlands are top of League A, Group 4 after coming from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Poland in Rotterdam, but they could have claimed a third win in as many games had Memphis Depay not squandered a late penalty.

English-born full-back Matty Cash gave Poland an 18th-minute lead with a fine low strike, and the visitors doubled their advantage five minutes after half-time as Przemyslaw Frankowski squared for Piotr Zielinski to finish. Yet the home side pulled one back almost immediately when Daley Blind's cross from the left was swept in by Davy Klaassen, and they were level by the 54th minute as Denzel Dumfries made it 2-2. — AFP

Oman women's futsal team register third win



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Oman women's futsal team blanked Italian club Genoa with 6-2 in the concluding friendly match which is part of the under way external camp in Italy. Oman team goals registered by Tharaa Ali al Ismaili, who scored 3 goals, Linat Youssef al Maslamiy who scored two goals, Heba Hammoud al Asimi and Naira Nasser al Amri who scored one goal.

The team is under direct supervision of Syrian coach Maha Jund and her assistant, Azhar Jassim al Bahrani and Reham Hamdan al Shezawiya.

The match was extremely difficult due to the two teams featured great technical skills and an Italian team showed advanced level including their high physical fitness during the whole match. With the conclusion of this this match, then women's futsal team will have a positive recovery session, prior heading off to Saudi Arabia to take part at the third West Asian Championship in the under way month of June. It will be the first presence of the Omani women team in the tournament and this will be opportunity to determine the itinerary of the team and to stand on the technical level of the players.

Saudi Arabia dent Oman hopes at WAFF futsal championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Saudi Arabia defeated Oman 4-3 to progress into the final match of the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Men futsal championship on Saturday at Al Nasr hall club in Kuwait. With the triumph, Saudi will meet the hosts Kuwait on Monday at the same venue in a tight final clash. Kuwait sealed their ticket to the final as they blanked Lebanon 6-3 in semis on Saturday.

Oman futsal team hopes dented at the WAFF Men futsal championship to reach into the final for the first time.

The gulf opponent started the game strongly as they managed to score an early goal by Mohsin Faqehi in the ninth minute. The opening goal gave much confidence for Saudi Arabia players to dominate in the field. This domination resulted with another goal by the same player to double



the match result and made it 2-0.

Later, Oman team pressed hard towards Saudi's goalie and coach Younis al Fahdi raised his instructions to Oman players to stay focused in the attacking side. Zamil al Balushi succeeded to reduce the gap as he netted the first goal for the national team in the 17th minute while Mohammed Taqi equalised two minutes later. The first half finished at 2-2.

In the following half, Saudi's futsal team men bounced back strongly as they took the lead once again when Abdullah Maghrabi struck third goal after five minutes from the half start.

Few minutes later, Mohammed Taqi scored his second goal and brought the result to origin point at 3-3. Maghrabi came back from behind to score the most important goal in the fixture and

led his team to a 4-3 victory over Oman team.

Oman team advanced to semis of WAFF Men futsal championship after they led group B by five points. They commenced their campaign with a 4-2 win over UAE in the opener. Then, the futsal team was held to a 2-2 draw against Bahrain before they levelled with a 3-3 draw with Lebanon in the conclusion group matches. Lebanon ended their campaign as runner up with the same amount of points but with goal difference than Bahrain which finished in third place. The UAE team was positioned in the fourth place with nil point.

Oman futsal team will make their debut at the AFC Futsal Asian Cup which will take place in Kuwait in September.

The Sultanate of Oman team will face a tough challenge of battling with the hosts Kuwait, 16-time Asian champions Thailand and Iraq in Group A.



Federer hopes to continue in 2023

'S-HERTOGENBOSCH, Netherlands: World number 30 Ekaterina Alexandrova sprung a surprise on the grass of 's-Hertogenbosch by beating top seed Aryna Sabalenka 7-5, 6-0 in Sunday's final.

It is only the Russian's second career title following her win in Shenzhen in 2020.

Sabalenka, sixth in the world and a Wimbledon semi-finalist last year, led 5-4 in the first set before her game completely imploded.

The Belarusian conceded nine games in a row, coughing up 31 unforced errors. Alexandrova, 27, closed out the match with her best weapon, two service winners and an ace.

Neither player, however, will be able to take this form to Wimbledon as Russians and Belarusians are barred from playing at the Grand Slam event following Russia's attack on Ukraine. — AFP

LAUSANNE: Swiss tennis great Roger Federer said he hopes to recover from his latest knee surgery and get back on the ATP circuit next season.

"How, why and to do what, I don't yet know, but that would be the idea," the 20-time Grand Slam title winner and former world number one told Swiss daily Tagesanzeiger in an interview published on Sunday.

Federer, who will be 41 in August, has not played since a quarter-final defeat at Wimbledon almost a year ago and his latest knee surgery was his third in 18 months.

"I myself am curious to see what will follow," Federer said. "But I have hope, I have already come a long way. I'm not far. The next three or four months will be extremely important."

Federer told Swiss broadcaster SRF on Saturday that he is "currently focusing on (his) physical condition, so that there is no overload" and goes to the gym "five to six times a week".

He is aiming for a return to action at the Laver Cup in London from September 23-25 and then his hometown tournament of Basel from October 24-30.

Federer, the winner of 103 trophies over his career, played only 13 matches in 2021 and just six in 2020. He is currently ranked 50th in ATP standings, his lowest in 22 years. — AFP



Shanaka lead Sri Lanka to four-wicket win over Australia

PALLEKELE, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka stunned Australia in their third and final Twenty20 international after skipper Dasun Shanaka hit an undefeated half-century to lead his team home in a nail-biting finish on Saturday.

The hosts were chasing a target of 177 to finish the series on a high after going down miserably against the visitors in the first two matches.

Shanaka scored an unbeaten 54 off 25 balls with five fours and four sixes to seal a four-wicket victory.

Shanaka and tailender Chamika Karunaratne shared a 69-run stand for the seventh wicket after they had been struggling at 108 for six in the 15th over.

Sri Lanka needed 59 off the final three overs, with the pair facing lead bowlers Josh Hazlewood and Jhye Richardson.

Needing 19 off the final over bowled by Hazlewood, the skipper hit two fours and a mighty six to level the scores with one ball remaining.

Hazlewood then bowled a wide to hand the win to the home side.

Openers Danushka Gunathilaka and Pathum Nissanka made a promising start in reply to Australia's 176-5.

Gunathilaka scored a 12-ball 15 before Charith Asalanka joined Nissanka.

The pair put on 42 for the second wicket. Asalanka scored



Sri Lanka's captain Dasun Shanaka (R) celebrate after winning the third and final Twenty20 international cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy. — AFP

26 off 19 before he was caught by Aaron Finch off Marcus Stoinis.

Bhanuka Rajapaksa (17), Kusal Mendis (six) and Wanindu Hasaranga (eight) could not accelerate the scoring before Shanaka and Karunaratne picked up the challenge.

"I took a few balls to get in. I read the wicket well, so I didn't throw my wicket away. Process is always important," Shanaka said after his player-of-the-match performance.

"They took a brave decision to bat first, it wasn't the best idea to bat first in these conditions. We should take this momentum in the ODI series moving forward," he

added.

Finch called Shanaka's innings "an unbelievable knock" but exuded confidence in his team for the upcoming five one-day internationals.

"We are really comfortable with the depth of our team," Finch, who was declared the player of the series, said.

Earlier, Australia won the toss and elected to bat with opening pair David Warner and Finch playing formidable knocks before Steven Smith and Stoinis led their team to 176 for five.

Warner and Finch enjoyed a 43-run opening stand.

Finch scored 29 off 20

balls before spinner Maheesh Theekshana removed his off stump as the Australian skipper attempted a slog-sweep.

All-rounder Glen Maxwell opened his innings on the next ball with a massive six.

Maxwell smashed Hasaranga for another six in the seventh over but fell for 16 off nine balls after attempting to hit the spinner in the ninth over the long-on boundary where Gunathilaka took the catch.

Theekshana had Warner leg before wicket for 39 off 33 balls in the next over after the hosts reviewed a not out decision.

The visitors battling line up stuttered after Josh Inglis, who replaced an injured Mitchell Marsh for the match, was run out next ball for a duck.

Stoinis then struck three fours and a six in his 23 ball innings of 38 before he was stumped by Mendis off Praveen Jayawickrama.

Smith remained not out for 37 off 27 balls with two fours and two sixes, with wicketkeeper Matthew Wade contributing 13.

Sri Lankan speedster Dushmantha Chameera was the most expensive bowler, giving away 46 runs in his four overs.

Theekshana picked two for 25 while Hasaranga and Jayawickrama claimed one each.

The hosts will take on the visitors in the first ODI in Pallekele on Tuesday. — AFP

Badminton number one Axelsen wins Indonesia Masters title

JAKARTA: Danish badminton ace Viktor Axelsen clinched the men's singles title at the Indonesia Masters on Sunday, beating Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen in straight sets. The world number one beat Chou 21-10, 21-12 in a 41-minute match held at the Istora sporting arena in Jakarta. "I love playing here in Istora and I always dreamt of winning a tournament at Istora. It's a legendary venue, so to have done that is something that is really special to me," 28-year-old Axelsen told reporters. Axelsen's victory came after he downed home favourite Anthony Sinisuka Ginting in the semi-finals.



In the women's singles, China's Chen Yufei overcame Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon to win her first title since her gold medal at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

She defeated Ratchanok, who won the Indonesia Masters women's title in 2020, in a 74-minute three-set match 21-16, 18-21, 21-15.

"I am very pleased to get the gold medal today. I faced some difficulties during the game but I'm very pleased to overcome them and secure the win," world number four Chen said.

Chen secured a place in the final after defeating compatriot He Bingjiao 21-17, 21-14 in the semis.

After the Indonesia Masters, the Indonesia Open is set to begin on June 14 and will last until June 19.

East Germany football legend Bransch dies aged 77

BERLIN: Former East Germany captain Bernd Bransch has died aged 77 after a long illness, his old club Halle said in a statement on Sunday.

Bransch played 72 times for East Germany and was twice voted East German footballer of the year.

He was captain of the team when they reached their only World Cup finals in 1974, in West Germany — where they beat the hosts, who went on to win the tournament.

Bransch also helped East Germany to win Olympic gold in 1976, as well as bronze in 1972.

"On behalf of all members, active players, fans, sponsors, employees and committee representatives, I express our heartfelt condolences to the family of Bernd Bransch," said Halle president Jens Rauschenbach.

He described Bransch as "one of the most important personalities of the club and ambassadors for the city of Halle".

Bransch played almost 300 league games for Halle, initially as a forward and later as a defender, excelling as a sweeper. — AFP





McIlroy, Finau share PGA Canadian Open lead

TORONTO, CANADA: Tony Finau closed with a 25-foot birdie putt to share the lead with four-time major winner Rory McIlroy after Saturday's third round of the US PGA Tour's Canadian Open.

World number 18 Finau matched the low round of his PGA career with an eight-under par 62 while eighth-ranked McIlroy fired a 65 to stand on 11-under 199 after 54 holes at St George's Golf and Country Club in suburban Toronto.

"I didn't finish the way I wanted to yesterday", Finau said after two late bogeys Friday. "I think all it did was light a fire in my belly to get after it today. That's pretty much what I did. I made some birdies and I just played really clean golf."

Finau, whose PGA titles include the 2016 Puerto Rico Open and 2021 Northern Trust, needed only 24 putts in the round.

"It has been trial and error with me and my putter. I've been working hard on it", Finau said. "It's starting to pay dividends for me. I saw a lot of them go in today. It was nice."

Northern Ireland's McIlroy — the 2019 winner and defending champion after Covid-19 caused a two-year hiatus — was cheered at every hole.

"All aspects were really good", McIlroy said. "I drove it a lot better

off the tees. My wedge game was a little better and my short game bailed me out a couple of times."

McIlroy is chasing his 21st US PGA victory and first since last October's CJ Cup in Las Vegas.

"I've played some good golf this year without getting a win", McIlroy said. "I just need to keep doing what I'm doing. Sort of just give myself a number and try not to look at the guys around me too much."

Sixth-ranked Justin Thomas, coming off his second major triumph at last month's PGA Championship, will join the co-leaders in Sunday's last trio.

Thomas made four birdies and an eagle in the last 10 holes in shooting a bogey-free 63 to share third on 201 with fellow Americans Sam Burns, Wyndham Clark and Alex Smalley.

"I played really solid. I didn't do anything great, I just didn't do anything bad", Thomas said. "I took advantage of some opportunities when I had them there in the middle of the course and just stayed patient and waited for my run."

McIlroy sank a 22-foot birdie putt at the par-4 fourth and made another from just inside 38 feet at the par-4 seventh.

After a bogey at the par-3 eighth, he made tap-in birdies at the par-5

ninth and 11th holes and another at the par-4 12th after dropping his approach inches from the cup.

At the par-5 15th, McIlroy sent his approach over the green and down a cart path but pitched to eight feet and tied Finau by sinking the birdie putt.

OH WOW WE'RE CLIMBING

Finau opened with a birdie and sank a 15-foot birdie putt at the par-3 sixth, then launched an impressive run with an 18-foot birdie putt at the par-3 eighth.

Finau drove the green in two at the par-5 ninth and sank a 37-foot eagle putt, then followed with birdies at 10 and 11 for a three-stroke lead.

"When I made an eagle on nine I knew then I was like, oh, wow, we're climbing up that leaderboard", Finau said.

But he found a greenside bunker and made bogey at the par-4 12th while Thomas reeled off three straight birdies with a three-footer at the ninth, a four-footer at the 10th and a five-footer at the par-5 11th.

Thomas added a six-foot birdie putt at 14 and landed his second shot inches from the cup for a tap-in eagle at the par-5 15th.

Finau holed out from just outside 47 feet at the par-4 14th to reclaim the lead. — AFP

Verstappen wins Azerbaijan Grand Prix as Leclerc limps out

BAKU: World champion Max Verstappen led a Red Bull 1-2 in Sunday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a potentially key moment of the title race after Charles Leclerc and Ferrari endured another dose of race day misery.

Sergio Perez had jumped pole sitter Leclerc to the first turn before Verstappen took control as first the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz and then Leclerc retired with engine problems.

George Russell took third with team-mate Lewis Hamilton fourth for Mercedes who suffered badly from bouncing on the streets of Baku this weekend.

Verstappen's fifth win of the season tightened his grip on the drivers' standings with Perez now moving into second, 21 points behind, while the luckless Leclerc slipped to 34 points adrift.

"Was that a good drive or was



that a good drive?" a pleased Verstappen asked over the team radio, mindful that he had ended his Baku jinx having never made the podium on any of his previous visits. It was a memorable day for Red Bull who are now 80 points clear of Ferrari in the constructors' championship ahead of round nine of the season in Montreal next week. — AFP

Lawmakers to discuss implementation of semi-automated offside system

DOHA: A semi-automated offside system could be used at this year's World Cup with the International Football Association Board, the guardian of the laws of the game, set to discuss the introduction of the technology in Doha on Monday.

The optical tracking system was trialed at the FIFA Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi earlier this year and had also been tested at the Arab Cup in Qatar last December.

The IFAB will not itself decide whether the technology should be in place at the World Cup but if it offers approval then world football's governing body could go ahead with its introduction.

"The semi-automated offside system still needs to be evaluated before a final decision is taken", Fifa told AFP, adding that it was simply "an additional tool to help the VAR".

Pierluigi Collina, Chairman



of Fifa's referees committee, said earlier this year that the introduction of Video Assistant Referees — first used at the World Cup in 2018 — had been "very successful" but that making offside decisions semi-automated would mean greater accuracy and greater speed.

"It's important the video officials get an accurate decision,

but we are aware we need to reduce the time, particularly with offside", Collina said in February during the trials at the Club World Cup.

The data-driven, limb-tracking technology uses both dedicated and broadcast cameras around the stadium to give the exact position of players on the pitch, offering referees precise information within seconds.

The aim is for the system to generate 29 data points per player — tracking the various parts of the body to create a skeletal, three-dimensional model.

Once a final decision is made, the artificial-intelligence driven technology turns the images into a 3D animation that can be displayed on the big screen at grounds.

The term "semi-automated" is used because Fifa insist that match officials will still make the final call, with a dedicated VAR assistant in place to monitor offside.

"I know that someone called it 'robot offside'; it's not. The technology is simply a tool used by human beings", said Collina. Monday's meeting will also discuss the topic of concussion substitutes, which the IFAB approved in late 2020 on a trial basis for any league wishing to take part until August of this year. — AFP





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Promising potential for enhanced Oman and Tanzania bilateral trade: OCCI



MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is making efforts to strengthen economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania by encouraging and developing investment opportunities, holding introductory seminars, bilateral meetings between Omani businessmen and their Tanzanian counterparts, establishing economic forums and conducting trade delegations.

Ridha bin Juma al Saleh (pictured), OCCI Chairman said: “The official visit by Samia Soluho Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to the Sultanate of Oman reflects the keenness of the two leaderships to develop the long-standing historical relations between the two friendly countries by building on the cooperation established by the two countries over the past decades in various fields, especially economic and commercial fields.”

In a statement to Omani News Agency, he underlined Tanzania’s strategic location as a commercial gateway to the African continent. On the flipside, Tanzania can also serve as a export hub for African goods destined for markets in the GCC and East Africa.

Oman’s Vision 2040 charter, he noted, opens up opportunities for the Tanzanian private sector to invest in industry, agriculture, fisheries, mining and tourism, in addition to possible sectors like health, education, renewable energy and information technology. Bilateral trade amounted to RO 27.085 million in 2021, up from RO 16.359 million in 2020. This is well below the 2019 figure of RO 46.715 million, he added. — ONA

Oman LNG posts \$3.278 bn revenue in 2021

STRONG GROWTH: Strategic projects to boost output to record 11 million tonnes per annum upon completion

MUSCAT: Oman LNG, owned 51 per cent by the Omani government, has posted revenue totalling \$3.278 billion for 2021, representing a 31 per cent increase over the corresponding figure for 2020.

The upsurge came amid robust international prices for natural gas and the gradual recovery of the global energy sector, Oman News Agency said.

The company’s annual report indicated that net income for the company by the end of 2021, after tax, increased by 34 per cent to \$886 million from \$663 million by the end of 2020. The LNG sector has boosted government gas revenues to nearly \$2.873 million over the past year, the report said.

Talal bin Hamed al Oufi (pictured), Chairman of Oman LNG, said the company has shown its full readiness and flexibility to adapt to exceptional circumstances during the past period and to meet all the challenges and difficulties to carry out its business at the highest levels.

He pointed out that during 2021 the company achieved high positive results in revenues and net income close to those



achieved in the years leading up to the pandemic.

Oman LNG intends to work with several partners to promote and develop the country’s energy sector, where it continued to perform positively during 2021, despite challenges in the energy industry worldwide, achieving more than 10 million hours of work without any time-consuming

OMAN LNG INTENDS TO WORK WITH SEVERAL PARTNERS TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP THE COUNTRY’S ENERGY SECTOR, WHERE IT CONTINUED TO PERFORM POSITIVELY DURING 2021, DESPITE CHALLENGES IN THE ENERGY INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE, ACHIEVING MORE THAN 10 MILLION HOURS OF WORK WITHOUT ANY TIME-CONSUMING INJURY, EQUIVALENT TO 688 WORKING DAYS AS A RESULT OF ITS CONCERN AND CONCERN FOR EMPLOYEES, THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES CLOSE TO ITS OPERATIONS.

injury, equivalent to 688 working days as a result of its concern and concern for employees, the environment and communities close to its operations.

The company carried out a number of strategic projects and periodic maintenance of its liquefaction trains, which included a large number of employees and contractors who

Early results from these projects contributed to record levels of LNG output, which totalled 10.6 million metric tonnes in 2021 compared to 10.2 million tonnes in 2020. LNG output is anticipated to reach over 11 million metric tonnes after the completion of strategic projects at Qalhat.

In the field of shipping and marketing, the total number of LNG shipments delivered to LNG customers worldwide by the end of 2021 was 163, consisting of 119 shipments for Oman LNG and 44 shipments for Qalhat LNG. Shipments of natural gas liquids (NGLs) totalled 30. These shipments were lifted by refineries of OQ Group. — ONA

Consultant sought to master-plan development of Al Rawdha SEZ in north Oman

New 55 sq km SEZ to leverage strategic geographical location, proximity to economic powerhouses and excellent road connectivity

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A number of local and international urban engineering consultancy firms are bidding for a contract to master-plan the development of a new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to be established at Al Rawdha in the Wilayat of Mahdha in Al Buraimi Governorate.

The SEZ initiative – the latest in a growing number of industrial and economic zones that serve as engines of the Sultanate of Oman’s long-term development – stems from Royal Directives issued earlier this year by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. As with all SEZs and free zones in the



country, development of the new Al Rawdha SEZ will be overseen by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Covering an area of around 55 sq kilometres, Al Rawdha SEZ will seek to leverage, among other factors, its strategic geographical location in the north of the Sultanate of Oman, its proximity to economic powerhouses in the Gulf, and the modern road

network connecting Al Mahdha with the rest of the country and other major markets in the region.

Given these factors, the new SEZ is seen as well-placed to attract investments in commercial, residential, tourist and logistics related sectors, among other areas, it is pointed out.

In addition to master-planning the SEZ, the selected consultant will also conduct market and feasibility studies, and undertake

the complete design of the zone as well. But this will be undertaken in three distinct phases, according to OPAZ.

As part of the first phase of the master-plan development, the consultant will be required to undertake a market study to explore the potential for investment in Tourism, Agriculture, Mining, Food Cluster, Light & Medium Industries and Logistics related projects and activities.

This study will help with the zoning and land allocations within the SEZ. Other deliverables during this phase include a detailed master plan and feasibility study.

The submission of a detailed design and detailed cost plan is stipulated in the second phase, while the third phase will focus on the preparation of implementation plans and tender documents.

Significantly, OPAZ has pledged to develop Al Rawdha SEZ as a model of sustainable development that conserves the area’s environmental and social attributes.

Established by Royal Decree in August 2020, OPAZ currently regulates the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, Al Mazunah Free Zone, Salalah Free Zone and Sohar Free Zone. Earlier this year, its mandate was enlarged to include the development of first-ever free zones proposed at Muscat, Salalah and Suhar airports.

Bank Muscat’s Floosi account improves financial inclusion among the youth

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat’s Floosi account, which was launched last year in line with the bank’s commitment to improving financial inclusion across the Sultanate of Oman, continues to receive excellent response from customers.

Targeted at youth in the 15-17 age group, Floosi accounts are becoming very popular with both Omanis and expatriates as it helps young people get financially aware and make savings a regular habit in their lives.

The debit card linked to the customer’s Floosi account, comes with a daily limit of RO 50 and a monthly cumulative limit of RO 200 for Point of Sale (PoS), e-commerce transactions and ATM withdrawals.

To apply for a Floosi account, minors must visit their nearest branch along with their parent or



legal guardian, and submit their application along with copies of

important documents like their National ID card (for Omani

citizens) or Resident Card and Passport (for expatriates).

The father / guardian will be the authorised signatory and must sign the deal slip on behalf of the minor. A major advantage of the Floosi account is that young customers are not penalised for not maintaining a minimum balance.

At the same time, the account has a number of benefits specifically targeted at young people like Social Media giveaways, gaming tournaments and exclusive offers at restaurants, cafes and entertainment venues.

To add convenience to the financial inclusion process, the Floosi account can be converted into a Shababi account when the customer turns 18. The customer can approach the nearest branch with their father/legal guardian and submit the documentation

for converting the account and releasing guardianship of the account, after which the newly converted Shababi account may be operated independently by the customer.

Bank Muscat has been steadily working to improve financial inclusion and a good savings habit amongst people in Oman through a number of financial products and services.

The Floosi account was launched by the bank after extensive market research in response to customer feedback.

Parents are particularly happy that this new account helps their children learn the importance of personal finance management and savings for their future. Please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/accounts/Pages/details.aspx#floosi> or call 24795555 for more details.

Renaissance’s RALI programme a big success



MUSCAT: Renaissance, Oman’s leading accommodation, services and IFM solutions company, marked the successful completion of its Renaissance Accelerated Learning Initiative (RALI) programme for 2021-22.

A graduation ceremony for the inaugural batch of trainees was held on May 30 at Crowne Plaza Muscat in the presence of senior officials from the Ministry of Labour.

RALI is an intensive programme aimed at grooming future leaders and is aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 which emphasises driving positive local impact and creating an indirect value chain by enhancing the skills and employability of young

Omanis.

The eight-month intensive programme was launched in September 2021 with 11 candidates. Nine completed the programme having received essential skills training along with on-the-job experience through rotational deputation in Renaissance’s various departments and its sites of operation across Oman, including Renaissance Village Duqm (RSVD).

Renaissance partnered with Competence HR, a leading HR and management development consultancy, to invite, screen, select and train candidates for this initiative. The batch was shortlisted from a pool of over 1,000 applicants after a rigorous, multi-layered selection process.

Sohar International successfully completes renovation of 42 houses

MUSCAT: Reflecting its ongoing commitment to the people and community it serves, Sohar International announced the successful completion of the first phase of its initiative to renovate houses of 100 families in the Governorate of Al Batinah (North) having completed the renovation of 42 houses in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah.

The governorate was the worst affected by Cyclone Shaheen, which hit the Sultanate of Oman last year.

Initiating the second phase that kicked off recently in presence of a number of officials from the governorate and members of the executive management of the bank, Sohar International targets yet more affected families in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq.

Commenting on the initiative, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International said, “Sohar International has always been a socially responsible financial institution that has been invested in the development of the local community and its people.

Cyclone Shaheen came at a time when a lot of people were



already coping with the effects of the pandemic. At Sohar International, we, therefore, took a comprehensive approach to help alleviate the plight of those affected. Our efforts went beyond committing financial assistance as we committed to renovate houses of more than 100 families in Al Batinah North. We are confident that our efforts will give a huge impetus to restoring the community and building back the lives of the people.”

In rapid response to the impacts of Cyclone Shaheen, Sohar International has allocated RO 5 million providing interest free loans and deferment options

on debt repayments to support impacted customers rebuild.

With the spirit of volunteerism, social service, and philanthropy running through every member of the Sohar International team, the bank has achieved significant milestones in its various endeavours to enrich the lives of people and drive socio-economic progress in the country.

As an agile, progressive, and community-centric financial organisation, Sohar International will stay committed to its social responsibilities as it continues to come up with innovative ways to address the diverse needs of different segments of society.

Lincoln presidential experience: More than just a luxury experience



MUSCAT: Lincoln takes luxury experiences to an even heightened level with the exceptional Lincoln Presidential range. Currently available for the Aviator and Navigator SUV models, this grade is intricately detailed to surround luxury enthusiasts with the finest materials and features to make their experiences every bit unique. Luxury automotive enthusiasts looking forward to experiencing the Lincoln Presidential range can visit their nearest Lincoln showroom.

The Lincoln Aviator is available in two Presidential themes — ‘Destination’ and ‘Flight’. Travel becomes art with the Lincoln Destination theme. A Lincoln Presidential logo is etched into the Khaya wood appliques to create an elegant driving environment that’s as adventurous as your next destination.

Taking inspiration from the rich history of aviation, the Lincoln Presidential Flight theme uses rich leathers like that of a bomber jacket, dark full engine turn metallic appliques and an instrument panel that has aviation-like dials to give one the sensation of taking to the skies.

The Lincoln Aviator Presidential range is equipped with standard twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 engine that is paired with a 10-speed SelectShift automatic transmission. Delivering an impressive 400 horsepower and 562 Nm of torque for effortless acceleration. The Lincoln Navigator is available in two Presidential themes — ‘Destination’ and ‘Yacht Club’.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

National Finance, Dar Al Atta’a inaugurate greenhouse project

MUSCAT: Reflecting its commitment to enhance its contribution to the programmes and charities in Oman, National Finance in collaboration with Dar Al Atta’a Charity inaugurated the Greenhouse Project.

The project aims to engage people with special needs at Al Wafa Social Centre in Ibra, Sharqiyah North. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Maryam Issa al Zadjali, a member of the State Council and Chairperson of Dar Al Atta’a, in the presence of representatives from Al Wafa Centre in Ibra and a number of officials from the public and private sectors, on Monday, June 6, 2022.

Resulting of partnership

between the company and the associations, this project aims to build nine greenhouses in various Al Wafa Social Centres. People with special needs will have the opportunity to acquire employment and a sustainable income source.

Lina al Abdulsalaam, National Finance Head of Corporate Communication and Marketing said, “We are pleased to launch the Greenhouse Project in cooperation with Dar Al Atta’a. We are also delighted to help and support all segments of the society. We strongly believe that we have responsibilities not only towards our customers, employees and shareholders but also to enhance our initiatives to



serve the communities in which we operate.

In addition, within our CSR programme, we are keen to strengthen our partnership with various entities and sectors to

achieve added value in the country and provide opportunities for the nation’s people to build a brighter future.”

Expressing her appreciation to National Finance, Maryam Issa al

Zadjali said, “We thank National Finance for its efforts to serve the community by supporting our sustainable programmes. The Greenhouse Project as part of the ‘Tamkeen’ initiative contributes to strengthening the role of job integration for people with special needs at Al Wafa Social Centre.

This can be succeeded by enrolling them in the production and marketing of agricultural crops with the aim of achieving an effective community partnership.”

National Finance’s Imtidad programme has undertaken a number of initiatives that are centred on education, community, health and the environment.

Following a holistic approach to CSR, National Finance will

continue to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country while leading programmes that are thoughtful, strategic and encompass the broad vision of the country.

National Finance seeks to provide safe, efficient, and transparent financial solutions for corporates, SMEs and individuals alike.

At the same time, it also seeks to enable individuals to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities, therefore, encouraging entrepreneurship in the country. Through its dedicated efforts, National Finance has been consistently contributing to the overall socio-economic development of the country.



Omantel strengthens partnership with SUBCO

New gateway: 10,000 km undersea Oman - Australia cable to come into service next month

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Omantel and Australian-based submarine cable development specialist SUBCO have recently entered into a large capacity agreement for connectivity between the Sultanate of Oman and various key telecom hubs in Europe through Omantel's extensive subsea network.

Through this arrangement, Omantel will be providing ultra-high capacity connectivity from Muscat to SUBCO's new PoPs in London, Milan and Marseille effectively extending the Oman Australia Cable (OAC), due to be RFS in Q3, 2022, from Australia to



Oman and all the way to Europe.

The Oman Australia Cable (OAC) a 10,000km undersea cable between Muscat, Oman and Perth, Australia built and operated by SUBCO. OAC is the first fully diverse cable between EMEA and Asia that avoids the Malacca Strait, a narrow stretch of water between Indonesia and Malaysia that has a high level of seismic and marine

activity causing regular outages on submarine cables and a single point of geographical risk.

OAC is due to be ready for service in July 2022.

Talal bin Said al Maamari - Omantel CEO said: "We are proud to have been the landing partner for the successfully landed OAC, achieving another key addition in our vision for Oman to be the

leading gateway to the region and beyond.

Our motto in Omantel's Wholesale is Reach Further which is something we truly live, and today we see yet another demonstration of fulfilling this mission by enabling our partners in SUBCO to reach further through Omantel's extensive network."

"OAC is going to contribute in changing the landscape of the Wholesale industry and take our collaboration to the next level. Omantel was the Wholesale partner of choice for OAC and has attracted more and more international partners like SUBCO to work and collaborate with us", Al Maamari further added.

Bevan Slattery, SUBCO's Founder commented, "I am so excited to see our vision of the first truly diverse route between Asia and the Middle East and now Europe coming to fruition and our relationship with Omantel has been pivotal in helping us to reach further.

With the OAC only a few months away from RFS, having this capacity in place to extend our reach into Europe is important to further enable our capability and addressable market.

Omantel and SUBCO are

in the process of completing provisioning and handover of the capacity in readiness for OAC service commencement. The parties are also exploring further options to expand their collaboration and to include other upcoming systems to provide further capability and diversity for OAC.

The system also leverages on being extended into the Equinix MC1 facility in Oman, which is the first carrier-neutral data centre in MENA which successfully positioned Oman as the natural hosting location for major hyperscalers and tier 1 service providers in the region.

This ensures open access to the OAC system and hence further increases the potential of the project. Future phases of OAC include a possible extension to the newly announced Equinix SN1 data centre in Salalah and even beyond.

AmCham MENA welcomes AmCham Oman as member



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The AmCham MENA Regional Council has welcomed the Oman American Business Center (AmCham Oman) as a new member organisation, adding over 150 new member companies to the Council's Membership, representing different sectors around the region.

The Oman American Business Center (OABC), also known as AmCham Oman was founded in 2003 to foster the development of commercial activity between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States, and to support the Oman business community through programmes and events focused on professional development, thought leadership, and high-level networking.

As the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, OABC promotes understanding, partnerships, and other matters of mutual economic interest between business communities in the Sultanate of Oman and the United States.

AmCham Oman hosts about 30 events annually and is considered to be Oman's most active business networking group. "Joining the regional Council of MENA American Chambers of Commerce is a natural step for AmCham Oman (OABC) to take as we continue serving our growing membership of companies in Oman," says Ali Daud, President and Chairman Emiratus of OABC.

Sky Rays Global opens two new branches in Oman

MUSCAT: Sky Rays Global, a renowned name in travel and tourism sector, has announced opening of its two branches in Oman, one in Al Mawaleh in Al Seeb and another in Avenues Mall.

"The trust and reputation that the customers have reposed on us would continue to give us serve them more even after rebranding and opening of newer branches would solely be customer in the centre," said Muhammad Rasal,



Managing Director of Sky Rays.

The company, which has an impressive track record of more than two decades in the travel and tourism industry, has been operating in the Sultanate of Oman for the past two years.

It has been serving clientele after being renamed as Sky Rays Global Travel and Tourism at Lulu Hypermarket in Wadi Allawami in Al Seeb.

The company, whose second

branch will open today (June 13) on the ground floor Avenues Mall is positioned to provide ticketing services, facilitating visas and tourist packages cost-effectively and providing quality services at par with the best in the market.

"We are aiming at becoming the best in the market with our quality services and affordable rates in the field of travel and tourism in the Sultanate of Oman," Rasal adds.

ESG: Best practice for responsible investment



DAVIS KALLUKARAN

As the ESG net widens, companies that fail to define ESG-related goals and then deliver on those commitments will lose out to competitors that do.

Disasters and whether patterns driven by global warming in Climate vulnerable countries have wiped out around one fifth of the economic growth in these countries as per the report published last week.

The research carried out by 55 developing nations across Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific, finds that rising temperature and modified rainfall patterns have reduced around \$550 billion in wealth of these countries over the last two decades.

The Climate change-Credit risk management-Commercial lending relationship.

Everyone in the world has a responsibility to be more environmentally conscious, especially business owners. It's a conscious decision to move sustainability and innovation together.

There is a relationship between climate change, credit risk management and commercial lending, and banks across the world, are keeping a keen eye on



this. Banks have started creating a plan to mitigate climate risk in their commercial loan book. The financial institutions have been writing off quite a sizable amount of their loans due to natural calamities.

Similarly the insurance companies have been settling huge claims on account of the calamities caused by The pace of this write-offs have increased tremendously in the last few decades on account of natural disasters which are mostly caused by the exploitation of nature by mankind for urbanisation, industrialisation and mining.

It is high time that the lenders started doing a due diligence on the activities of their customers to understand whether they are financing an idea which may contribute to climate change and sustainability and ESG in general. ESG criteria's are driving commercial lending approach

THE RESEARCH CARRIED OUT BY 55 DEVELOPING NATIONS ACROSS AFRICA, ASIA, THE AMERICAS AND THE PACIFIC, FINDS THAT RISING TEMPERATURE AND MODIFIED RAINFALL PATTERNS HAVE REDUCED AROUND \$550 BILLION IN WEALTH OF THESE COUNTRIES OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES.

of the financial institutions especially, climate risk.

ESG initiatives in Oman

The Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives, especially the climate change and sustainability reporting, being taken by the central bank of Oman is very encouraging. CBO has recently issued a circular to the banks on mandatory compliance with climate change reporting and sustainability.

The capital Market Authority (CMA) and the Muscat Stock exchange (MSE) have also issued statements calling for voluntary disclosures by the listed entities in Oman. Following the global response, in due course, we expect Insurance companies will have very similar obligations

International Sustainability Standards Board

The most significant development in ESG Reporting for some time now is the creation of the International Sustainability Standards Board under the IFRS Foundation and is a major step towards convergence of the currently fragmented reporting landscape. The board is expected to issue the new Standards by the end of the year for setting out requirements for the disclosure of material information about a company's significant sustainability-related risks and opportunities that is necessary

for investors to assess a company's enterprise value.

ESG elements

The acronym "ESG" encompasses a great many elements and activities. The environmental element covers energy, waste, carbon emissions and climate change. Social criteria includes an organisation's relationships with other institutions and communities, its diversity and inclusion, workers' rights, child labour, and human trafficking.

Governance, apart from incorporating the environmental and social elements outlined above also encompasses the procedures, practices and risk management controls an organisation puts in place to operate in a regulatory compliant and ethical manner.

These are essential components of achieving and maintaining market integrity as well as driving responsible and sustainable performance. Each of these elements have a direct impact on the perception of an organisation, and therefore its reputation. As the ESG net widens, companies that fail to define ESG-related goals and then deliver on those commitments will lose out to competitors that do.

The United Nations too have laid out principals of ESG as the best practice for Responsible Investment (PRI) that are dedicated to promoting environmental and social responsibility among worlds investors.

(Davis Kallukaran is Managing Partner of Crowe Oman)

Turkey bets on modern cruise hub to boost tourism

A state-of-the-art port in Istanbul with an underground terminal, a celebrity chef’s restaurant and a shopping centre, welcomes yet another 5,000-passenger cruise ship, bringing more cash to Turkey’s struggling tourism industry.

Hit hard by Covid, Turkey’s tourism sector could get a shot in the arm from the revenue generated at Galataport, which opened in 2021 — a year later than planned due to the pandemic.

The port could also provide a boost to an economy that has been weighed down by double-digit inflation and a currency in free fall, though the project has drawn criticism over the destruction of historical monuments and the potential environmental impact.

Figen Ayan, chief port officer at Galataport, said “ships began to arrive one after the other” after the facility opened in October. “Galataport has become the face of tourism,” she said.

The 20-story Costa Venezia vessel from Italy was taking passengers from an 11-day voyage to the Aegean Sea when it docked in Galataport, its gangway connecting directly to the futuristic underground customs terminal.

The port is home to a shopping centre, a hotel, cultural venues and a restaurant owned by Turkish butcher Nusret Gokce, better known as Salt Bae, the social media star who sprinkles salt on steaks in front of celebrity customers.

“Galataport Istanbul is much more than a cruise port,” Ayan said.

Around 30 cruise ships have so far anchored at Galataport and 200 more are expected by the end of the year, which amounts to 450,000 passengers.

The pandemic caused havoc in the global cruise ship industry as vessels were hit by outbreaks and vessels were banned in several countries.

“Now we can say that we have left the pandemic behind and that the cruise sector, which is an important segment of tourism, has revived and is on the move,” Ayan said.

The target is 1.5 million cruise passengers and 25 million visitors annually. “If a regular tourist spends \$62 daily, a cruise passenger spends \$400. He spends up to eight times more in one day,” she said.

The pandemic caused havoc in the global cruise ship industry as vessels were hit by outbreaks and vessels were banned in several countries.



GREENHOUSES ON THE RISE IN SOMALIA

A farmer tends to tomatoes inside a greenhouse farm on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Somalia. The greenhouse farming business is new, but it has created jobs in Mogadishu as the crops such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers are supplied to Mogadishu market to be sold as a means of making money for owners of the business.

– AFP

Rethinking supply chains



DIANE COYLE

The writer is Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge and founded the consultancy Enlightenment Economics.

WITH GLOBAL SUPPLY-CHAIN BOTTLENECKS UNLIKELY TO RESOLVE THEMSELVES SOON, FIRMS HAVE TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO RESHORING OR AT LEAST ‘FRIEND-SHORING.’

Starting in the 1980s, transnational production enabled the expansion of global trade and low prices for goods, contributing significantly to economic growth.

But the shocks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war have shown firms that the efficiency gains implied by the global division of labour – and just-in-time production – come at the cost of resilience.

With global supply-chain bottlenecks unlikely to resolve themselves soon, firms have turned their attention to reshoring or at least “friend-shoring,” which seeks to combine closer geographic proximity with greater geopolitical peace of mind.

But turning re-establishing the shorter and more national (or regional) supply chains of a generation ago will be costly in terms of growth. For a hint of just how costly, look no further than post-Brexit Britain’s lack of any post-pandemic trade recovery.

The United Kingdom’s independent Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that productivity will be 4 per cent lower in the long run than it would have been had the UK retained its deep trading links with the European Union.

The specialisation enabled by globalisation has brought significant

benefits, as many economists (including me) have long argued.

Businesses will adjust to supply-chain shocks in different ways. Some will reshore. Some will find subcontractors in diverse locations. And some may opt for increased automation.

The latter two strategies will carry a lower productivity penalty than reshoring, but will involve adjustment costs and new investment. All three options will roll back some of the globalisation of the past four decades.

Other firms, however, will not be able to take any of these steps, given the scale and nature of the upstream activities they have outsourced over the years. In some sectors, such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals, outsourced production accounts for as much as 15-20 per cent of total output.

After 1980, there was a substantial shift among companies toward buying components, rather than making them in-house. This reflected the spread of information and communication technologies that made it possible to send instructions and receive feedback instantaneously, along with a management philosophy that emphasised cost efficiency and lean production.

Many multinational firms kept high-value activities such as research and

development or design in the headquarters’ countries, and sent formulae or blueprints to factories in lower-cost locations such as Malaysia and China.

After an initial learning period, these facilities could produce goods at a far lower cost than at home, and often with more consistent quality.

Over time, however, this pattern has generated another hidden cost: the loss of what is often termed tacit knowledge, or know-how, in manufacturing.

This refers to the kind of tweaking and learning from experience that never gets written down but happens on every production line. Such insights can provide vital feedback to researchers and engineers, but the feedback is lost when production takes place thousands of miles away.

Rich-country firms have allowed these capabilities to erode for decades and cannot reshore them quickly. East Asian manufacturing centres such as China, Malaysia, and Singapore have developed sustainable, hard-to-replicate advantages in specific sectors and also in areas such as logistics.

This presents problems for policymakers, too. Secure supplies for key commodities such as food and microchips are now at the top of most governments’ agendas.

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Price spike: Higher fuel prices test US economy

Surging energy costs are being felt across the US economy with varying effects. Some consumers are absorbing higher costs, while others are shifting behaviour or cutting back. Here’s a sampling of how the story is playing out in different sectors.

TRUCKER SEES AUSTERITY

As he contends with surging fuel prices, truck driver Lamar Buckwalter sees signs all around that consumers are cutting back. Demand for refrigerated pet food — a torrid business just three months ago — has virtually disappeared. Humans are also shifting their own diets, ordering less high-end meats like veal and crab cakes.

“People are starting to cut off the extras,” said Buckwalter, a third-generation trucker who lives in Pennsylvania. “They’re not buying filet mignon steak.”

The last time he fuelled up, Buckwalter spent \$5.79 a gallon for diesel, more than double the price from a year ago, a shift exacerbated by

lower job rates as demand for trucking services cools.

Mitigating things a bit is Buckwalter’s membership in a national small trucker association that offers discounted fuel. He can also pass on a fraction of the fuel price spike to consumers.

But the pain from fuelling up is “enough to make a preacher man curse,” said Buckwalter, who has been turning down trips that pay insufficiently.

He is also planning to tighten the belt on perks for his three employees, such as a summer family picnic.

“We’ll still do Christmas bonuses,” he said. “Unfortunately, I have to cut back where I can.”

TOUGH TIMES FOR TAXIS

Also taking a hit is Rutz Alliance, a New York taxi driver who feels the pinch daily. “I used to put \$25 of gas everyday,” Alliance said. “Now it’s up to \$45.”

That computes to weekly pay of about \$600 to \$650, one-third less than the pre-pandemic amount.

“We’re trying to live. We have no choice. Inflation is all over. Rent, food, everything, but it’s take it or leave it.”

Dubbing the jump in prices an “emergency,” the New York Taxi Workers Alliance called in March for a 75-cent temporary fuel surcharge. But city officials have not taken action thus far.

AIRLINES PASS ON THE PAIN

Airlines have been among the sectors most directly affected by spiking energy prices, with jet fuel prices jumping almost 50 per cent since mid-March, according to Argus.

That would normally amount to a huge drag on the industry, given that fuel and labour are two major sources of costs.

“The rule of thumb in this industry is that you can pass through two-thirds of a fuel price increase within three to six months, the full amount within six to 12 months,” said Savanthi Syth, an industry expert at Raymond James.

But in a twist of fortunes in a pandemic-dominated era, airlines are

benefitting from “pent-up demand” of consumers desiring travel after more than two years of being hemmed in.

Airline tickets are currently up 38 per cent compared with the level of the year prior, with industry executives saying they are having no trouble passing on the hit from higher fuel costs.

A HIGHER BAR ON VACATIONS

For Chayzz Devyant, one casualty of spiking gasoline prices has been a summer visit to Atlantic City. Just travelling back and forth to the casino town would cost some \$162 in gas, on top of lodging costs.

“Big Oil is to blame,” said Devyant, who hopes to work from home to save on fuel costs. But travel experts still expect a busy summer even if more consumers like Devyant cut some trips.

“We are seeing mixed messages. Oil prices obviously have an effect,” said Aaron Szyf, economist for the US Travel Association.

“But pent up demand is so high

that hotels/attractions/national parks/ flights are all expected to be at full capacity this summer.”

ELECTRIC VEHICLES GET A CLOSER LOOK

Higher gasoline prices have prompted greater interest from consumers in electric vehicles (EV). Since January, website visits to EV options have soared 73 per cent, according to Cox Automotive.

However, the share of visits to EVs remains a relatively small 5.7 per cent of overall page views, according to Cox.

Moreover, the shortage of semiconductors and other key supplies has left car dealerships with limited inventories, crimping sales.

In May, Toyota and Lexus sold 46,000 hybrid vehicles, down 17 per cent from the year-ago period amid tight supplies

At Tesla, the top-selling EV maker in the United States, the wait time is at least three months for delivery of a Model 3 and six for the Model Y.

— AFP

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Adventure lovers, it's time to explore the beauty of Sa'al Cave

One activity that is yet to fully become popular in Oman is caving. While Sa'al Cave is not as imposing or intimidating as the Tahiri or the Seventh Hole Cave system in Salma Plateau in Quriyat, it has its own unique beauty and charm that can amaze adventure lovers... **P20**

Marathon dhow race seeks to preserve ancient Gulf heritage

UNDER A BLAZING SUN, far from the skyscrapers and SUVs of modern Dubai, hundreds of enthusiasts took to Gulf waters in traditional wooden vessels, keen to preserve an ancient heritage.

Around Sir Bu Nair, a teardrop-shaped island roughly 100 kilometres (60 miles) from both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, two of seven emirates that make up the UAE, 118 teams raced dhows, the sailboats that have plied the Arabian peninsula's waters for centuries.

"I started about 10 years ago, when I was 23, with my father and my brothers", one of the sailors, Abdullah al Mheiri, said

under the setting sun.

He had just ventured out across choppy waters with 11 crew mates to take part in the Al-Gaffal dhow race, a gruelling annual tournament that stretches from early morning to early afternoon.

On one dhow, the crew, clad in white robes, toiled to unfurl a white sail, pulling at arm's length on ropes and then scrambling for balance as the giant fabric caught the wind.

For Mheiri, taking part is his way of paying tribute to his heritage – Al-Gaffal refers to the return of fishermen to Dubai's coasts after journeying out to



sea.

Duty to preserve environment

Like much of the Gulf prior to the discovery of oil, the settlements that now make up the United Arab Emirates, including Dubai, were formed largely around maritime activities, notably pearl-diving using the once-ubiquitous dhows.

But with the establishment of the federation in 1971 and the advent of oil driven development, the UAE's economic activity would swiftly balloon to become

the Arab world's second largest after Saudi Arabia.

Despite sitting on relatively low oil wealth compared to its neighbours, the emirate of Dubai saw a spectacular rise, capitalising on its strategic location to transform itself into a finance, air travel and tourism hub.

But away from the flitting of social media influencers and luxury high-rises, Mheiri prefers the quiet respite that he finds on the open sea.

The race's starting point, Sir Bu Nair,

is ideal, he believes, as it is also home to a nature reserve.

"We have lived with the sea for hundreds of years", he said. "Preserving the environment is a duty."

According to the UN's cultural agency Unesco, the island "is one of the most important hawksbill nesting sites within the entire Arabian Gulf and certainly by far the most important location in the UAE".

Preserving heritage is vital for the organisers of Al-Gaffal and they have sought to set an example with the competing sailboats, which are not fitted with engines.

"One of the most important messages we send is the transmission of this heritage from one generation to the next", Tournament Director Mohammed al Falahi told AFP.

"But the fact is that it also doesn't pose a risk for nature", he added. "We haven't forgotten that Sir Bu Nair is a nature reserve that shelters many species of turtles" in the Gulf.

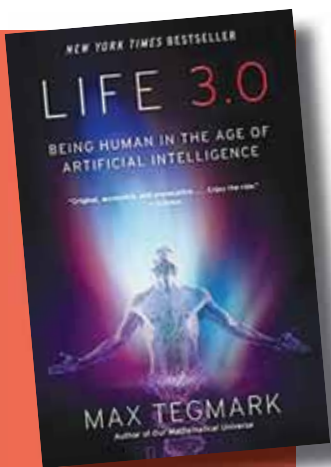
The teams of sailing enthusiasts set off at dawn on Saturday, at times battling the searing heat as much as the waters.

Their sails hoisted, the vessels caught the wind, like white clouds floating across the expanse of blue, towards the Dubai shoreline, where the nearby Burj Al Arab Hotel towers in the shape of a sail. — **AFP**

READ

LIFE 3.0 BY MAX TEGMARK

The book discusses a variety of societal implications, what can be done to maximise the chances of a positive outcome, and potential futures for humanity, technology and combinations thereof.



GOODBYE, PAULA!

The celebrated British-Portuguese artist Paula Rego has died aged 87 in London, her representative the Victoria Miro gallery said on Wednesday. A statement said she "died peacefully this morning after a short illness at home in north London surrounded by her family." — **AFP**



FASHION TRENDS

Models receive finishing touches backstage prior to walking in a fashion show entitled 'Unbound', showcasing final pieces by the graduating class of the Fashion Design MFA program, at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York on June 8, 2022. — **AFP**





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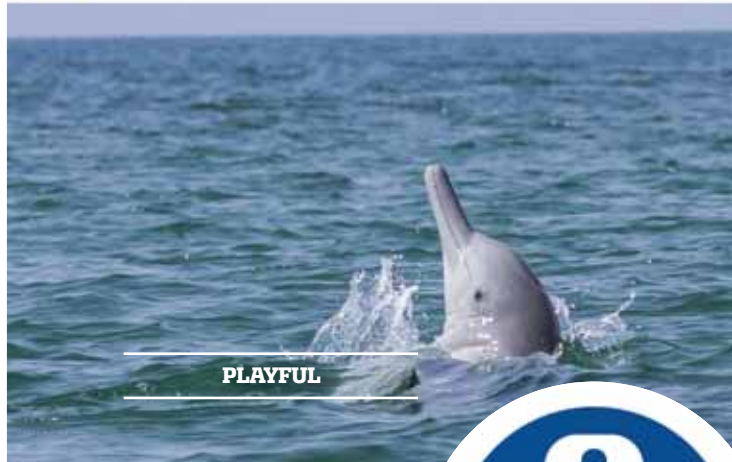
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Beloved Japanese manga 'One Piece' heads into final chapter



AFTER 25 YEARS and 490 million copies sold worldwide, the beloved Japanese manga "One Piece" is entering its final chapter, according to its creator Eiichiro Oda.

The manga, which follows the adventures of the swashbuckling pirate Monkey D. Luffy, has captivated millions of fans worldwide as its characters hunt for 'One Piece', the treasure coveted by all pirates.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Oda announced he would be taking a month off from his usual publishing pace of one instalment per week, citing various demands, including his work on the last part of the long-running series.

"A break for me!" he wrote in a handwritten announcement posted on the series' official Twitter account.

"I want to rearrange the structure (of the manga) so that I can wrap up the final chapter as soon as possible. Soooo... Forgive me, but I will take a short breather to prepare for it all!"

"One Piece" first appeared in manga form in Japan in 1997, with an animated TV series version following two years later.

Since then, the franchise has become a global cultural phenomenon, and Oda holds the 'Guinness World Record' for "most copies published for the same comic book series by a single author".

Last year, the 1,000th episode of the TV series was released, with special screenings in the United States and France — the world's biggest manga and anime market after Japan.

A live-action adaptation by Netflix is also in the works, with fans speculating it could catapult the franchise to global household name status, on par with "Star Wars" or "Harry Potter".

Meanwhile, the publishers of another cult manga series, "Berserk", announced on Tuesday that the cartoon would be relaunched following the death of its creator, Kentaro Miura, just over a year ago.

Miura's friend Kouji Mori will continue the author's work based on discussions they had about the direction of the series, the publishing house Hakusensha announced.

"I will only write the episodes that Miura talked to me about", Mori said in the statement released by Hakusensha.

"I will not flesh it out. I will not write episodes that I don't remember clearly. I will only write the lines and stories that Miura described to me." — AFP

ART

Is AI the future of art?



TO MANY THEY are art's next big thing — digital images of jellyfish pulsing and blurring in a dark pink sea, or dozens of butterflies fusing together into a single organism.

The Argentine artist Sofia Crespo, who created the works with the help of artificial intelligence, is part of the "generative art" movement, where humans create rules for computers which then use algorithms to generate new forms, ideas and patterns.

The field has begun to attract huge interest among art collectors — and even bigger price tags at auction.

US artist and programmer Robbie Barrat — a prodigy still only 22 years old — sold a work called "Nude Portrait#7Frame#64" at Sotheby's in March for £630,000 (\$821,000).

That came almost four years after French collective Obvious sold a work at Christie's titled "Edmond de Belamy" — largely based on Barrat's code — for \$432,500.

A BALLET WITH MACHINES

Collector Jason Bailey said that generative art was "like a ballet between humans and machines".

But the nascent scene could already be on the verge of a major shake-up, as tech companies begin to release AI tools that can whip up photo-realistic images in seconds.

Artists in Germany and the United States blazed a trail in computer-generated art during the 1960s.

The V&A museum in London keeps a collection going back more than half a century, one of the key

works being a 1968 piece by German artist Georg Nees called "Plastik 1".

Nees used a random number generator to create a geometric design for his sculpture.

BABYSITTING' COMPUTERS

Nowadays, digital artists work with supercomputers and systems known as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) to create images far more complex than anything Nees could have dreamed of.

GANs are sets of competing AIs — one generates an image from the instructions it is given, the other acts as a gatekeeper, judging whether the output is accurate.

If it finds fault, it sends the image back for tweaks and the first AI gets back to work for a second try to beat the gamekeeper.

But artists like Crespo and Barrat insist that the artist is still central to the process, even if their working methods are not traditional.

"When I'm working this way, I'm not creating an image. I'm creating a system that can create images", Barrat

Crespo said she thought her AI machine would be a true "collaborator", but in reality it is incredibly tough to get even a single line of code to generate satisfactory results.

She said it was more like "babysitting" the machine.

Tech companies are now hoping to bring a slice of this rarefied action to regular consumers.

Google and Open AI are both touting the merits of new tools they say bring

photorealism and creativity without the need for coding skills.

Enter the 'transformers'. They have replaced GANs with more user-friendly AI models called "transformers" that are adept at converting everyday speech into images.

Google Imagen's webpage is filled with absurdist images generated by instructions such as: "A small cactus wearing a straw hat and neon sunglasses in the Sahara desert."

Open AI boasts that its Dalle-2 tool can offer any scenario in any artistic style from the Flemish masters to Andy Warhol.

Although the arrival of AI has led to fears of humans being replaced by machines in fields from customer care to journalism, artists see the developments more as an opportunity than a threat.

Crespo has tried out Dalle-2 and said it was a "new level in terms of image generation in general" — though she prefers her GANs.

"I very often don't need a model that is very accurate to generate my work, as I like very much when things look indeterminate and not easily recognisable", she said.

Camille Lenglois of Paris's Pompidou Centre — Europe's largest collection of contemporary art — also played down any idea that artists were about to be replaced by machines.

She said that machines did not yet have the "critical and innovative capacity", adding: "The ability to generate realistic images does not make one an artist." — AFP

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



Rasha al Raisi

Crime Diaries: The Search

YEARS AFTER watching the first part of the Mexican mini-series Crime Diaries: The Night out, I decided to watch the third part that's called The Search (2020).

The series discusses the real case of suspicious death and disappearance of a 4-year-old Paulette Gebara Farah in the municipality of Huixquilucan in Mexico.

On the morning of 22 of March 2010, Paulette's nanny went to wake her up but she wasn't in her bed. She looked around the house before heading to the mother's room to inform her about Paulette's disappearance.

The police were called and information about the girl and her physical disabilities (motor and language) were shared on local television and social media. Her mother appeared on TV asking the alleged abductor to return her safely. Pictures of Paulette were distributed as flyers, in advertisements and on billboards to widen the search.

Attorney general Alberto Bazbaz was in charge of the investigation. Later, he issued restraining orders for the parents and the nannies due to contradictions in their statements.

However, after nine days, the body of Paulette was found in her bedroom. Although the original video footage that was leaked to the public — right after the discovery — had someone mentioning that she was severely beaten and her sheets had blood stains, Bazbaz refuted it saying that the cause of death was mechanical asphyxia that happened accidentally.

The official findings declared that death had occurred between five and nine days. As there were no signs of drug or sexual abuse — despite the remains of adhesive cloth on both cheeks and a blow to the left elbow and knee — Paulette's death was declared an accident. She had fell in the space between the mattress and the foot of her bed and died asphyxiated.

Obviously, this conclusion caused a stir among the public as there were many ambiguities surrounding the case: Why couldn't the dogs that were brought on the day of her

disappearance find the body? What about the mother who was interviewed on Paulette's bed — days later — and the guest who'd spent several nights there?

Couldn't they smell the putrefaction? The body of Paulette was buried on the 6th of April. The following month Bazbaz resigned from his position, arguing that he had lost confidence due to many questioning his actions during the investigation. Though the case is intriguing and heartbreaking, it was presented very lamely in the mini-series. It was almost comical with Bazbaz's gawky character (played by Dario Yazbak) and two other agents-used merely as muscles — who were fitter for a Hollywood gangster comedy.

In reality, the six episodes don't add much to the original case, yet it sheds light on more enigmas surrounding it such as the parents' cold reaction towards the vanishing of their daughter and the innumerable mistakes made during the investigation such as using Paulette's room — the crime scene — as guest accommodation. Even when suspicions surrounded her father, his highly influential family stopped all attempts to incriminate him which altered the course of the investigation.

The series also presents other characters taking advantage of the case, such as the news anchor who wants to rise to fame covering the story and the family's friend who publishes a book relating events from her point of view. Nonetheless, the plot is incoherent which makes characters and events ill-defined. Just when you feel that everyone is lying or up to something, you're left at the end with what you started with: an unsolved mystery accompanied by a huge disappointment.

The Search is a display of when the pursuit of justice clashes with corruption and power abuse. Available on Netflix.

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art & life

Local Scene

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MONDAY | JUNE 13 | 2022

Adventure lovers, it's time to explore the beauty of Sa'al Cave

By Arwa Al Hashimi
Photos by Riyadh Al Hinal

The eastern Hajar Mountains in Oman hide countless extraordinary natural treasures including valleys and cliffs that attract adventure enthusiasts. Included in these treasures are mountain trails that are considered perfect spots for hiking trips.

One activity that is yet to fully become popular in Oman is caving. These natural treasures are an important part of the country and sometimes, these caves have their own ecosystems that make them educational places to explore.

Caves in Oman had been formed many hundreds of years ago and a lot of them had been shrouded in mystery. These caves had become fertile source of many legends and strange stories. Some caves even became home to some Omani tribes and it was only in the last 50 years that these caves were abandoned.

The use of these caves as shelter goes back to even the Bronze or earlier eras. Caves have become an important source of discovery as many ancient writings were found on their walls serving as historical documents changing the impression and understanding of how old societies work.

Caves in the Sultanate of Oman are distinguished by their varying types, lengths, sizes and geographical formations. This necessitates the government to exploit this aspect in promoting the tourism sector, which is one of the important sectors in enriching the Omani economy because this phenomenon is unique in the region and needs a wealth of studies and scientific research.

With a panoramic view of Oman's wide sky, the cave located in Sa'al is one of the caves close to Muscat that you should not miss. Carved from limestone but generations of erosion, it's a beautiful escape that has become a destination for adventure lovers in Oman.

Sa'al Cave is astonishing for the marvellously shaped and coloured rock formations found in it as well as the wonderful panoramic scene up the cave.

Before exploring the cave, the view from the mountain surrounding the village of Sa'al is on its own,

already an attraction highlighting the immense natural wonder gifted to this place. From the top, the breeze not only cools you down, but the view also can be a source of peace and happiness.

While Sa'al is not as imposing or intimidating as the Tahiri or the Seventh Hole Cave system in Salma Plateau in Qurayat, it has its own unique beauty and charm that can amaze adventure lovers.

Being close to Muscat, many people see it as a perfect spot for hiking, mountain descent and other amazing nature adventures.

The Cave Trail is considered an easy mountain trail that is suitable for beginners, according to Discover Oman. Many of the cave visitors said that they were surprised by what they have seen and that the experience was extraordinary. Yet, they mentioned some challenges they faced during the trips including lack of services, and the rocks in the area are somehow slippery that is why visitors need to be prepared and wear proper shoes.

With the summer heat a very challenging part to contend with when doing outdoor adventure, fun activities like caving definitely provided diversity to what one can do. Many adventure groups have already mapped out the different routes in how to enjoy these caves. If you're looking for a fun new activity to do, try out caving and if you haven't been to Sa'al yet, then this is definitely your call to venture out into its waiting embrace.

As usual, be always on alert and keep your safety first. Only trust groups with prior experience and do not do it alone.