

The UN General Assembly elected by acclamation Dr Mohammed Awad al Hassan, the Sultanate of Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) as the Chairman of the Fourth Committee "Special Political and Decolonization Committee" during the 77th session of the General Assembly. In his speech to the General Assembly, Dr Mohammed stated that Oman was keen to chair the "Special Political and Decolonization Committee," stemming from its belief in the freedom of peoples and their independence, as well as the importance of ending colonisation in line with the UN's related decisions. **DETAILS ON P2**



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OTTA TIES UP WITH QURAYAT CLUB FOR TALENT CENTRE



P13

ACCREDITATION SUSTAINS ECONOMIC GROWTH: MOCIIP



P20

SQU STUDENTS WON PRINCE SULTAN BIN SALMAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE HERITAGE



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO KING OF JORDAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Abdallah II of the Kingdom of Jordan on the occasion of his accession to the throne anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to King Abdallah II, wishing him good health, happiness and long life. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions on King Abdallah II and the people of Jordan while they realise further aspirations of progress and prosperity. — ONA

CRUDE PRICES AT \$116.46 A BARREL

Oman oil price for August delivery on Wednesday reached \$116.46, comprising a rise by 87 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$115.59. The average price of Oman oil for June delivery has stabilised at \$102.40, thus \$8.56 per barrel lower than May delivery 2022. Brent crude rose 1.6 per cent to touch \$122.55 per barrel as the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development predicted that the world economy would grow by three per cent this year — much slower than its previous estimate of 4.5 per cent in December.



INSIDE



BORIS 'IN DENIAL' AS HE FACES MPS AFTER VOTE

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CAN NUCLEAR ENERGY COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE?

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Oman signs MoU with ILO, pledges to advance decent work

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the three parties to production (the Ministry of Labour, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the General Federation of Oman Workers) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the International

Labour Organization (ILO). The MoU deals with jointly setting up a new national decent work programme in Oman for 2023-2025. The signing of the agreement comes on the sidelines of the 110th edition of the International Labour Conference. The MoU was signed by

Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, Ruba Jaradat, Regional Director of the ILO for Arab States, Eng Ridha Juma al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI, and Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi, Chairman of the General Federation of Oman Workers. Baowain said that the new

programme will enhance social dialogue among the parties to production, as well as boosting productivity and effectiveness. Ruba Jaradat said Oman proved its commitment to decent work since it joined the ILO over two decades ago. The new national programme for appropriate work focuses

on employment, grooming skills, entrepreneurship, social protection, international standards and work management. Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman approved five agreements with the ILO since it joined the organisation back in 1994. **DETAILS ON P13**

EXTENDING CULTURAL COMMUNICATION



The activities of the Omani Cultural Days began at the Colosseum Archaeological Park in the Italian capital, Rome. The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with the aim of extending cultural communication between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries around the world through culture and arts. The Omani Cultural Days run through till Friday. **DETAILS ON P2**

UN envoy in Yemen for peace talks

SANAA: The United Nations special envoy arrived in Yemen on Wednesday for talks on reopening routes to a blockaded city that has proved the thorniest problem in implementing a fragile truce. Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg flew into the capital Sanaa, held by the Ansar Allah fighters since 2014, less than a week after the truce was renewed for a second period of two months.

Yemen is witnessing what

the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, seven years into a conflict between the Ansar Allah and a coalition. Grundberg hailed the truce extension, calling it a "positive signal of the parties' seriousness to uphold and implement the truce". "Yemenis have seen the truce's tangible benefits. We have witnessed a significant positive shift and we have a responsibility to safeguard it and deliver on its potential for peace in Yemen,"

he told reporters. Grundberg said he would meet the Ansar Allah leadership to discuss proposals for reopening roads into Ta'ez, Yemen's third biggest city which has been largely cut off since 2015. "I hope we will have constructive discussions on our proposal for reopening roads in Ta'ez and other governorates, as well as economic and humanitarian measures and the way forward," he said. **SEE P6**

Climate change erased a fifth of exposed nations' growth

PARIS: Climate-vulnerable countries said disasters and weather patterns driven by global warming have wiped out around a fifth of their economic growth, in a report published on Wednesday amid growing calls for funding to help nations hammered by weather extremes. The research, released by a consortium of 55 developing nations across Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific, comes

as UN climate negotiators meeting in Germany wrangle over "loss and damage" — the costs of climate change impacts that are already unfolding. According to the report, heat, changes in rainfall patterns and other weather extremes are already putting a severe dent in developing economies. Ghana's Finance Minister Kenneth Nana Yaw Ofori-Atta,



Boats are seen on the dried lake Poopo affected by climate change, in the Oruro Department, Bolivia. — Reuters file photo

who wrote the preface to the report, said the finding should "sound alarm bells for the world economy", calling for global action to support nations most exposed. The research, carried out on behalf of finance ministers, compared observed losses to modelling that estimates how the economies might have grown without the impacts of climate change. It finds that rising

temperature and modified rainfall patterns have already reduced wealth in these countries by 20 per cent, or \$525 billion, over the last two decades. "We are bearing this alarmingly high economic cost, despite having contributed the least to causing climate change, while also being least equipped to respond to its costly consequences," the report said. — AFP

POST-COVID DEPRESSION

Students face stress-related syndrome

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Post Covid-19 pandemic, there have been several reports of stress-related depression across the age groups, but students are at greater risk of depression, anxiety and stress, said a research highlight of the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

Scholars from several Arab countries studied the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress (DAS) among youth during and after Covid-19. Dr Omar al Omari of the College of Nursing headed the TRC-funded study that provided valuable input about the DAS syndrome. Suggesting that the older students were at greater risk of the DAS, it said that the youth with health and academic problems were under greater pressure. The study recommended regular screening of those found with any such symptoms and identifying the newly evolved variables associated with DAS. "Parents need to let young



Parents need to let young people express their feelings and fears about the current situation. They also need to make an effort to increase family time to provide youth with a sense of security

SQU REPORT

people express their feelings and fears about the current situation. They also need to make an effort to increase family time to provide youth with a sense of security," it says. This study, according to the research highlight, is the first of its kind to collect data from six different countries using a standardised method and one of the few studies to investigate the prevalence of DAS during Covid-19. **TURN TO P2**



SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES
AMBASSADOR OF KOREA



His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Kiejoo Kim, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate of Oman. They reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on several matters of common interest. — ONA

Relations with France and Hungary reviewed



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received here on Wednesday Veronique Aulagnon, Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate of Oman. The ambassador expressed her thanks and appreciation

to the Sultanate of Oman in achieving the joint interests of the two countries. The two sides also discussed several matters of common interest.

Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani also received Dr Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary

to the Sultanate of Oman, on the occasion of the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to Oman. The two sides reviewed the march of relations between Oman and Hungary.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the care extended

to him from all officials in the Sultanate of Oman.

On his turn, Al Numani thanked the ambassador for his efforts to enhance the bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields, wishing him continuous success. — ONA

Environmental impact of
industrial production in focus

DESIGN MUSCAT SYMPOSIUM FROM JUNE 13 TO 15

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The various impacts of industrial production on our environment and how it improves the local communities and habitats will be in focus at the Design Muscat 2022 biennial symposium attended by experts from 10 countries to be held at the Scientific College for Design from June 13 to 15.

Titled 'Design Muscat 2022: Rethinking Creative Industries Role towards Sustainability', the symposium will explore the global narratives, case studies, challenges and policy recommendations through the experiences of practitioners, research of academicians and innovations of designers. Design Muscat 2022 will be an interdisciplinary space for debate and international networking in the field of sustainability of art and design to enhance awareness and good practices in Oman through hybrid presentations and interactive workshops. The symposium is aimed at those in the creative industries of a variety of roles to share innovative steps and measures towards sustainability.

Oman Vision 2040 has made a call for innovation and diversification of the economy as well as creative and innovative individuals. The government initiated a National Cultural Strategy 2021-2040 to support the development of a creative community with skills to compete in the global market as well as to instigate cultural institutional collaborations. The National Strategy for Education 2040 called for building a culture of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship



HH SAYYID ADHAM BIN
TURKI AL SAID

as well as skill development.

"The symposium will shed light on how a change in art and design thinking and practice reduces the environmental impact of industrial production and improves the local communities and habitats in light of the Oman Vision 2040," Dr Mona Ismail, Dean of Scientific College of Design (SCD), commented.

Globally, Oman is a signatory of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs) and has made good progress through different initiatives. The SDGs are a call to respond to the global challenges in preserving the environment and improving human lives. Design Muscat will be a platform to explore how the creative industries respond to these goals. Specifically, the themes will focus on the creative industries of art and design disciplines in response to 'Responsible Consumption and Production' in terms of materials and techniques used; and sustainable cities and communities will be explored through discussions on maintaining national identity versus implementation of 'smartness', issues threatening the physical environment in the



DR MONA ISMAIL

architecture and interior design disciplines. Moreover, Design Education's role will be explored in awareness as well as research of sustainability issues in academic programmes, according to Dr Rahma al Rashdi, Head of Design Muscat Committee.

"The social and environmental imperatives of the twenty-first century necessitate a new paradigm framed with newfound perspectives. Themed around sustainability and creative industries, Design Muscat 2022 will build linkages across disciplinary boundaries to bring these perspectives to light. There are strong linkages between thematic issues at the national and global levels," said Dr Rahma al Rashdi.

A wide range of areas will be explored by the Design Muscat 2022 with the aim to trigger innovative ideas in shifting design practices towards sustainability and integrating sustainability in design education.

Accordingly, the shift in the role of creative industries' practices to achieve sustainability goals, design for environmental sustainability, initiatives and best practices, sustainable communities/smart



DR RAHMA AL RASHDI

cities to address solutions and challenges of sustainability implementation in the physical environment, realities framing the physical environment, well-being and quality of life, defining 'smartness' and cultural identity, design education towards a sustainable tomorrow to integrate sustainability in academic programmes and academicians' research nexus, research nexus for a sustainable future, rethinking academic programmes, and a number of case studies will be analysed.

Design Muscat is a non-profit international event and brand with a focus on the creative industries. It is a professional platform for practitioners, academicians and students to share expertise and knowledge.

"The symposium will shed light on how a change in art and design thinking and practice reduces the environmental impact of industrial production and improves the local communities and habitats in light of the Oman Vision 2040," HH Sayyid Adham bin Turki al Said, guest of honour and Board of Trustee's Chair of Scientific College of Design (SCD), commented.

Oman's envoy elected
UN panel head



NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly elected by acclamation Dr Mohammed bin Awad al Hassan, the Sultanate of Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), as the Chairman of the Fourth Committee "Special Political and Decolonization Committee" during the 77th session of the General Assembly.

In his speech to the General Assembly, Dr Mohammed stated that Oman was keen to chair the "Special Political and Decolonization Committee," stemming from its belief in the freedom of peoples and their independence, as well as the importance of ending colonisation in line with the

UN's related decisions.

He also reiterated the importance of the committee's provisions regarding the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, issues related to media, the Palestinian cause, the occupied Syrian Golan region, the effects of nuclear radiation and means of limiting them, peacekeeping operations and the University of Peace, among other provisions. Dr Mohammed affirmed that Oman will work closely with the President of the General Assembly and all member states in all matters of concern to the committee in a bid to realise aspirations of all countries.

— ONA

Students face syndrome
related to stress

FROM PAGE 1

"The findings suggest that the Covid-19 has no significant impact on the selected DAS variables. The prevalence of anxiety ranges from 33.1 per cent in Saudi Arabia to 51.6 per cent in Egypt, with a total prevalence of 40.5 per cent in the six countries."

"The prevalence of depression in the current study ranged from 47.9 per cent in Saudi Arabia to 64.8 per cent in Egypt, with a total prevalence of 57 per cent. The lockdown and moving to online learning have increased the use of the Internet from an average of 5.46 hours a day before the pandemic to 9.74 hours a day. Therefore, healthcare organisations in collaboration with ministries of telecommunications are strongly encouraged to design and provide specific psychological promotion programmes for youth during this pandemic with the aim of promoting their mental health," it said.

The scholars discussed the issue in two stages, the first being a

cross-sectional descriptive design used to assess the relationship between depression, anxiety and stress during the pandemic. The target population here was young people aged between 15 and 24.

The survey participants were invited for the inputs online using social media platforms from different countries in the region.

In the second stage, the participants' socio-demographics information, including age, gender, educational level and type, and presence of family members, friends, or colleagues with Covid-19, were collected. It also examined the previous history of depression, anxiety and medication for the depressive syndrome, frequency of watching the news about Covid-19 and Internet use.

"The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) was used because it is available in the public domain, the Arabic version has been validated, it is sensitive to youth, and it measures depression, anxiety and stress in the same survey," said the report.

Oman attends GCC economic authority meet

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Economy, took part on Wednesday in the meeting of senior officials' committee of the GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Oman's delegation in the meeting was headed by Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali,

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy.

The meeting discussed a spectrum of topics, particularly the proposal related to activating the role of the Economic and Development Affairs Authority and the proposal for the governance and organisation of the GCC's committees, among other topics. — ONA





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Omani Cultural Days inaugurated in Rome

ROME: Activities of the Omani Cultural Days began at the Colosseum Archaeological Park in the Italian capital, Rome.

The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with the aim of extending cultural communication between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries around the world through culture and arts. The Omani Cultural Days run through till June 10.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the ministry is keen on taking part in global events that enhance cultural communication between Oman and other countries of the world. He added that these forums provide an opportunity to promote Oman, highlighting the country's culture and rich arts in various fields.

He pointed out that participation in such international events give the Sultanate of Oman opportunities to enhance its presence in the international arts scene, gain more experiences and review rich blend of cultures between Oman and the rest of the world. The opening ceremony included presentation of joint musical notes by Omani and Italian musicians, whose pieces



The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, with the aim of extending cultural communication between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries around the world through culture and arts

varied between traditional and international, classical and contemporary works.

After the opening ceremony, the audience toured sections of the

two exhibitions of photographs and fine arts. The exhibitions spotlight the wonderful nature of the Sultanate of Oman, its history and ancient civilisation, as well as Oman's civilisational and cultural landmarks, the authentic Omani customs, traditions and wildlife.

The photo gallery includes 38 pictures of Omani artists and three pictures of Italian artists.

The Fine Arts exhibition also includes 26 artworks by a number of Omani fine artists.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr Ahmed bin Salim Ba'omar, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic, heads of diplomatic missions in Italy, officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Italian officials.

— ONA

OMANI MEDIA HAILED FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE



KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The Board of Directors of the Oman Journalists Association (OJA) expressed its gratitude to the government for its support which helped in the successful holding of the international conference of journalists in Muscat from May 31 to June 4.

The OJA hosted the General Conference of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called 'Congress 31' with more than 350 union leaders and 70 journalists from 120 countries from print, TV, radio and social media at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The Council of the Board of Directors of the OJA extended thanks at a meeting held under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed

bin Mubarak al Aرامي at the association's building on Tuesday.

The council, which appreciated the proactive Omani media, commended the support of state institutions, members of the association and work teams. It also said the support had played a crucial role in the grand success of the four-day congress.

The council issued a statement in which it said, "The Board of Directors of the Omani Journalists Association has the honour to share a note of gratitude to the government; many thanks and great regards for the support and care the participants received from the government, which had a great impact on the success of the activities of the Congress."

This was confirmed by Dominic Bradali, President of the International Federation

of Journalists, Zuliana Linez, Vice-President, and Anthony Bellanger, Secretary-General of the Federation, during their speeches at the opening and closing of the Congress.

President Dominic, elected at this Congress, described the meetings as historic in terms of the number of participants and the countries attending it. They all praised the Sultanate of Oman for hosting this event and the hospitality, organisation and preparations conforming to its success.

The council acknowledged the efforts of all members of the association, representatives in the committees and accompanying work teams, students of universities and colleges, and volunteers who played an active role in the success of this historic conference.

Tender

مدائن madaayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
1/2022/PEIE/HQ-1 (RE-TENDER)	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DETAILED DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES AND DETAILED MASTER PLAN FOR WADI AL-KABIR INDUSTRIAL CITY	16-06-2022	10-07-2022	CONSULTANCY OFFICES	FIRST	150

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24402200.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening. Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

@madaynoman
madayn.om

'Synergy' seeks overall growth of schooling system

MUSCAT: To underscore concerted commitment of the school management committees, the Indian School Board organised its annual event titled 'Synergy'. The event was inaugurated by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman. Syed Salman, Vice-Chairman, Ashwini Sawrikar, Finance Director, and other members on the board were present on the occasion. The board has also launched an 'Integrated Recruitment Portal for Indian Schools' which is expected to streamline and facilitate staff recruitment processes in schools. Dr Manickam applauded the phenomenal growth of Indian schooling system in the Sultanate of Oman and thanked the yeomen services rendered by the past and present management committees.

Announcement

هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Invitation to Bid for a Class-I Service License to Provide Managed Private Mobile Radio (PMR) Service in the Sultanate of Oman

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), Sultanate of Oman, announces the availability of the Information Memorandum (IM) detailing the process for the award of a Class-I license for the Installation, Operation, Maintenance and Exploitation of a Managed Private Mobile Radio (PMR) in the Sultanate of Oman

The License will be granted based on beauty contest in which any professional company may participate. The applicant will be required to demonstrate in its application that it satisfies the qualification criteria in order to be considered for selection and award of the License. The applicant will be required to establish a legal entity eligible to hold the license if selected to do so

Last date to purchase the IM document
(11:00 GMT) Muscat on 9 August 2022

Last date to submit offers
(11:00 GMT) Muscat on 9 October 2022 by Courier or by person to TRA address

For inquiries
PMR@tra.gov.om
+ 968 - 24222222

IM Document Price
OMR 3,000

To view the purchase procedure of the IM document please visit TRA website

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PAY LESS TRAVEL SMART

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

ECONOMICAL TRAVEL allows a traveller to use the means of transportation like planes, ships, trains or buses at discounted prices and compromise with luxuries of choice seats, great meals and drinks during the trip. It also requires light luggage, being content with unusual flight timings, and accepting stopovers (transit) during the trip. In short, 'economical travel' is the skill of proper trip management and all reservations intelligently.

Opinions differ about this type of travel. Some see it as "useless" because it imposes certain restrictions, while travel is supposed to be an enjoyable and free trip to achieve the desired goal. Some, however, support it as it allows a traveller to roam around the world with minimal expenses.

Issa al Hinai, an entrepreneur and a travel fanatic, confirms that some people still believe that economical travel is a lie and one cannot make an enjoyable trip at an all-inclusive cost that does not exceed RO 200. He emphasised that a traveller can avoid many unnecessary expenses and stressed that economical travel might not be suitable for family trips in most cases.

Al Hinai talks about a number of secrets for 'economical travel', including booking in economy class. "The ticket is the first and most important cost of the trip. You can book an economy ticket on a non-luxury airline with excellent and not tiring flight standards. The biggest difference is often the lack of a seat screen. By searching and early booking, you can find that with the flexibility of timing and without transit".

The second secret is to take the least number of luggage. Al Hinai says, "This will help you book a super economy ticket and move around with more flexibility and completely without extra costs. Take appropriate and fewer clothes and move with more flexibility. Try it!". Also, reduce unnecessary expenses. "Avoid buying unnecessary expensive necessities before and during travel is a requirement, including your clothes, unimportant accessories, urgent and unthoughtful reservations and eating in places crowded with tourists". Al Hinai advises that the person be aware in advance of the costs of living in the destination countries and travel to low-cost countries.

Contrary to what some may do from being drawn behind celebrity ads, Al Hinai says that the fourth secret is to stay away from this completely. "Celebrities sometimes travel at zero cost, or at a cost that means nothing to them but may not suit you", he explains.

OPINIONS DIFFER ABOUT 'ECONOMICAL TRAVEL'. SOME SEE IT AS 'USELESS' BECAUSE IT IMPOSES CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS WHILE SOME OTHERS SUPPORT THIS TYPE OF TRAVEL AS IT ALLOWS A TRAVELLER TO ROAM AROUND THE WORLD WITH MINIMAL EXPENSES

Fifth, YouTube is not always a correct and accurate option to take travel information from, even for 'economical travel'. He calls on everyone to avoid tourism companies, as they take tourists to specific places only that fit their contracts.

In addition, travelling outside the peak time and during summer helps you get a low-cost ticket and lower service prices in tourist countries in all respects. This also helps to get more comfort in services and enjoy the places as well.

In addition, moving to several places in a matter of days will mean that a person will incur high costs of transportation, so he will try to reach faster, regardless of the price and reservations. Al Hinai says, "In order to get used to new places, you will spend more money in the beginning. Stay in specific places carefully and discover them well."

Al Hinai believes that using programmes dedicated to travel for reservations and transportation reduces the total cost, saying: "You must plan well for travel because every country has a specific system of transportation. This will help you reduce the cost. You do this by choosing the cheapest and most appropriate transportation and linking roads with each other. Such as flight reservation programmes, public transportation programmes, use Airbnb".

It is also important to travel with one or several people to reduce costs and share them. "When you travel with your friends or with one person, the cost of some goods, transportation, accommodation and other costs will be distributed", he clarifies, adding, "in the event that a person has friends abroad in the destination country, this is a really useful thing as friends may offer accommodation for free or guide you to good hotels. Friends may help you know the culture of the country, the best transportation for mobility, the least expensive and the right markets to buy", Al Hinai adds.

One of the preferable ways of economical travel is to walk as much as possible. "Walking can help you explore new places that you did not know, or at least help you reduce the costs of moving within the city, especially during crowded times."

The last tip is to avoid eating and shopping in well-known places (mostly city centres), as these places are often attractive to tourists and it is easy to buy from them. "Choose the same product from other nearby places with the same quality and a huge price difference", Al Hinai recommends.





Bausher Dialysis Centre opens paediatric ward



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

The Directorate-General of Health Services in Muscat opened a paediatric ward at the Dialysis Centre in Bausher on Wednesday. Dr Qasim al Salmi, Director-General of the Royal Hospital, presided over the ceremony in the presence of Dr Thamra al Ghafri, Director-General of Muscat Health Services. The five-bed ward serves children suffering from kidney

failure. It has been set up to provide quality health services. The ward will function in two shifts, offering services for a total of 14 patients daily. The facility is equipped with all treatment facilities. Dr Qasim al Salmi said the ward was built as part of the centre's expansion work carried out by the DGHS to provide hemodialysis services for children with kidney failure, besides supporting children

with educational services. In the upcoming phase, it is planned to provide every child with a tablet while undergoing treatment to improve individual skills and alleviate her/his pain. A new Dialysis Centre in Al Amerat was recently launched in Muscat in addition to the 5 Dialysis Centres in Bausher and Seeb, Qurayat Hospital, Royal Hospital, and Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The Directorate-General of Health Services in the Governorate of Muscat is continuing its endeavour to establish and expand dialysis centres in the governorate due to the rising number of kidney patients.

Workshop on child forensic interviews held



MUSCAT: The training workshop on child forensic interviews concluded on Wednesday. It was organised by the National Committee for Family Affairs for specialised participants in interviewing children from the ministries of Social Development, Education, and Health, the Royal Oman Police, and the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, and the Public Prosecution. Such interviews of children help to extract and collect information from the child and use it in his/her legal status. These interviews are conducted by specialists such as physicians, psychologists, social workers and others, who are trained in child forensic interview protocols.

On the importance of this workshop, Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Marzouqi, a certified trainer in public prosecution and law, said that it is the first national initiative adopted by the National Committee for Family Affairs, which brings together under its umbrella all the parties concerned with the childhood sector. He said practical reality has resulted in the growing problems related to children under the age of 18 years, and this group constitutes 40 per cent of the population of the Sultanate of Oman. The National Committee for Family Affairs is concerned with taking steps within a general umbrella intended to build a protection system for children. This system is based on creating human capabilities and qualifying them scientifically to enable them to deal with childhood issues.

Impact of peace education discussed

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, Human Sciences Supervision Department, organised on Wednesday a virtual scientific workshop titled "The Impact of the Peace Education Programme on the Social and Emotional Behaviour of Students" via the Microsoft Times platform. Dr Mahfuzah al Mushaiqeri, Motivation and Childhood Trainer, who led the workshop, evaluated the peace education programme discussing theories related to it and explaining its impact on the social and emotional behaviour of students. She also reviewed methods by which peace education values can be incorporated into school curricula. The scientific workshop targeted supervisors and first supervisors from the ministry's headquarters and the educational governorates, and first teachers in the educational governorates.



P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman,
Tel: 24073800, Fax: 24698496, Website: www.soharpower.com

Notice and Invitation to attend the Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Sohar Power Company S.A.O.G (the **Company**) is pleased to invite all the shareholders to attend the Ordinary General Meeting (**OGM**) of the Company scheduled to be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, 22 June 2022 at Salwa Ballroom located at Holiday Inn, Al Mawaleh, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman and also through the electronic platform for holding general meetings in which you can access through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (**MCD**) (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum was not achieved for the OGM, a second OGM shall be held at 3 p.m. on Monday, 27 June 2022 at the same address and electronic platform mentioned above to discuss the following agenda items:

Ordinary General Meeting agenda:

- To consider and approve the proposal to enter into a related party transaction in accordance with the information set out in the Annexure and to authorise the executive management to undertake all necessary steps to implement this transaction.
- To elect one (1) new member to the board of directors to fill the vacant seat. Any person who wishes to be nominated shall complete the director's nomination form and submit it to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the meeting, i.e. no later than the close of business on Thursday, 16 June 2022. The candidate must ensure compliance with the established criteria for membership to the Board of Directors.

In accordance with the Company's article of association and Rules for Convening General Meetings of Public Joint Stock Companies via Modern Electronic means issued by the Capital Authority Market, we would like to inform you to the following:

- Every shareholder has the right to appoint any other person as his proxy to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf by authorising such person in writing, by way of a proxy card issued by the Company. Any natural person should attach to the proxy card, a copy of his ID if adult male, and passport if female or minor who are not holding IDs and a copy of a resident card or passport for non-Omanis. For juristic persons, the proxy form shall be signed by one of the authorized signatories and sealed by the company's stamp accompanied with copies of the commercial registration certificate and the specimen signature form (if any) or ID card /residence card of the Authorized Signature.
- Every shareholder has the right to appoint any other person as his proxy to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf through Electronic means, provided that the person has an investor number in the MCDC.

Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall begin no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. In case the shareholder balance changes by increase or decrease, the voting process will be cancelled again on the day of the General Meeting.

For more information, please contact **Mr. Salah Issa al Farsi**, the Company's Admin Manager, telephone number **(+968) 99219419**.



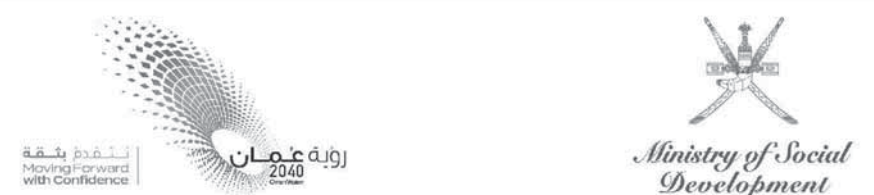
TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (R.O)
18/2021	Electromechanical (RO Plant) Work – Al Furjah	First and Above	16 June 2022	25 July 2022	135/- R.O
14/2022	Electromechanical (RO Plant) Work – MNB	First and Above	16 June 2022	25 July 2022	250/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Tender Announcement

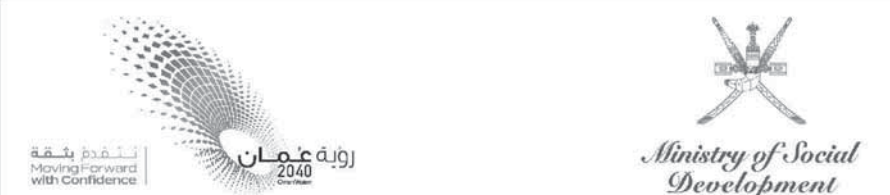
The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
69/2022	Completion of balance works of Omani Women Association building at Al-Khabourah	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 28-6-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 18-7-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Thursday 9/6/2022.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry “

www.mosd.gov.om



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby re-announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
23/2022	Provision of a programmer & database supervisor for a Takaful system	Companies specialized in the field of information technology services that are registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Excellent and First degree	Tuesday 28-6-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 18-7-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Thursday 9/6/2022.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry “

www.mosd.gov.om



Sudan starts post-coup talks without civilian bloc

KHARTOUM: Sudan on Wednesday began UN-facilitated direct talks between rival factions hoped to resolve a political crisis sparked by last year's coup, but with a critical civilian bloc refusing to participate.

"It is important to not let this moment slip," United Nations special representative Volker Perthes told reporters in Khartoum. "We are asking everybody to work with one another in good faith."



“It is important to not let this moment slip. We are asking everybody to work with one another in good faith

VOLKER PERTHES,
UN special representative

Sudan has been rocked by deepening unrest, near-weekly protests, a violent crackdown that has killed over 100 people and a tumbling economy since the October 25 power grab led by army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

The military takeover derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule that had been established following the 2019 ouster of president Omar al Bashir.

The UN, African Union and regional bloc IGAD have since March been pushing for Sudanese-led talks to break the political stalemate. On Tuesday,

Burhan hailed the talks as a "historic opportunity" and called on political factions "to not stand as a stumbling block".



Mini Minawi, the Governor of Sudan's Darfur province, speaks with Mubarak Ardol, head of the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, during a meeting of representatives of the tripartite mechanism in Khartoum. – AFP

Burhan last month lifted the state of emergency imposed since the coup, and authorities have in recent weeks released multiple civilian leaders and pro-democracy activists. Perthes welcomed the measures, but said "more can be done". Wednesday's talks were attended by military officials, representatives from several political parties and senior members from ex-rebel

groups. But Sudan's main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) — which was ousted from power in the coup — as well as the influential Umma party have refused to take part.

Members from the resistance committees, informal groups which emerged during the 2019 protests against Bashir and which have led calls for recent anti-coup rallies, were also absent.

The meeting "does not address the nature of the crisis" and any political process should work on "ending the coup and establishing a democratic civilian authority", the FFC said in a statement earlier this week. The Umma Party said the objective of the talks was "undefined" and the political climate "was not fully prepared."

However, IGAD envoy Ismail Wais urged absent factions to join. "They are always welcome and the door is open," Wais said.

"We... cannot imagine a political solution without the participation" of the absent factions, AU envoy Mohamed Lebatt said. — AFP

Van crash kills 22 in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: At least 22 people were killed when a passenger van plunged into a deep ravine in southwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, officials said here yesterday.

The South Asian country has an appalling record of fatal road and rail accidents due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving.

The only survivor of the crash — a 13-year-old boy — was taken to hospital in a critical condition, said Muhammad Qasim, a senior

government official in the Qila Saifullah district of Balochistan province where the accident happened.

"The driver was speeding and broke through a protective wall at a bend in the road, falling hundreds of feet into the ravine," said Qasim.

Four children aged between three and nine were among those killed, he added.

Muhammad Younus, from the provincial disaster management authority, confirmed the incident and details. —AFP

UN envoy arrives in Yemen for talks on besieged city

SANAA: The United Nations special envoy arrived in Yemen on Wednesday for talks on reopening routes to a blockaded city that has proved the thorniest problem in implementing a fragile truce.

Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg flew into the capital Sanaa, held by the Ansar Allah fighters since 2014, less than a week after the truce was renewed for a second period of two months.



Major General Yahya Abdullah al Razami, chairman of Ansar Allah fighters 'military committee for negotiations', holds a press conference in Sanaa. – AFP

Yemen is witnessing what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, seven years into a conflict between the Ansar Allah fighters and a coalition.

Grundberg hailed the truce extension, calling it a "positive signal of the parties' seriousness to uphold and implement the truce".

"Yemenis have seen the truce's tangible benefits. We have witnessed a significant positive shift and we have a responsibility to safeguard it and deliver on its potential for peace in Yemen," he told reporters.

Grundberg said he would

meet the leadership to discuss proposals for reopening roads into Taz, Yemen's third biggest city. "I hope we will have constructive discussions on our proposal for reopening roads in Taz and other governorates, as well as economic and humanitarian measures and the way forward," he said.

Holding talks on Taz was one of the terms of the truce, along with resuming commercial flights out of Sanaa and allowing fuel ships into the lifeline port of Hodeida, which is also in fighters hands. Flights



UN special envoy Hans Grundberg

have resumed from Sanaa to Amman and Cairo and tankers have docked in Hodeida in an attempt to ease fuel shortages.

Meanwhile, Greenpeace urged the Arab League to drum up funds to rescue a stranded, oil-filled tanker that is rusting off Yemen, threatening a major environmental disaster.

The environmental group said an urgent meeting was needed for the FSO Safer, after a UN pledging conference last month fell far short of its \$80 million target.

The decaying 45-year-old tanker, long used as a floating storage platform and now abandoned off Yemeni port of Hodeida, holds 1.1 million barrels of oil and is in "imminent" danger of breaking up, the UN has warned.

Ghiwa Nakat, executive director at Greenpeace for the Middle East and North Africa, urged the Arab League's secretary-general "to hold an urgent meeting and make concerted efforts to fund the plan to rescue the Safer before it is too late and before disaster strikes." — AFP



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fee	Last Collection Date	Last Date of Submission
BME/T/436/2022	LEASE CONTRACT FOR HAEMATOLOGY ANALYSER	OMR. 25	03/07/2022	18/07/2022
BME/T/437/2022	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF COMPUTERIZED TOMOGRAPHY IMAGING SYSTEM. (CT SCANNER)	OMR. 25	03/07/2022	18/07/2022
BME/438/2022	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF CARDIAC CATHETERISATION IMAGING SYSTEM CCIS	OMR. 25	03/07/2022	18/07/2022

Tender Conditions:

- The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
- The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelop.
- The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms & Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Procurement Directorate
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
AL Khoudh / Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24144688 / 24144633
Fax: 24413156
E-mail: hospitalprocure@squ.edu.om
www.squ.edu.om



BEIRUT

Lebanon pine forest blaze begins wildfire season

Rescue teams scrambled to douse a massive blaze in Lebanon's largest pine forest that authorities said could be deliberate, as the country braced for another summer of fires.

The fire in the northern Dinniyeh region broke out on Tuesday night, prompting the army and volunteer firefighters to intervene to try to salvage one of the Middle East's lushest pine forests.

The army on Wednesday



TEHRAN

17 killed in central Iran train derailment

At least 17 people were killed and dozens injured when a train derailed near the central Iranian city of Tabas after hitting an excavator beside the track, state media reported. The train was on its way from the northeastern city of Mashhad to the central city of Yazd with 348 passengers on board when it careered off the track in the desert at 5:30 am. "Seventeen people are dead and 37 of the 86 injured people have been transferred to hospital,"



said it dispatched helicopters but it was still struggling to contain the fire, hours after it started.

— AFP

emergency services spokesman Mojtaba Khaledi told state TV. "The number of the dead may rise as some of the injured are in critical condition," he said.

— AFP



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THURSDAY | JUNE 9 | 2022

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In brief

■ LONDON



OVER 300 MONKEYPOX CASES IDENTIFIED IN BRITAIN

More than 300 cases of monkeypox have now been identified in England. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) announced that it has detected 18 additional cases of monkeypox in England, bringing England's total to 305. Officials have also found another case in Scotland, bringing the total number of cases there to 11. Across the UK, 321 cases have been identified up to June 7, including two in Northern Ireland and three in Wales, UKHSA said. It comes after the virus became a so-called "notifiable disease" in England, meaning all medics must alert local health authorities to suspected cases. — **dpa**

■ BERLIN



1 DEAD, A DOZEN HURT AS CAR PLOUGHS INTO BERLIN CROWD

One person was killed and at least a dozen others injured when a man drove a car into a crowd, including teenagers, at a busy shopping district in central Berlin, police said. The driver was briefly detained by passers-by before being handed over to police after the car smashed through a shop front, according to police spokesman Thilo Cablitz. It was not clear whether the crash was intentional. The driver, a 29-year-old German-Armenian man, is being questioned, police said. "There are seriously injured people among the more than a dozen injured," said Cablitz. — **AFP**

■ TULLE



FRENCH EX-PRESIDENT HOLLANDE WEDS ACTRESS JULIE

After a romance that made headlines around the world when it was revealed in 2014, ex-president Francois Hollande has married actress Julie Gayet at a low-key ceremony in his political fiefdom in central France. The news was announced to La Montagne newspaper by the mayor of Tulle, Bernard Combes, with a picture of the couple showing the groom in a suit and his bride in a white dress climbing the stairs of the local town hall. They married "in a private ceremony," the mayor's office in the central Correze region told the paper. — **AFP**

Fighting rages in battle for Ukraine's key city

KIEV: Ukrainian troops defending the city of Severodonetsk are facing constant shelling by Russian forces but "no one will give up" the fight, the governor of the eastern Luhansk region said on Wednesday.

"Mortars, artillery, tanks, air strikes, everything is flying there right now," governor Serhii Haidai said in remarks broadcast on television.

Severodonetsk is one of the last large cities still under partial Ukrainian control in the Donbass, which consists of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. The industrial city also offers strategic advantages, including its location on the Donets river.

Even before the war began on February 24, Moscow claimed swathes of the Donbass on behalf of Kremlin-backed separatist forces.

"No one will give up anything - even if our soldiers are forced to retreat to better fortified positions," Haidai said.

He noted that given the heavy attacks, a key railway line was no longer being used by Ukraine and that supplies for the twin cities of Lysychansk and Severodonetsk were being rerouted.

"It is unlikely that either side has gained significant ground in the last 24 hours," the British Ministry of Defence said of Severodonetsk in its daily report.

Russia continues to attempt assaults on the city from three different directions, although Ukrainian defences are still holding, according to London's analysis.

There were also intensified



A local resident reacts in front of a destroyed school after a strike in the city of Bakhmut, eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas. — **AFP**

air strikes towards Bachmut in Donetsk and around Ukrainian fighters near Zolote in Luhansk, according to the Ukrainian general staff, who said Russian Ka-52 combat helicopters also involved.

In Moscow, the Defence Ministry said Ukrainian armed forces are suffering heavy losses in the Donbass fighting.

Kiev lost more than 300 fighters within three days in battles around the Donetsk town of Svyatohirsk alone, Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said. Svyatohirsk is about 80 kilometres to the west of

Severodonetsk.

Moscow also reported pounding a tank factory in the north-eastern city of Kharkiv and attacks on Ukrainian command posts.

The claims by the sides could not be independently verified. Meanwhile, Russia is forcibly introducing the rouble as a legal tender in the occupied southern Kherson region, the British Defence Ministry said.

According to the report, Moscow is also employing Russian teachers to introduce the Russian curriculum and language to schools.

"Russia will highly likely claim its occupation of Kherson as evidence of delivering improved governance and living standards to the Ukrainian people," the ministry said. Elsewhere on Wednesday, Norway said it had delivered 22 howitzers to Ukraine and Luxembourg said it had frozen nearly \$4.5 billion in Russian assets to date as a result of EU sanctions.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky about further support. In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, they also discussed how grain

Ukraine troops moot retreat from Severodonetsk, one of the last large cities still under partial Ukrainian control

exports from Ukraine could be made possible by sea, according to government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit in Berlin.

The Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports has led to a halt in these exports, causing food prices to rise and exacerbating a hunger crisis in many poor countries, especially in Africa.

In Strasbourg, the chairman of the Ukrainian parliament told EU lawmakers that candidate status for EU membership could encourage more reforms in his country.

Speaking to the European Parliament, Ruslan Stefanchuk described potential candidate status for entry as as an "incentive" for further reforms.

Should Ukraine receive "this political message, we are ready to continue to work, to move forward quickly and to implement reforms, as we have done in the past," Stefanchuk said in his speech.

Stefanchuk said it was important for Ukraine to receive the candidate status from the European Union at an upcoming EU leaders summit in June. If Ukraine does not get candidate status, it would mark a win for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said Stefanchuk. — **dpa**

Britain faces biggest rail strike in decades

LONDON: More railway workers are to go on strike in Britain later this month in growing disputes over pay, jobs and pensions, threatening massive travel chaos later this month.

Members of Unite at Transport for London (TfL) and London Underground will join a walkout on June 21, crippling services on the underground. The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union has already announced a Tube strike on that day, while its members at Network Rail and 13 train operators will walk out on June 21, 23 and 25. The strikes will be the biggest outbreak of industrial action in the industry in a generation.

The disputes are over pay, jobs and pensions, with the unions complaining that railway staff who worked through the pandemic are facing job cuts, a pay freeze and attacks on employment conditions. Unite said 1,000 of its members in London will take action over pay and warnings of plans to cut pensions.

Transport for London insists no decisions or proposals have been made. Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham

said: "It is not acceptable that the dedicated workers at TfL and London Underground are being told to pay the price of the pandemic with their pensions, pay cuts and threats to their jobs."

Talks between Network Rail (NR) and the union are expected to be held in the next few days, sources told the PA news agency.

NR is also drawing up contingency plans, with the strikes expected to cause disruption to services for six days, from the first walkout on Tuesday, June 21 to the day after the third strike.

Fewer than one in five trains are likely to run, and only between 7am and 7 pm, probably only on main lines.

The strikes threaten widespread travel disruption during major events, including concerts, Test match cricket and the Glastonbury festival.

Glastonbury starts on June 22, while that week will also see England play New Zealand in a Test match in Leeds, the British Athletics Championships in Manchester, and gigs in London's Hyde Park by Sir Elton John (June 24) and The Rolling Stones (June 25). — **dpa**



Boris 'in denial' as he faces MPs after confidence vote

LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson fought on Wednesday to get back on the policy front foot, but was likened to a "Monty Python" character who refuses to admit he is mortally wounded. The Conservative leader was facing parliament for the first time since surviving a no-confidence vote of his MPs on Monday, which commentators said had left his scandal-tainted premiership still in peril.

Backers in the House of Commons staged a noisy show of support as he embarked on the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions. But Tory rebels sitting behind looked glum and laughed along with opposition jibes.

Johnson has branded the 211-148 confidence vote "decisive" and insisted it is time to "draw a line" under calls for him to resign over the "Partygate" scandal, about lockdown-breaching parties in Downing Street.

"As for jobs, I'm going to get on with mine", he reiterated in the Commons, after defending his government's record on employment, health and Ukraine.

"I've of course picked up political opponents all over and that is because this government has done some very big and very remarkable things which they didn't necessarily approve of."

But Johnson faced repeated taunts about Monday's vote, including comparisons to Monty Python's "Black Knight" character, who declares "it's just



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves from 10 Downing Street in central London to attend the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). — **AFP**

Boris defended his government's record on employment, health and Ukraine

a flesh wound" when he has his arms and legs chopped off in a duel.

"No amount of delusion and denial will save the prime minister from the truth: This story won't go away until he goes away", said the Scottish National Party's Westminster leader Ian Blackford.

Johnson's Tory opponents fear that public disgust over Partygate is crippling their party's electoral chances. Some want a

return to "Conservative values" including lower taxes after the Covid pandemic. Downing Street set the stage for a policy blitz in the coming days, including on Britain's skewed property market, where sky-high prices have deprived younger people of the hope of home ownership.

Rising rental prices are compounding the misery of the worst cost-of-living crisis in generations, which Johnson and his Finance Minister Rishi Sunak are set to address anew as well. Tax cuts will come "as soon as it is fiscally responsible to do so", Johnson's press secretary told reporters, while ruling out any revamp of his cabinet team to bring in new blood. — **AFP**

Get set to the new trend of travelling



Dr Anchan C K

The writer is an international adviser

Tourism trends are in for a huge change, heavily influenced by the concerns and mores of the customer base. Of course, the customer experience has always been central to the tourist industry.

With new technologies and an ever-broadening array of options for tourists, enhancing the customer experience has never been more vital. In the final analysis, customer experience is what will make or break your business. Everything from the web interface where your clients book their trips to the very last day of their journey needs to be as enjoyable as possible.

As a new generation becomes increasingly relevant in the marketplace, the ideals driving their purchasing decisions create

new tourism trends. Eco travel is just one example of these tourism trends, reflecting a growing concern among today's travellers for ethical and sustainable tourism options. Eco travel includes simple changes, such as the availability of carbon credits when booking a flight or the option to rent an electric instead of a conventional vehicle.

There are a variety of tourism trends that are based on more general changes in consumer behaviour, like the need for healthy and organic food and drinks, sustainability, personalised service, the rising demand for digitalisation and the use of technology. With home smart speakers growing in popularity, as well as mobile assistants like Siri, Google Assistant and Bixby, more

ECO TRAVEL IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THESE TOURISM TRENDS, REFLECTING A GROWING CONCERN AMONG TODAY'S TRAVELLERS

and more tourism customers are turning to voice search.

Virtual reality is another of the major tourism trends disrupting the industry and capitalising on the technology can give you an edge over rivals who have not yet adopted it. Through online VR tours, customers can experience hotel interiors, restaurant interiors, outdoor tourist attractions and more, all from their home. Most modern VR tours are also web-

based, meaning they can be viewed through any mainstream web browser. Many customers now book their travel and accommodation with the help of Internet chatbots, specifically tailored AI who can handle queries and assist customers with useful information when human operators are unavailable.

You're probably familiar with those ads that pop up on social media and certain other websites, ads related to things you've looked at or purchased online.

One of the more eye-catching examples of these particular tourism trends is Connie, the Hilton Hotel chain's robot concierge. Other hotels have also got in on the robot-staff trends, installing interactive robots to handle certain reception duties

or even having them serve food and drink to visitors. This kind of novelty application, however, is far from the only one.

Artificial Intelligence is becoming increasingly important, with AI helping to personalise the experience of finding and booking tours and trips. AI is also increasingly valuable in contexts such as smart hotel rooms, identifying the likely needs of guests and fine-tuning the environment and services to fit the guest's needs and preferences.

Artificial Intelligence is finding applications everywhere, from customer service to security. Future AI tourism trends to watch out for might include self-driving vehicles and virtual guides for tourism. Get set to the new trend of travelling...

Conspiracy theories cloud pandemic treaty push

NINA LARSON

The World Health Organization is battling a barrage of disinformation alleging it is scheming to take over health policy in sovereign nations, as it tries to chart a way forward towards averting future pandemics. Although used to being in the crosshairs of conspiracy theorists especially over Covid-19, high-profile attempts in countries around the world to discredit the WHO's efforts are casting a shadow over talks in Geneva this week.

Country representatives are discussing how to pave the way for a global agreement that could eventually regulate how nations prepare for and respond to future pandemic threats.

"We may face more severe pandemics in the future and we need to be a hell of a lot better prepared than we are now", the WHO's Emergencies Director Michael Ryan told reporters recently. "That's going to require countries to work together."

It is still far from clear what any future agreement would contain and whether countries will decide they want it to be a treaty or some other "legal instrument".

The negotiations — involving member states, not the WHO — are set to last at least two years.

However, that has not stopped conspiracy theories suggesting that the UN health body is out for a power-grab.

Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson, in a segment last month on the pandemic treaty, warned his millions of viewers that US President Joe Biden's administration was close to "handing the World Health Organization power over every aspect, the intimate aspects of your life."

Christine Anderson, a German member of the European Parliament, has warned that the agreement would grant "the WHO de facto governing power over member states".

British comedian-turned-YouTuber Russell Brand, meanwhile, told his more than 5.5 million subscribers that the future treaty meant "your democracy is... finished".

The WHO and experts say such theories, which have also popped up in Germany, Australia, Russia and other countries, have nothing to do with what is being discussed.

"I am frankly baffled by the degree of disinformation", Suerie Moon, co-director of the Global Health Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, said, stressing that the agreement "is really in the embryonic stage."

Many of the claims, she said, are "completely disconnected from the reality of what is being proposed and potentially negotiated".

— AFP

Evacuating the vulnerable amid the terror of war



Maria Varenikova

The writer is a Kyiv-based journalist and producer

The sounds of war echo throughout Bakhmut, a largely deserted city in eastern Ukraine, just 10 miles from the front. Even with a trained ear, it is hard to tell what artillery fire is outgoing or incoming.

The terror can be all the more acute for the vulnerable and those unable to care for themselves, among them Zinaida Riabtseva, 77, who is blind and cannot leave her fifth-floor apartment on her own.

As Russian forces bear down with intensifying ferocity in an effort to control the Donbas region, which borders Russia, aid workers are scrambling to evacuate the old, the infirm and the disabled.

Those who leave their homes don't know if they will ever be able to return, joining the more than 12 million Ukrainians who have been displaced by Russia's war.

Last week, British and Ukrainian volunteers with the aid group Vostok-SOS, were called in to evacuate Zinaida, along with her husband, Yuriy. After carefully placing her on a stretcher, volunteers carried her down five flights of stairs, while Yuriy followed behind with a few pieces of luggage.

Since the attack began in February, Vostok-SOS has evacuated 15,000 people from eastern Ukraine. On one such evacuation mission, Vostok staff recently drove through back lanes to reach the home of their latest evacuee, Mykhaylo Silichkin. When they arrived in front of his tidy house, he

THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE HAS ALSO UPENDED THE LIVES OF MANY YOUNG PEOPLE CAUGHT IN THE LINE OF FIRE

hopped out through the front gate on his crutches, a cigarette perched in his mouth.

One volunteer picked up his prosthetic leg. Others carried his luggage. Silichkin locked the gate as he left, not knowing if he would ever return.

The conflict in Ukraine has also upended the lives of many young people caught in the line of fire. Maria Alefirenko, 31, was paralysed in a mortar attack during the fighting against Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine eight years ago.

On a recent day in Mykolaivka, a city the Donetsk region partly ruled by pro-Russian separatists, an aid worker lifted her into a car. Her father, who had cared for her for years, stayed behind. He cried as she left. Ukrainian officials say that about 80 per cent of the civilian population of the Donetsk region, one of the two provinces that make up the Donbas, have already fled.



A man looks at a supermarket, partially destroyed by a missile attack on the southeastern outskirts of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. — AFP

Cities like Bakhmut have become ghost towns, their shops boarded up, their streets deserted but for military vehicles and ambulances zipping through. Some residents who remained behind cook food on campfires in their yards because there is no gas in the city.

But vulnerable people remain, and evacuations continue daily even in frontline towns that face regular shelling.

As towns and cities in eastern Ukraine empty out in the face of the Russian offensive, volunteers drive around in minivans, working off lists of addresses of elderly or disabled people who have remained behind, well past the time when it was safe to flee.

In Slovyansk, an industrial city in the eastern Donbas region, residents who haven't left are now at risk from daily artillery and cruise missile strikes, which blow out windows in apartment buildings.

Maksym Sutkovy, a deputy mayor of Bakhmut, said Russian forces were advancing on an arc to the south and east. About 65,000 people had already fled, he said, from a prewar population of about 100,000 and heavy fighting persisted everyday.

"We cannot climb into the heads of people", said Sutkovy, adding that some residents had stayed behind because they were too poor to move or desensitised to danger after weeks of being bombarded. "People get used to living with explosions", he said. "What in peaceful times is inconceivable becomes ordinary, everyday." So the effort to evacuate the old and vulnerable goes on, even amid the thud of explosions. The departures and displacement provoke strong emotions, as people who have lived their whole lives in one place are finally, sometimes grudgingly, persuaded to leave.

In Bakhmut, Pavlo Boreyko leaned in close to his 90-year-old father, Petro, gently explaining that it was time to go.

His father sat on a sofa in front of a woven red carpet hanging on the wall before volunteers carefully slipped a stretcher under him. Incapacitated and no longer able to speak, Petro was carried down the stairs of his apartment building.

— New York Times

Have a good sense of humour: It is free



SONIA AMBROSIO
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What a pleasure it is to see happy faces, big smiles not only on the lips but also radiating from one's eyes. There is no price for this wonderful essence. Even the most expensive or miraculous medicine will not bring about genuine happiness. Smiles can work miracles. Well, some societies regard smiling individuals as less smart than those who don't. Scholarly studies published in the 'Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour' found that in societies with high levels of corruption, trust in smiling people is reduced. We can travel to the North and South hemispheres to see that the principles do not apply to all societies. But, in any case, we are talking about happiness in general, and one of the indicators is that when you smile, the world smiles with you, to quote Louis Armstrong.

Types of smiles and their possible meanings have been subject of studies with researchers saying that smiles provide different psychological signals,

WELL, SOME SOCIETIES REGARD SMILING INDIVIDUALS AS LESS SMART THAN THOSE WHO DON'T. IT IS FOUND THAT IN SOCIETIES WITH HIGH LEVELS OF CORRUPTION, TRUST IN SMILING PEOPLE IS REDUCED

including positive emotions, social intentions, or a person's status, this according to the article 'Be Careful where you smile: Culture shapes Judgements of Intelligence and Honesty of Smiling Individuals'. In some countries, smiling on the streets can be seen as ridiculous; in other countries, tourists are advised not to smile at strangers because it is a sign of stupidity. Neuroscientists, psychologists, economists and communicators want to know how people's brains responds to happiness — perhaps, this is why governments around the world are attempting to figure out how to measure and increase the happiness of their citizens'. According to psychology professor Daniel Gilbert, who is widely known for his best seller Stumbling on Happiness, a new car, a new house, or even a new spouse will make you happy — but for how long? Difficult to predict. Object as the ultimate happiness has been addressed in one of my earlier articles.

Smiling has numerous health benefits. It has the potential to ease the negative effects of stress. Smiling lowers heart rate and blood pressure. It has the potential to improve immune function. Consider health policy and budget allocation: It is far less expensive to have happy citizens! The theory of the smile is used in therapeutic humor as a practice of care for hospitalised patients. As a result, a smile is an effective communication strategy for promoting care and comfort.

In the article 'Show your teeth and tilt your head! Customer preferences towards a service with a smile', the writer Chung-En Yu describes that in the tourism and hospitality industries, staff has to be aware of their emotional expressions; it is a critical factor that employees in these industries display positive emotions during working hours — whether genuine or not. That is true for some "non-smiling" societies who feel compelled to adapt and interact with "smiling" ones, especially when economic interests such as tourism, hospitality and investment are pursued. The entertainment and advertising industries are also increasingly relying on emotional communication to attract, sell, and brand their products usually through humour, a fun storyline, or upbeat music. This is an effective method of attracting and retaining attention with the ultimate goal of persuading clients, customers and visitors, to buy, use, or support a product, service or idea. Smiles are used to create positive impressions. The way we communicate, entertain, explain or express ourselves can be enlightening. In media, it is not enough to simply combine words or image together. The video clip of the Peruvian young bear Paddington having tea with the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth, is rich in information. People have long speculated what the monarch keeps in her handbag. We now know: A marmalade sandwich. Even the clinking of teaspoons against porcelain cups to announce the musical show opening was striking. The clip is amusing and adds delight to a happy occasion. Communication doesn't have to be dull.



CLEARING UP THE UNEXPLODED

Ukrainian bomb disposal workers carry unexploded ordnance during mine clearance work in the village of Yahidne, in the liberated territories of the Chernihiv region amid the Russian war on Ukraine. — AFP

Can nuclear energy come back from the grave?



Nick Butler

The writer is a visiting professor at King's College London, is Founding Chair of the Kings Policy Institute and Chair of Promus Associates

Nuclear power has been in decline since the Fukushima disaster in Japan more than a decade ago, but it may be poised for a comeback. Russian war on Ukraine and soaring natural-gas prices have led some to argue that nuclear energy can help solve the twin challenges of energy security and climate change. Is the industry back in business, or will this prove to be another false dawn?

Until recently, nuclear power's prospects seemed poor. Plants built in the 1970s and 1980s are nearing the end of their working lives, while Germany and Japan decided to shut down theirs for political reasons. Of the relatively few new nuclear plants currently being built, many have been blighted by management failures and technical faults. The flagship EPR pressurised water reactors at Flamanville in northern France and Olkiluoto in Finland are, respectively, 13 and 12 years behind schedule. Hinkley Point in southwest England, which was supposed to have provided the power to cook Britain's Christmas turkeys in 2023, may now be operational in 2027. Inevitably, all of these projects are massively over budget.

In the United States, no new commercial nuclear facility has opened since 1996. The combination of cheap domestic shale gas and subsidies for wind power has undermined the economics of existing plants and discouraged investment in new ventures. With the cost of alternative energy supplies falling, nuclear began to look excessively costly and risky. In many countries, staff with nuclear engineering skills are ageing and recruitment has been minimal over the past decade.

The industry's argument that nuclear should be regarded as a boon to the clean-energy transition has not halted the decline. But over the past year, surging energy prices and the energy insecurity triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine have reminded governments and consumers that depending on imports of key strategic resources is risky. Maximising domestically produced electricity supplies should be the starting point for any energy-security strategy. At the same time, the sharp increases in natural-gas prices in the past 12 months have begun to make new nuclear facilities look much more competitive.

The result is a wave of new projects and plans. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants nuclear power to provide 25 per cent of the country's electricity by 2050. In April, China approved the construction of six new reactors, adding to the 54 already in operation and 19 under construction. Chinese firms are reportedly negotiating to develop 40 new

FROM CHINA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, POLICYMAKERS REGARD NUCLEAR POWER AS PART OF THE SOLUTION TO THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF ENERGY SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE. BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE INDUSTRY WILL FINALLY ESTABLISH ITSELF AS A MAJOR GLOBAL ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER, OR AGAIN FAIL TO LIVE UP TO ITS PROMISE

reactors around the world. A Chinese-built reactor in Karachi, Pakistan, was commissioned on March 31, and China signed a deal earlier this year to build another new nuclear power station in Argentina.

True, Germany began to shut down its nuclear capacity in 2011 and is scheduled to close its three remaining stations by the end of this year. Elsewhere in the European Union, however, there is significant interest in the potential of nuclear power to replace the Russian natural-gas supplies on which the EU has depended for the past 40 years. French President Emmanuel Macron announced before the recent presidential election that France would build up to 14 new nuclear reactors, starting in 2028. And Poland submitted plans in March for the construction of six new reactors.

Supporting this trend, firms such as Rolls-Royce in the United Kingdom and NuScale in the US are developing a new generation of small modular reactors (SMRs) that can be built and commissioned in under ten years. SMRs can be built in series and should attract private investors deterred by the long lead times, escalating construction costs and

risks associated with complex large-scale plants such as Flamanville.

But a nuclear renaissance is far from certain. Today, more reactors are at risk of closure and decommissioning than are being built. Although public sentiment has become more favourable to nuclear power in most countries, entrenched resistance, underpinned by environmental and safety concerns, continues to impede a renaissance. Local planning processes are extensive and bitter. Construction takes time, not least because of the extensive safety assessments required, and time costs money. As a result, projects will proceed only where there are credible guarantees regarding future pricing and power purchases. The future of nuclear energy is inseparable from public policy, which, as ever, is uncertain and a further source of risk.

Moreover, there is no guarantee that natural-gas prices will remain high when new fields in regions such as North Africa or Central Asia come on stream, or that the EU will deliver on its pledge to reduce its gas imports from Russia by two-thirds by the end of this year. Equally, the nuclear industry is still failing to deal effectively with the problem of waste disposal. At plants such as Sizewell in eastern England, there is the additional challenge of securing sufficient water supplies to operate the reactors.

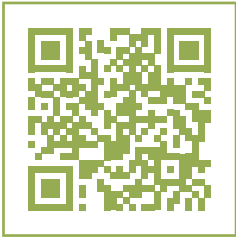
Given the prospect of a long conflict in Ukraine limiting trade with Russia, and with electrification likely to become increasingly important as we move to a low-carbon world, the potential for nuclear power is huge. Because of the lead times involved, nuclear energy cannot offer an instant solution to today's challenges. Within a decade, however, nuclear, alongside wind and solar, could undermine the global gas market. The question is whether civil nuclear power can now finally fulfil the promise it has shown since it was first developed in the 1950s. © Project Syndicate 2021



Until recently, nuclear power's prospects seemed poor.

sport

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Germany's Thomas Mueller (left) and England's Harry Maguire vie for the ball during the Uefa Nations League match in Munich, southern Germany. – AFP

Kane’s 50th goal secures draw with Germany

MUNICH, Germany: England captain Harry Kane scored his 50th international goal on Tuesday by converting a late penalty in Munich to seal a 1-1 Nations League draw with Germany.

Germany broke the deadlock when Jonas Hofmann fired the hosts ahead at the Allianz Arena, but Kane levelled from the spot with two minutes left.

Germany defender Nico Schlotterbeck stumbled into Kane in the area and the penalty was given after a VAR review.

The Tottenham striker moved into outright second — just three behind Wayne Rooney — on England’s list of all-time leading goalscorers, passing Bobby Charlton’s total of 49.

“It’s a really nice feeling,” Kane told Channel Four.

“I had a couple of early chances and thought it could be one of those days.”

“It’s good to get the goal and it’s just a shame we didn’t nick it in the end,” added Kane, who had earlier been denied by a superb Manuel Neuer save.

Gareth Southgate’s side remain bottom of Group A3 after losing 1-0 to Hungary in Budapest last Saturday.

Southgate was “pleased with lots of parts” of the England performance.

“The Germans are the masters of tournaments and this was a good test,” he told ZDF.

“Most of this (England) team has played a World Cup semifinal and the Euro 2020 final -- they showed the character to fight for a point.”

Germany, who visit Hungary on Saturday, are a point above them in third as the Germans’ coach Hansi Flick extended his unbeaten run to 11 games, dating back to September.

“We played a really good

game, but weren’t rewarded for the performance,” Flick told ZDF.

Germany, playing in the shirts of their national women’s team, twice breached the England defence in the first half without reward.

Thomas Mueller lobbed the ball over England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford, but the whistle had already gone after an injury to Calvin Phillips, who was replaced by Jude Bellingham.

Hofmann then broke clear and fired past Pickford, but after a VAR check, the effort was ruled offside.

Neuer, who captained Germany for the 54th time to overtake 2014 World Cup-winning skipper Philipp Lahm, made a reflex save to deny Bukayo Saka.

England struggled to get the ball into the box, especially in the first half, when Kane was closely marshalled by the German defence.

Germany were finally rewarded for their pressure early in the second period.

Joshua Kimmich split the defence with a pass into the feet of Hofmann, who drilled in a shot which Pickford could only get a glove to.

Only a fine stop by Pickford prevented Mueller marking his 114th international appearance with a goal.

Neuer again came to Germany’s rescue with another excellent save from Kane’s close-range effort.

However, there was no denying England’s captain who sent Neuer the wrong way from the spot.

“It’s bitter to concede the equaliser — extremely stupid,” Hofmann said. “But we created good chances and it was a decent performance.” — AFP

New-look Italy beat Hungary to top NL group

CESENA, ITALY: Italy moved top of their Uefa Nations League group on Tuesday after a new-look team continued their unbeaten start to the campaign with a 2-1 win over Hungary.

Roberto Mancini’s side lead the way in League A, Group 3 thanks to first-half goals from Nicolo Barella and Lorenzo Pellegrini in Cesena which put them a point ahead of second-placed Hungary.

A largely impressive display was blighted by Gianluca Mancini’s 61st-minute own goal which gave the match a scoreline that flattered Hungary, led by coach Mancini’s former Sampdoria team-mate Marco Rossi.

The European champions, who are trying to rebuild after failing to qualify for a second straight World Cup, now travel to Wolverhampton to face bottom side England

on Saturday before taking on Germany in Moenchengladbach three days later.

“It was a good performance, especially in the first half. Their goal made us a little bit fearful but it was a match which we should have won by a bigger margin,” Mancini told RAI.

“This is a team full of young players who need to work a lot, we’ve got a long way to go.”

Mancini selected a host of players who played little or no role in Italy’s triumph at Euro 2020, the glow of which has dimmed after they were dumped out of this year’s World Cup in Qatar by North Macedonia in March.

Before Tuesday’s match Italy had won just three of the 11 fixtures played since being crowned kings of Europe at Wembley in July, one of those a meaningless win



Italy's midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini (C) celebrates after scoring during the Uefa Nations League - League A, Group 3 first leg match against Hungary. – AFP

in Turkey days after their play-off defeat to North Macedonia.

The hammering Italy took at the hands of Argentina in last week’s ‘Finalissima’ in London seemed to confirm a deep crisis.

But a youthful XI showed signs of life in Saturday’s 1-1 draw with Germany and they took that momentum to Cesena, frequently playing with the style and verve which characterised Mancini’s team before the Euro.

Barella opened the scoring in the 30th minute, firing home his eighth Italy goal via two slight deflections after great work down the left from Leonardo Spinazzola, who seems near to top form after nearly a year out injured.

Pellegrini almost laid on teen talent Wilfried Gnonto moments before the break when he scampered in behind and rolled

an inviting pass across goal which was well cut out by Loic Nego.

However, the Roma captain then doubled the hosts’ lead seconds later, making no mistake when meeting Matteo Politano’s pull-back to net his second Italy goal in four days.

NATIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:
League A, Group 3
In Munich, Germany
Germany 1 (Hofmann 50) England 1 (Kane 88-pen)
In Cesena, Italy
Italy 2 (Barella 30, Pellegrini 45) Hungary 1 (Mancini 61-og)
League B, Group 3
In Helsinki
Finland 2 (Pohjanpalo 31, 38) Montenegro 0
In Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bosnia and Herzegovina 1 (Prevljak 68) Romania 0
League C, Group 1
In Torshavn
Faroe Islands 0 Luxembourg 1 (Rodrigues 74)
In Vilnius
Lithuania 0 Turkey 6 (Sinik 2, 14, Dursun 56-pen, 81, Akgun 89, Dervisoglu 90+1)

■ ROP SHOOTING TEAM WINS GOLD



The Royal Oman Police (ROP) shooting team won the gold medal in the pistol shooting competition in the second edition of GCC Police Shooting Championship hosted by Kuwait. The team also won the second place in the rifle shooting competition.

OPENERS POWER AUSTRALIA TO THUMPING VICTORY

HAZLEWOOD PENETRATES THROUGH LANKAN BATTING



Australia's Josh Hazlewood (R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Bhanuka Rajapaksa during the first Twenty20I at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium in Colombo on Tuesday. — AFP

COLOMBO: Australian openers David Warner and Aaron Finch smashed half-centuries in an impressive 10-wicket win against Sri Lanka in the first T20 international in Colombo on Tuesday.

The visitors eased to 134-0 in 14 overs, chasing just 129 for victory, after a penetrative Josh Hazlewood spell restricted the hosts to 128 all out in 19.3 overs.

Australia, the reigning champions, are warming up for

the 2022 T20 World Cup to be held on home soil later this year.

Earlier, Australia skipper Finch won the toss and asked Sri Lanka to bat first in rain-hit Colombo.

Warner hit nine fours in his unbeaten 44-ball 70 while Finch finished with a 40-ball 61 not out with four fours and four sixes.

Warner and Finch hammered 59 runs in the first six overs and attacked key Sri Lankan bowlers Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana, who

bowled six wicketless overs for 52 runs between them. Dushmantha Chameera leaked 48 runs in his four overs for the hosts.

Hazlewood took three wickets in the 14th over and triggered a middle-order batting collapse in the first of three T20Is.

The in-form pacer finished with 4-16 in his four overs and took the wickets of Danushka Gunathilaka (26), Kusal Mendis (1), Bhanuka Rajapaksa (0) and captain Dasun Shanaka (0).

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA

P Nissanka b Starc36
D Gunathilaka c M Marsh b Hazlewood ..26
C Asalanka run out38
K Mendis c Agar b Hazlewood1
B Rajapaksa c Wade b Hazlewood0
D Shanaka lbw Hazlewood17
W Hasaranga c Finch b Starc17
C Karunaratne run out (Smith)1
D Chameera c Warner b Starc1
M Theekshana c Warner b Richardson1
N Thushara not out0
Extras: (w 7)7
Total: (19.3 overs, all out) 128
Fall of wickets: 1-39, 2-100, 3-102, 4-103, 5-103, 6-116, 7-118, 8-127, 9-128
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-0-26-3, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-16-4, Mitchell Marsh 2-0-21-0, Glenn Maxwell 2-0-18-0, Kane Richardson 3.3-0-22-1, Ashton Agar 4-0-25-0

AUSTRALIA

A Finch not out61
D Warner not out70
Extras (w 3)3
Total (14 overs, no loss) 134
Bowling: Maheesh Theekshana 4-0-25-0, Nuwan Thushara 2-0-21-0, Dushmantha Chameera 4-0-48-0, Wanindu Hasaranga 2-0-27-0, Chamika Karunaratne 2-0-13-0

“The wicket was a little bit slow but I guess you can use that to your advantage,” Hazlewood said.

“The back of a length was crucial. I’ve been working hard on my T20 cricket, playing a lot, feeling confident and we saw that tonight.”

Hazlewood was well supported by Mitchell Starc who removed opener Pathum Nissanka for 36 before cleaning up the hosts’ lower order to finish with 3-26 in his four tight overs. — AFP

Pant elated to lead India after Rahul’s injury

NEW DELHI: Rishabh Pant said on Wednesday he will make the most of his unexpected chance to captain India after KL Rahul was ruled out to injury on the eve of the Twenty20 series against South Africa.

Rahul was appointed captain of the team after all-format skipper Rohit Sharma and superstar Virat Kohli took a break when the Indian Premier League wrapped up, but he has now been sidelined by a groin injury.

Pant, a wicketkeeper-batsman who leads Delhi Capitals in the IPL, will take charge in his place for the five-match series, which begins on Thursday in New Delhi. “It’s a great feeling, especially getting an opportunity like this in your hometown, (no) bigger opportunity than that and I will make the most of it,” the 24-year-old told reporters.

Pant added that his performance would be bolstered by the experience of leading Delhi.

the nets on Tuesday.

Both he and Rahul will be sent to the National Cricket Academy for medical examination, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said.

Hardik Pandya, who last month led Gujarat Titans to IPL triumph in their opening season, has been named vice-captain.

‘PART AND PARCEL’

Pant said India have set their sights on the T20 World Cup later this year and will soon unleash a new style of cricket.

“I think as a team we have thought about certain goals which we want to achieve,” he said. “In the coming days you will see a lot of changes in the way we play.”

Pant is ready to grind it out in the Delhi heat with searing summer temperatures soaring to 43 degrees Celsius (109 degrees Fahrenheit) this week.

“I think this is the first time we are playing in these kind of conditions after a long time but I think the heat will play its part,” he said.

“We might get dehydrated, we might get tired earlier but I think it’s part and parcel of the game. We just have to keep improving, not think about the heat.”

Pant was identified as a future leader alongside Rahul and Jasprit Bumrah after Kohli stood down from the captaincy. — AFP



India’s legendary Mithali Raj retires from cricket

NEW DELHI: India’s Mithali Raj on Wednesday announced her retirement from all international formats after 23 years dominating women’s cricket as a batter and skipper.

Raj is the all-time leading run-scorer in women’s one-day internationals and one of the most recognised figures in Indian sport.

A Bollywood biopic following the 39-year-old’s trailblazing career is set to hit cinemas next month.

She last captained India against

South Africa in the Women’s World Cup in March when the team failed to make the semifinals of the 50-over showpiece.

“Today is the day I retire from all forms of international cricket,” Raj, who quit Twenty20 internationals in 2019, wrote in a statement posted on Twitter.

“Each time I stepped on the field I gave my very best with the intent to help India win. I will always cherish the opportunity given to me to represent the tricolour,”



Mithali added.

“I feel now is the perfect time to call curtains on my playing career as the team is in the capable hands of some very talented young players and the future of Indian cricket is bright.”

Raj led India to two 50-over World Cup finals and finishes with 7,805 runs including seven centuries in 232 ODI matches.

She began her career in 1999 in a one-day international against Ireland.

Raj is India’s only double centurion in women’s Tests, with her 214 against England in 2002.

She says she intends to stay involved with cricket somehow.

“This journey may have ended but another one beckons as I’d love to stay involved in the game I love and contribute to the growth of women’s cricket in India and world over,” said Raj.

“Special mention to all my fans, thank you for all your love & support.” — AFP



Oman set for Asian powerlifting in India

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Oman national powerlifting team is preparing to participate in the Asian Equipped Powerlifting Championships to be hosted by South Indian city of Coimbatore from June 17 to 21.

As many as 20 Asian countries including hosts India, Oman, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China among others will take part in the event.

Oman will participate in four categories with eight weights. Oman powerlifters will participate in junior, youth, men and masters sections under the national coach Ahmed bin Salem al Hasani.

In the junior category, Musab bin Khaled al Siyabi will compete in the 74 kg.

In the youth category, Mohammed bin Musa Awlad Thani (93 kg) and Nasser bin Khaled al Siyabi (120 kg) will represent Oman.

In the men's section, Al Azhar Bani Arabeh (53 kg), Khalifa al Jamahi (66 kg), Ayman bin Salem

al Hasani (74 kg), Al Khattab bin Saeed al Siyabi (83 kg), Ayman al Maamari (93 kg) and Mohammed bin Saeed al Siyabi (105 kg) are the Omani contestants.

In the masters category, Ahmed bin Salem al Hasani will compete in 105 kg section.

Oman coach Ahmed bin Salem al Hasani said: "The technical staff of the team started preparing early with an indoor camp at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher for two months. Our external participations were stopped due to the Covid pandemic for two years, and the last participation was in 2019 in Hong Kong when Oman won 13 medals including two gold, 6 silver and 5 bronze medals.

"The team is participating in the 10th Asian championship, so the competition will be very important for the team. The team has a number of young players striving to win many medals, we count on to win the championship titles, especially in the junior category," Al Hasani added.

Murray wins Stuttgart opener

STUTTGART, Germany: Andy Murray won his first match at the ATP event in Stuttgart on Tuesday, while Nick Kyrgios made a triumphant return after sitting out the European clay-court season.

Murray overcame a slow first-round start on grass as he defeated Christopher O'Connell 6-4, 6-3 and Kyrgios dominated Czech youngster Jiri Lehecka 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

The colourful Australian barely had enough gear to make it onto court, with his tennis bag showing up on Monday while his all-important grass shoes only arrived at the tournament site with an hour to spare before his match.

"I had to play doubles in clay-court shoes yesterday," said Kyrgios, who has partnered up with Alexander Bublik. "I had to deal with a bit of adversity.

"Today was the first time I wore grass-court shoes.

"I didn't have the best preparation for here. I did hit on grass back in Australia, but there is nothing like a match.

"I've never needed match play to perform, I know what I have to do to win."

Former world number one Murray, now ranked 68th, is back in his element on the grass and can hardly compare his current confidence with his low point of a year ago.

"It feels completely different," the 35-year-old said.

"Last year I was barely training before Queen's and when I was training I was not moving well.

"I also entered Queen's at the last minute, had an issue with a nerve in my leg and just didn't feel great."

But that unfortunate situation is now well in the past for the three-time Grand Slam champion.

"This year I've trained three weeks on grass and had good sessions," the Stuttgart debutant said.



"I've had some good matches (last week in Surbiton) and a good build-up for Wimbledon."

Murray delivered seven aces at the Weissenhof Club - whose grass was originally curated by Wimbledon groundsmen - and broke his opponent four times.

"I'm very motivated right now," said Murray. "That comes from loving the sport. You have to be willing to play through some pain.

"But it's a lot easier to do that when you are competing for major titles."

STUTTGART ATP RESULTS

First round

Dominic Stricker (SUI) bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/2); Andy Murray (SCO) bt Christopher O'Connell (AUS) 6-4, 6-3; Alexander Bublik (KAZ x7) bt Denis Kudla (USA) 7-6 (7/3), 7-5; Marton Fucsovics (HUN) bt Jurij Rodionov (AUT) 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4; Nick Kyrgios (AUS) bt Jiri Lehecka (CZE) 7-6 (7/3), 6-3; Arthur Rinderknech (FRA) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA x8) 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4



Nick Kyrgios

Top seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who begins play on Thursday after a bye, is determined to improve his grass-court standing after losing in the Wimbledon first round in three of four visits.

"I'm not where I want to be on the surface. But I have the right intentions - I'm fully present and committed to my job on court," the world number five said.

"I'm trying to get as many points as possible from each surface. I got a lot of clay points this spring (Monte Carlo title defence and Rome final) and I want to try and do the same on grass."

Tsitsipas starts against Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker, the 2020 French Open junior champion who defeated American Maxime Cressy 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/2). — AFP

OTTA ties up with Qurayat club for talent centre

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

The Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) signed a two-year contract with Qurayat club to establish a TT junior talent centre.

The tie up between both parties came up as part of OTTA's efforts towards boosting TT in the Sultanate of Oman and expand the number and categories of participants in the sport. Also, the objective of the partnership is to have a potential player who will represent the national TT teams in the near future.

The signing function took place at the headquarters of the Qurayat club on Tuesday in presence of board directors of OTTA and Qurayat club. Abdullah BaMukhalef, OTTA chairman, signed on behalf of OTTA while Mohammed bin Khalfan al Musharafi, chairman of Qurayat club, represented the club party.

With the signing of Qurayat junior TT talent centre, the number of centres are being increased in different sporting complex and clubs including Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex centre, Al



Saada Complex in Salalah, Ibri, Saham, Seeb and Salalah club. The forthcoming centre will be in Yanqul club after finalising all the pre-requirements ahead of signing function.

According to the agreement clauses, the OTTA will provide all the technical and logistics support to the club including four certified TT tables from Stag International brand while the club will ensure allocating a proper venue to

accommodate all the tables and players.

The OTTA is also committed to supply the club with the required materials of balls, racquets and sporting outfit to technical staff and players. The TT body will cover the expenses of the club's players during the internal and external camps in case of selection of any player from the club. The partner's club will receive 30 per cent discount rate from the international vendor Stage

International on different related TT materials.

Abdullah BaMukhalef, OTTA chief, affirmed post the signing ceremony that OTTA is very keen to provide all the technical and logistics support to the domestic clubs towards development of TT in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We are working hard to ensure reach of table tennis in all the wilayats of Oman. These junior centres are perfect venues for

developing a young professional TT player. They will be guided with the basics and fundamentals besides professional training in later stages by experienced coaches with the presence of the national TT team in the centres. I hope all the players will adhere with the training sessions and programmes to reach the best technical levels," he said.

On the other hand, Mohammed bin Khalfan al Musharafi, chairman of Qurayat club, appreciated all the



hard work taken by the OTTA chief and board members to spread TT in different sporting complex and clubs.

"We are very glad to have this tie-up with the OTTA and I would like to thank them for all the logistics support to prepare the junior TT talent centre in Qurayat club. The club signed a deal with Syrian coach Mohammed Showman to lead the TT team in the club. I am confident that the newly appointed coach and his assistant Ali al Sinani will take the team to better positions in the forthcoming period with players commitment and discipline. Later, we are looking forward that these players will be an added value to the national teams," he ended.

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New pledge to advance decent work in Oman

Strong commitment: The ILO and Omani tripartite partners have agreed to develop a new Decent Work Country Programme to promote the Decent Work Agenda in the Sultanate of Oman.

BUSINESS REPORTER
GENEVA, JUNE 8

The ILO and the Sultanate of Oman signed a second extension of an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly develop Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) to advance decent work in the Sultanate of Oman.

The extension of the MoU, which was originally signed into force in 2017, took place on the sidelines of the 110th International Labour Conference in Geneva, and will pave the way for developing a DWCP for the period 2023-2025.

The MoU was signed by Oman's Minister of Labour, Mahad bin Said Baowain, ILO Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat, the Chairman of the General Federation of Oman



Workers Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh.

The new DWCP will see the ILO continuing to work closely

THE NEW DWCP WILL SEE THE ILO CONTINUING TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE TRIPARTITE PARTNERS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN TO BOLSTER THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AGENDA AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO DECENT WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY.

with the tripartite partners in the Sultanate of Oman to bolster the national employment agenda and enhance access to decent work opportunities in the country.

It will build on joint successes achieved during previous Oman DWCPs since the Sultanate of

Oman's first such programme began in 2010.

"The Sultanate of Oman has demonstrated its deep commitment to decent work since it became an ILO member state almost three decades ago," said ILO Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat.

"We look forward to working with the country's government, worker and employer representatives to develop a new Decent Work Country Programme that will prioritise employment creation, skills and entrepreneurship development, social protection, and international labour standards and labour governance," Jaradat continued.

In March 2022, the Sultanate of Oman became the 100th ILO Member State to ratify the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006). DWCPs are the ILO's main vehicle to work with government, worker and employer organisations on promoting the "decent work" agenda, by using a results-based approach to support national initiatives in the areas of employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection.

Oil prices rise despite increase in US oil stocks

LONDON: Oil prices rose on Wednesday, despite a rise in US oil stocks and a possible strike by Norwegian oil workers. Brent crude futures were up \$1.19, or 1%, at \$121.72 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$120.59 a barrel, up 96 cents, or 0.8%.

"Despite the API report showing builds for crude and oil products, oil prices are higher, supported by expectation of China easing the Covid restrictions, translating in higher demand and imports this summer," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo said.

A number of Norwegian oil workers plan to strike from June 12 over pay, putting some crude output at risk of shutdown.

American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday showed US crude stocks rose by 1.8 million barrels for the week ended June 3. Gasoline and distillate inventories rose by 1.8 million barrels and 3.4 million barrels, respectively.

Meanwhile, global crude and oil product supplies remain tight, boosting Asian refiners' diesel margins to record levels, as Western sanctions hamper exports from major producer Russia. — **Agencies**

Accreditation sustains environment and economic growth: MoCIIP

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), celebrates World Accreditation Day on June 9 each year. This year's celebration, focusing on the theme, "Sustaining economic growth and the environment", stresses on increased vigilance in the face of the perils that the environment faces globally.

The celebration is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed in 2015 to be part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan for the World. The plan focuses on meeting 17 objectives, including two on this year's World Accreditation, namely, the sustainability of economic growth and the environment.

Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, Director of the Accreditation Office at the Directorate-General of Specifications and Standards, stressed that international organisations related to accreditation such as the International Laboratory Accreditation Organisation and the International Accreditation Forum as well as national accreditation agencies in the



world are working to contribute to the sustainability of natural resources in line with the need to meet the needs of global populations.

He added that all countries seek to shift from a linear to a circular economy, which seeks to optimise the use of resources in terms of reuse, manufacture, recycling and reducing waste.

This circular transformation contributes to efficiency and quality of products and services through the implementation of international accreditation.

Al Busaidi also pointed out that population growth, alongside economic growth, can fuel a significant increase in the consumption of resources. In the absence of a circular economy, this consumption trend is not sustainable.

He said the ministry, represented by the Accreditation Office, is the official representative of Oman's membership in the international body, as well as the Gulf Accreditation Centre.

He said that the Accreditation Office registers laboratories,

donors for certificates and inspection offices, where examination laboratories are registered in various areas including food, water, plant health, building materials, soil, general chemistry, cosmetics, microbiology, petroleum derivatives, etc, in addition to registering calibration laboratories in various areas such as heat, pressure, blocks, weights, and so on.

As many as 74 entities have been registered by the ministry, he said. — **ONA**

Madayn workshop stresses importance of sound industrial waste management

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn", represented by its Inspection, Control and Occupational Safety Department, and in cooperation with be'ah Company, organised a workshop on 'Industrial Waste Management' with the aim of enhancing awareness on methods of hazardous and non-hazardous industrial waste management.

The workshop, which was held for control, inspection, and environmental health and safety at Madayn and its industrial cities, aimed at highlighting several topics including industrial waste infrastructure, types of industrial waste and treatment methods, engineered landfills, hazardous industrial waste transportation, challenges facing industrial units in dealing with waste, and health and safety procedures to prevent occupational accidents.

Forbes names Bank Muscat in Middle East’s Top 100 Listed Companies

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been named as one of Middle East’s Top 100 Listed Companies in 2022 by Forbes Middle East in recognition of its leadership and achievements.

The bank topped the Omani companies in the prestigious listing, which was based on data gathered by Forbes Middle East from listed stock exchanges across the Arab world and then ranking companies based on their reported market value, sales, assets and profits for 2021.

This year’s list was dominated mostly by companies from the energy and financial services sectors across the region.

Bank Muscat, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2022, has been clearly demonstrating its leadership role in the Sultanate of Oman’s banking and financial services sector over the last four decades.

Today, Bank Muscat is one of the leading Omani institutions



supporting the advancement of the Sultanate of Oman’s economy and the development of its national human resources. The listing further validates the bank’s leadership role in Oman based on a strong customer-centric strategy, initiatives for sustainability and pursuit of overall excellence.

Bank Muscat is keenly following the trends that will shape the financial services sector in the

future, and moving decisively to prepare for future developments in an age of rapid global economic and technological changes.

The bank’s push for digitalisation continues to reap rich rewards in the form of enhancing customer experience, expediting transactions and service delivery, and lower costs and effort for both customers and employees.

Today, Bank Muscat leads the

financial services sector in the Sultanate of Oman with over RO 13 billion in assets, 174 branches and more than 800 ATMs and CDMs spread across the country making it the bank of choice for over 2 million customers. The bank has a wide reach even in remote areas and is an integral pillar for financial inclusion in Oman.

In keeping with technological developments, the bank’s digital

channels including Mobile and Internet banking have been witnessing tremendous growth over the recent past.

Bank Muscat posted a net profit of RO 189.63 million for the year 2021 compared to RO 163.36 million reported in 2020, an increase of 16.1 per cent.

The bank has the largest portfolio in the Sultanate of Oman across the retail, corporate, wholesale and Islamic banking space and its leadership role has been well recognised by global, regional and local publications and awards organisers, with it winning over 30 awards in 2021.

Notably, the bank has been repeatedly chosen as the Best Bank in Oman by a number of prestigious international publications like Global Finance, Euromoney, The Banker and EMEA Finance.

It was also named by Forbes Middle East in its “Top 50 Banks in the Middle East” and “Top 100 Companies in the Middle East” lists earlier in 2021.

Kia accelerates electrified mobility with first electric PBV plant



MUSCAT: Kia Corporation, which is in the midst of its transition into a sustainable mobility provider, has announced today that it will establish an all-new, high-tech smart manufacturing facility dedicated to producing electric Purpose Built Vehicles (PBVs). The intelligent new production hub for PBVs will be located within Kia’s existing Hwaseong manufacturing site in Korea.

The company plans to begin construction in the first half of 2023, with the aim to commence commercial production in the second half of 2025.

The plant will initially be able to build 100,000 PBVs a year with the capacity to increase production to 150,000 units annually in line with the growth of PBV market.

“This dedicated PBV facility is one of the major pillars of our Plan S strategy as Kia seeks to claim the top position in the global PBV market”, said Ho Sung Song, President and CEO of Kia Corporation.

“We will initially explore new markets with derivative PBV models, then gradually expand our presence in global markets with dedicated PBV models featuring autonomous driving technologies.”

Kia is one of the first global organisations to make headway into the PBV market and as part of its Plan S roadmap, the brand aims to become a PBV leader by 2030. When combined with autonomous driving technology, PBVs are expected to offer a revolutionary new means of transportation that further enrich society and communities around the globe.

The new PBV plant will feature state-of-the-art automation processes combined with advanced technologies that reduce carbon emissions during the production processes. The site is also equipped with clean painting and energy-saving facilities to minimise environmental impacts further.

OOMCO signs pact with Dhofar Insurance and Waypoint Systems



MUSCAT: Committed to providing drivers with the best value and convenience, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has signed with top insurance provider Dhofar Insurance and specialist insurtech firms Waypoint systems & Auratech Technologies Ltd to offer car warranty services at its service stations.

This unique programme offers clients repairs to car engines due to a sudden or unforeseen breakdowns, just on purchase of oil change service and lube packages, in which this is embedded from its car care service centre

‘OptimoSwift Service Centre.’

The programme covers the cost of both parts and labour for the car’s engine and will be available at all Oman Oil OptimoSwift Service Centres. Oman Oil plans to extend the offering later to cover comprehensive dealer warranty type repairs for cars that are out of dealer warranties.

This is a first time ever initiative in the car industry in the region and is designed to give utmost peace of mind for car owners whereby not only services but even repairs are taken care of for their car engines due to sudden and unforeseen break downs.

NBO, FAS sign agreement to offer account holders exclusive privileges

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) has signed an agreement with Fairtrade Auto Services (FAS), the authorised dealer in Muscat for Bentley and Lamborghini, to offer Private Banking and Sadara account-holders exclusive privileges when purchasing a new vehicle. Under the partnership, customers can enjoy a range of discounted finance options and exclusive offers.

Ali bin Mustafa al Lawati, AGM — Head of Private Banking at NBO, said, “With our award-winning wealth management account, we continue to pioneer best-in-class banking services and are always looking for new ways to maximise return and increase rewards opportunities for our valued clients.

Adding to our growing portfolio of strategic partnerships, we are delighted to team up with Fairtrade Auto Services and provide our clients with impressive rewards and attractive finance options on some of the most luxurious and most sought-after cars in the market.”

Faisal bin Murtadha al Lawati, Managing Director of FAS, added, “Our partnership with NBO reflects our shared commitment to strengthening our relationships with our customers while offering them the highest levels of service. Purchasing a new car is one of life’s most exciting moments and we are pleased to make it all the more rewarding with the list of perks that we have designed exclusively for Private Banking and Sadara clients.

We look forward to welcoming customers to our showrooms and offering a truly first-class



experience.”

The exclusive privileges include a 50% down or upfront payment, a Bullet Payment for the remaining 50% in 2 years with a 0% interest rate for the period of the loan* (2 years). Customers will also be offered a five-year warranty with unlimited mileage, a five-year service contract or 75,000 km, a 25% discount on accessories, a 25% discount on labour for routine services.

NBO’s Sadara Wealth Management offers a comprehensive suite of products, tailored service and industry-leading financial advisory to assist with every aspect of private banking. Through personalised investment opportunities, preferential rates, exclusive privileges and benefits, including a dedicated personal relationship manager, NBO is the only bank in Oman to offer such a wide range of wealth management product solutions to meet the banking and investment needs of customers.

KR Eshraqa felicitated by Ministry of Social Development

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) recently honoured Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa’s contribution to social development activities and initiatives in the Sultanate of Oman. The event was held at the Avani Muscat Hotel in the presence of Her Excellency Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development.

On receiving the MoSD’s appreciation, Nailesh Khimji, Director of the Khimji Ramdas Group mentioned: “We are grateful to be part of the nation’s socio-economic progress and deeply appreciate this prestigious accolade. I wholeheartedly thank the MoSD for bestowing this

honour on us. We are committed towards inclusive growth to work towards the goal of ensuring the success and well-being of Omani communities in particular, and the society at large”, he said.

Established in 2016, as the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of the Khimji Ramdas Group, Eshraqa’s vision is aligned with the national agenda and goals outlined in Oman’s Vision 2040.

Eshraqa’s initiatives focus on Education, Health, Community Well-being and Training, with unique partnerships being made with various governmental institutions and associations on a not-for-profit basis to enrich the lives of the people



of Oman.

On the role of corporates participating in Social Responsibility — Shaikh Rashid

bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development said: “We are reassured by the fact that the collaboration between the public and private sectors will strengthen and grow in the years to come. We need to adopt the best practices of social responsibility to reinforce our resolve to contribute effectively to the socio-economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman.

Eshraqa’s strategy of going to ‘one wilayat at a time’ has created avenues for better health, education, community well-being and entrepreneurship Mahmood bin Khalifa bin Ali al Saqri, Head of Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas’ Social Development Arm

mentioned: “We are thankful to receive such an important recognition from the MoSD. KR Eshraqa will continue to implement projects that contribute to social causes by developing solutions that enhance the community’s well-being, and at the same time empower people with tools and skills to become self-reliant and lead their best lives.”

Eshraqa’s primary beneficiaries are Omani youth, women and persons with disabilities. Under its developmental scheme, communities in the wilayats of Samayil, Izki, Bidbid, Ibra and Bidiya have benefited. The project’s focus is currently on the Wilayat Dima W’attayeen.



Tejarah Talks: Cracking the export market

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Trading internationally is a natural step for many Omani businesses looking to grow as increasing opportunities open up in existing export markets and new possibilities emerge for Oman-made and grown products in countries around the region as well as further afield.

The prospects, options and resources available to internationally minded manufacturers along with potential pitfalls, problems and risks will be explored at the upcoming Tejarah Talks, 7:30 pm Wednesday, June 22, at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre in Al Hail North.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in association with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman Business Forum and generously supported by HSBC and SOHAR Port & Freezone, the evening's discussion will be moderated by His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Founder, The Firm.

Expert insights and information will be provided by panellists Salem al Bortmany, CEO, Areej Vegetable Oils; Abdullah al Badri, CEO, Voltamp Oman; Ali Taqi Hassan, Assistant General Manager and Head of Global Trade



We often hear companies saying exporting is difficult and with this in mind the Tejarah Talks panellists will also delve into the challenges would-be exporters should be aware of and how to combat them.

MAYMUNA AL ADAWI

*Director, MoCIIP
Organiser, Tejarah Talks*



& Receivables Finance, HSBC; Faisal Ahmed Khan, COO, A'Saffa Food Processing and Shayan Sumar, Director, Operations, Apex Transgulf Manufacturing.

Commenting on this latest Tejarah Talks topic, HH Sayyid Dr Al Said noted: "Our economy is at an inflection point. While current challenges in global trade persist and Omani businesses continue to adjust to a post-Covid environment, local firms need to have an eye on future opportunities. We have to work

together to get more companies, particularly SMEs, thinking global and increasing Oman's export-led growth in sustainable goods, services and technologies."

He continued: "Exports help companies become more competitive, diversified and more likely to survive tough economic times. In fact, it makes them more attractive to potential clients and partners here at home and overseas. Boosting Oman's non-oil exports promises many opportunities for productivity, decent jobs, balance

of trade and good for our quality of life."

"We often hear companies saying exporting is difficult and with this in mind the Tejarah Talks panellists will also delve into the challenges would-be exporters should be aware of and how to combat them," said Maymuna al Adawi, Director, MoCIIP and Tejarah Talks organiser noting that these include overcoming exchange rate fluctuations; breaks in supply chains; dealing with cultural, legal and language issues;

meeting labelling requirements; coping with extended payment terms and maintaining a healthy cash flow."

Despite the world economic slowdown, Omani companies are consistently demonstrating that they are not simply surviving, but performing exceptionally well in international markets.

In 2021, for example, Oman's non-oil exports to India increased to RO 478 million (\$1.2 billion) a jump of 172% on 2020. While in February this year the US imported over RO 87.6 million (\$227 million) worth of Omani products, the third highest monthly recording in 10 years.

According to the MoCIIP Director, this is a defining moment in Oman's trading story.

"We understand local businesses are at different points on their exporting journey. Some are already highly successful exporters but want to sell more products or reach new markets.

Others are yet to take the leap and export for the first time. Whatever your story, the insights and experience our panel will be sharing on June 22 will be invaluable to any company looking to maximise their ambitions and sell to the world."

To reserve your place at Tejarah Talks email your name and contact details to TT@tejarah.gov.om

Detecting and protecting against deepfakes

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Google recently banned deepfake algorithms from Google Colaboratory, its free computing service with access to GPUs. The technology giant is not the only one to regulate deepfakes — several US states have laws regulating them, China draft law requires identification of computer-generated media, and the prospective EU AI regulation may include a clause about this particular technology.

Kaspersky experts have explained what deepfakes are, and why there is so much controversy around them — along with how users can protect themselves:

- 'Deepfakes' commonly refer to various kinds of synthetic, computer-generated media involving people and made with deep neural networks.

These might be videos, photos or voice recordings. The use of deep learning, instead of the traditional image editing techniques, drastically lowers the effort and skill required to create a convincing fake.

- Originally, the term referred to a particular piece of software which had gained popularity on Reddit.

- This technology could also aid cybercriminals. In at least two cases, in England, a voice deepfake has been used to trick companies into transferring funds to fraudsters, by posing as the officers of the respective companies.

Recent research showed that commercial liveness detection algorithms, used by financial institutions in KYC procedures, could be tricked by deepfakes



created from ID photos, creating new attack vectors and making leaked IDs an even more serious issue.

- Another issue is that deepfakes undermine trust in audio and video content as they can be used for nefarious purposes. For example, in a recent case a fake interview of Elon Musk was used to promote a cryptocurrency scam.

Various experts and institutions, such as Europol, warn that the growing availability of deepfakes can lead to further proliferation of disinformation on the Internet.

- It's not all bad news. Image manipulation is as old as the images themselves and CGI has been around for decades, and both have found decent use, as have deepfakes.

For example, in a recent Kendrick Lamar's video, Heart Part 5, deepfake technology was used to morph the rapper's face into other famous celebrities, such as Kanye West.

In the movie 'Top Gun: Maverick', an algorithm was used to voice Val Kilmer's character after the actor lost his voice.

A deepfake algorithm was also used to create a viral TikTok series starring fake Tom Cruise. And a few startups are looking for new

ways to use the tech, for example, to generate lifelike metaverse avatars. With all the trust issues surrounding deepfakes, users can wonder how to spot a deepfake.

Here are some tips to get started:

- A convincing deepfake, such as the one featuring Tom Cruise, still requires a lot of expertise and effort — and sometimes even a professional impersonator.

Deepfakes used for scams still tend to be low-quality and can be spotted by noticing unnatural lip movements, poorly rendered hair, mismatched face shapes, little to no blinking, skin colour mismatches and so on. Errors in the rendering of clothes or a hand passing over the face can also give away an amateur deepfake.

- If you see a famous or public person making wild claims or too-good-to-be-true offers, even if the video is convincing, proceed with due diligence and cross-check the information with reputable sources. Note that fraudsters can intentionally code down videos to hide the deficiencies of deepfakes, so the best strategy is not staring at the video looking for clues, but using your common sense and fact-checking skills.



Midhyaf programme empowers national competencies across various disciplines

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Reflecting Omran Group's ongoing commitment to create national competencies, the highly specialised training for employment programme, Midhyaf, continues to succeed in empowering the national youth and enhancing their capacities to accomplish development in the tourist sector in numerous disciplines.

The programme, which was launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour by Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), is intended to accommodate young Omani talents, develop their skills and abilities, and provide them with the qualifications they need to work in the lucrative tourism sector.

Attesting to Midhyaf's success, a total of 111 trainees from six professional disciplines completed specialised courses, which are offered at Oman Tourism College (OTC).

This comes under the first phase of the programme before they start their on-the-job

training programmes in the group's hotels.

Meanwhile, an additional 24 trainees under the culinary programme are scheduled to complete their specialised courses in July, following which they will also take up on-the-job training at select hotels until the end of October to continue with their careers.

Commenting on the programme's updates, Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, stated, "Midhyaf programme reflects Omran Group's keen interest in investing in local talent development, which in turn contributes to sustainable development. The Groups aims to make a positive impact on economic and human capital development.

We endeavour to keep ourselves strongly aligned with the Oman Vision 2040 which focuses on enhancing the tourism sector's competitiveness while creating jobs and promoting national abilities.

Parallely, we are also contributing to fulfilling the goals outlined in the National

Tourism Strategy 2040 that seeks to position Oman as an iconic tourist destination that has the required support services to cater to the diverse needs of different segments of tourists. A strong, skilled and motivated local workforce is, therefore, intrinsic to achieving progress."

Speaking about the importance of human resources development, Hilal bin Masoud al Jadidi, Omran Group's Chief Human Capital Officer stated, "The Midhyaf Programme bolsters efforts to create jobs and empower Omani talent in the tourist and hospitality industries.

This is accomplished by aligning educational outcomes with labour market demands in order to provide them with a bright future in this industry. Local competencies have been refined to the highest standards necessary at the local, regional and global levels through collaborative efforts to improve their skills and expertise. This paves the path for trainers to contribute to the tourism and hospitality sector's leadership."

Europe’s energy subsidies help Putin and pollution

Europe’s leaders have the right intentions to tackle soaring energy bills — and the wrong remedies. After gas prices quadrupled since last year, European Union governments had committed 0.6 per cent of the bloc’s GDP, as of late April, to help their economies cushion the blow. That makes sense. Yet the way they do it enriches Russia and compromises an EU pledge to cut 2030 greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent compared to their 1990 level.

The smart way to intervene is to leave prices untouched, and use taxpayer resources to help poorer citizens who are least able to cope. That is not what’s happening.

According to a paper by European Commission economists, most of the measures announced thus far aim to reduce the price households and businesses pay by cutting things like fuel taxes.

UK Finance Minister Rishi Sunak, meanwhile, is giving all UK citizens a 400 pound cut to their power bills.

Europe wants households and businesses to use less Russian gas in particular, and cut consumption in general to fight climate change.

One doesn’t have to be a free-market zealot to see the problem. Europe wants households and businesses to use less Russian gas in particular, and cut consumption in general to fight climate change.

Rocketing prices offer an ideal opportunity to achieve those goals. Keeping prices artificially low, in contrast, helps maintain the flow of revenue Europe keeps sending to Moscow to the tune of \$20 billion a month.

There are two better alternatives. Instead of a price-focused strategy that hikes long-term household fossil fuel consumption by 11 per cent, the commission economists calculate that targeted income support for lower-income households would limit hikes to both emissions and imports.

But the real opportunity, as flagged by the International Energy Agency on Wednesday, is to target energy efficiency.

Turning down thermostats by an extra 2 degrees Celsius, coupled with a cut of industrial gas usage by 10 per cent, would knock 30 billion cubic metres or 20 per cent off Europe’s Russian gas requirements, according to the Energy Transitions Commission. True, this could also cost some 2.2 per cent of GDP. But targeted income support for the poorest would limit the hit.



THE WORLD BANK’S LATEST FORECASTS REFLECT A SIZEABLE DOWNGRADE TO THE OUTLOOK: GLOBAL GROWTH IS EXPECTED TO SLOW SHARPLY THIS YEAR.

Just over two years after Covid-19 caused the deepest global recession since World War II, the world economy is again in danger. This time, it is facing high inflation and slow growth simultaneously.

Even if a global recession is averted, the pain of stagflation could persist for several years, with potentially destabilising consequences for low- and middle-income economies — unless major supply increases are achieved.

Amid the war in Ukraine, surging inflation and rising interest rates, global economic growth is expected to slump in 2022.

The World Bank’s latest forecasts, published in June, reflect a sizeable downgrade to the outlook: Global growth is expected to slow sharply this year, to 2.9 per cent, from 5.7 per cent in 2021.

This also reflects a nearly one-third cut to the January 2022 forecast, which projected 4.1 per cent this year.

The surge in energy and food prices, along with the supply and trade disruptions triggered by the war in Ukraine and the necessary interest-rate normalisation now under way, account for most of the downgrade.

Covid-19 already dealt a major setback to income growth and poverty reduction in developing economies. The fallout from the war in Ukraine compounds the challenges for many of them.

They are expected to eke out 3.4 per cent growth in 2022 — barely half the rate in 2021 and well below the average between 2011 and 2019. Similarly, the growth forecast for middle-income countries in 2022 has been downgraded sharply, losing 1.3 percentage points relative to the January forecast.

Real income per capita in 2023 will remain below pre-Covid-19 levels in about 40 per cent of developing economies. For many countries, recession will be hard to avoid.

With the supply of natural gas constrained, especially for use in fertiliser and electricity grids in poorer countries, announcements of major production increases worldwide will be essential to restoring non-inflationary growth.

The danger that above-average inflation and below-average growth will persist for several years — a phenomenon not seen since the 1970s — is considerable.

Between 2021 and 2024, global growth is projected to slow by 2.7 percentage points — more than twice the deceleration between 1976 and 1979. Subdued growth will likely persist throughout the decade because of weak investment in most of the world.

With inflation now running at multi-decade highs in many countries and supply expected to expand slowly, there is a risk that the rate of price growth will remain higher for longer than currently anticipated.

Moreover, developing

economies’ external public debt is at record levels today. Most of it is owed to private creditors and much of it involves variable interest rates that could spike suddenly.

As global financing conditions tighten and currencies depreciate, debt distress — previously confined to low-income economies — is spreading to middle-income countries.

The removal of monetary accommodation in the United States and other advanced economies, along with the ensuing increase in global borrowing costs, represents another significant headwind for the developing world.

In addition, over the next two years, most of the fiscal support provided in 2020 to fight the pandemic will have been unwound, though debt levels will remain elevated.

As policy accommodation is removed, it will be important to reduce inequality and seek higher incomes for all by using fiscal and

monetary tools that strengthen supply chains, small businesses and the capital-allocation process.

But current conditions also differ from the 1970s in several important ways. The dollar, extremely weak in the 1970s, is strong.

Oil prices quadrupled in 1973-74 and doubled in 1979-80; today, in inflation-adjusted terms, oil prices are only two-thirds their level in 1980. And the balance sheets of major financial institutions are generally strong, whereas they were a risk in the 1970s.

Economies around the world are also more flexible than they were in the 1970s, with fewer structural rigidities involving wages and labor markets, and policymakers are in a better position today to stave off stagflationary headwinds.

Monetary-policy frameworks are more credible: Central banks in advanced and many developing economies alike operate under clear price-stability mandates.

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CHIPS AHOY!
The owner of a home-based chips industry arranges her tempe chips, a traditional Indonesian food made from fermented soybeans in Jakarta. About three weeks after Russian troops invaded Ukraine, Indonesian housewife Liesye Setiana was forced to close her banana chip business as cooking oil supplies dried up across the country. — AFP

Will Oman’s Central Bank issue its own virtual currency?



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCL.

Although the monetary authorities in the Sultanate of Oman had two years ago cautioned against trading in cryptocurrencies due to their volatility, as well as risks associated with cyber theft and fraud, it appears they are charting a new course for dealing with virtual currencies for the foreseeable future.

A few days ago, Taher bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, was quoted as saying that the bank wants to develop its own digital currency and start providing open banking services.

This came within the framework of the 7th New Age Banking Summit Oman, where banking sector executives presented new business models to meet the evolving needs of next generation customers, thereby opening up new growth paths and enhancing the level of efficiency in operation and performance.

The Omani banking sector has been organising many events to discuss issues of interest to banks, money markets and

monetary policy, but the future will focus on new trends and developments to facilitate more modern banking transactions and instant payments.

The recent conference discussed many themes, including the developments of the financial economic system in light of the digital age, and the readiness of Omani banks to deal with digital currencies through the adoption of a new banking strategy based on innovation products and services that help the organisations reach customers through digital platforms, while working to combat cyber risks.

Most of the participants in this event were experts in banking, financial technology, investment, insurance and consultants in these fields.

The desire of the Capital Market Authority, the CBO and other financial authorities to regulate virtual assets in addition to issuing a virtual currency by the Central Bank comes in the wake of a tender floated several months ago for specialised companies interested in assisting Oman in developing a regulatory framework for

virtual assets.

This confirms a change in the longstanding position of authorities to frown upon virtual currencies which some people have been rushing to acquire at high prices.

But the virtual currency that will be issued by the Central Bank will have a fixed price to guard against risks and unfair competition.

Today, there is a great obsession with virtual currencies in a number of countries of the world, including the Gulf area, due to the increasing spread of digital currencies, which achieve record gains for some in short periods of time, while on the flipside, make some impoverished.

The Sultanate of Oman is not the only country that is considering issuing a virtual currency by its Central Bank, but Saudi Arabia and the UAE have announced to work together to study the issuance of a digital currency that will be acceptable in cross-border transactions between the two countries as a result of this great interest in it.

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A winning initiative inspired by Oman takes home prestigious award for Architecture Heritage

Two young Omanis recently took home the prestigious Prince Sultan Bin Salman Award for Architecture Heritage. Noor al Kamali and Najwa al Hadhrami who specialise in Architectural Engineering wrote a research in Architecture Heritage that got accolade not just within the research world but also in heritage preservation and culture protection... **P20**



Colombia discovers two historical shipwrecks in Caribbean

COLOMBIAN NAVAL officials conducting underwater monitoring of the long-sunken 'San Jose galleon' have discovered two other historical shipwrecks nearby, President Ivan Duque said on Monday.

The 'San Jose galleon', thought by historians to be carrying treasure that would be worth billions of

dollars, sank in 1708 near Colombia's Caribbean port of Cartagena.

Its potential recovery has been the subject of decades of litigation.

A remotely operated vehicle reached 900 metres depth, Duque and naval officials said in a video statement, allowing new videos of



the wreckage.

The vehicle also discovered two other nearby wrecks — a colonial boat and a schooner thought to be

from around the same period as Colombia's war for independence from Spain, some 200 years ago.

"We now have two other discov-

eries in the same area, that show other options for archaeological exploration", navy commander Admiral Gabriel Perez said. "So the work is just beginning."

The images offer the best-yet view of the treasure that was aboard the 'San Jose' — including gold ingots and coins, cannons made in Seville in 1655 and an intact Chinese dinner service.

Archaeologists from the navy and government are working to determine the origin of the plates based on inscriptions, the officials said.

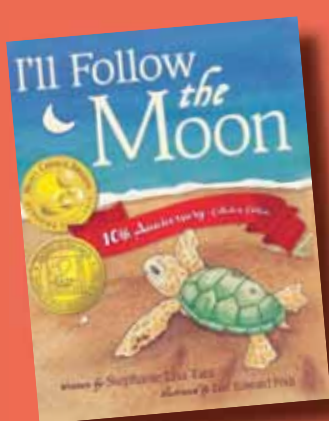
"The idea is to recover it and to have sustainable financing mechanisms for future extractions", President Ivan Duque said. "In this way we protect the treasure, the patrimony of the 'San Jose galleon'."

READ

I'LL FOLLOW THE MOON

BY STEPHANIE LISA TARA

I'll Follow the Moon is a whimsical tale of a baby turtle's journey from egg to reuniting with his mother. With its lyrical verse, it was fun to read and makes a great bedtime story.



RICH HISTORY

Archaeologists have uncovered a roughly 1,300-year-old sculpture representing the head of a Mayan maize god in ruins in southeastern Mexico. — AFP



FIRE PROOF

A one-of-a-kind "unburnable" edition of Margaret Atwood's bestseller 'The Handmaid's Tale' has sold at auction for \$130,000. — dpa





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Pitt says Jolie sought 'harm' by selling vineyard to Russian oligarch



BRAD PITT has accused his ex-wife Angelina Jolie of seeking to "inflict harm" on him by selling her stake in their French vineyard to a Russian oligarch with "poisonous associations and intentions."

The allegations, made in new court filings as part of Pitt's lawsuit against Jolie for the sale of Chateau Miraval, are the latest barb in a bitter legal battle between the former Hollywood power couple who filed for divorce in 2016.

Last October, Jolie sold her stake in the southern France vineyard — where she and Pitt had their wedding — to Tenute del Mondo, a subsidiary of Russia-born billionaire Yuri Shefler's drinks conglomerate.

Pitt sued in February, saying the couple had agreed never to sell their interests without the other's consent, and accusing Jolie of seeking "unearned" profits.

In an amended complaint seen by AFP, Pitt's lawyers argue "Jolie sought to inflict harm on Pitt" with the sale, and describe Shefler as "a stranger with poisonous associations and intentions."

The filing received by a Los Angeles court last Friday alleges Shefler "maintains personal and professional relationships with individuals in Vladimir Putin's inner circle."

Shefler has long been an outspoken critic of Putin, and his Stoli Group drinks conglomerate is based in Latvia.

"Since Russia's February 2022 war on Ukraine, Miraval's insurer has sought assurances that Shefler is not aligned with Putin and that affiliation with Stoli would not create commercial risk", the filing says.

In March, following Russia's war on Ukraine, Shefler issued a statement saying he has been "exiled from Russia since 2002 due to my opposition to Putin", and rebranded his company in "solidarity with Ukraine."

But Pitt's latest filing says: "Despite Shefler's desperate attempt to disassociate himself from the Putin regime, the Stoli brand is now a massive international liability."

It adds: "Stoli vodka is synonymous with Russia, as the countless images of consumers pouring Stoli vodka down the drain make clear."

The complaint also lists Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman within Shefler's alleged "network of ill-reputed professional associates" that "threatens lasting harm to Miraval's reputation."

Neither the Stoli Group nor Jolie immediately responded to AFP request for comment.

Once Tinseltown's highest-profile couple, Pitt and Jolie first got together after co-starring as married assassins in the 2005 film "Mr. and Mrs. Smith." Pitt was married to Jennifer Aniston at the time. — AFP

ART OF LIVING

Tales Full of Fibre and Glitter



SUCCESS IN the design business can depend more on image than on product. High-quality furniture and fabrics can set a company apart, but if they are sold with a good story, that is even better.

So maybe it is not a surprise that two first-time exhibitors at this year's Salone del Mobile are pushing their companies' compelling narratives as much as the textiles they are introducing in Milan. With both, the tale is personal, though coloured by the deep traditions of the countries they call home.

For Hosoo, in Japan, the accompanying story goes back to 1688, when the company was founded in Kyoto's historic Nishijin district. Its chairman and president, Masataka Hosoo, boasts that he is the 12th generation of his family to manage a business that began by making textiles and kimonos for the imperial court of its day and has maintained a position as one of the country's most influential producers of woven goods.

Across the globe, in Bogotá, Colombia, Verdi has a background that is shorter in duration though equally infused with a nationalist vibe. Carlos Vera Dieppa, the father of the company's current creative director, Tomás Vera, began honing novel rug-making techniques in 1995, working with weavers of the rough sacks used to transport coffee beans.

"In a way, you can say every rug that you see at Verdi is an evolution of a Colombian coffee sack", Vera said in a video conversation from his studio in Bogotá. "There are definitely few things that are more Colombian than a coffee sack."

Vera's father devised hand-operated looms that enabled him to add metal threads to rugs. Gold, copper and silver became the raw materials of his trade.

"But he closed down his workshop in 2007, and he actually sold everything by parts", his son explained. "Then in 2010 he passed away, and that's when I decided to retake his work."

Under Vera's leadership, the company has expanded into three branches, turning its textiles into home goods, such as the fabrics used to make the new line of wall coverings it is showing at the design fair; fashion accessories, including its highly stylised handbags based on traditional Colombian mochila bucket bags; and works of art that are meant to be purely decorative.

But Verdi's reputation remains rooted in its signature practice of relying on both natural fibres and metals. Products include satchels made by combining baby alpaca wool and silver-plated thread and rugs constructed of 100% copper. The company also makes goods from horsehair and plantain fibres sourced in the Amazon region, and recent designs have been inspired by several objects associated with Colombian culture, such as peacocks, coral snakes and emeralds.

Representing the country well is important, Vera said, because Verdi is the first Colombian studio to appear as a solo exhibitor at the Milan fair.

"When it comes to high-end design, it's usually conquered by the European market, or the Italian market — or the French when it comes to weaving", he said. "Verdi is our take on Latin

American high-end design."

Similar to Verdi, Hosoo has broadened its business plan under current leadership. That is partly out of need, Hosoo said. Kimonos have fallen out of fashion as a traditional ceremonial garb in Japan and the company had to find new outlets for its wares. It decided to look internationally.

Among the recent innovations: Developing a loom that can manufacture textiles as wide as 150 centimetres, the current global standard for textile fabrication and much bigger than the 40 centimetres its traditional looms produced.

That enabled the company to expand its client base outside Japan. Among its major customers is the fashion house Dior, which uses Hosoo textiles for fabrics and furniture coverings in its retail showrooms throughout the world.

"One thing we are careful of is not to normalise thinking processes that have built up over many, many years", Hosoo said, speaking in a video conversation from his company's Kyoto headquarters. If something exists just because it is standard practice, he said, it "needs to be challenged and also needs to be changed."

Hosoo's presence at the Milan fair allows it to introduce products that have come out of its evolved thinking, which mixes old expectations for refinement with current realities of supply and demand. Front and centre is its Heritage Nova line, featuring textiles made from hemp and silk, that was inspired by one of the company's original cloths from the 17th century. — NYT

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Getting a stroke at the beauty salon

AS PART OF personal hygiene and sometimes vanity, people have been flooding to hair centres and beauty salons to get their crowns taken care of. For individuals who do this regularly, it may never occur to them that harm can actually happen within the walls of these beauty centres. But is there any possibility, even less than one per cent, that you can die while inside these centres?

While it may sound ominous, there is a rare syndrome called the stroke syndrome that can strike at any time, even when you're relaxing and as simple as having a haircut.

I don't think it's an accurate description to call it salon stroke syndrome, but there is a part when you're getting your hair care when you end up stretching your neck for your hair to be washed at the washbasin. Too much and wanton disregard for procedures can actually lead to a reduced blood supply to the brain which then leads to stroke.

This might not be a common scenario but there is a group of causes that cause the actual medical condition known as dissection of the vertebral artery from excessive stretching of the neck.

The name is indeed a lot less catchy but sure is still scary. Some movements or pressures on the neck can lead to a rupture of the vertebral artery that supplies blood to the brain. From there, the blood enters (and thus thickens) the artery wall, causing a blood clot, thereby blocking blood flow and potentially causing a stroke.

This is a phenomenon that is not fully

understood, but it can occur as a result of a variety of harmless activities. Not just washing your hair, but getting out of bed in the wrong way in the morning, stretching your body and even sneezing!

I am not here to scare people, it is very rare, we do not worry about it, especially since it is very unlikely and there is nothing you can do to prevent it either. Someone might ask and say for instance: Why not put extra towels under one's neck in the salon maybe it will help? The answer is that while one can be safe in the salon this can also happen while getting up in the morning.

One may then ask, is neck pain a symptom of a vertebral artery dissection or rupture? Perhaps we are all aware that it is unlikely to be the dominant or the only one, especially since neck pain can be caused by a large number of causes, as such it is not a cause for concern. Even more worrying are the other more common symptoms of stroke, for example, facial slackness, severe headache accompanied by nausea or vomiting, paralysis on one side of the body, loss of coordination or loss of vision. If any of these symptoms are felt, one should go to the emergency department of any health institution.

In the end, there is not much that can be done to prevent such a condition and you are most certainly likely not at greater risk in the hair caring salon (or barber) than you are in your bed.

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

art & life

Local Scene

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THURSDAY | JUNE 9 | 2022

A winning initiative inspired by Oman takes home prestigious award for Architecture Heritage

By Baraah Al Mujaini

Oman's deep-rooted history became a topic of interest among Omani youth as the newer generation of students are looking at the historical-cultural background of the country for inspiration.

Recently, a group of Omani graduate students dedicated a research paper which has gained the Prince Sultan Bin Salman Award for Architecture Heritage, on Muscat City Expansion and Accessibility to the Historical Core: Space Syntax Analysis.

Noor al Kamali and Najwa al Hadhrami, graduate students from Sultan Qaboos University, expressed their pride and happiness about what they have accomplished in the field of researching Oman's history. Noor and Najwa graduated from the College of Engineering.

"The idea of the research was generated when we were studying the Space Syntax course, where we were strongly encouraged by our Professor, Dr Chaham Alaouch, to start research that is relevant to our course", Noor and Najwa shared.

Within a record time, pushed by the professor's support, Noor and Najwa have completed the research and successfully published it in the esteemed 'Elsevier's Procedia' journal. The professor has also guided them in participating in the Prince Sultan Bin Salman Award for Architecture Heritage.

The pre-phase of preparation to start writing the research was long and hectic, since writing a high-qualified research paper needs a well-prepared tool that facilitates the task of writing and analysing.

"Working and publishing credited scientific research requires exceptional efforts. The research was a fruit of a long process of reading, investigating and analysing. Generating a new research question is built from the acquired wide-knowledge and its answer, as well, established from it" Noor and Najwa added.

Numerous sources were consulted, and much research was conducted by Noor and Najwa in various fields of Space Syntax, the heritage of cities and specifically the historical aspect of Muscat to collect data as much as possible. Post-consulting-and-conducting phase, Noor and Najwa have collected a sufficient amount of information that enables them to start writing their research paper precisely and comprehensively.

"We turned to use technical software that helped us to reach the final answer of the research and the conclusion", Noor

and Najwa said.

One of the most critical challenges that Noor and Najwa have had to deal with was they were drawing all of Muscat's streets manually, as it has consumed a vast amount of their time while drawing and researching them. Yet this step was highly significant since it helped them in reaching accurate results for their papers.

"We would like to take the chance to thank Muscat Municipality and the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University for their effective collaboration which has paved our way and helped remarkably in diminishing the obstacles we have faced", Noor and Najwa added.

The research highlighted the idea that cities usually have developed from smaller-old cities, and with this expansion, the accessibility to the original-old-smaller cities is affected. Therefore, the research investigates how the expansion of Muscat had affected the accessibility to the old cities.

Sultan Qaboos University always encourages and supports its students and graduates in researching and publishing papers in well-known journals and websites, for instance, students have the privilege of being able to access a library of thousands of reliable resources for free and anytime.

"Our specialisation in Architectural Engineering has indeed been a major factor in promoting us to write the research in Architecture Heritage", Noor and Najwa said.

They added regarding the reason for choosing this field to conduct research, "Heritage is a keystone of our culture and indispensable part of the present we live in and of the future, we, the youth, will build".

Omani youth do believe in the heavy responsibility that they should bear in preserving the Omani ancient history from any corruption and the responsibility to expose the unique heritage to the world.

"We were proud to be a team that was nominated for the award and very happy when our names were announced as the winners", Noor and Najwa expressed.

At the moment of announcing the winners, "We could not find enough superlatives to describe the happiness of our team", they expressed.

Winning such a prestigious award will motivate the team to work harder and exert much effort in planning for the next step in terms of the research and publishing field.

"The award has encouraged us to work towards enriching the scientific field with more valuable papers, we are aspiring to get more opportunities and support to conduct more research in the field of heritage and architecture.

