

Oman condoles with Turkey over coal mine victims

The Sultanate of Oman expressed sympathy with the Republic of Turkey on the explosion that occurred inside a coal mine in Bartin province in Northern Turkey. Oman through a statement issued by Foreign Ministry voiced deep condolences and sympathy to the government and people of Turkey and the families of the victims wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — ONA



P10

800 ATHLETES TAKE PART IN SPARTAN RACE IN SALALAH



P15

SV PITTIE SOHAR TEXTILE ANNOUNCES FULL COMMERCIAL OPERATION



P20

60 YEARS BEHIND THE CAMERA FOR TOR EIGELAND



MUSCAT

OMAN WELCOMES ALGIERS DECLARATION

The Sultanate of Oman welcomed the signing of the Algiers Declaration by the Palestinian factions, voicing full support to all the steps aimed at achieving unity among the brotherly Palestinian people in a manner that enables them to realise their aspirations and obtain their legitimate rights and consolidates the principle of dialogue and political partnership between the Palestinian groups. The Sultanate of Oman, through a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, valued the great efforts made by the sisterly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, in hosting and sponsoring the talks. — ONA

LONDON

OMAN A GLOBAL LOGISTIC HUB

The Anglo-Omani Society (AOS) held its annual party in the presence of dignitaries and businesspersons from the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. Eng Said bin Hamood al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, affirmed that the Oman Logistic Centre is fundamental in placing Oman as a sustainable global logistic hub which is part and parcel of Oman's Logistics Strategy 2040. **DETAILS ON P2**



Omani Women's Day reaffirms role in nation-building task

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will mark the Omani Women's Day, which falls on October 17 each year, on Monday. This year's celebration, held under the slogan, 'Women are Partners in Development', comes amid a deepened belief

on the women's great role in the renewed Renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who affirmed his keenness that Omani women should get the rights guaranteed by the law since they accepted to become partners in creating an inspiring

reality for a brighter future and they are undertaking their roles in various fields to realise the development goals and ends. The Honourable Lady, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on several occasions stressed the great efforts made by the

Omani women and their roles in developing and supporting family and the patriotic, social and humanitarian contributions made by Omani women in various fields. According to the National Centre for Statistics and

Information (NCSI), the number of Omani women holding the General Education Diploma (GED) certificate has reached 313,745, higher education diploma certificate (53,232) and bachelor's degrees and above (152,422). — ONA

Stress on saving habits to face difficult times

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While the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has reiterated that inflation in the Sultanate of Oman is expected to remain moderate despite rising inflationary trends worldwide, the Ministry of Economy has called for changes in consumer behaviour. The ministry, in a report, recently analysed consumption patterns and said that average citizens should review spending decisions to achieve financial stability. The ministry added that the first step to achieve financial stability is to prepare a budget because spending randomly in the absence of a plan often leads to increased consumption and the inability to control it. According to experts, inflation rates have reached unprecedented levels in developed economies, which is the highest since 1982, and according to IMF, for many people 2023 will feel like a recession. To mitigate the repercussions of inflation's high prices on lives, awareness should be created to improve consumption patterns, such as focusing on actual needs and reducing spending on unnecessary luxuries, the ministry said. "Consumer behaviour is often determined by the economic situation, per capita income, and

Setting monthly plans to manage and regulate consumption must be in all economic conditions and not be limited to periods of inflation only, as the individual or family must set a basic rule, which is to determine the amount of monthly savings steadily and not be less

BADR AL AUFI
Economic analyst

availability of consumer products. It is also affected by the individual's inability to make better decisions, which results in the consumption of unnecessary products or choosing products that are above one's purchasing capacity. The products marketed on social networks also motivate consumers to choose specific products over others." The report called for an emphasis on having a budget or a plan to control spending, especially random ones. Consumers should be able to save a specific

amount from their income, such as five per cent of the total income or RO 50 a month. As saving funds reaches a good amount, individuals can reward themselves by having a dinner in a restaurant, or buy a luxury product. "Saving certain amount from the monthly income is important as a protection for the family from any economic or financial problems or challenges that the family may face any time, whether because of an economic crisis or other special crises." Badr al Aufi, an Omani economic analyst, said that setting monthly plans to manage and regulate consumption must be in all economic conditions and not be limited to periods of inflation only, as the individual or family must set a basic rule, which is to determine the amount of monthly savings steadily and not be less. This percentage is less than 10 per cent of the total income, at least. Meanwhile, the CBO report added, "As an oil exporter, rising commodity prices are a net positive for Oman as the higher proceeds from hydrocarbons have provided ample fiscal space to the government to counterbalance any inflationary pressures with targeted interventions to complement the impact of monetary policy."

SUMAIYA WINS FIRST PLACE



Sumaiya bint Saeed al Siyabi of the Sultanate of Oman won first place in the Stars of Science programme. Earlier, she qualified for the final stage in the Stars of Science programme for her innovation in "Bio-analysis of microplastics in a new way of biological and nanotechnology", which was held on Friday. After the triumph, she said, "This victory came as a result of the great support of various government and private institutions and members of the Omani society and from the Gulf and Arab countries through voting." **DETAILS ON P3**

Oman Science Festival ends

The six-day Oman Science Festival concluded on Saturday after 450 activities spread over 70 pavilions of 110 government, private, military and civil institutions. The concluding ceremony began with a film on the festival. Dr Khamis bin Abdullah Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, Chairman of the Main Committee of Oman Science Festival, honoured the winners of Oman Information Olympiad for Programming. The Oman Information Olympiad is an annual competition that aims to inspire grades 7-12 students to take up computer sciences and information technology majors. Students' participation in this competition is dependent on two factors; procedural programming and skills in problem solving such as rational thinking in designing algorithms. **DETAILS ON P2**

Royal Academy programme to build national capacities

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, Oct 15

The Royal Academy of Management announced implementation of the first educational module 'The National Programme for Developing Leaders and Future Foresight' with 30 participants. The programme is implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with

Lenco Armored Vehicles Company, USA. This reflects the ministry's aspirations to build national capacities and competencies in all sectors, and transfer knowledge and best practices through partnerships that link the programme with leading institutions and companies around the world. The implementation of the first educational module aimed to develop leadership skills in middle



management departments within the state's managerial apparatus, in line with Oman Vision 2040, and to prepare staff to face a world of increasing complexity and change. Implementation of the programme is in partnership with the Ministry of Finance. Eller Executive Education, of the University of Arizona, has designed and is co-implementing the programme.

"The programme will play an important role in improving the government performance of units within the state's managerial apparatus. This is in pursuant to His Majesty the Sultan's generous directives, which emphasise the need to improve the government work system to provide better services that keep pace with world developments and benefit public interest."



Bushra Khalfan wins Katara Prize



MUSCAT: Omani writer Bushra Khalfan has won the Katara Prize for Arabic Fiction for her novel ‘Dilshad: The Biography of Hunger and Satisfaction’. She will share the \$50,000-award with Algerian Ezzedine Jalaoui for ‘The Embrace of Snakes’. Both writers’ works will be translated to English as part of the award. The plot of Dilshad, which revolves around the young native of Muscat named Dilshad, takes place during the first half of the 20th century.

The prize is given by Qatar’s Cultural Village Foundation, Katara.

Bushra Khalfan has been writing short stories, novels, and articles for nearly 25 years including in some local newspapers. Her prose collection Dust (2008) was awarded the Omani Writers’ Association Prize, and her second novel Dilshad was shortlisted for the 2022 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, aka the Arabic Booker Prize.

She is involved with various literary endeavours in Oman and other GCC countries including creative writing workshops. From 2010 to 2012, Bushra was head of the Literature and Creativity Committee at the Muscat Cultural Club. In 2014, she founded the Omani narrative laboratory.

Blood donation campaign held in Salalah

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 15

The Blood Bank at Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah organised a blood donation campaign in cooperation with the Pakistani community recently.

The campaign aimed to support the blood bank stock in the hospital and to consolidate the humanitarian and noble goals of the donors. The campaign witnessed a remarkable turnout from donors with collection of 52 units from eligible donors.

Mazen bin Ahmed al Sheidad, blood bank official at Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah, said blood donation is a great humanitarian service to save the lives, including patients with genetic blood diseases, accidents, surgeries and childbirth.

The official mentioned the health benefits of donating blood. “It helps stimulate blood circulation, and reduce the level of iron in the blood, thus reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases. It also helps feel active and relieved”.

PRESIDENT OF ZANZIBAR LEAVES OMAN



MUSCAT: Dr Hussain Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, and his accompanying delegation left the country on Friday after an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman that lasted for several days. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mohammed bin Nasser al Wahaibi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Administrative and Financial Affairs (Head of the Honorary Mission), and Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tanzania, bid farewell to the guest and his accompanying delegation upon their departure from the country. – ONA

OSF fosters curiosity for science and research

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 15

The six-day Oman Science Festival concluded on Saturday after 450 activities spread over 70 pavilions of 110 government, private, military and civil institutions.

The concluding ceremony began with a film on the festival. Dr Khamis bin Abdullah Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, Chairman of the Main Committee of Oman Science Festival, thanked the participants, volunteers and sponsors. Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Financial and Administrative Affairs, honoured participating committees, institutions and sponsors of the festival’s activities.

Dr Ambosaidi honoured the winners of Oman Information Olympiad for Programming.

The Oman Information Olympiad for Programming is an annual contest that aims to inspire grades 7-12 students to take up computer sciences and information technology majors. Nine students were qualified from each group to represent the Sultanate of Oman in international



finals.

Many institutions’ pavilions presented projects that attracted visitors. Balqees al Busaidi from Sultan Qaboos University’s College of Education, said, “Our pavilion focuses on providing visitors with information about the universe and its secrets. It includes results of cosmic motion studies. This pavilion targets higher grades students and higher education students with illustrative projects.”

Aya al Zadjali, Civil Engineer at Enotech Company, said, “The Mobile Fab Tech Lab introduces visitors to designing and printing 3D models using plastic, wood, powder, acrylic and concrete in a simple, easy way. It aims to develop students’ skills in designing and sketching with Blender software. It also includes a miniature lab that automates the labs in printing houses as well as safety helmets to raise students’ awareness on safety precautions in bigger labs.”

ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY HOLDS ANNUAL PARTY

LONDON: The Anglo-Omani Society (AOS) held its annual party in the presence of dignitaries and businesspersons from the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

Eng Said bin Hamood al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, affirmed that the Oman Logistics Centre is fundamental in placing the Sultanate of Oman as a sustainable global logistic hub which is part and parcel of the Sultanate of Oman Logistics Strategy 2040 and an enabler for realising this objective using the most advanced technologies to boost the employment rate of national workforce and provide support to the logistic sector.

Delivering a speech at the event, the minister said that Oman Logistics Strategy 2040 aims at enhancing the logistics sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) at actual value, generating job opportunities, improving various performance indicators of the Sultanate of Oman and placing the Sultanate of Oman as a global and regional logistics hub.

Among the main areas of

Oman Logistics Strategy 2040 is the focus on international agreements that would enhance the performance of the logistics sector in the Sultanate of Oman in general and improve the national indicators of the Sultanate of Oman, with Oman Logistics Centre striving to boost the logistical performance indicators of the Sultanate of Oman at the international level and match it with the Strategy’s visions and ambitions, the minister said.

On his part, Richard Stanford, Chairman of AOS, emphasised the strength of the historical bilateral relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom and the continuing cooperation in the political, commercial, technical and military fields.

Stanford spoke about the volume of the British investments in the Sultanate of Oman specially in the fields of energy, education and technology, noting that the Sultanate of Oman has made great strides towards becoming a technologically advanced country though establishing the foundation of the digital society and setting up a modern information technology and communications sector.



Eng Said bin Hamood al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, speaks at AOS in London on Saturday.

Project to reduce food waste to be launched today

FAO OMAN CONFERENCE AT OMAN CONVENTION CENTRE TO MARK WORLD FOOD DAY

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To commemorate this year’s World Food Day (October 16), FAO Oman, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Omani Food Bank (Dayma), is holding a conference at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

It aims to raise awareness about food systems and calls on everyone to make food choices that improve both health and food systems, preserving habits that support them, respect food and food producers and join in any global solidarity efforts wherever possible.

The ceremony to be held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and



Omani Food Bank, also known as Dayma, is a first-of-its kind initiative to reduce food waste and give surplus to the needy.

Water Resources, will also mark the official inauguration of the Omani Food Bank, also known as Dayma, which is a first-of-its kind initiative to reduce food waste and give surplus to the needy. Further interventions featured an exchange

of ideas and success stories between the Food Banks of Oman, Saudi Arabia and Egypt with the aim of reducing food waste, food preservation and recycling surplus food.

On the occasion of World Food

Day, FAO Oman stated, “If we are committed to ensuring that no one is left behind, we have to transform our current agrifood systems to provide equal opportunities for all producers, and help smallholders gain access to new markets. This

also means investing in rural transformation.”

Furthermore, FAO is calling for action across sectors to ensure that the agrifood systems deliver enough affordable, nutritious and safe food for all because the agrifood systems are interlinked to so many different areas of lives and economy – from agriculture to natural resources

to energy to health and they hold great potential as vehicles for a more equitable and prosperous future.

“Agrifood systems transformation is critical if we want to honour our pledge to leave no one behind and deliver better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all. For this reason, agrifood systems transformation is higher on the global agenda than ever before,” stated FAO Oman.



Sumaiya wins \$300,000 cash prize for top innovator

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 15

Sumaiya bint Saeed al Siyabiyah of the Sultanate of Oman won first place in the Stars of Science, the Arab world's leading scientific 'edutainment' reality TV programme, on Friday. She is the first Omani and first woman to win the \$300,000 award given by Qatar Foundation. Shada Bennbaia of Libya and Noraldin Al Deri of Jordan came second and third.

Al Siyabiyah won the prize for her marine microplastics disposal device, which can help to tackle

plastics, which account for at least 85 per cent of the total marine waste. She will get a cash prize as seed money to launch her project.

Free of chemicals and environmentally friendly, the device is a floating sphere comprising microbial mats and nanomaterials that dissolve microplastics and convert these into carbon dioxide and water.

The device can easily float in oceans trapping and disposing of microplastics.

Describing Sumaiya's project, organisers of the programme said, 'Innovative and simple, it could



be invaluable in protecting our natural water resources and the wildlife within.'

Sumaiya has a Master's degree in biology from Sultan Qaboos University.

After the triumph, she said, "This victory came as a result of the great support of various governmental and private institutions and members of the Omani society and from the Gulf and Arab countries."

She expressed her happiness that she was able to prove the importance of her scientific innovation and its role in preserving the environment and human health.

Sumaiya sought support of the project from all authorities in the Sultanate of Oman

"I was able to prove the importance of my scientific innovation and its role in preserving the environment and human health. During this stage, I conducted a practical application to follow the previous laboratory experiments. Using a fish tank filled with 10 litres of water, the process of decomposition of plastic particles was followed up with the changes that took place," she said.

SALMA AWARDED ITALY KNIGHTHOOD



MUSCAT: Salma bint Ali al Hashmiyah, Board Member of the Omani-Italian Friendship Association, received the highly prestigious decoration of Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy on Saturday This esteemed order of chivalry is bestowed by decree of the President of the Italian Republic, on the recommendation of Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, in acknowledgment of those individuals who have

achieved extraordinary results in the preservation and promotion of bilateral relations between Italy and other nations.

Federica Favi, Italian Ambassador to Oman, presented the Knighthood, on behalf of the Italian President saying: "We are delighted to recognise the significant and enduring contribution Al Hashmiyah has made to strengthening the social, cultural, sporting and business ties

between Italy and the Sultanate of Oman."

Al Hashmiyah, Vice President of Marketing at Al Mouj Muscat SAOC and a Board Member of the Mazoon Dairy Company, has drawn on her considerable business acumen to create new networking, information exchange and investment opportunities for the benefit of both nations. Beyond her work with Omani-Italian Friendship Association, Al Hashmiyah has been instrumental in establishing several successful initiatives, ranging from youth exchange programmes to fundraising for pandemic research at an institute in Rome, and establishing opportunities for bilateral trade.

Commenting on the award, Al Hashmiyah said: "I am deeply honoured to have been awarded the decoration of the Order of the Star of Italy. It has been a great privilege to be able to contribute to the commercial and cultural exchange and fruitful cooperation between our two great nations."

"I very much look forward to building on this valuable relationship, as we continue to foster beneficial opportunities for our youth, our business communities and our cultural institutions."

Indian TV to honour medical professionals

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Medical professionals in Oman who have rendered exemplary services during the Covid-19 pandemic will be recognised by an Indian TV channel.

Kerala-based Kairali TV is organising a function to honour the dedicated health professionals of Oman. The winners of the Kairali Oman Health Professional Awards 2022 will be selected through nominations received from

the public.

Speaking to the Observer, P M Jabir, Oman co-ordinator, Malayalam Communications (Kairali TV) said that this initiative is an attempt to motivate and appreciate the contributions of medical professionals.

"We are happy to announce the awards aimed at recognising and motivating the healthcare professionals and to inspire those who choose healthcare," he said.

Anyone can nominate a doctor or any other healthcare

staff citing the reasons for the nomination. Healthcare workers can send in their nominations to omanhealth@kairaliti.in or WhatsApp on 95404142. Nominations need to include the name and telephone number of both nominee and nominator, the hospital/institute of the nominee and his/her contributions as a health professional.

The chosen healthcare professionals will be awarded at a function on October 29 in Muscat.

Oman Sustainability Center to spearhead carbon neutrality

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's plan to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 by establishing the Oman Sustainability Center based on the outputs of the Carbon Management Laboratory is an important step towards protecting the environment.

Carbon neutrality by 2050 is still achievable despite the energy crisis, according to a UN report. The report, which builds on the input from international experts and data scientists from across Europe, North America, and Central Asia, identifies a range of technology and policy solutions for the region to attain carbon neutrality by 2050 despite the current energy and geopolitical crises. It finds that investment in energy as a per cent of Gross Domestic Product would need to increase from 1.24 per cent in 2020 to 2.05 per cent per year from 2025 until 2050.

This values the investment needed at between \$44.8 and 47.3 trillion by 2050, with any additional delay in taking action adding to the bill. As exemplified by the exponential costs of extreme weather events registered this summer and over the past years, inaction bears a much higher cost on society.



Carbon neutrality and climate change are the most important components of Oman Vision 2040. Industry, urban planning, energy, transportation, agriculture and health sectors have factored in these components in their strategies . It aims to achieve economic growth by sustainable use of natural resources and mitigate impact of climate change.

Achieving carbon neutrality will contribute to diversifying sources of income, creating opportunities for sustainable economic and social growth, reducing the repercussions of climate change, building a knowledge economy, benefiting from clean technology and creating a diversified mix of energy sources.

The Carbon Management Laboratory has identified the most important projects that will contribute in reducing greenhouse

gas emissions and promote renewable energy sources (solar, wind, green hydrogen). It also put focus on tapping biofuels, recycling waste, and improving energy efficiency of the electricity supply chain from production to transmission to distribution and consumption.

In the oil and gas sector, emphasis was on enhancing the efficiency of production and use of gas, reducing the routine combustion of natural gas, green testing of gas wells, reducing diesel use, sequestration of carbon and emissions control.

As for the industrial sector projects, the aim is to optimally use energy consumption, electrification of processes, deployment of renewable energy and hydrogen, emission control, waste recycling and promoting circular economy.

— ONA



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A'Soud Global School offers a UK style of education based on the Cambridge Curriculum

A'Soud Global School (AGS) opened in September 2016 as a premium international school offering a UK style of education following the Cambridge Curriculum. The majority of our highly trained and experienced staff are from the UK and have extensive experience working in leading UK curriculum international schools. With a bright, spacious modern campus we offer a very child-centered approach to education. The School offers an exceptionally wide range of facilities for all ages of students like Science Labs, IT suites, Mac Suite, 25m Swimming Pool, Astro Football Pitch, Tennis/Netball courts.

At AGS, we focus on every child to ensure they achieve their very best. The various talents of our students are encouraged to ensure that they all develop confidence and as children mature, we are able to scrutinize their academic progress and build a precise picture of each child's potential.

As a Cambridge Curriculum school, AGS provides our students with a truly international school experience. We bring together

students from all over the world and draw upon the renowned Cambridge Curriculum to provide a high-quality learning environment whilst also fulfilling local Ministry requirements here in Oman. The standards at the heart of our school are a focus on good manners, positive moral values and discipline and mutual respect. Additionally, the strong emphasis on sport, drama and other opportunities outside of the formal school curriculum, locally and internationally, also ensures that your child has every opportunity to develop into a well-rounded and academically strong individual. AGS is a special place where children learn, grow and develop and where the positive relationships between all members of the school community are a genuine strength of the school.

The entire concept of the classroom is changing at AGS. The smart classrooms feature Wi-Fi connectivity, Interactive whiteboards, Audio-Visual and multimedia projectors. It is this step forward which will assert AGS as the schools of the future.

CORAL REEFS UNDER STRESS

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CLIMATE CHANGE is causing more frequent havoc to marine life as rising temperatures are damaging coral reefs around the world with no exception to the Sultanate of Oman.

Studies suggest that the future of this tropical ecosystem, which is fragile and easy to break and takes decades to grow again and harbours more species than any other, is probably worse than anticipated.

The Sixth Status of Corals of the World: 2020 Report reveals that almost invariably, sharp declines in coral cover, correspond with rapid increases in sea surface temperatures, indicating their vulnerability to temperature spikes, and found that this phenomenon is likely to increase as the planet continues to warm.

Although coral reefs in more than 100 countries cover only 0.2 per cent of the seafloor, they underpin the safety, coastal protection, well-being, food and economic security of hundreds of millions of people, said the report.

And the value of goods and services they provide is estimated at \$2.7 trillion per year, including \$36 billion in coral reef tourism.

In the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) countries, 35 million people benefit from coral reefs, including 16.5 million people who are likely highly dependent on reefs for their food or livelihood.

The ROPME region includes Oman, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and eastern Yemen.

Coral reef-associated tourist expenditure in the ROPME region is valued at \$1 billion annually. This includes on-reef recreation -- snorkelling, diving, recreational fishing and glass-bottom boat tours-- as well as reef-adjacent benefits such as white, sandy beaches and sheltered waters.

However, coral reefs are under threat from climate change, ocean acidification and land-based pollution; as well as sediments from agriculture, marine pollution and overfishing.

“By the 2060s, one-third of coral reefs in the ROPME region will experience severe coral bleaching conditions annually. By the 2080s, two-thirds of reefs are projected to experience such conditions,” a report on “Coral Reefs: the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman” reveals.

By the 2040s, 40 per cent of coral reefs in ROPME will be situated in conditions considered marginal

for coral growth, based on ocean acidity and the availability of aragonite. By the 2070s, all reefs will be in areas rated as either marginal or poor.

Coral bleaching is the primary cause of coral loss, although considerable localised degradation and loss have also occurred because of coastal development and overfishing.

“The ROPME region contains the most thermally tolerant corals in the world, but they live at the limits of their physiological tolerance, given recent extreme thermal anomalies. Thermal anomalies are particularly high in the enclosed Persian Gulf, which includes three-quarters of the region’s reefs. Projections of stress from ocean acidification are relatively low for this region,” the report points out.

“Maintaining the integrity and resilience of coral reef ecosystems is essential for the well-being of tropical coastal communities worldwide, and

CORAL REEFS ARE UNDER THREAT FROM CLIMATE CHANGE, OCEAN ACIDIFICATION AND LAND-BASED POLLUTION; AS WELL AS SEDIMENTS FROM AGRICULTURE, MARINE POLLUTION AND OVERFISHING

a critical part of the solution for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” underscored the Status of Coral Reefs.

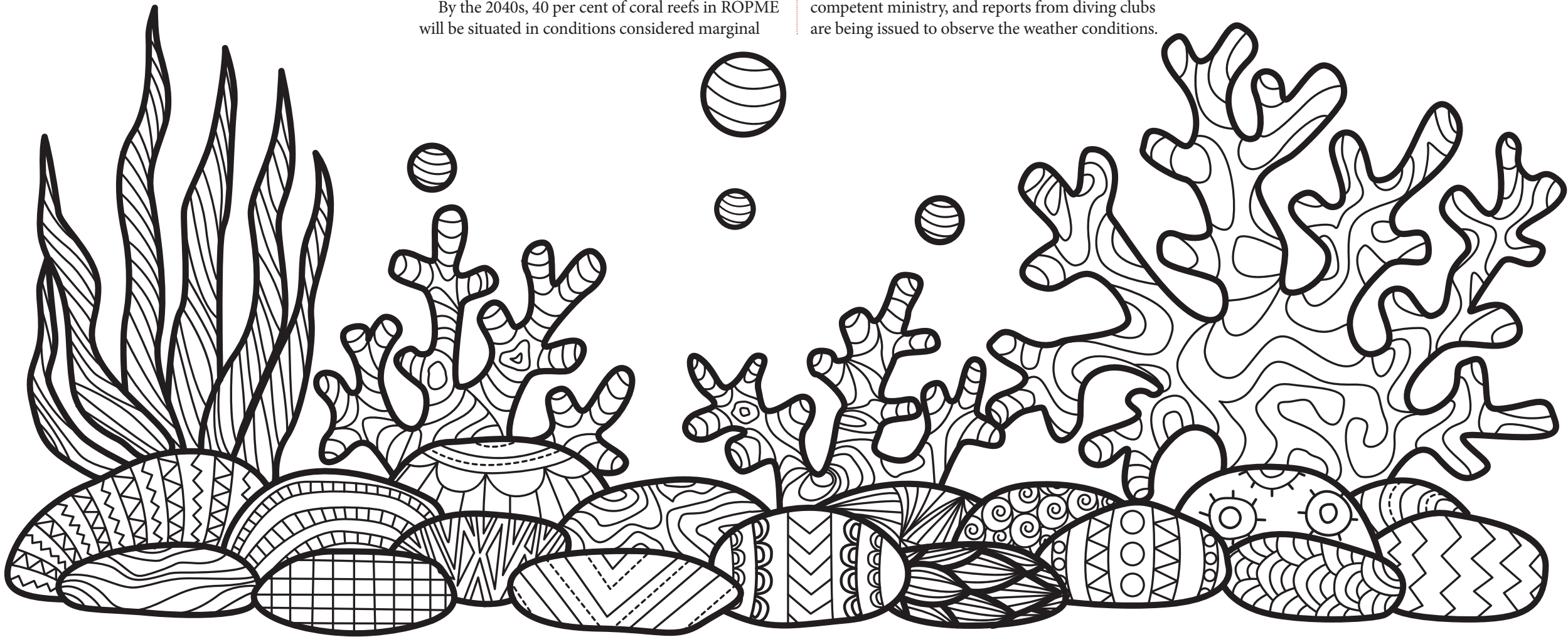
In the Sultanate of Oman, coral reefs are located in five major regions and constitute an integrated ecosystem. In fact, the Damaniyat Islands Nature Reserve was declared one of the sites where coral reefs are one of the most

important environmental components.

A national plan has been implemented to manage them and a plan for periodic coral reef cleaning campaigns has been set.

In view of the increasing number of nets and fishing equipment in the coral reef sites, and their effects on them, continuous campaigns have been launched to clean the coral reefs since 2002 at different coral reef sites, with a focus on the sites most affected by intense fishing activity.

Additionally, an integrated annual programme was carried out to implement campaigns for all coral reef sites, for sites with large coral reefs and for those that are most affected by fishing operations. Furthermore, monitoring and follow-up programmes are carried out by specialists from the competent ministry, and reports from diving clubs are being issued to observe the weather conditions.





Scientists scour global waters to study pollution

LORIENT: After a near two-year “Microbiome” mission around the world, scientists said on Saturday they had gathered thousands of samples of marine micro-organisms in a bid to better understand ocean plankton and pollution.

The survey was carried out from the 33-year-old Tara research schooner, which returned to her home port of Lorient on France’s western coast at the weekend.

From Chile to Africa, via the Amazon and the Antarctic, nearly 25,000 samples were collected over the 70,000-kilometre (43,000-mile) route.

“All this data will be analysed,” Tara Ocean Foundation director Romain Trouble told a press conference.

“Within 18 months to two

years we will start to have the first discoveries from the mission,” he said.

At the base of the food chain, micro-organisms were the “invisible people of the sea”, accounting for two-thirds of marine biomass, said Trouble.

“They capture atmospheric CO2 (carbon dioxide) and supply half of the oxygen we breathe.”

Trouble said the mission sought to find out how it all works.

“How do all these marine viruses, bacteria, micro-algae manage to interact to produce oxygen?”

“And how will that change tomorrow with climate change and pollution?”

The Tara team paid particular attention to the impact on the



The survey was carried out from the 33-year-old Tara research schooner, which returned to her home port of Lorient on France’s western coast at the weekend.

oceans of the River Amazon, which has a water flow rate of 200 million litres (53 million gallons) per second.

They wanted to test a theory that deforestation and the spread of agriculture has increased nitrate fertiliser discharge, leading to an abundance of toxic algae along river banks and coasts, particularly in the Caribbean.

The 22-month odyssey also sought to trace the sources of plastic pollution at river mouths, to understand distribution and the types of material involved.

The mission was Tara’s 12th global journey and involved 42 research institutions around the world.

Next spring, Tara sets off to research chemical pollution off European coasts. — AFP



Activists of “Just Stop Oil” glue their hands to the wall after throwing soup at a van Gogh’s painting “Sunflowers” at the National Gallery in London on Friday. — Reuters

UK climate activists in court over Van Gogh protest

LONDON: Two environmental protesters appeared in a UK court on Saturday after throwing tomato soup over one of Vincent van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” paintings at London’s National Gallery.

The latest stunt targeting works of art came after Home Secretary Suella Braverman threatened a police clampdown against “direct-action” protests.

On Saturday, nearly 30 demonstrators from the group glued themselves to the tarmac as they blocked a major road in east London, triggering angry exchanges with motorists.

After attacking the van Gogh painting, Just Stop Oil climate activists Anna Holland, 20, and Phoebe Plummer, 21, both pleaded not guilty in the London court to criminal damage. The painting itself was protected by a screen but damage was caused to the frame, according to the gallery in Trafalgar Square. District judge Tan Iram released the women on bail, pending a trial on December 13 in London. Holland and Plummer also glued themselves to the gallery wall during their protest.

Another Just Stop Oil protest on Friday targeted the New Scotland Yard headquarters of London’s Metropolitan Police, who arrested 28 demonstrators.

In the same court on Saturday, Lora Johnson, 38, pleaded not guilty to criminal damage after allegedly spraying paint on the New Scotland Yard sign, as others blocked the road outside. — AFP

ONE DEAD, SEVERAL MISSING AFTER GREECE HIT BY POWERFUL STORMS

ATHENS: A man was found dead and two others were missing on Saturday after torrential rain brought major flooding to the Greek island of Crete, emergency workers said.

The victim, a man in his fifties, had become trapped in his car as the rains began to fall in the southern Greek island of Crete, a popular holiday destination.

Local media reported extensive damage in seaside villages, where streets have become rivers carrying away everything in their path.



A pick-up truck hangs off a wall following floods in the village of Agia Pelagia on the southern Greek island of Crete, following flash flood on Saturday. — AFP

According to emergency services, a woman was slightly injured when she too became trapped in a car.

At least nine vehicles surrounded by water still need to be rescued.

Eight tourists and a security guard were also stranded in the Archaeological Museum in the coastal resort town of Sitia.

The mayor of Sitia told the Skai TV channel, “The situation was out of control and the (weather) phenomena in the region were exceptional.”

Scientists say climate change is amplifying extreme weather -- including the floods, heatwaves, droughts seen in several parts of the planet. — AFP

First Russian soldiers arrive in Belarus for joint force

MOSCOW: The first Russian soldiers to take part in a new joint force with Belarusian troops have arrived in Belarus, Minsk’s defence ministry said on Saturday.

“The first convoys of Russian servicemen from the regional force group have arrived in Belarus,” the ministry said, adding that their mission was “exclusively to strengthen the protection and defence of the border”.

Images from the ministry showed soldiers welcomed by women wearing traditional costumes and handing out bread and salt. Last Monday the leader of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko claimed Ukraine was plotting to attack his country and announced a joint force with Moscow. Lukashenko accused Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine of training Belarusian radicals “to carry out sabotage, terrorist attacks and to organise a military mutiny in the country”.

The deployment raised fears that Belarusian troops could join Russian forces in their offensive in Ukraine.

On Friday, Lukashenko told Russian journalists the Belarusian army and its 70,000 people would constitute the “base” of this joint force.

The Belarusian leader did not specify how many Russian soldiers were expected to join, but said “we do not need to ask for 10,000-15,000 people



Last Monday the leader of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko claimed Ukraine was plotting to attack his country and announced a joint force with Moscow.

from Russia. They have other issues over there, as you know”. Minsk said on Tuesday that the contingent was “purely defensive”. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of “trying to directly draw Belarus into this war” at a G7 meeting last Tuesday.

Zelensky called for an international observers mission to be placed on the Ukraine-Belarus border. In an interview to NBC released on Friday night, Lukashenko said his country supported Russia but “we did not kill anyone and we are not going to kill anyone.” — AFP

Death toll from Turkey mine blast rises to 41



Rescuers walk past a woman waiting outside a coal mine after an explosion in Amasra, in Bartın Province, on Saturday. — AFP

AMASRA: Rescuers on Saturday found the body of the last missing miner at a coal mine in northern Turkey, bringing the death toll to 41 from a methane blast the previous day.

The blast ripped through the mine near the small coal mining town of Amasra on Turkey’s Black Sea coast shortly before sunset on Friday. Shortly after his arrival at the site on Saturday afternoon, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the last missing person had been found dead.

“Our priority was to find the miners in the gallery. We

finally reached the last one. He also died, bringing the number of deaths to 41,” he said, ending rescue operations more than 20 hours after the deadly explosion.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu earlier said 58 miners had survived the blast, “either by themselves or thanks to rescuers”.

He said 28 people had been injured as a result of the blast. Television images late on Friday showed anxious crowds -- some with tears in their eyes -- congregating around a damaged white building near the entrance to the pit in search of news of

their friends and loved ones.

Erdogan earlier vowed on Twitter that the incident will be thoroughly investigated.

Most initial information about those trapped inside was coming from workers who had managed to climb out relatively unharmed.

But Amasra mayor Recai Cakir said many of those who survived had suffered “serious injuries”.

Turkey’s Maden Is mining workers’ union attributed the blast to a build-up of methane gas. But officials said it was premature to draw definitive conclusions over the cause of the accident. — AFP



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P.O Box 381, C.P.O, Postal Code 111



Visitors walk near books about Chinese President Xi Jinping entitled 'The Governance of China' at a bookstore in Yan'an city, in China's northwest Shaanxi province on Saturday. – AFP

President Xi expected to be given third term on October 23

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping is expected to be handed a historic third term in control of China on October 23, it emerged on Saturday, after a spokesman confirmed the Communist Party's 20th Congress will end the previous day.

About 2,300 party delegates from every province will gather at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing from Sunday for the mostly closed-door conclave, to approve the country's next leadership make-up.

The five-yearly talking shop will get under way at 10:00 am with an opening ceremony, after which Xi is expected to deliver a lengthy speech that will give an assessment of the previous term as well as a roadmap for the next five years. Should everything go to plan, after the week-long

meeting 69-year-old Xi will be reconfirmed as the party's general secretary, cementing his position as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong.

At the highly choreographed conclave, the 2,296 participants will also pick members of the party's roughly 200-member Central Committee, which in turn selects the 25-person Politburo and its all-powerful Standing Committee — the country's highest leadership body.

The day after Congress closes, the new Standing Committee — currently a group of seven men including General Secretary Xi — should be revealed, if this year follows the same convention as previous Congresses.

Congress spokesman Sun Yeli confirmed the closing

date of October 22 and told reporters: "The preparations for the Congress have now been fully completed."

During the two-hour press conference — in which Chinese state media asked several questions, as well as some international outlets — Sun said the proportion of female delegates had increased to 27 per cent, from 24 per cent at the last Congress in 2017. There were no questions asked about Xi. China is holding Sunday's opening ceremony under a strict zero-Covid policy, sealing organisers and journalists in a virus-secure bubble two days in advance.

Participants have been ordered to take daily Covid-19 tests to attend events, some of which are being held remotely by video link instead of in person. — AFP

PUTIN SAYS RUSSIA 'DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT' IN UKRAINE

US ANNOUNCES \$725 MILLION IN NEW MILITARY ASSISTANCE

ASTANA: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow was "doing everything right" in its nearly eight-month war on Ukraine despite a string of defeats against Kyiv's forces, who will receive \$725 million in new US military assistance.

Putin's comments came hours after Kremlin-installed officials in the southern Kherson region urged residents to leave as Kyiv said its soldiers were advancing on the oblast's main city.

Moscow also hinted at the extent of the damage dealt to the Crimea bridge -- the sole land connection between its mainland and the annexed Ukrainian peninsula -- following a blast last Saturday, saying it could take many months to complete repairs.

"What is happening today is not pleasant. But all the same, (if Russia hadn't attacked in February) we would have been in the same situation, only the conditions would have been worse for us," Putin told reporters after a summit in the capital of Kazakhstan. "So we're doing everything right," he insisted.

He did, however, acknowledge that Russia's ex-Soviet allies were "worried."

Putin said there was no need for further massive strikes against Ukraine at present and claimed the Kremlin did not intend to destroy its pro-Western neighbour.

"There is no need now for massive strikes. There are other tasks. For now," he said.

He spoke days after Russia unleashed a wave of missile strikes



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a news conference following the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) leaders' summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Friday. – Reuters

on cities across Ukraine that left at least 20 civilians dead. Putin said the strikes were in retaliation for the explosion on the Crimea bridge, which he has described as a "terrorist act". The bridge is a logistically crucial transport link for moving military equipment to Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine.

Washington on Friday announced an additional \$725 million in military assistance to Kyiv, including more ammunition for the HIMARS rocket systems that have been used by Ukraine to wreak havoc on Russian targets.

The aid comes "in the wake of Russia's missile attacks on civilians across Ukraine" and "mounting evidence of atrocities by Russia's forces," US Secretary

of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

It brings the total US military assistance to Ukraine to \$17.6 billion since the Russian war on February 24. "We will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine as they defend their freedom and independence with extraordinary courage and boundless determination," Blinken said.

Separately, Elon Musk said his SpaceX would not be able to pay indefinitely for the Starlink satellite Internet vital to Ukraine's communications in the fight against Russian forces.

The US military confirmed it was communicating with the billionaire's company about funding for the key network.

— AFP

Egypt mediates talks to develop Gaza offshore gas

GAZA CITY: As Israel and Lebanon moved to resolve a dispute involving offshore gas fields, Egypt has been working with Israeli and Palestinian officials to unlock natural gas production off Gaza's coast.

More than two decades since exploration began, the struggling Palestinian economy could reap huge benefits from natural gas reserves, and a Palestinian official has said an agreement may be imminent.

Banners reading: "Our gas is our right" in both Arabic and

English have appeared in Gaza City's fishing port, calling on neighbouring Egypt and Israel to revive a plan to develop the Marine 1 and 2 fields in the Mediterranean.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) had commissioned energy firm British Gas to conduct gas exploration in the area back in 1999. A year later, British Gas found Marine 1 about 30 km out to sea, and later the smaller Marine 2, but eventually withdrew from the contract.

The project was handed over to

energy giant Shell in 2016 only for it to pull out two years later over Israeli objections and other disputes.

Since then, the Palestinians have been looking for investors in the \$1.1 billion project to extract the estimated 28 billion cubic metres (989 billion cubic feet) of natural gas.

Israel has held sporadic talks over the years with the Palestinian Authority.

The Hamas too would like a share of any gas revenues.

Hamas and Fatah movement,

The Palestinians have been looking for investors in the \$1.1 billion project to extract the estimated 28 billion cubic metres of natural gas

which dominates the PA, signed a reconciliation deal last Thursday in their latest attempt to end the rift, but it remains unclear if this agreement will bear any more fruit than its predecessors.

An Egyptian source said that Cairo has been "in contact with all parties, including Israel, to develop and profit from Gaza's gas reserves, which would also support the Palestinian economy".

A senior PA official said that "serious talks" were under way to reach a framework agreement by the end of the year.

The talks include Palestinian engineering firm Consolidated Contractors Company, the Palestinian Investment Fund, Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS) and Israel.

"Once an agreement is signed, the Egyptian company EGAS will commence work to develop the Marine 1 and 2 gas fields, with the aim of starting production within two years," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But "Israel's approval is necessary" before any work can begin, another PA official involved in the talks said.

Israeli Energy Minister Karine Elharrar declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

BAGHDAD

Iraq's Sadrist camp refuses to join new govt

Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr's movement on Saturday announced its refusal to join a new government being formed by prime minister-designate Mohammad Shia al Sudani.

The announcement came two days after lawmakers elected Abdul Latif Rashid as Iraq's new president, and he swiftly named Sudani as prime minister in a bid to end a year of political gridlock since October 2021 elections.

"We stress our firm and clear refusal for any of our affiliates to



participate... in this government formation," Mohammed Saleh al Iraqi, a close associate of Sadr, said in a statement posted on Twitter.

KARACHI

Pakistan summons US ambassador over remarks

Pakistan's foreign minister said on Saturday he had summoned the US ambassador after President Joe Biden questioned the safety of Pakistan's nuclear programme.

In a speech on Thursday, Biden said Pakistan is "maybe one of the most dangerous nations in the world" as it has "nuclear weapons without any cohesion".

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari (pictured) said he was surprised by the comments.



"As far as the question of the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets are concerned, we meet all - each and every - international standard in accordance with the IAEA," he said at a press conference on Saturday.

JAKARTA

Indonesia bans cough syrup material

Indonesia on Saturday banned ingredients linked to the deaths of 70 children in Gambia from cough syrups in the Southeast Asian country as it investigates acute kidney damage that has killed more than 20 children in the capital Jakarta this year.

Food and drug regulator BPOM also said it was investigating the possibility that the ingredients, diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol, had contaminated other materials that are used as solvents.



Gambia and India are investigating the deaths from acute kidney injury in the west-African country thought to be linked to cough syrups made by New Delhi-based Maiden Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

The hunt to arm Ukraine leads to difficult choices on sending more ammunitions



LARA JAKES

Eastern European nations, many of which were once satellites of the Soviet Union, have eagerly sent Russian-standard equipment to Ukraine since February

NATONATIONS have committed to sending Ukraine billions of dollars in sophisticated Western weapons — including about \$17 billion from the United States alone.

The Russian strikes that hit civilian targets across Ukraine last week immediately brought new pledges by Ukraine’s allies to send in more weapons and ammunition.

The United States promised more air defence missile systems, and Germany said it would send similar defences “in the next few days.” The Nato chief declared that support to Ukraine’s fight against Russia would continue “for as long as it takes.”

But for all of the assurances, there remains a problem. Ukraine also needs more of the Russian-style weapons that its military is trained to use, and the available global supply of them is running low.

To find those weapons, the United States and other allies have been scouring the globe, looking for willing suppliers in a hunt that has revealed both the promise and pitfalls of unlocking stockpiles of Russian-standard and Soviet-style weapons for use by Ukraine.

There have been some successes.

Finland, which has long balanced the sensitivities of its Russian neighbour, is sending Ukraine some Soviet-style weapons, including ammunition and guns compatible with the AK-47 assault rifle. South Korea is supplying ballistic vests, helmets, medical equipment and other defence assistance. Others like Cambodia, Congo, Rwanda, Mexico, Colombia and Peru have received a recent visit from Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a painstaking, behind-the-scenes diplomatic campaign to countries that have demonstrated support for Ukraine but are still reluctant to supply lethal aid.

And then there is Cyprus.

It has presented a special window on the difficulties of keeping up with the urgent demand for arms that Ukraine’s troops are burning through faster than can be supplied as they claw back large swaths of territory and push the Russians to retreat.

Until this month, Cyprus had been under a US arms embargo for 35 years, imposed to help tamp down tensions after a conflict left the island bitterly divided between a government backed by Greece and a portion still controlled by Turkey — both Nato members.

In that time, Cyprus turned to the Soviet Union and then Russia for weapons and military equipment.

Today, its stockpile of at least 10 Tor and Buk missile systems that can down Russian aircraft, drones and cruise missiles could provide a bonanza for an embattled Ukrainian army.

But the Cypriot government has made clear it wants new and better replacements, something that could antagonise Turkey and reignite an arms race in the still unresolved conflict. Even so, on October 1, the Biden administration formally lifted the embargo, allowing Cyprus to buy American weapons.

US officials said the move was several years in the making and broadly intended to pull Cyprus away from Russian influence. But one US official, speaking on condition of



A slogan is seen painted on a helmet of Ukrainian recruit during a five-week combat training course with the UK armed forces near Durrington in southern England.

anonymity to describe the delicate diplomacy, said Cyprus was now “a potential option” as a supplier to Ukraine.

Cyprus “would be ready to consider” transferring some of its weapons and ammunition to Ukraine if they were “replaced with other military apparatus of equal power and capabilities,” Marios Pelekanos, a government spokesperson, said in a statement to *The New York Times*.

He cited numerous meetings with US officials in recent months, during which “we have also discussed this possibility.”

Already, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey has pledged to reinforce his troops in northern Cyprus with additional weapons as the US embargo is lifted.

State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday that “we welcome additional contributions to provide Ukraine with the continued support it needs to defend itself” but would not discuss diplomatic conversations with specific nations, including Cyprus.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine called on allies to speed air defence systems to his country as “currently the No 1 priority.”

Already, Nato nations have committed to sending Ukraine billions of dollars in sophisticated Western weapons — including about \$17 billion from the United States alone.

Russia is responding by buying artillery from North Korea and, notably, military drones from Iran, which have blitzed southern Ukrainian cities and last week struck a

town about 50 miles outside Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. Dozens of countries have sought to remain neutral, including China and India, which are Russia’s two largest weapons customers but which on Monday renewed calls for de-escalation after Moscow’s missile strikes.

Eastern European nations, many of which were once satellites of the Soviet Union but are now Nato members, have eagerly sent Russian-standard equipment to Ukraine since February: tanks and artillery munitions from the Czech Republic, howitzer guns from Estonia, helicopters from Latvia and Slovakia, and amphibious infantry combat vehicles and thousands of 122 mm-caliber Grad rockets from Poland.

As of Tuesday, the latest data available, Poland was the fourth-largest contributor of military aid to Ukraine, following the United States, Britain and the European Union, according to a database of public commitments compiled by the German-based Kiel Institute. But Poland, like other Eastern European nations, cannot spare its remaining stockpile of Soviet-style weapons without risking its own defences and wants to see other countries step up, a Polish defence official said.

Talks among allies to share parts, ammunition and other equipment, and to prod defence manufacturers to ramp up production are continuing, including this week at a high-level meeting at Nato headquarters in Brussels. But weapons contracts can take months, if not years, to complete.

Parkour athletes turn off the lights in Paris

AFTER taking a few steps back to get a running start, Hadj Benhalima dashed toward the building, pushed against its wall with his foot, propelled himself upward and stretched out his arm.



CONSTANT MÉHEUT

At the peak of his leap, he flipped off a light switch, more than 10 feet off the ground. A click sound rang out, and the bright lights of a nearby barbershop went off instantly.

“Oooh,” his friends cheered, as Benhalima, a thin 21-year-old dressed all in black, landed back on the sidewalk. It was the second store sign he had turned off on a recent nighttime tour across Paris’ upscale neighbourhoods. Many more would follow as he soared up and dropped back down across the city.

Over the past two years, groups of young athletes practicing Parkour — a sport that consists of running, climbing and jumping over urban obstacles — have been swinging around big French cities switching off wasteful shop signs at night, in a bid to fight light pollution and save energy.

Videos of their feats, showing Spider-Man-like aerialists clinging to stone facades and balcony edges before plunging

streets into darkness with the flick of an elevated switch, have been popular on social media since the start of the trend.

But these so-called Lights Off operations have become extra resonant in recent months, with France embarking on energy conservation efforts to cope with Russia’s chokehold on Europe’s gas.

Paris, the City of Light, is a favourite target.

While its landmark monuments now go dark earlier than usual, many store signs still stay lit all night.

“Everyone can contribute in their own way” to save energy, said Kevin Ha, the leader of the Paris-based On The Spot Parkour collective, with about 20 members. “We put our physical abilities to good use.”

Several times a month, Ha and his compatriots can be found vaulting their way around Paris, on the hunt for electric advertising signs perched above awnings or illuminated store names.

They search out the small emergency switches installed outside storefronts, usually about 9 to 13 feet high.

Most of the time these switches control only outdoor signs, meaning the group cannot extinguish the window displays bathing a store’s interior in golden, if wasteful, light.

While scaling other people’s property to turn off their lights may strike some as a form of trespassing, the Parkour athletes — or non-violent vigilantes, to some — insist their activities are only about enforcing seldom-respected rules.



Members of the On The Spot Parkour collective often train on a large esplanade in eastern Paris, performing moves amid a landscape of high-rises.

More than a decade ago, Paris City Hall issued orders requiring stores to turn off all signs and window displays from 1 am to 6 am, but the ordinance is widely ignored with little consequence.

“For 10 years there has been no follow-up, no control, no sanction,” said Anne-Marie Ducroux, the head of the National Association for the Protection of the Sky and the Night Environment, which has long lobbied to increase efforts against light pollution.

That is why On The Spot members have taken matters into their own hands. The group often converges on the so-called Golden Triangle neighbourhood, in western Paris, the epicentre of French luxury, where elegant Haussmann-era buildings with cream-coloured facades line the streets.

Enforcing the orders in place of the authorities certainly enters a legal gray area. But the group said all the police officers they have met during their rounds have approved of the initiative — as long as it causes no damage. And they have the full support of the City Council.

“They are right to take action,” said Dan Lert, a Paris deputy mayor in charge of the environment.

“It’s also thanks to them that we’ll put an end to these shocking habits.”

Dali Debabeche, another On The Spot member, said these nighttime missions allowed him to hone his Parkour skills while “sending a message” about environmental protection. “We kill two birds with one stone,” he said.

No health without mental health



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

October 10th marked the World Mental Health Day. A day designated by the World Health Organization to raise awareness about mental health and its importance in our lives.

The theme this year is ensuring mental health and well-being for all becomes a global priority, but it starts with prioritising once own mental health.

Covid-19 pandemic led to many people experiencing loneliness and isolation.

Many people lost their jobs due to the closure and the financial impact of the pandemic.

This became another source of stress leading to an increase in the number of people experiencing mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

As we head towards winter we hear news about a possible increase in the risk of Covid cases rising up.

Such news makes us feel apprehensive and concerned about going back to the same situation we experienced during Covid. However, knowing that most of us have received the vaccine and that at present Covid symptoms are similar to the flu we often get during winter time makes us feel reassured.

In general, psychologists suggest a few tips to maintain a positive mental health.

The first step is to stay connected with other people, be it face-to-face or virtually, you should not suffer alone in silence.

Some people feel that talking to others about their emotions may burden the person listening or they worry that others will think of them as weak and attention seekers while in fact sharing with others is likely to reduce your distress.

Knowing that there is a caring

THERE ARE SEVERAL TECHNIQUES THAT CAN HELP US PRACTICE MINDFULNESS RANGING FROM BREATHING EXERCISES TO MEDITATION AND YOGA

person who would listen to you and not judge you can be therapeutic in itself.

Sometimes you only need to be acknowledged by others and your feelings to be validated.

The next tip is to keep physically active.

We all know that physical activities help your body release happiness hormones that balance your mood and help you cope with daily stress.

Recent studies show that regular exercise is not only good for your heart, but also good for your brain and can help in preventing the

onset of memory problems like Alzheimer's disease.

The third tip is practicing mindfulness which means living in the moment.

Most of us feel distracted all the time with our brains drifting in recalling the past or fantasising about the future.

There are several techniques that can help us practice mindfulness ranging from breathing exercises to meditation and yoga which understandably may not be for everyone to find the type of mindfulness that is suitable and keep it up.

The fourth tip is learning a new skill be it a new language or a craft or a new hobby that you always wanted to practice but never had the time.

It can be as simple as learning to paint or playing musical instruments, or even gardening.

Finally, giving to others is a source of happiness that is often neglected or limited to donating money to charities which does not have to be the only way.

You can share your knowledge with others by volunteering to teach something you are good at or helping in cleaning beaches or building houses for the poor.

Everyone agrees with your skills and physical abilities.

Volunteering would also connect you with others who have similar interests which then widens your social network.

Finally, remember that all the tips mentioned above need perseverance and well-power as it's easy to slip down to sitting alone feeling miserable and turning to bad habits to work out your frustration.

Stay positive and remember that you are not alone.

Low water level on Mississippi River hurts US grain shipping

THOMAS URBAIN

A lack of rainfall in the central United States has brought the mighty Mississippi River to its lowest depth in years, causing headaches for shippers and squeezing farmers who rely on the busy waterway to take their product to the Gulf of Mexico.

According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), the river's depth at shipping hub Memphis, Tennessee, is at its lowest level since 2011.

"Normally at this time of year we would see 40-plus barges moving in a tow configuration pushed by (a) towboat," said Deb Calhoun, senior vice-president of Waterways Council, a US river infrastructure advocacy group.

"Now you you're only seeing about 24, 25... moving at one time, sometimes less, depending on how shallow the river is at any point."

This year's low water level is largely due to a lack of rain in the upper plains states of Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, through which the Mississippi's major tributary, the Missouri River, flows.

In some areas, the US Army Corps of Engineers has been forced to do emergency dredging so that barges can pass through.

"It's a very difficult time with harvest occurring now -- really the worst possible time for this severe low water situation to occur," Calhoun said.

Though the winter wheat season was largely wrapped up by early August, corn and soy harvests are in full swing, increasing as usual demand as usual cargo space.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) figures show that about two-thirds of US sea-based grain exports last year departed from the Gulf of Mexico, most often after being shipped by barge down the Mississippi River.

One barge can carry the equivalent volume of 15 rail cars and 60 semi-trucks, according to industry representatives American Waterways Operators.

"We're seeing a lot of inefficiencies," said Calhoun, explaining that barges are having to be filled with less grain so they float higher.

"At this point, we are just very hopeful that rain will come." Meteorologists predict some rain will fall over the weekend in the southern states of Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi.

The decreased barge capacity has translated into higher shipping costs, with the USDA recording a fourfold increase in barge prices since late August.

At those levels, "we are pricing ourselves out of the export market," said Michael Zuzolo, of Global Commodity Analytics and Consulting. — AFP

When trade becomes a weapon



PAUL KRUGMAN
The writer is a NYT opinion columnist

Stop me if you've heard this one before: We're now engaged in a trade war.

Actually, you probably haven't heard this one before. I'm not talking about Donald Trump's clumsy tariffs aimed at reducing America's trade deficit. I'm talking instead about the sweeping new controls the Biden administration imposed last Friday on exports of technology to China — controls meant to constrain other advanced countries as well as the United States.

Unlike the Trump tariffs, these controls have a clear goal: to prevent or at least delay Beijing's attempts to produce advanced semiconductors, which are of crucial military as well as economic importance. If this sounds like a very aggressive move on the part of the United States, that's because it is.

But it needs to be put in context.

Recent events have undermined the sunny view of globalisation that long dominated Western policy. It's now apparent that despite global integration, there are still dangerous bad actors out there — and interdependence sometimes empowers these bad actors.

But it also gives good actors' ways to limit bad actors' ability to do harm. And the Biden administration is evidently taking these lessons to heart.

It wasn't supposed to turn out this way. The postwar world trade system, with its limits on protectionism and waves of tariff reduction, emerged partly out of the view that trade promoted peace.

This was the firm belief of Cordell Hull, Franklin Roosevelt's secretary of state, arguably the father of that system. The European Union grew out of the 1951 Coal and Steel Community, established with the explicit goal of making war impossible by binding European industry together.

Later, Germany would promote economic links with Russia and China under the doctrine of "Wandel durch Handel" — change through trade — which asserted that integration with the world economy would promote democratisation and rule of law.

Obviously it didn't work.

Russia is led by a ruler who attacked Ukraine. Some Asian countries appear to have retrogressed politically, moving back to erratic one-man rule.

And rather than forcing nations to get along, globalisation seems to have created new frontiers for international

confrontation.

Three years ago, international relations experts Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman published a prescient paper titled "Weaponised Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion."

They argued, in effect, that conventional trade wars — in which nations try to exert economic power by restricting access to their markets — are no longer where the action is. Instead, economic power comes from the ability to restrict other countries'

THE POSTWAR WORLD TRADE SYSTEM, WITH ITS LIMITS ON PROTECTIONISM AND WAVES OF TARIFF REDUCTION, EMERGED PARTLY OUT OF THE VIEW THAT TRADE PROMOTED PEACE

access to crucial goods, services, finance and information.

And much of this new form of power rests in the hands of the West, especially the United States.

To be sure, we're not the only players who can exert economic pressure. Russia, losing on the battlefield, is trying to blackmail Europe by cutting off its supply of natural gas. But the big surprise on the economic side of the Ukraine war was the early success

of the United States and its allies in strangling Russian access to crucial industrial and capital goods.

Russian imports have begun to recover, but sanctions probably dealt a crucial blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war-making ability.

Which brings me to what we might call the Biden doctrine on globalisation and national security.

Last week, Katherine Tai, the US trade representative, gave a fairly startling speech calling for US industrial policy aimed in part at protecting national security. She denounced China's "state-directed industrial dominance policies" and declared that the efficiency gains from trade liberalisation "cannot come at the cost of further weakening our supply chains (and) exacerbating high-risk reliances."

On the same day, the Biden administration announced its new export controls.

I don't have any inside information on what is driving this change in policy, but it seems likely that it reflects both a new appreciation of global dangers and increased confidence in America's ability to exercise economic power.

On one side, Handel evidently hasn't produced Wandel. Putin's Russia is or was deeply integrated with the world economy; it has also tried to conquer its neighbour and is committing horrific war crimes. A Chinese war of Taiwan would be deeply self-destructive; that doesn't mean that Chinese President Xi Jinping won't try it.

— New York Times



Port Newark, the second largest container port in the United States.

Autism means different: not less!

Here we are, in an age where autistic spectrum disorders are becoming progressively more widely acknowledged, across all societies. They are nothing to be scared of, but to be aware of, and in fact it affects an estimated 1 in 100 children according to the World Health Organization (WHO). We should understand the autistic spectrum, as I have learned to in teaching and learning environments, with the initial understanding that, if you know, or have known someone with a mild autistic spectrum condition, that's not because they only have a 'mild' condition. In fact, it demonstrates how effective their individual and personal management has been, and recognise just how well they are doing.

Autism, or the conditions included in the autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refer to a broad range of conditions characterised by challenges to social skills, repetitive behaviours, speech and nonverbal communication issues. Because autism is a spectral disorder, each person with autism has distinctly individual strengths and weaknesses, with the ways those with autism think and learn, their cognitive processes, requiring different levels of support in their daily lives, and in many cases, live quite independently.

We can't look at Oman's population and say that "We are okay, there's no ASD here." Actually there is, but maybe we tend not to look for it, feeling that it's a label we don't want, for ourselves or our kids. The signs appear early, around the ages of two to three, and early intervention has demonstrated positive outcomes later in life, for those with autism. Emerging initially as sensory issues, sleep issues, anxiety, depression, and attention disorders usually follow, but with familial care and support especially, can prove of very little societal disruption.

Gluten-free, ketogenic, and casein-free diets and diet supplements, vitamin and mineral supplements, chelation, hormone therapies, blood-boosters, brain-boosters, and most weirdly of all pressurised hyperbaric oxygen therapy, are those most



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

AUTISM IS A SPECTRAL DISORDER, EACH PERSON WITH AUTISM HAS DISTINCTLY INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, WITH THE WAYS THOSE WITH AUTISM THINK AND LEARN

commonly wheeled out by the 'fools in white coats,' as working effectively. They don't. Autistic people may act differently to the rest of us, as they may have difficulty relating to how we think and feel about 'things.' Certainly, they will demonstrate a weakness in either visualisation as a cognitive or thinking process, verbal acuity as intelligent articulate speakers, or pattern, or process type learners. Yet, generally they will demonstrate excellence in the demonstrative learning process that matches them, in response to their lesser abilities in the others.

They will often take comfort in repetitive tasks or situations, such as classrooms and learning environments, even in their religion and faith. All children thrive on repetition, predictability, and patterns with routines a common element in most learning, as uncertainty is reduced. Mealtimes are one way to reinforce that stability, creating a 'comfort zone' of sorts. Those with autism certainly function more effectively in settled environments.

They will almost certainly have difficulty with communicating with, and interacting with, others, and consequently demonstrate unease in unfamiliar situations, social events, or being isolated. Their diversity not so much being tested or found wanting, but needing to be identified and supported. They will retreat from sociality, withdrawing into themselves, but early, supported integrations, are positive. Almost certainly, they will find bright lights, flashing lights, loud music, and unexpected noises, uncomfortable, to the point of distress, but honestly, all those things upset me too, in my maturity, so I can understand. Really, my message is that autism, whether you are "seeing it or being it," as one with the condition laughingly said to me, is not to be scared of, or intimidated by. In real terms it may well challenge individuals and families, but the upside is the absolute determination to finish every task every hour of every day, to the best of their ability. As Dr Seuss wrote... "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

DEATH AND FUNERALS OF CAIN



Created by the Mexican architect Juan Jose Gurrola, a giant statue of a dead chicken inspired by the painting 'Muerte y funerales de Cain'(Death and Funerals of Cain) by the Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros is pictured on the rooftop of Carrillo Gil Art Museum, in Mexico City, Mexico. — Reuters

As Truss fights for job, new FM warns of tough decisions

MICHAEL HOLDEN AND ALISTAIR SMOUT

Britain's new finance minister Jeremy Hunt said on Saturday some taxes would go up and tough spending decisions were needed, signalling further reversals from Prime Minister Liz Truss as she battles to keep her job just over a month into her term.

In an attempt to appease financial markets that have been in turmoil for three weeks, Truss fired Kwasi Kwarteng as her chancellor of the exchequer on Friday and scrapped parts of their controversial economic package.

With opinion poll ratings dire for both the ruling Conservative Party and the prime minister personally, and many of her own lawmakers asking, not if, but how Truss should be removed, she has turned to Hunt to help salvage her premiership less than 40 days after taking office.

"We will have some very difficult decisions ahead," Hunt said as he toured TV and radio studios to give a blunt assessment of the situation the country faced, saying Truss and Kwarteng had made mistakes.

"The thing that people want, the markets want, the country needs now, is stability," Hunt said. "No chancellor can control the markets. But what I can do is show that we can pay for our tax and spending plans and that is going to need some very difficult decisions on both spending and tax."

Truss won the leadership contest to replace Boris Johnson on a platform of

big tax cuts to stimulate growth, which Kwarteng duly announced last month. But the absence of any details of how the cuts would be funded sent the markets into meltdown.

She has now ditched plans to cut tax for high earners, and said a levy on business would increase, abandoning her proposal to keep it at current levels. But it is not clear if that has gone far enough to satisfy investors.

Hunt is due to announce the

government's medium-term budget plans on October 31, in what will be a key test of its ability to show it can restore its economic policy credibility. He said further changes to Truss's plans were possible.

"Giving certainty over public finances, how we're going to pay for every penny that we get through the tax and spending decisions we make, those are very, very important ways that I can give certainty and help create the

stability," he said.

He cautioned spending would not rise by as much as people would like and all government departments were going to have to find more efficiencies than they were planning.

"Some taxes will not be cut as quickly as people want, and some taxes will go up. So it's going to be difficult," he said, adding that he would sit down with Treasury officials on Saturday before meeting Truss on Sunday to go through the plans.

Kwarteng's September 23 fiscal statement prompted a backlash in financial markets that was so ferocious the Bank of England (BoE) had to intervene to prevent pension funds being caught up in the chaos as borrowing costs surged.

Hunt, an experienced minister and viewed by many in his party as a safe pair of hands, said he agreed with Truss's fundamental strategy of kickstarting economic growth, adding that their approach had not worked.

"There were some mistakes made in the last few weeks. That's why I'm sitting here. It was a mistake to cut the top rate of tax at a period when we're asking everyone to make sacrifices," he said.

It was also a mistake, Hunt said, to "fly blind" and produce the tax plans without allowing the

independent fiscal watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, to check the figures.

The fact that Hunt is Britain's fourth finance minister in four months is testament to a political crisis that has gripped Britain since Johnson was ousted following a series of scandals.

Hunt said Truss should be judged at an election and on her performance over the next 18 months - not the last 18 days. However, she might not get that chance. During the leadership contest, Truss won support from less than a third of Conservative lawmakers and has appointed her backers since taking office - alienating those who support her rivals.

The appointment of Hunt, who ran to be leader himself and then backed her main rival ex-finance minister Rishi Sunak, has been seen as a sign of her reaching out, but the move did little to placate some of her party critics.

"It's over for her," one such Conservative lawmakers told Reuters after Friday's events.

The next key test will come on Monday, when the British government bond market functions for the first time without the emergency buying support provided by the BoE since September 28. Gilt prices plunged late on Friday after Truss's announcement. — Reuters



British Prime Minister Liz Truss attends a news conference in London, Britain, last Friday. — Reuters

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‘El Clasico’ against Real a chance for Barca to bounce back, says Xavi

MADRID : “El Clasico” tie away at Real Madrid on Sunday is an opportunity for Barcelona to regain some confidence, manager Xavi Hernandez said on Saturday, after his side’s dreadful run of results in the Champions League. Barca have won seven consecutive LaLiga matches and sit top of the table on 22 points, ahead of domestic and European champions Real on goal difference. In the Champions League, however, they have won only one of their four games and face elimination from Europe’s elite competition at the group stage for the second straight season. “I’m always an optimist and I see this game as a great opportunity for us. We are the (LaLiga) leaders and we want to continue to be as of Sunday,” Xavi

told a news conference. “We want to leave the past behind. If we are positive, everything will be fine. Barca salvaged a late 3-3 draw against Inter Milan on Wednesday in the Champions League but sit three points below them and eight below Bayern Munich. “I have tried to emotionally get the players to recover. It’s time to insist on our ideals and stay on track,” Xavi said. Struggling lately with several injuries, Barca will nevertheless have the services of defender Jules Kounde, Xavi said, as the player has recovered from a hamstring injury. “He is very well, 100 per cent and happy. His feelings are very good. He has trained very hard and is available for Sunday,” Xavi said.



“I’m always an optimist and I see this game as a great opportunity for us. We are the (LaLiga) leaders and we want to continue to be as of Sunday

XAVI HERNANDEZ
Manager, Barcelona

Xavi, a former midfield powerhouse for Barca, was brought in by the club’s new board last season to help them rebuild after they were unable to re-sign Lionel Messi. There has been speculation

over his future however as Barca slip closer to falling out of the Champions League and into Europe’s second-tier Europa League competition for the second year. “The president have given me full trust. The day I don’t see that clearly, I’ll go home... The day I think I’m not part of the solution, I’ll go home,” Xavi said. “Sunday’s game is three points but also the boost in morale of leaving the game reinforced. It is a vital match for us and for Real Madrid. “Let’s see who comes out on top. Our project has just started, we can’t destroy everything now. We have to calm down, be patient. We are still under construction. Falling in the Champions League is sad but this continues. I think we are on the right track.” — Reuters



Oman Olympic Committee

Tenders Announcement

OOC announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Statement	Tender Documents Value	Dead line for Specifications Brochure	Deadline for Submitting the Tenders
1/2022	Cleaning work in OOC and sports federations and committees building	(50/- OMR)	October 30, 2022	November 10, 2022
2/2022	General Maintenance (Electricity / air conditioning / plumbing works) in OOC and sports federations and committees building	(50/- OMR)	October 30, 2022	November 10, 2022
3/2022	Computer network and electronic operation systems in OOC and sports federations and committees building	(50/- OMR)	October 30, 2022	November 10, 2022

- The companies specialized in the work of each tender must obtain the documents, conditions and specifications of each tender above from OOC Financial Affairs Department at the headquarters located in Al Ghubrah North during official work hours starting from Tuesday, October 18, 2022 until Sunday, October 30, 2022.
- Tenders shall be submitted signed and sealed for each tender inside envelopes and addressed to the name of the Dr. / Chairman of OOC Tenders Committee, written on it from the outside the number and name of the tender. Provided that the name of the Tender is not written on the envelope or what it refers to.
- The envelopes for each tender shall be deposited in Tender Box at OOC building located in Al Ghubrah North during official work hours before 12 p.m on Thursday, November 10, 2022. Tenders submitted after this date, whatever they may be, shall not be considered.

800 take part in Salalah Spartan race

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 15

Global adventure event ‘Spartan’ race was held for the first time in Salalah on Friday. The race saw participation of 800 athletes from across the world. It was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The race was organised by Spartan Arabia in cooperation with the Dhofar Municipality and Omran Group. All participants were treated to the scenic natural beauty of Salalah during their adventures in the Spartan Super Race for a distance of 10 km and 25 obstacles, in addition to four other races dedicated to age groups for children. The Spartan Super 10 km and 25 hurdles race was won by Mohammad al Hasani from the UAE, while Czech Republic’s Richard Hynek took second place and Oman’s Obaid al Nuaimi came in third place. In the men’s race for 18 to 24 years, Abdullah Fouad came in first place, Saif al Naqly came second and Mohammad Karam finished third.



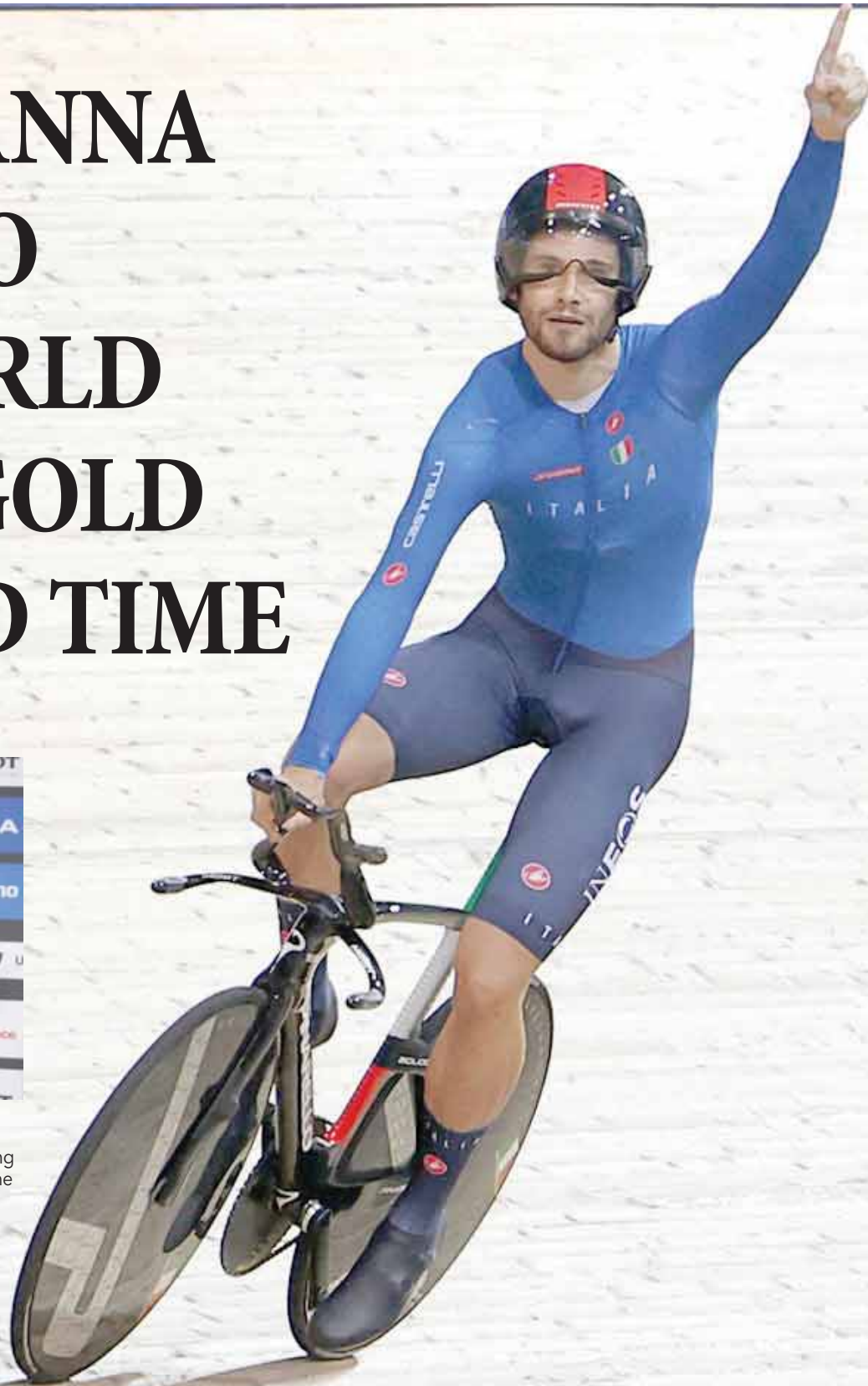
FEMALE RACE
In the female race for 29 to 35 years, Rawan Salah claimed the top spot. Farah al Hazeem claimed second place and Alaa Benslameh finished third. In the men’s 25 to 29 years category, Abdulaziz al Houti finished first. Alexander Fedotov came second and Mohammed al Balushi claimed third. In the women’s 30 to 34 years, Ruby Dalida came top, Nour Ismail took second spot and Jennifer Estee claimed third place.

In the men’s race for 30 to 34 years, Butti al Nuaimi claimed the top spot. Ahmed Mustafa al Mohammed came in second and Juan Fortunato finished third. In the women’s 35 to 39 years, Radmila Bakic snatched the first place, followed by Maryam al Akhras and Daniel Maranan. In the men’s race for 35 to 39 years, the first place was claimed by Al Hammadi Salah. Marius Daniel came second and Ahmed Mubarak finished third. In the women’s 40 to 44 years, Melissa Woods came in first place, Khawla Saleh took second place and Marvi Joy Andoyan finished third. In the same age group for men’s, Hamid al Mahri came in first place, Nawaf Mubarak took second place and Omar al Mutairi claimed third place. In the women’s 45 to 49 years, Anleen Van Wyck won first place. In the men’s race, Simon Bieber came in first place, Manuel Yahya took second and Alex Buckley finished third. Nather Saqan emerged champion in men’s 50 to 54 years, while Khaled al Saif claimed the title of men’s 55 to 59 years category.

ITALY'S GANNA STORMS TO FIFTH WORLD PURSUIT GOLD IN RECORD TIME



Italy's Filippo Ganna celebrates his new world record on the podium after winning the Men's Individual Pursuit finals during the UCI Track Cycling World Championships at the Velodrome of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, southwest of Paris. — AFP



FRANCE: Italy's Filippo Ganna set a new world record time on his way to a fifth gold in the men's individual pursuit at the Track World Cycling Championships in France on Friday.

Ganna won gold ahead of compatriot Jonathan Milan, to add to the titles he won in 2016 and from 2018 to 2020, after finishing third last year in Roubaix.

The 2020 and 2021 road time-trial world champion crowned his triumph by setting a new world record of 3min 59.636sec at the Saint Quentin en Yvelines velodrome outside Paris.

The Olympic team pursuit champion had arrived at these worlds on the back of another world mark, breaking the mythical one-hour record, with 56.792km at the Grenchen track in Switzerland last Saturday.

The 26-year-old had bettered the surprise record set by Britain's Daniel Bigham, a performance engineer at Ganna's Ineos Grenadiers team on the same track last August, which he had attempted in order to collect data for the Italian's quest.

Bigham finished fourth in the pursuit on Friday, beaten by Portuguese Ivo Oliveira in the race for bronze.

The Netherlands took two

gold medals with veteran rider Yoeri Havik winning the points race and compatriot Jeffrey Hoogland successfully defending his 1km time-trial title.

Havik, 31, finished ahead of Germany's Roger Kluge and Belgian Fabio van den Bossche over the 160 laps covering 40km, interspersed with 16 sprints.

Hoogland, 29, dominated France's Melvin Landereau in the 1km time-trial final, an event he won in 2018 and 2021, with Spaniard Alejandro Martinez taking bronze.

Among the women, Mathilde Gros gave hosts France their first title by beating Germany's Lea Sophie Friedrich in the final of the sprint event.

It was the first world gold for the 23-year-old, less than two years before the 2024 Paris Olympics which will be held in the same velodrome.

"It's a dream. I gave it everything and the public were incredible," said Gros.

"Hearing 'Mathilde, Mathilde' ring out throughout the velodrome was magical."

American Jennifer Valente became omnium world champion ahead of Dutchwoman Maïke van der Duin and Portuguese Maria Martins. — AFP



Prima Pramac's Spanish rider Jorge Martin rides his bike during the MotoGP fourth practice session in Phillip Island on October 15, 2022, ahead of Australian MotoGP Grand Prix. — AFP

Martin sets lap record to grab pole position in Australia

MELBOURNE: Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin set a lap record on Saturday to capture pole position for the Australian MotoGP Grand Prix as Francesco Bagnaia remained in the hunt to leapfrog world championship leader Fabio Quartararo at Phillip Island.

Spaniard Martin topped the timesheets with a scorching lap of one minute 27.767 seconds in windy conditions ahead of the 18th round of the world championship, which is returning Down Under to the seaside circuit for the first time since 2019.

Martin eclipsed the previous lap record of Jorge Lorenzo which had stood for nine years.

"For sure he (Lorenzo) won't be super happy today but it's time to beat those records, because the bikes are much faster now," said Martin, who took pole for the third time this year.

"Yesterday I was a bit lost because this track is so fast... today I had a good pace and I feel strong for the race also. I feel we can fight till the end tomorrow."

Repsol Honda's six-times MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez (+0.013) avoided a

crash during the qualifying phase and will start second on the grid on Sunday while Ducati's Bagnaia (+0.186) joined him on the front row following a solid display in qualifying.

Quartararo will line up in fifth place.

The Frenchman finished 17th in the Thai Grand Prix earlier this month, allowing the in-form Bagnaia to cut his lead to two points after a third-placed finish with three races left in the 2022 season.

"My challenge is with Fabio so I'm happy that I'm in front," said Bagnaia.

"In free practice four we took an enormous step in front and in qualifying I pushed from the start. I wasn't aware that a lot of riders were behind me but it doesn't matter."

Aleix Espargaro, Enea Bastianini and Australia's Jack Miller are also in contention for the riders' championship. Ducati have claimed the constructors' crown and could wrap up the teams' title for a second consecutive year.

— Reuters

Spirited BDO lift Auditors Cup 2022

MUSCAT: BDO triumphed in the 20th edition of the Auditors Cup cricket tournament here on October 8.

Six teams from Audit firms competed in the tournament and BDO and KPMG moved into the final.

In the final, BDO led by Hashim won the toss and elected to bat first. They scored 64 runs for 3 wickets in 6 overs.

In reply, KPMG fell 3 runs short of the target. Haaris Patel from BDO was adjudged the man of the match for his heroics with the bat and the ball.

Deloitte became first runners-up and PWC finished as second runners-up.

Alkesh Joshi, Tax partner of EY and Treasurer and Board member of Oman Cricket was the chief guest. Also, Abba of KPMG, Fareed of Deloitte, Shoaib of Moore, Nayaz of PWC and Saritha of BDO were the special guests for the tournament.

Music by DJ Sash and food from Café Rocket was the highlight of both the days.

Individual prizes: Player of the tournament – Rana Noman (KPMG), Best bowler – Nayam Patel (BDO), Best batsman – Haaris Patel (BDO), Best wicketkeeper – Aakash Bhola (KPMG), Best fielder – Arjun Mehta (KPMG), Best catch – Mohammed Nabil (EY) Best dressed team – Moore.



Gulf hockey fiesta set for Oct 28, 29

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, OCT 15

The sixth edition of the much-popular Gulf Hockey Fiesta 2022 is all set for action at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Basher on October 28 and 29.

The official inauguration of the event is scheduled to be at 6 pm on October 28, though the matches start from 2 pm and continue till 11 pm.

“We will have matches from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 29. This year’s event is extra-special for us as Oman is going to host the Hockey 5S World Cup in 2024,” the organisers said.

The final match will be at 8 pm on October 29. This event is organised by Oman Hockey Association and it is an approved event of Asian Hockey Federation.

In the spirit of promoting hockey and as a longtime supporter of hockey in the Middle East, the event will see six international and six local teams in action. Besides, there will be exhibition matches between boys and girls of Indian Schools at 3 pm on October 29.

OMAN WOMEN’S TEAM TO PLAY

In a special attraction, the Oman national women’s team will be making a first-time appearance by playing friendly matches with the visiting teams.

Dr Marwan bin Juma al



Juma, Chairman, Oman Hockey Association (OHA), and the brain behind bringing the prestigious tournament to the Sultanate of Oman, says, “We are all set for a successful and a high calibre international tournament. It is a world-class event. And we are proud it is happening in Oman. We are confident that this event will promote tourism in a big way and provide a platform for foreign players to exhibit their skills in hockey to Oman’s sports loving public.”

The Gulf Fiesta organisers thanked the OHA chief for the

support and guidance.

The tournament is technically supported by UTSC, an Oman-based sports club which has branches in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and India.

The tournament includes Omani and expatriate teams, showcasing the interest and enthusiasm of Omanis in this sport.

FAMILY ATTRACTION

Gulf Hockey Fiesta 2022 will add a special attraction to draw in more audiences including families under the banner “The Great 2022

Cook-off Contest’, supported by Foodlands and Shahi Spices and Sea Pearls Jewellery which will bring a lot of families to this event.

“We have a celebrity guest from South India, cine actress and cooking live host of Asianet channel Sadhika and Vaigha to host the cookery contest. They both are popular for their TV reality shows and movies. In addition, we have a DJ, live music and entertainment, dance and magic show,” the organisers said.

UTSC over these years has nurtured and unleashed many sportsmen covering a large spectrum of sports such as cricket, hockey, football and basketball, with many of its members participating in regional and international competitions.

Having its presence in many countries, the Middle East wing of UTSC with its motto ‘Experience and share the joy of living better through sport’ has witnessed encouraging participation and support of local teams and players for hockey. Team Oman has taken part in many International tournaments and won.

The UTSC also thanked their sponsors who include Shahi Foods & Spices, Sea Pearls Gold & Diamond Jewellery, FAP, Al Nahla Solutions, Magzi Shipping & Logistics, Badr Al Sama Group of Hospitals, Lulu Hypermarkets, Al Rehwan, Foodlands Restaurant, Bader Shipping and Lynx.



Murray falls to Korda in Gijon Open quarterfinals

SPAIN: Britain’s Andy Murray fell to American Sebastian Korda in the Gijon Open quarterfinals on Friday.

Korda, ranked 47, won through 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 against former world number one Murray, now ranked 48, in two hours and 27 minutes.

Wildcard Murray was playing his first tournament since September’s Laver Cup, but after rallying in the second set the 35-year-old was unable to maintain the momentum in the third.

Korda, 22, advances to meet France’s Arthur Rinderknech who saved nine match points before ousting second seed Pablo Carreno Busta, the last Spaniard in the tournament, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (18/16).

Rinderknech staved off two match points on serve at 4-5 in the third set, and a further seven in the third-set tie-break, before sealing victory on his sixth match point after just over three-hours in northern Spain.

Earlier Austrian Dominic Thiem continued his quest for his first title since the 2020 US Open when he eased past fourth seed Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina 6-4, 6-3.

The 29-year-old next plays top seed Andrey Rublev who dispatched fifth seeded American Tommy Paul 7-5, 6-3 in 87 minutes. Rublev, who triumphed in Marseille, Dubai and Belgrade earlier this season, has boosted his chances of qualifying for the ATP Finals. — AFP

ROYAL CAVALRY WINS FIRST, SECOND SPOTS IN FRANCE



The Royal Cavalry won the first and second places in the endurance race organised by the International Equestrian Federation in French Fontaine Bleue for a distance of 103 km. The race saw 65 riders from 14 countries, Oman, France, Bahrain, UAE, Switzerland, Spain, Argentina, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Germany, USA, the Netherlands and Britain. Hisham al Farsi snatched the first place on ‘Kara’, Hussein al Farsi claimed the second place on ‘Fanshdoh’, and Shaikh Isa bin Faisal al Khalifa from Bahrain finished third. The race included four stages, the first stage for 27 km, the second for 30 km, third (24 km) and the final stage for 22 km.

Swiatek rips Gauff to reach WTA San Diego semis

SAN DIEGO: World number one Iga Swiatek, seeking her eighth WTA title of the year, cruised over eighth-ranked CoCo Gauff on Friday to reach the San Diego Open semifinals.

In a rematch of this year’s French Open women’s final, the 21-year-old Polish star rolled over 18-year-old American Gauff 6-0, 6-3 in 65 minutes.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek advanced to a Saturday semifinal against sixth-ranked Jessica Pegula, who defeated 18th-ranked US compatriot Madison Keys 6-4, 7-5.

“I’m pretty happy that we’re going to play against each other because it’s a test for me of where my level is because she’s really, really solid,” Swiatek said of Pegula.

“Our matches are always physical and really tight. Even though sometimes the scores are one way, you can see during the games we always have deuces and

any point can matter.”

Swiatek is 3-1 all-time against Pegula, having lost their first meeting in 2019 at Washington but won this year at the Miami semifinals and US and French Open quarterfinals.

“She plays super athletic, aggressive, defends really well,” Pegula said of Swiatek. “She does everything at a really high level.”

Croatia’s 77th-ranked Donna Vekic made the semifinals by ousting fifth-ranked Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1.

Vekic will next face 19th-ranked American Danielle Collins, who defeated Spain’s fourth-ranked Paula Badosa 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

Swiatek won her WTA-best 62nd match triumph of the year in her tour-best 12th quarterfinal of the season.

Swiatek, a runner-up last week at Ostrava, seeks her 11th career WTA title and her eighth of the year after crowns at Qatar, Indian

Wells, Miami, Stuttgart, Rome and the US and French Opens.

Gauff fell to 0-4 all-time against Swiatek, having lost last year in Rome and this year at Miami and Roland Garros, where Swiatek dispatched her 6-1, 6-3 for the trophy.

Swiatek broke three times to lead 5-0, saved two break points in the final game and held to claim the opening set after 29 minutes. Swiatek broke to open and close the second set for the victory.

Vekic improved to 5-1 all-time over Sabalenka after two hours and 37 minutes to reach her first semifinal of the year.

Collins broke at love to force a first-set tiebreaker, which she won when Badosa sent a backhand wide. In the second set, Badosa hit a backhand long to hand Collins a break for a 4-3 lead and held twice for the victory, closing it out on a forehand crosscourt winner after two hours. — AFP





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MDO CONCLUDES FIRST PHASE OF AIRBORNE GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY TRAINING

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 15

Minerals Development Oman (MDO) has concluded a training programme in the field of airborne geophysical surveys, which was organised in conjunction with the airborne survey project implemented by MDO in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) for metallic minerals’ exploration.

The programme was designed and implemented by the Canadian company Sander Geophysics as a part of its commitment to transfer knowledge in accordance with ICV standards.

The training lasted for three weeks at the company’s headquarters.

Thirty participants attended the programme, including university students and employees from the private and public sectors.

Says MDO’s CEO, “As part of MDO’s vision, the programme aims to prepare and develop young Omani competencies to be able to lead the mining sector’s growth and achieve sustainable economic and social development”.

He added: “The programme included many scientific aspects related to airborne geophysical surveys, such as survey planning, adjustment and procedures, information quality control, data processing using four geophysical methods including magnetic, electromagnetic, gravity and surveying techniques, in addition to many information related to the science of geophysical surveys”.

Martin Bates, Geophysicists and Cartography Manager at SGL said: “Sander Geophysics is pleased to have the opportunity to

spend time sharing knowledge of airborne geophysical techniques with the members of MDO and the wider community of Earth scientists in Oman.”

“We believe there is a strong benefit to everyone involved in promoting a sense of partnership and mutual understanding between the airborne survey company and those who would use the data for exploration purposes. This ensures the data is used to its maximum potential in the characterisation of existing natural resources and in the discovery of new economic deposits”.

Participants expressed interest in the programme, emphasising that it provides an opportunity to learn more about the project, which is a core base for the exploration of metallic ores.

Furthermore, it equips specialists, researchers, and workers with the latest technologies used in the field of mineral exploration.

It’s worth mentioning that MDO announced the start of the airborne survey for exploration of metallic minerals, which is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy & Minerals (MoEM) and a number of government entities in a solid reflection of the recent government directions aimed at promoting mining sector for effective contribution into the national economic growth.

Minerals Development Oman was established in 2017 with a clear strategic vision to invest in the mining sector in the Sultanate of Oman and to increase its contribution to the growth of the economic and social sectors by creating job opportunities and building local competencies, in addition, to supporting small businesses and to develop the in-country value.

Zanzibar President’s shrimp farm visit explores investment prospects



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 15

Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, and his accompanying delegation visited Qurun Shrimp Aquaculture Farm - Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, as part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During this tour at the farm, Fisheries Development Oman showcased how their aquaculture

developments which focuses on sustainability, competitiveness, in-country value, supporting national food security objectives, creation of employment opportunities, diversification of aquaculture sector production streams.

The President’s tour at the Shrimp Aquaculture Farm in Qurun included going through the different farming process stages starting from the hatchery, nursery to the grow out ponds.

The farm includes 220 grow out pods at 5,000 square metres each. The farm has a great economic potential and high impact in Oman’s fish production.

Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, expressed in a statement his happiness to visit the Sultanate of Oman, describing it as “fruitful”.

He said that his visit to Qurun shrimp farm is an opportunity to explore many areas of cooperation

with the Oman Investment Authority, whether they are investments in Tanzania or Zanzibar in particular.

He also express his admiration of this farm and what he saw amongst many projects during his visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

He also stressed about working with Oman to ensure the knowledge he acquired towards implementing them in the projects in Zanzibar.

UK’s new FM admits taxes to rise

LONDON: Britain’s new finance minister on Saturday warned of looming tax hikes as he admitted to “mistakes” made in a disastrous budget that still threatens to bring down Prime Minister Liz Truss.

“Truss fights for survival,” The Times newspaper headlined a day after she forced chancellor of the exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng to carry the can for market turmoil sparked by their budget on September 23.

The Times, Telegraph and other newspapers reported that senior Conservative members of parliament were still plotting to unseat Truss, possibly within days, aghast at the party’s collapse in opinion polls since she replaced Boris Johnson on September 6.

New chancellor Jeremy Hunt indicated he would be tearing up the strategy that brought Truss to 10 Downing Street.

“There were mistakes,” acknowledged Hunt, a former foreign secretary who is seen as a Tory centrist.

He said Kwarteng and Truss had erred in trying to cut taxes for the highest earners, and in presenting their budget without independent forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

“The prime minister’s recognised that, that’s why I’m



New Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt leaves 10 Downing Street in London. – Reuters

here,” Hunt told Sky News.

In one of his first acts on taking office late on Friday, the new minister spoke to Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey, who has had to stage costly interventions to calm febrile bond markets.

“They discussed the importance of tackling global inflation, and their commitment to economic growth and fiscal discipline,” the Treasury tweeted.

Tax cuts were the centrepiece of the ill-starred budget announced

by Kwarteng and Truss.

But they were financed through billions in more borrowing, causing panic on financial markets, which has fed into higher costs for British households in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

“We will have some very difficult decisions ahead,” Hunt said, warning that “all government departments” face spending restraint.

“And some taxes will not be cut as quickly as people want. Some

taxes will go up.”

Hunt confirmed he would deliver a new fiscal statement on October 31, telling BBC radio he had a “clean slate” to start afresh -- underlining that Truss has considerably weakened her own position after coming to power on a hard-charging platform of reform.

Truss dismissed Kwarteng hours after he had rushed home early from international finance meetings in Washington, and staged another U-turn in acquiescing to a significant rise in profits tax levied on companies.

At a subsequent Downing Street news conference, her first since succeeding Johnson, the prime minister gave a widely panned performance which did nothing to calm market nerves.

Truss took only four questions, looking nervously around the room and delivering terse replies.

She insisted she had acted “decisively” in firing Kwarteng to bring about “economic stability” -- but the pound resumed its slide on currency markets and UK bond markets wobbled anew.

Asked why she herself should not resign, Truss said she was “absolutely determined to see through what I have promised”.

— AFP

Bank Muscat posts net profit of RO 148.29m for 9 months till Sept 30

Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the nine months ended September 30, 2022. The bank posted a net profit of RO 148.29 million for the period compared to RO 140.16 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 5.8 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

1)Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at RO 254.93 million for

the nine months period ended 30 September 2022 compared to RO 252.48 million for the same period in 2021, an increase of 1.0 per cent.

2)Non-interest income was RO 117.10 million for the nine months period ended 30 September 2022 as compared to RO 105.85 million for the same period in 2021, mainly due to higher income from sale of investments.

3)Operating expenses for the nine months period ended September 30, 2022 was RO 156.18 million as compared to

Key highlights of preliminary unaudited results			
Particulars (RO millions) For the period ended	30 Sep 2022	30 Sep 2021	Change (%)
Net interest income & Islamic financing income	254.93	252.48	1.0%
Other operating income	117.10	105.85	10.6%
Operating expenses	156.18	144.33	8.2%
Operating profit	215.85	214.00	0.9%
Net profit	148.29	140.16	5.8%
Particulars (RO millions) as at	30 Sep 2022	30 Sep 2021	Change (%)
Total Assets	12,773	12,819	-0.4%
Net loans and Islamic financing	9,229	9,158	0.8%
- Conventional loans and advances	7,778	7,805	-0.3%
- Islamic financing receivables	1,451	1,353	7.2%
Customer deposits and Islamic deposits	8,709	8,698	0.1%
- Conventional customer deposits	7,501	7,550	-0.6%
- Islamic customer deposits	1,208	1,148	5.2%
Total Equity attributable to equity holders	2,043	1,972	3.6%

RO 144.33 million for the same period in 2021, an increase of 8.2 per cent.

4)Net Impairment for credit and other losses for the nine months period ended September 30, 2022 was RO 41.58 million as against RO 46.77 million for the same period in 2021. The decrease is mainly attributed to the precautionary and collective provisions created by the bank during 2021.

5)Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 0.8 per cent to RO 9,229 million as

against RO 9,158 million as at September 30, 2021.

6)Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased marginally to RO 8,709 million as against RO 8,698 million as at September 30, 2021.

The full results for the nine months period ended September 30, 2022 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during October 2022.

KR Eshraqa, MoE sign MoU to support infrastructure development of schools

MUSCAT: Khimji Ramdas Group's (KR) Eshraqa has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education (MoE), to enhance the infrastructure of government schools in Wilayat Dima W'attayeen, by equipping them with Smart Televisions, Smart Interactive Boards, Desktops and Security Cameras.

The MoU was signed by Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, and Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the third Oman Science Festival, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

By providing digital amenities such as Smart Televisions and Interactive Boards, Eshraqa aims to help the schools make lessons more engaging, interactive and productive for both students and teachers.

Commenting on the MoU, Nailesh, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group said, "In line with Oman's Vision 2040 goals, our constant



support to 'education' comes as a continuation of Eshraqa's initiatives to develop and improve the sector, by providing infrastructure that is at par with modern education globally. The infrastructure and learning environment of schools have a direct impact on students and teachers, and on the quality of education."

Majid bin Said al Bahri, mentioned: "Children across the country deserve a quality education to embark on their life's journeys successfully and become the leaders of tomorrow. We thank Khimji Ramdas' Eshraqa for their commitment to the development and progress of local communities; and urge other private sector companies to participate in similar efforts that help strengthen the education sector."

Sohar Islamic offers free of charge local, intl transfers through mobile application

MUSCAT: Continuing to innovate for providing better customer service and enhanced digital financial inclusion, Sohar Islamic announced its Free Remittance Offer.

The offer extended until December 31 allows Sohar Islamic retail customers to transfer money to a local account or internationally with no charge when using Sohar Islamic mobile banking app.

Revealing the new offer, Abdul Wahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer said, "The free remittance offer is an exclusive solution to enable our customers to carry out instant money transfers with no fees. Additionally, customers can now make the most of the current exchange rates after removing the fees related to transferring money, especially for transfers abroad. This will definitely enhance the banking experience for our customers while supporting the broader digitalisation objectives of the nation."

The Sohar Islamic mobile app features a modern, streamlined



look that caters ease of navigation, allowing customers to do banking on the go with facilities to view account balances, transfer funds, pay utility bills, credit card payments and much more.

Prior to the commencement of the campaign, prices for domestic transfers were between RO 1 to RO 3, while international transfer were charged RO 5 per transaction in addition to the VAT.

With an all-pervasive culture of innovation, best-in-class operations, and a keen focus on contributing to the country's socio-economic progress, the bank continues to invest significantly in digitalisation, providing structured and customised array of relevant technologies and digital capabilities to ensure it is fully geared for the future.

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier oceanfront lifestyle and leisure destination, has won three titles at the highly prestigious International Property Awards affirming its reputation and profile as a global leader within the real estate industry.

The International Property Awards is an annual event that recognises the highest levels of achievement in real estate where companies from all over the world compete for the prestigious mark of excellence. Divided into four areas of Architecture, Development, International Design and Real Estate, the winners were announced this week at a glittering ceremony in Dubai.

Two of Al Mouj's title wins are in the Best Residential Development 20+ Units category and relate to its exclusive collection of villas Golf Beach Residences which is adding 51 exceptional contemporary five and six-bedroom oceanside villas to its impressive property portfolio. It achieved best Residential Development for 20



Plus Units both for Oman and Arabia.

Al Mouj also won best Development Marketing. The award in recognition of Beyond Dreams, an innovative and unique campaign that supported the launch of Golf Beach Residences. This is the second international win for Beyond Dreams as in July it scooped the Real Estate Asia prize for Marketing & Brand Initiative of the Year.

The Beyond Dreams campaign captured the imagination of prospective buyers, with the retelling of a fairy-tale about a gentle-yet-bold female protagonist and a mythical unicorn who find a home within each other. Featuring a film, it became the most watched viral advertisement in Oman, with around 38 million views contributing to 90 per cent of the first phase being sold within four weeks. Al Mouj has also won the

best Marketing Brand Creation at international level.

Commenting on the wins, Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: "I am delighted that these International Property Awards recognise what sets Al Mouj Muscat apart and we welcome the global profile that they will bring."

"They reflect both the extraordinary talent of our people and the outstanding quality of our homes as we continue to have a positive economic impact for Oman."

"Our oceanside setting and first-class dining, leisure and retail amenities, along with an award-winning golf course which is in the region's top two plus an elegant 400-berth marina, has earned Al Mouj a reputation as our country's finest and most vibrant lifestyle destination. And in addition to attracting close to 4 million visitors a year which helps boost opportunities for local businesses, our residents experience a true sense of belonging."

Own a Kia Carens and get a chance to win fully paid trip to World Cup

Kia's all-new Carens is now available with Kia's most popular offer. Buy the all-new Kia Carens and get an opportunity to win a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup event in Qatar.

During this campaign, Kia customers owning a brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, LIVE in action. Apart from Fifa Qatar match tickets, customers will also get Comprehensive Service up to 50,000 kms and 1 Year Insurance. The campaign will end on November 4, 2022.

The Kia Carens is a recreational vehicle (RV) that sports a perfect balance of being a family mover and a SUV in one compelling package. The three-row Kia Carens is comfortable and spacious with the longest wheelbase in its class.

The Kia Carens is powered with a 114 HP, 1,497 cc MPI, Euro 4 engine with 14.7 kg.m. torque.



This is paired to a CVT for smooth and thrilling drives.

The Carens' stylish exterior embodies Kia's latest design philosophy - 'Opposites United.' The SUV-like exterior design shows the confidence and innovation of the Kia Carens. The LED DRL in the headlamps is designed based on Kia's new signature lighting concept - 'The Star Map'.

The interior of the Kia Carens

is impressive. The sophisticated interior features soothing colours, plenty of storage space with a layout designed to put all occupants at ease.

The One Touch Easy Electric Tumble in the second-row ensures easy ingress and egress of the patrons in the car. The second row also features recline and slide functions for utmost comfort. In addition to the optimum space and recline functions, the third-row

seats can also be flattened in the boot to ensure maximum cargo space. The car also incorporates cooling cup holders & Easy Push Retractable cup holder.

Giving the Interior of the Carens an even more appealing look is the dashboard which has a wide high-gloss black panel that accentuates the overall design.

The door trims look stylish and are uniquely designed for offering storage space. Inspired by airplane seats, all three-seat rows in the Carens combine comfort with aesthetics by matching materials, patterns and colours in an elegant manner. The centre switches are uniquely designed so that they highlight the smart experience the Carens offers. The features in the Carens include 8" audio display, Android auto & car play, roof-fused 2nd & 3rd AC vents, power windows, radio with USB control, 5 USB C Type charger interfaces, driver's seat height adjuster, one touch tumble electric folding 2nd row seats, tinted glass and more.



Huawei MEA holds second annual Innovation Day

MUSCAT: Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, held the second annual Huawei Innovation Day with customers, partners and technology experts from the Middle East and Africa.

Held in parallel with Gitex GLOBAL 2022, the Huawei MEA Innovation Day 2022 was organised in partnership with the Arab ICT Organization (AICTO) under the theme of "Collaboration to Unleash Innovation for Sustainable Digital Future". The annual event gathered the region's government leaders from different sectors, industry analysts, ICT ecosystem partners and international standardisation, and Huawei's senior leadership team.

Jeff Wang, Global President of Public Affairs and Communications Huawei, delivered the opening keynote speech to highlight Huawei's commitment to supporting the MEA digital transformation and ICT sustainability future.

Participating in a panel discussion that covered the importance of empowering the role of women in technology, Dr Eman al Abri, Dean of the College of Computing and Information Sciences, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, said, "Online education and work-from-home environments have eliminated the physical barriers that held back women from achieving their full potential in the Middle East and Africa. Now, we can further leverage technology to boost

Huawei MEA Innovation Day highlights how collaboration can unleash innovation for a sustainable digital future

inclusivity through online training and upskilling."

She added, "As a university, we see the immense value of engaging the government and private sector in preparing our students for the job market and closing the gap between theory and practical knowledge. Additionally, industry training and professional certificates effectively empower students with practical knowledge to further their careers."

The panel, moderated by Caroline Faraj, CNN VP and CNN Arabic Editor-in-Chief, was attended by Dr Fatma Taher, IEEE UAE Section Chair, Dr Mardin Abdullah Anwar, Director of ICT and Statistics at Salahuddin University, Erbil, Iraq, and Rania Halimeh, Regional Director, META, Logical Operations.

Panelists discussed the importance of improving university curriculums and programmes in light of ICT accelerated innovation, and filling the talent gap in cybersecurity, among other topics.

Eng Mohamed Ben Amor, Secretary-General of the Arab ICT Organization (AICTO), the event partner, delivered the keynote

speech, highlighting the importance of collaboration between various regional stakeholders and global partners to build an integrated ICT ecosystem for a sustainable digital economy.

"We are delighted with this collaboration with Huawei around an insightful topic increasingly becoming the keystone for sustainable technological development," Ben Amor stated, adding, "If 'innovation' was always and will remain the engine of economic and social progress with a profound transformational impact on our lives, technological innovation will be, without any doubt, the compulsory way towards a better digital future. Therefore, we highly trust that technological innovation will help transform challenges into opportunities and shorten the path to achieving our common goals. This requires a strong regional and international cooperation framework to strengthen national and regional innovation systems and models leading to innovative and sustainable technological initiatives."

Steven Yi, President of Huawei Middle East & Africa, added: "We are honoured with the distinguished audience in our Innovation Day MEA 2022. Our mission remains to bring the broadest ICT ecosystem together to inspire change and deliver socioeconomic growth."

"We are hopeful the lessons we take from the event will help bring us closer to an open, intelligent world that has been our mission from Day 1."

SV Pittie Sohar Textile announces full-fledged commercial operation

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT

SV Pittie Sohar Textiles announced the formal full-fledged commercial operations of Phase 1 in the presence of its board of directors and the senior officials of the financing banks namely Sohar International Bank and Ahli Bank.

Phase-1 comprising Unit 1 – 3,500 rotors and Unit 2 – 150,000 spindles is one the world's largest spinning facility and is the only of its kind in the GCC region.

The plant is a modern and state of art technology facility capable of producing variety of yarns ranging from coarse to fine counts.

The cost of the project is RO 57 million.

Due to the unique location of the facility at Sohar Free Zone in the vicinity of Sohar Port, the yarn produced in the Sultanate of Oman has strategic and logistics advantage.

"The company is proud of its dedicated employees, especially the female Omani operators which joined the workforce after successfully completing an intense and enhanced training programme. The 600 local workforce represent a major and key part of the production, quality and maintenance team. The yarn manufactured is exported to the



world under the banner 'Made in Oman by Omanis for the World,' says a statement issued by the company.

The Board of Directors extended their appreciation to the shareholders, the financing

banks and government authorities especially the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Sohar Port and Free Zone for their support in this journey as the company commenced full operations.

NFT can change the concept of ownership the way we know it

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) were the most hyped blockchain trend in 2021, and although the volumes have decreased significantly, there is still so much more that has not been explored.

NFT may be used to represent unique digital assets, like the original CryptoKitties and the virtual buildings in the famous metaverse Decentraland. NFTs can be used to proof ownership of any digital item, such as in-game skins, all the way up to physical properties in the real world.

Non-fungible tokens can be used for digital assets that must be distinguished from one another in order to demonstrate their value, or their scarcity. This means non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, can be used to define a unique object, whether it is in the real world or in a digital form. In simple words, an NFT is just a contract with a unique ID.

That ID on the blockchain is made of a long string of numbers and letters, which in turn can be wrapped around the content of the contract. That could be a picture, or a property title... and anything in between.

NFTs are digital representations of assets, and they have been likened to digital passports, as each token contains a unique, non-transferable identity that differentiates it from other tokens.



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The author is a member of the International Press Association

The unique data in an NFT makes it easier to check and validate ownership and the transfer of a token among owners. Just like cryptocurrency, NFTs also include ownership details to easily identify and transfer tokens among owners.

NFTs may only have one owner at any given time, and NFTs use of blockchain technology makes it easier to prove ownership and transfer tokens between owners.

NFTs means ownership of assets has transferred to the actual purchaser, and as a consequence they can be bought and sold on a game platform, with additional value applied - or discount - depending on who has owned them down the road.

Because NFTs have value set mostly by the market and its demand, they can be bought and sold like other physical types of

artwork on digital marketplaces.

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are attractive because they are verifiable about their uniqueness and ownership. They can be used in applications developed by a web3 start-up, and can easily be traded via secondary markets.

Unlike standard coins on Bitcoins blockchain, NFTs are unique and cannot be traded as such (hence, they are not fungible). Whereas a Bitcoin is directly exchangeable with another, meaning that it is fungible, NFTs are conversely, as the underlying assets are somehow unique and cannot be traded like-for-like.

An NFT basically allows its purchaser to claim to own an original copy of the digital file, just as one can claim the original copy of a work of physical art, or the master files for a musical recording. Ownership of NFT assets may differ depending on the deal, but the Nyan Cat example is a common scenario where the artist who created the piece still owns the piece, but the NFT purchaser owns the original copy and the right to expand on it, as if it was a design covered by a trademark.

Although art NFT made the headlines on the news in the past, future use cases might be significantly more interconnected in our day to day life.

■ FUND TO HELP CONSUMERS FROM INFLATION



A shopper buys pineapples at a fruit and vegetable market in Berlin. Inflation will be eight per cent in 2022 and seven per cent in 2023, the German government forecast. The government recently unveiled a €200-billion fund to shield consumers and businesses from surging prices, which includes a cap on energy costs. – AFP

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **AL MUTAWER HOTELS AND RESORTS (SAOC)**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1078429**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 11,000,000.000 to 5,794,576.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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#Living_with_COVID19



A shutterbug's tale: 60 years behind the camera for Tor Eigeland

Tor Eigeland, an internationally known photojournalist, presents unique photos from travelling the world on various assignments. His new book, a photo memoir 'Stuff Happens' The Far from Humdrum Life of a Photojournalist captivates the readers. Tor contributed to a wide range of publications including National Geographic, Time Life, Fortune, The New York Times and Aramco World. He recollects his long association with Oman and his love for the country but vows never to give up his cameras... **P20**

Syria uncovers 'unmatched' Roman-era mosaic in ex- rebel stronghold

WAR-TORN SYRIA unveiled on Wednesday what antiquity authorities described as an "unmatched stunning mosaic," dating back to the Roman era.

The Syrian state news agency SANA reported that the large mosaic panel had

been unearthed in the city of al-Rastan, a former rebel stronghold, in the province of Homs in central Syria.

SANA added that the panel has no parallel in the world.

The director of excavation studies and the archaeologi-

cal mission in al-Rastan, Humam Saad, told dpa that the discovery took place in 2018, but the area was at the time under the control of opposition forces. Government troops later recaptured the city.

Al-Rastan, which witnessed heavy fighting between government forces and opposition rebels since Syria's uprising erupted in 2011, has many ancient archaeological sites dating back to the Roman era.

Saad added that the discovery is considered one of the most important and rarest mosaic panels in the world, with a length of 20 metres and a width of 6 metres. It features two main scenes.

He said its detailed scenes display the war between the Greeks and Trojans. The mosaic also shows Amazon warriors. — dpa



READ

MAD HONEY

BY JODI PICOULT

AND JENNIFER FINNEY BOYLAN

After returning to her hometown, Olivia McAfee's son gets accused of killing his crush.



THE HARVEST

A harvester collects honey at night when the bees are less aggressive. In Bossangoa, in the northwest of the Central African Republic, renowned for its fragrant honey, four beekeepers walk silently towards a wooden hive perched on top of a mango tree. — AFP



A MUCH-NEEDED PEACE

A member of the Oficina de Envigado criminal organisation holds his gun next to religious images at a house in Medellin, Colombia. Seven days without a murder: the month of August marked a record for Colombia's second city of Medellin, home of infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar and still gripped by the violence he sowed 30 years ago. "In Medellin, security is measured in lives" saved, mayor Daniel Quintero welcomed the achievement. — AFP





A century of Surrealism on show at London Design Museum

FROM SALVADOR Dalí's lip-shaped sofa to the dreamlike video clips of Icelandic artist Björk, Surrealism has influenced design for almost a century.

The complex evolution is now being explored in a new exhibition — "Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 - Today" — which opens on Friday at London's Design Museum.

Visitors are welcomed upon arrival by one of the most notorious

telephone, a lamp stand made of champagne glasses, a chair with human arms, and a sofa shaped like the lips of actress Mae West.

But even before Dalí, early 20th-century modernist architect Antoni Gaudí had already tried "to give objects which could be purely functional, an emotional kick and a psychological impact through this sort of changing form to something much more organic and emotional", said curator Kathryn Johnson.

chair made of Disney stuffed animals created by Brazilians Fernando and Humberto Campana (2007).

Two lamps made of horsehair by British artist Jonathan Trayte (2022) also go to show "unexpected design" in everyday objects.

Dalí collaborated with Walt Disney in the 1940s and Christian Dior in the 1950s, helping Surrealist contributions to continue to the present day.

During the pandemic, young

economic and political instability, because surrealism was founded on a creative embrace of chaos, it accepts uncertainty, the inexplicable, and I think we need it now."

Music videos of songs such as "Utopia", "Mutual Core" and "Hidden Place" — made by Björk between 2001 and 2017 — show dreamlike relationships between humans, nature and technology.

According to Johnson, even strange images generated by arti-



depictions of the human psyche: "Metamorphosis of Narcissus", painted by Dalí in 1937.

The Spanish painter's entire oeuvre was influenced by theories on the subconscious, in particular by Sigmund Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams", which he read while studying in Madrid in the 1920s.

Through his British patron Edward James, Dalí met the Austrian neurologist in London in 1938. The exhibition begins with the fruit of Dalí and James's close collaboration.

Dalí created numerous pieces of iconic future for the British poet and patron such as a lobster-shaped

- FURNITURE, FILM, FASHION -

Born in literature before spreading to visual art, Surrealism declined as an artistic movement in the early 1950s but it survived in design.

In fact, some of its creations "seem to have really found their moment in this century", Johnson said.

Such was the case for a broken-foot lamp commissioned from Dalí in 1937, which was considered too avant-garde for the market at the time and it wasn't until 2019 that the lamp was manufactured.

The exhibition features a huge lamp on a plastic horse by Swedish studio Front (2006) and an arm-

British-Nigerian couturiere Yasmina Atta designed garments inspired by Afro-Surrealism, such as a woollen top with butterfly wings which can be electrically activated.

"She made it during lockdown, and I think it captures that feeling of trying to fly away from us being stuck in one place," Johnson said.

- TURBULENT TIMES -

The exhibition argues that Surrealism, a reaction to the horrors of World War I and the 1918 flu pandemic, has undergone a resurgence in turbulent times.

"It's no accident that these moments coincide with periods of

cial intelligence "can result in different kinds of art".

"Artificial intelligence is modelled on the way that the brain works, and it doesn't surprise us that it can be creative, but it's fascinating to see how that may play out in the future," she added.

Despite the exhibition's inclusion of iconic photographs such as Man Ray's "Le violon d'Ingres" (1924), Mateo Kries, director of the German Vitra Design Museum which loaned many pieces to the show, said that today Surrealism is, "no longer an art movement but an attitude that you can have towards art or design".

— AFP

TRAVEL TALES

Romania's epic trail hopes to revive rural Transylvania



EUROPE HAS A NEW epic trail to rival the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

The Via Transilvanica across Romania is so long, it took its founder Alin Useriu nearly two months to walk to celebrate its official opening this week.

The 52-year-old first had the idea for the 1,400-km (870-mile) way through the wilds of Transylvania four years ago.

Useriu wanted to create something similar to the ancient pilgrim route to Santiago or the vast American Pacific Crest Trail.

Little did he know then that more than 10,000 people would help turn that dream into reality, volunteering to mark out the route through the Carpathians and some of the most spectacular landscape on the continent.

"My only goal was to revitalise rural areas, and all the friends I talked to were thrilled about the project," he said.



- RURAL EXODUS -

Romanians have embraced the idea with gusto.

"This is the first project since the revolution (of 1989) which really brings us together, which allows us to discover landscapes and people that we would not have otherwise," said mud-splattered Sergiu Paca, who AFP met cycling the route in the isolated village of Sapartoc near Sighisoara.

Nearby, Radu Moldovan has transformed one of the deserted old village homes into a pretty guest-house.

"We wanted to put into practice all the beautiful theories we had learned at university and be a living example," said the farmer who trained in environmental issues and rural development.

"I could not have dreamed of better for Sapartoc," said the 35-year-old, hoping it will be a major boost to the village of 22 souls.

Despite strong economic growth, Romania has seen an exodus of young people from rural areas, with some of the country's most beautiful regions suffering the heaviest depopulation.

In Archita, another village on the route, truffle farmer Gheorghe Silian — who sports a traditional felt hat — also hoped the trail would help bring life back to the region.

"I moved back here after several years in Italy," said the 58-year-old, one of millions of Romanians who emigrated to Western Europe in search of a better life after the collapse of communism.

- FIRST BABY IN 47 YEARS -

"For the past three years (after the trail was laid out) tourists have reappeared, coming here for a meal or to rest for the night," he said as he surveyed his oak and almond trees.

"It also means I can sell them my truffle-based products and my palinka," the local plum brandy.

The eco-tourism the trail hopes to encourage is also about preserving local architecture and traditions.

Not that Useriu sees much danger of mass tourism of the kind seen on Romania's Black Sea beaches.

"We have set the maximum traffic at 300,000 people per year, and we are far from it yet," he said.

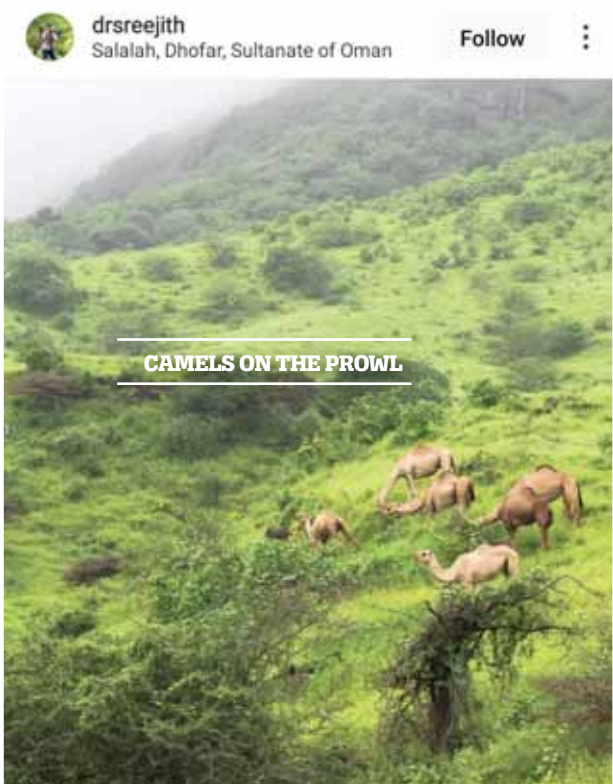
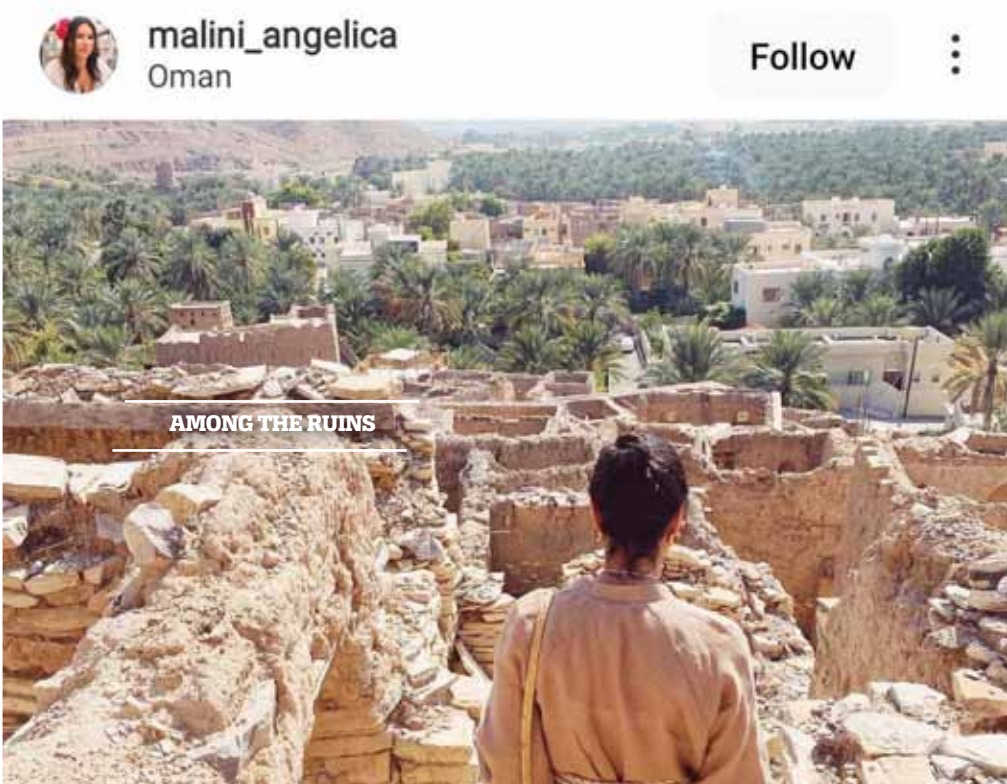
But already Useriu's dream of the trail helping to revitalise mountain villages seems to be bearing fruit.

"My wife gave birth to our son a few months ago — the first birth in the village of Sapartoc for 47 years!" said Moldovan. — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Extinction threatens pollinating hoverflies in Europe: IUCN



MORE THAN A THIRD of hoverfly species — key pollinators — are threatened with extinction in Europe, largely due to intensive agriculture, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said on Tuesday.
There is more to the humble hoverfly than meets the eye.
Masters of the art of mimicry — they masquerade as small wasps to avoid being eaten by birds — hoverflies are critical for the planet's food security and farming systems.
The larvae eat sap-sucking aphids that damage many commercial crops, thus providing a



chemical-free pest control service.
The winged adults are the second most significant pollinator group in the world after bees and often visit flowers at higher rates than bees.
Yet around 37 per cent of all hoverfly species in Europe are threatened with extinction, according to the IUCN's first continent-wide assessment.
Intensive agriculture, harmful pesticides, unsustainable commercial forestry, urban development and climate change are the main threats, says the report, which was funded by the European Commission.
IUCN Director General Bruno Oberle said there were solutions available, including protecting wetlands and ancient trees where the larvae of hoverflies and other insect species feed.
Planting field margins with wildflowers and restoring hedgerows are also beneficial to winged pollinators.
Climate change poses a particular threat, as it contributes to forest fires, which clear dead wood and old trees, forcing hoverflies and other species out.
"We urgently need to transform all sectors of our economies, and especially agriculture, to become nature-positive and sustainable," Oberle said. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Asia's top film festival roots for regional talent



FROM A SINGAPOREAN widow on a K-drama voyage of self-discovery to teenagers seeking revenge on a bully, the movies vying for the key prize at the Busan International Film Festival showcase a diverse array of Asian experiences.
Ten films are in the running for the high-profile New Currents award at the festival — Asia's largest — which will hand out two prizes of \$30,000 to first- or second-time Asian directors on Friday.
Host South Korea — now a cultural powerhouse thanks to the explosive success of the Oscar-winning film "Parasite" and the Netflix series "Squid Game" — has two films in competition, including the highly talked-about "Hail to Hell" by Lim Oh-jeong.
The entertaining, at times genre-defying flick follows two teenage girls as they travel to Seoul to confront their bully.
Critics have hailed its fresh approach to tackling popular tropes of South Korean cinema, including suicide and cults.
Lim, 40, has been coming to Busan as an audience member to watch films for two decades and said it was both "a huge honour and nerve-wracking" for local film-makers like her to have their work in competition.
Her film was inspired by the universal "moments that make us want to die

because we are so alone and in so much pain", she said.
But festival director Huh Moon-young said its goal was to nurture regional film-makers, not just home-grown talent.
"Supporting Asian film-makers and rooting for them is the real responsibility of the Busan Film Festival," he said.
Other movies in the New Currents section include Thai film-maker Thapane Loosuwan's "Blue Again", which tells the story of a mixed-race girl in Bangkok, and Indian director Jaishankar Aryar's "Shivamma", which features a struggling middle-aged woman who falls for a pyramid scheme.
SINGAPORE'S OSCAR ENTRY
To that end, the New Currents prize selection features a diverse selection of the region's up-and-coming talents.
An upbeat South Korean-Singaporean co-production called "Ajoomma" about a Singaporean widow who visits South Korea has been a hit with festival-goers, and is Singapore's entry for the 2023 Oscars.
Director He Shuming said it was inspired by his own mother's obsession with Korean soap operas, and her efforts to forge a new identity for herself once her children had grown up.

"Like many Singaporean adults, I still live with my parents. I was observing her aging, and how she's also embarking on a chapter of her life, as much as I am," he said.
When his mother returned from her first trip to South Korea "she changed all our utensils at home to Korean ones. So that obsession then amused me," director He told AFP.
Women of his mother's generation have spent their lives being mothers "and when their kids find their way out of the nests, they usually expect the next step is being a grandmother".
The film asks: "What if that doesn't happen? And can they forge an identity beyond being a mother?"
The title "Ajoomma" is a Korean term for middle-aged women or housewives, which means something equivalent to "auntie".
Other films in the section include Vietnamese Marcus Vu Manh Cuong's "Memento Mori: Earth", a tale of a young, terminally ill mother who discovers her husband plans to sell a kidney to make ends meet.
Also in the running is Japanese director Kubota Nao's "Thousand and One Nights", about an aging woman whose husband went missing around three decades ago.
The festival will announce the winners at the closing ceremony on Friday. — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

As oceans rise, are some nations doomed to vanish?



IF RISING SEAS engulf the Maldives and Tuvalu, will those countries be wiped off the map? And what happens to their citizens?
The prospect is no longer science fiction as global warming gathers pace, posing an unprecedented challenge to the international community, and threatening entire peoples with the loss of their land and identity.
"This is the biggest tragedy that a people, a country, a nation can face," Mohamed Nasheed, former president of the Maldives, told AFP.
According to UN climate experts, sea levels have already risen 15 to 25 cm (six to 10 inches) since 1900, and the pace of rise is accelerating, especially in some tropical areas.
If warming trends continue, the oceans could rise by nearly one additional metre (39 inches) around the Pacific and Indian Ocean islands by the end of the century.
This is still below the highest point of the smallest, flattest island states, but rising seas will be accompanied by an increase in storms and tidal surges: Salt contamination to water and land will make many atolls uninhabitable long before they are covered over by the sea.
According to a study cited by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, five nations (the Maldives, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Kiribati) may become uninhabitable by 2100, creating 600,000 stateless climate refugees.

'LEGAL FICTION'
It is an unprecedented situation. States have, of course, been wiped off the map by wars. But "we haven't had a situation where existing states have completely lost territory due to a physical event, or events, like sea-level rise, or severe weather events," noted Sumudu

Atapattu, of the University of Wisconsin in Madison.
But the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, a reference on the subject, is clear: A state consists of a defined territory, a permanent population, a government and the capacity to interact with other states. So if the territory is swallowed up, or no one can live on what is left of it, at least one of the criteria falls.
"The other thing that I argue is that statehood is a fiction, legal fiction we created for purposes of international law. So we should be able to come up with another fiction to encompass these deterritorialised states," Atapattu added.
That is the idea behind the "Rising Nations" initiative launched in September by several Pacific governments: "convince members of the UN to recognise our nation, even if we are submerged under water, because that is our identity," the prime minister of Tuvalu, Kausea Natano, explained to AFP.
Some people are already thinking about how these Nation-States 2.0 might work.
"You could have land somewhere, people somewhere else, and government in the third place," Kamal Amakrane, managing director of the Global Centre for Climate Mobility at Columbia University, told AFP.
This would first require a "political declaration" by the UN, then a "treaty" between the threatened state and a "host state," ready to receive the government in exile in a kind of permanent embassy. The population, which might be in that state or even a different one, would then have dual nationality.
Amakrane, a former UN official, also draws attention to an ambiguity in the Montevideo Convention: "When you speak about territory, is it dry or wet territory?" — AFP



art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | OCTOBER 16 | 2022

A shutterbug's tale: 60 years behind the camera for Tor Eigeland

LIJU CHERIAN
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Tor Eigeland, aged 91, a Norwegian born internationally known photojournalist lives a quiet life in Dorset, a county in south-west England.

Tor has launched his book *Stuff Happens – the Far from Humdrum Life of a Photojournalist*, which offers ample recollection of his visits to Oman starting from the 1970s. He recalls having then returned at least a dozen times over the next 35 years, staying for two or three weeks each trip.

He was privileged to have access to people and places, traveling widely and covering a lot of ground in a short time.

In his book *Stuff Happens – the Far from Humdrum Life of a Photojournalist*, Tor looks back over a life packed with adventures, starting in 1947 when he set off from Oslo – aged just 16, as a deckhand bound for Shanghai. His desire to travel and a keen sense of curiosity led him into photojournalism.

Published earlier in 2022, his book recounts stories and anecdotes from about 60 years of worldwide travel, contributing to some of the top publications: "This incredible, unique memoir, with varied tales and anecdotes, the culmination of a life's work – all wonderfully photographed – is captivating from start to finish."

Tor's first noteworthy assignment to the Sultanate of Oman was back in 1981 for a National Geographic book titled *The Desert Realm*. Having already worked on other Geographic book projects, he was assigned the Middle East chapter, which took him to Saudi Arabia, Oman and Jordan.

Says Tor, "My text highlighted the history, development, geography and people, and in Oman I traveled widely from Salalah to Musandam to see and learn as much as possible."

One moment that still stands out in his mind was when he was on his way to photograph the beautiful Mughsayl and Taqah beach with the mountains behind.

Tor recalls that the beach was deserted, only a few fishing boats pulled up on the sand. "Nobody around. The following day I went back and it was like a

different place. There were millions of sardines all drying in the sun. The sand was completely covered and it was an incredible sight."

Looking back at what he wrote in that *Desert Realm* chapter, Tor called Oman "a land of watchtowers and castles, and a thousand miles of unspoiled beaches along the Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea".

Much of what he learnt about Oman for that National Geographic book helped him for another large assignment a couple of years later for *Aramco World*, a bi-monthly subscription only magazine.

An entire special issue in 1983 featured the Sultanate of Oman, titled *Oman – A New Dawn*. His memorable visit to Washington DC is referred to in his recently published book, *Stuff Happens – the Far from Humdrum Life of a Photojournalist*.

In the chapter dedicated to Oman he also writes: "For that special 1983 *Aramco World* issue, I travelled to or over most corners of the country to get these photos, which showed everything from crafts, frankincense, the forts and beautiful beaches to the mountains and the wonderful people."

Not long after that assignment he was privileged to be asked by the Ministry of Information to take photographs for Oman '85, the Ministry's yearbook.

Very luckily, he knew Tony Ashworth, who worked for the Ministry and was able to facilitate access for Tor which included time with the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) so he could obtain aerial shots of a large part of the country including Musandam.

In helicopters they flew over the capital area and up to the rugged mountains and Al Jabal al Akhdhar. Flying quite low, busily photographing, Tor waved at some farmers on the ground who happily waved back. Flying over Nizwa and the Al Hajar Mountain chain, high and low over the incredible landscape and mountains gave him some very exciting moments, highly memorable to this day.

In 1987 Tor was back to take photos of scientists in the Rimal al Sharqiya working on the most intensive desert study at that time, led by the London-based Royal Geographical Society.

A total of 32 research projects were taking place over a five-month period covering everything from the dew-drinking beetle to the importance of ghaf tree in reforestation of arid areas.

Of particular interest was the study of the sand dune formation and movements giving evidence of environmental changes over thousands of years as well as signs of early inhabitants.

Rimal al Sharqiya was chosen for this study due to Oman's environmental policy and his photos were to show the scientists at work and were published in an *Aramco World* feature.

In 1987, he was back for a feature on Amouage, Oman's famous perfume, known as the 'Gift of Kings'. He saw how the frankincense resin is harvested from the trees in the desert near Salalah and spent time with Guy Robert, one of the world's best perfumers. Guy created the original Amouage and Amouage Gold fragrances.

In 2006, Tor completed his last assignment in Oman and it was for an entirely different kind of story for a glossy Spanish travel magazine, affiliated to National Geographic Traveller.

His text and photos, a 12-page feature, highlighted the history, geography and development of Oman and all there is to see and do for a visitor, from visiting old forts to lying on beautiful beaches or excursions into the desert.

"Oman has a special place in my memory. I was lucky to visit before its modernisation and much later. I am pleased to say that many of my early photos live on and are now of historical and cultural interest," adds Tor.

After a few different cameras in the early years, like Rolleiflex and Hasselblad, Tor changed to Nikon, first as analogue and then digital. Nikon D300 and Nikon 7000 were two of his favourites in later years, both digital.

Stuff Happens – the Far from Humdrum Life of a Photojournalist, is available to buy online through Amazon sites worldwide and with free international delivery from Book Depository.

Tor's last professional assignment was in 2016, and now takes pictures for pleasure. For details visit www.toreigeland.com and Instagram @toreigeland

