

‘Give priority to climate change’

GCC countries have urged the international community to give priority to climate change due to its wide and complex impacts. They voiced their concern for the phenomenon's negative implications to the security and safety of all humanity, including its right to food. This was unveiled in a statement delivered by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations (UN) and International Organisations in Geneva, on behalf of GCC states.

SEE P2



P10

OMAN OLYMPIC
DRAWS WITH
ALGERIA IN ARAB
SPORTS GAMES



P13

CBO LAUNCHES
COMPOSITE FINANCIAL
STABILITY INDICATOR
FOR OMAN



P18

HARNESSING THE
HEALING POWER OF
ART THERAPY FOR
MENTAL RECOVERY



MUSCAT

HM GREET'S US PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Joe Biden of the United States on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Joe Biden. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations and cooperation further development and growth.

OMAN CONDEMNS ISRAELI ATTACKS

The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its denunciation and condemnation of the recurrent Israeli attacks on the city of Jenin and Palestinian camps in the West Bank. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Monday, Oman voiced its firm stance and strong backing to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders in accordance with the two-state solution, relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Oman also underscored the significance of the international community's assuming its responsibilities on this issue, in line with international law, with the prime objective of realising fair and comprehensive peace.

SEE ALSO P6

CAIRO

POPE CONDEMNS BURNING OF QURAN

Pope Francis has condemned the burning of the Quran and expressed his "anger and disgust" at the recent incident in Stockholm when two men burned a copy of the Muslim holy book.

"I feel angry and disgusted by these actions," he told the United Arab Emirates' Al Ittihad newspaper in remarks published on Monday. "Any book considered holy must be respected out of respect for those who believe in it, and freedom of expression should never be used as an excuse to despise others," he added.

Several countries condemned the incident and castigated Swedish diplomats, saying the act incites hatred and should not count as free speech. Saudi Arabia summoned the Swedish ambassador to express its "rejection of the disgraceful act carried out by an extremist."

SEE P6

Royal Decree sets up Khazaen Economic City

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued two Royal decrees, reading as follows: Royal Decree No. 44/2023 establishes Khazaen Economic City and promulgates its Bylaw (articles of association).

Article (1) stipulates that an economic city shall be set up in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, to be named "Khazaen Economic City" and to be established on the land area demarcated in accordance with the layout attached to this decree. The city shall be under the supervision of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and it shall be governed by the attached Bylaw.

Article (2) states that two free zones shall be established within Khazaen Economic City on the specific land area demarcated in accordance with the attached layout, which is specified in the Development Agreement defined in the attached Bylaw.

Article (3) endorses the Development Agreement and the Usufruct Agreement for Khazaen Economic City stated in the attached Bylaw.

Article (4) states that Oman Logistics Company LLC shall be the operating party of Khazaen Economic City and the two free zones set up therein. Khazaen Economic City Company LLC shall be the developer of Khazaen Economic City and the two free zones set up therein.

Article (5) states that the Chairman of Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones shall issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the attached Bylaw.

Article (6) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. 45/2023 endorses the Sultanate of Oman's joining the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialised Agencies, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 21, 1947.

Article (1) endorses the Sultanate of Oman's joining the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialised

Agencies, in accordance with the version attached to this decree while at the same time observing the reservation of section (32) of article 9 of the convention.

Article (2) instructs the departments concerned to deposit the official document for joining the aforementioned convention in accordance with its provisions while at the same time observing the above-mentioned reservation.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA



BEAT THE HEAT

Dhofar with its misty Khareef season is attracting tourists from the region as well as the world. It is a perfect place to beat the heat. **REPORT ON P2 PHOTO BY AJI GEORGE**

Submit data before this month end for industrial survey

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion called upon industrial establishments to speed up the submission of their data for the past three years of 2020, 2021 and 2022 before the end of July for the Industrial Survey.

The periodic industrial survey, which this year targets 969 industrial establishments, seeks to provide an updated, comprehensive and accurate database on industrial establishments in the Sultanate of Oman in order to find advanced indicators to monitor and measure the performance of the industrial sector in a way that enhances transparency.

The survey also aims to identify investment opportunities and raise the

percentage of the local content of the sector. Its data is used in devising plans, policies, development programmes to meet the public interest.

Sami bin Salim al Sahib, Director-General of Industry at the Ministry, said that 186 establishments and factories submitted their data until the middle of June. He urged target companies and factories to submit their data as scheduled to avoid legal action.

Al Sahib pointed out that annual surveys establishments are an essential part of an integrated system for national industrial statistics. It provides data about each licensed industrial establishment whose investment cost exceeds RO 5,000 and employs more than 9 workers, he explained.

— ONA

Official urged target companies and factories to submit their data as scheduled to avoid legal action

Temperatures hit record as climate change fuels 2023 extremes

SINGAPORE: The target of keeping long-term global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius is moving out of reach, climate experts say, with nations failing to set more ambitious goals despite months of record-breaking heat on land and sea.

As envoys gathered in Bonn in early June to prepare for this year's annual climate talks in November, average global surface air temperatures were more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels for several days, the EU-funded Copernicus Climate Change

Service (C3S) said.

Though mean temperatures had temporarily breached the 1.5C threshold before, this was the first time they had done so in the northern hemisphere summer that starts on June 1. Sea temperatures also broke April and May records.

"We've run out of time because change takes time," said Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick, a climatologist at Australia's University of New South Wales.

As climate envoys from the two biggest greenhouse gas emitters



A child plays in the water fountain at Grand Park in Los Angeles, California, on Monday. — AFP

prepare to meet next month, temperatures broke June records in the Chinese capital Beijing, and extreme heatwaves have hit the United States.

Parts of North America were some 10C above the seasonal average this month, and smoke from forest fires blanketed Canada and the US East Coast in hazardous haze, with carbon emissions estimated at a record 160 million metric tonnes.

In India, one of the most climate vulnerable regions, deaths were reported to have spiked

as a result of sustained high temperatures, and extreme heat has been recorded in Spain, Iran and Vietnam, raising fears that last year's deadly summer could become routine.

Countries agreed in Paris in 2015 to try to keep long-term average temperature rises within 1.5C, but there is now a 66% likelihood the annual mean will cross the 1.5C threshold for at least one whole year between now and 2027, the World Meteorological Organization predicted in May.

— Reuters



Dhofar beckons as khareef season gains pace

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Yet again, with the misty clime and salubrious nature that wears green blanket with the arrival of the khareef season, the southern tip of the Sultanate of Oman, the Dhofar Governorate is pulling tourists from the Gulf region as well as the world.

Monsoon season in the governorate's most awaited time of the year in Dhofar, the mountain ranges witness sprouting greenery accompanied by the drizzles that give birth to a dreamy place far from the rest of the world.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) confirmed that the popularity of Salalah is increasing and attracting tourists thanks to its chilled, foggy and drizzling weather which turns the whole Governorate of Dhofar from sandy to lush green during the whole khareef season.

From the end of June to September, Salalah becomes the top tourist destination in khareef season, especially among the neighbouring Gulf countries and beyond and the number of tourists has been on a rise year after year.

"Dhofar Governorate, especially Salalah has been a major attraction



to the visitors to the Sultanate of Oman and the number is steadily increasing," confirms a Tourism official.

In 2022, approximately 165,704 visitors came to the Dhofar Governorate through the Salalah Airport, an increase of 20.4 per cent over the same period in 2019, which recorded 156,281 visitors.

Out of the nationalities visited, Indians constituted 244,786, while British visitors stood at 133,529, visitors from Pakistan at 67,893, and from Germany at 55,126.

Better air connectivity has played a crucial role in pulling tourists to Salalah as the airport went for a mammoth renovation and the number of domestic flights

during the khareef season of 2022 reached approximately 16,114 flights, against approximately 15,198 flights in 2019.

The number of flights carrying international tourists during khareef season of 2022 touched 149,590, an increase compared to 141,083 flights in 2019.

According to a report released

Dhofar Khareef to showcase 65 cultural, sports activities



SALALAH: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth completed preparations to carry out the activities of the 2023 Dhofar Khareef (monsoon) season's cultural and sports.

Musa bin Abdullah al

Kasabi, Director General for Culture, Sports and Youth at Dhofar Governorate said that the event covers a total of 65 activities. They will cater to all segments of society, including citizens, residents and tourists. — ONA

32 per cent.

The report further added that the governorate has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Gulf region during the season due to its diverse natural features, exceptional weather and varied terrain which are major factors of tourism attraction.

— PHOTO BY AJI GEORGE

'Priority needed to be given to climate change'

GENEVA: GCC countries have urged the international community to give priority to climate change due to its wide and complex impacts. They voiced their concern for the phenomenon's negative implications to the security and safety of all humanity, including its right to food.

This was unveiled in a statement delivered by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations (UN) and International Organisations in Geneva, on behalf of GCC states. The statement was delivered within the framework of a panel discussion on climate change as part of the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council.



Al Khanjari pointed out that GCC countries were keen to constructively participate in global and regional conferences and initiatives in addressing the negative effects of climate change. He said that the Climate Conference provided an ideal

opportunity to address this global phenomenon and poses challenges prompting shared responsibilities.

He affirmed that GCC states, through their initiatives and plans, seek to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change. The GCC action includes the Saudi Green initiative and Green Middle East initiatives, as well as the United Arab Emirates' hosting the 28th Climate Summit (COP28) towards the end of this year (2023).

The GCC states look forward to provide the first positive global output, based on collective action, towards implementing the goals of the Paris Agreement within the context of the COP28 summit. — ONA

MoTCIT seeks to achieve zero-carbon neutrality

STAFF REPROTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, organised the Green Mobility Forum under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Monday.

Speaking at the event, Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, said that the ministry seeks to achieve zero-carbon neutrality on the transport field in implementation of the Royal

directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik designating the year 2050 as the deadline for realising zero-carbon neutrality in the Sultanate of Oman. This goal can be achieved by utilising clean technology for sustainable development and creating a diverse mix of clean energy sources.

Al Shammakhi noted that the ministry is working on 3 phases to attain carbon neutrality. The first stage aims to encourage electric vehicles, the use of hydrogen for heavy transport and trucks and the use of biofuels. The second phase aims to expedite the ministry's efforts with partners to increase the number of environmentally-

friendly vehicles, enabling the use of sustainable aircraft fuel, providing smart mobility services, establishing a regional centre for supplying ships with green fuel and reducing carbon emission at the ports.

The ministry is working on a number of initiatives that include: the Leadership by Example, an initiative that would contribute to enabling the private sector to adopt electric vehicles, Enabling Hydrogen Trucks initiative, the Smart Tracking of Land and Public Transport initiative, the Artificial Intelligence initiative and the Electric Chargers Network initiative, the official concluded.

Turning waste water bottles into valuable resources

NAZLI ANSARI
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Waste water bottles has become a major environmental problem around the world. However, in Oman, we have the opportunity to use these bottles and turn them into something useful for our communities.

By using waste water bottles in innovate ways, we can create a cleaner and more sustainable environment for ourselves and future generations.

One of the most significant benefits of using waste water bottles is the fact that they can be repurposed instead of being discarded. When they are thrown away with regular trash, they can end up in landfills or oceans, causing environmental damage. But by collecting waste water bottles separating them from regular trash, they can be turn into new items and put to good to use.

There are few actions which we can take to reduce pollution like, Educate and raise awareness.

Conduct educational campaigns and awareness programmes to inform the public about the importance of separating waste water bottles and the impact it has on the environment. This can be done through schools, community organisations and social media platforms to reach a wider audience.

We also can implement a separate collection system like establish a separate collection system specifically for waste water bottles. This can involve placing dedicated bins or containers in public spaces, commercial areas and residential communities, clearly labelled for waste water bottles. Ensure Regular collection and proper disposal of these bottles through recycling programmes or partnerships with recycling centres.

There are several ways to repurpose or recycle waste water bottles to reduce their negative impact on the environment.

First of all the most common

and effective solution is to recycle waste water bottles.

Check local recycling guidelines and ensure they are properly sorted and placed in designated recycling bins.

Recycling these bottles helps to conserve resources, reduce energy consumption, and minimise waste sent to landfills.

WASTE BOTTLES INTO DECORATIVE ITEMS

Get creative and repurpose waste water bottles into useful and decorative items.

They can be transformed into planters, vases, storage containers, or even craft projects like jewellery, lamps, or art installations.

Eco-bricks: fill waste water bottles tightly with non-biodegradable materials such as plastic wrappers, bags, or foam packing peanuts, creating eco-bricks. These eco-bricks can be used in construction projects, such as building walls or furniture.

Encourage businesses and companies to participate: Engage



with businesses industries, and organisations to promote the separation and cycling of waste water bottles.

Provide them with information and resources on why and how to properly dispose of these bottles, And incentivise their participation through recognition programmes or certification for environmentally responsible practices.

We can support recycling

infrastructure by collaborate with local authorities and recycling centres to enhance recycling infrastructure for waste water bottles. This could involve establishing new recycling facilities or improving existing ones to accommodate the increased recycling demand.

Also, there is a need to encourage use of recycled materials made from waste water bottles in industries. Support

local businesses that manufacture products using recycled plastic and educate consumers about the benefits of purchasing these eco-friendly products.

By implementing these measures, you can contribute to improving the environmental in Oman by promoting the separation of waste water bottles and ensuring that they are recycled appropriately, reducing pollution and waste water in the process.



■ RAINFALL REPORTED IN SOME PARTS OF AL DHAHIRAH AND AL DAKHILIYAH



A number of wilayats in Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates witnessed rainfall and occasional thundershowers accompanied by active wind, on Monday. Cumulus cloud formation is forecast to further extend to the Hajar Mountains on Tuesday bringing scattered thundershowers to the area, Oman Meteorology said.

Motorists, aquaphiles urged to be cautious while enjoying summer

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Road accidents and other fatalities have been on the rise in Oman in the past days, prompting experts to emphasise the importance of respecting traffic rules, particularly during the summer when temperatures soar.

In just a week's time, seven people lost their lives on Salalah road while a drowning incident in Wadi Darbat was reported. In addition, three of a family lost their lives on Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and a girl drowned in Al Batinah Governorate.

"Reckless driving, fatigue, mobile phone usage and wrong manoeuvring are the major causes of road mishaps while neglecting the signboards near the beaches is said to be the cause of drowning incidents," a top civil defence personnel said.

The number of accidents reached nearly 76,200 in 2022, of which 15,300 were major accidents and 60,900 are minor accidents, an increase by 15.5 per cent compared to the previous year. However, over the last decade, there has been a drop of more than 50 per cent in the number of casualties in traffic accidents across the country.

The number of deaths due to RTA (Road Traffic Accidents) was 1,139 in 2012 but by 2022, it came down to 525.

This achievement was due to a strategy based on an action plan which the Sultanate of Oman signed along with 82 countries in May 2011.



"The Royal Oman Police envisions to reach zero deaths due to traffic accidents, and this cannot be achieved by wishful thinking, but rather by the hard work of everyone and the concerted efforts of all hence, safety is a joint responsibility of the people and the authorities," said an ROP official.

DROWNING

Two lost their lives last year in Mughsail beach after they lost control while taking selfies and

fell into the sea whereas another one lost life in Barka, less than six months ago.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said that the water rescue teams dealt with 521 calls of drowning accidents in 2021.

In most of the cases, the victims of drowning are children which is mostly due to the result of negligence and lack of supervision by parents. It is reported that many of them either attempted to cross the swamps of

water or running wadis or were playing in the swimming pools in farms and rest houses without knowing the danger involved resulting in loss of many human lives.

Swimming in undesignated areas such as dams, water channels and water-logged areas, leaving children unattended near water surfaces, and non-abidance by the safety instructions urged by the CDAA also constitute the number of drowning incidents in the country.

Drowning incidents in Oman have reached 211 or 1.42 per cent of total deaths and the age adjusted death rate is 4.91 per 100,000 of population ranking Oman 26 in the world.

In order to shed more light on safety in the seas and other water bodies, the United Nations General Assembly for World Health Organisation (WHO) has urged all to observe July 25 as World Drowning Prevention Day.

This is to coordinate actions within the UN system on drowning prevention and facilitate the observance of World Drowning Prevention Day on 25 July each year.

Accordingly, certain precautions are advised before taking a leap into the water. They include keeping away if there is a board prohibiting swimming, avoiding crossing wadis (valleys) and low-lying areas when it is raining and a better role by parents in saving their children from drowning and make sure that their children are playing in their supervision.

Drive carefully and take precautions to ensure road safety

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Road accidents continue to claim countless lives worldwide, making it imperative for drivers to exercise caution and for society to address contributing factors. While driver negligence remains a leading cause, other elements such as speeding, adverse weather conditions, and subpar road infrastructure cannot be overlooked.

In the pursuit of safer roads, there are crucial precautions that individuals can adopt: Exemplary Driving Practices: By maintaining awareness of their surroundings, adhering to speed limits, and obeying traffic rules, drivers can significantly reduce the risk of accidents.

Distracted driving, be it from mobile phone usage, eating, or conversing with passengers, poses grave dangers. Eliminating such distractions is paramount.

Allowing ample space between vehicles grants drivers the crucial time needed to react in the event of sudden stops or emergencies. Remaining alert to traffic signals and making effective use of mirrors enhances overall situational awareness and enables prompt responses.

A simple act that can save lives, fastening seat belts is non-negotiable for every occupant in a vehicle.

Avoiding driving during inclement weather or when feeling fatigued is crucial.

When driving in adverse conditions becomes unavoidable, reducing speed and exercising extreme caution are paramount.

Regular checks, including tire inflation and brake functionality, ensure that vehicles are roadworthy and reduce the risk of accidents caused by mechanical failures.

Implementing these precautions is essential to curbing the frequency of road accidents and fostering a safer environment for all road users.

Recognising signs of fatigue, such as drowsiness, and promptly pulling over for a rest break can avert potentially fatal accidents.

Educating the public about the severe consequences and adopting a steadfast stance against driving under the influence of alcohol are crucial steps in reducing alcohol-related accidents.

Encouraging patience, respect, and courteousness among drivers can help prevent road rage incidents, ultimately reducing the likelihood of accidents. Staying vigilant and attentive to the presence of pedestrians, cyclists, and animals is pivotal in preventing avoidable accidents.

Collectively, by incorporating these suggestions into our daily practices, we can actively contribute to a safer road culture and significantly reduce the toll of road accidents. Let us unite in our efforts to protect lives and build a safer future on our roads.

Omani Halwa penetrates into international markets

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Omani Halwa holds significant importance in Omani culture, particularly in terms of hospitality, symbolising generosity and warmth when hosting guests. Its consumption has grown both within Oman and internationally in recent years.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), there were 48 Omani Halwa factories spread across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in 2022.

The increase in consumption can be attributed to several factors. The growth of tourism in Oman has exposed visitors to the country's rich culture and heritage, with Omani Halwa often being offered as a traditional welcome treat.

Ali bin Rashid al Abri, a halwa maker, mentioned that tourists often bring Omani Halwa back as souvenirs, contributing to its global consumption. In fact, he said that they even receive requests from tourists to ship halwa to them, hence the growing popularity and demand for the dessert.



Omani Halwa manufacturers and local businesses have actively pursued export opportunities, making it more accessible in

international markets. The expansion of export channels and distribution networks has facilitated the availability and

enjoyment of Omani Halwa outside of Oman.

The presence of Omani Halwa in food fairs and exhibitions, both domestically and internationally, has allowed people to sample and discover the dessert, generating interest and increasing consumption.

The widespread use of social media platforms has played a role in spreading awareness and promoting Omani Halwa. Individuals sharing their experiences, along with pictures and reviews on platforms like Instagram, have created buzz and piqued curiosity among their

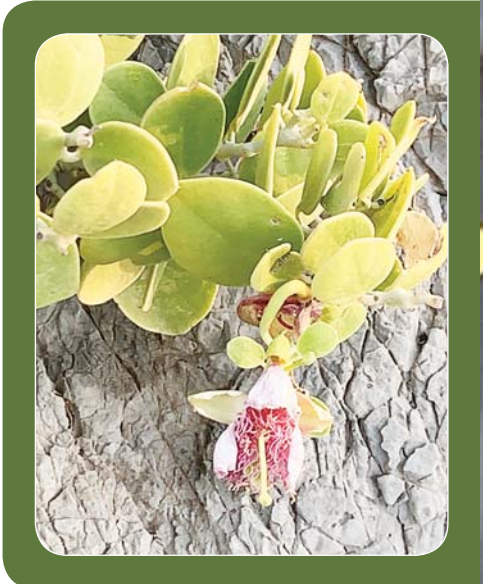
followers.

Omani Halwa is also deeply ingrained in Omani cultural events such as weddings, festivals, and religious celebrations. The consumption of Omani Halwa during these occasions, which attract large numbers of attendees, has further contributed to its expansion.

In response to the trend towards healthier eating, Omani Halwa manufacturers have begun offering sugar-free or reduced-sugar options, catering to health-conscious consumers who still wish to indulge in the flavours of this beloved dessert.



THE PLANT THAT CAN THRIVE IN HEAT



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

The summer of 2023 has been seeing temperatures crossing 45 degrees Celsius mark and even touching 50 degrees Celsius at times challenging vegetation in general except the indigenous plants.

On top of a mount was a stroke of green with few touches of pink and closer look gave its details, thick leaves and fragrant flowers.

This is capparidaceae, found on cliffs, wadis and mountains of Oman, an example of plants that can survive the summer heat. According to botanist who specialises on plants of Oman, Salim al Rahbi, and has popular Instagram account on plants (@e.o.Omani.p), locally the plant is called as Qanfar.

They have also been found near springs in the Dhofar Governorate. They need well drained soil and grows in crevices.

This perennial shrub thrives in arid region and on top of the mountains and cliffs where one would think there is no soil. But it grows providing spots of green in otherwise stark mountains.

The plants provide flowers and fruits throughout the year. The flowers tend to bloom by late afternoon and stays until next day.

Capparidaceae is an important plant because of its properties.

Salim al Rahbi said, "In Oman, traditionally, the plant's

roots are used to treat snake bites." According to tropical. inferns.info, the plant is used as medicine in East Africa. In Somalia, the leaves are steeped in hot water and used as medication to treat cough.

The pollinators are bees, moths and even wasps as was noted with this plant on one of the mountains in the Muscat Governorate. After the flowering stage the fruits appear and ants and birds help in the disposal of its black seeds.

The shrub is known to be tolerant to salt and resistant to drought, all of which prove that it could be one of the plants that can handle climate change and sea water intrusion.

The other places they are found are Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, Soqatra, India, North, East and South West Africa as well as the Mediterranean region.

In the Mediterranean region, this plant comes in the cuisine as well.

In the Mediterranean part of the world, the flower buds, tender fruits and young shoots are pickled and are popular as seasoning.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO lists Capers under the class of 'Other Vegetables' and the European Commission categorises it as part of, 'Minor Crops.' There is currently many research interests going in the world on this plant because of its nutritional value and as it has reportedly shown antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antifungal effects and other health benefits.



OBITUARY

The Board of Directors, Management
and Employees of OHI Group are
deeply saddened to announce that
our beloved Chairman

Maqbool Hameed Al Saleh
passed away on 1 July 2023

We pray to the Almighty to rest his
soul in peace and give his family the
strength to overcome such a
profound and irreplaceable loss.

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un

OHI



Major Israeli military raid kills eight in West Bank

JENIN: Israel on Monday began a large-scale military raid including drone strikes and hundreds of troops in the northern occupied West Bank, killing eight Palestinians.

The operation under the hard-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is the biggest of its kind in years, with bulldozers, armoured vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Troops in Jenin were inside the camp and also around the city. There were gun battles, explosions, and Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli troops, the correspondent reported.

Israel had already stepped up operations in the northern West Bank, home to Jenin city and its adjacent refugee camp, which is a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups and where there has been a spate of attacks on Israelis as well as attacks by Jewish settlers on Palestinian communities.

The Palestinian health ministry said that in Monday's operation eight people were killed -- exceeding the toll of seven from an Israeli army raid in Jenin refugee camp two weeks ago which saw use of helicopter missile fire.

Fifty others were injured including 10 who were in serious condition, the ministry said.



Palestinians clash with Israeli forces during an Israeli military operation in Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. – Reuters

“There is bombing from the air and an invasion from the ground,” Mahmoud al-Saadi said, director of the Palestinian

Red Crescent in Jenin. “Several houses and sites have been bombed... smoke is rising from everywhere.”

The Israeli army said its forces had struck a “joint operations centre”, which served as a command post for the “Jenin

Brigade”. The area is nominally under the control of president Mahmud Abbas’s Palestinian Authority,

which has partial administrative control in the West Bank.

Violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has worsened since early last year, including under the latest administration of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu which took power in December, a coalition between his Likud party and extreme-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish allies.

Netanyahu’s coalition contains hardline West Bank settlers, including extreme-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

An army statement said that one soldier was lightly injured” by Israeli army grenade shrapnel.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the territory is now home to around 490,000 Israelis who live in settlements considered illegal under international law.

Netanyahu has pledged to “strengthen settlements” and has expressed no interest in reviving peace talks, which have been moribund since 2014.

In a separate incident a Palestinian youth was killed by Israeli fire near the West Bank city of Ramallah, the Palestinian health ministry said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DAKAR

President set to announce election plan

Senegal braced for a potential showdown on Monday as President Macky Sall prepared to make a long-awaited announcement on whether he plans to seek a controversial third term. Sall’s nationwide address, his fiercest critic, Ousmane Sonko, urged the public to “come out en masse” and oppose him.

Deadly clashes erupted last month between Sonko supporters and the security forces, claiming at least 16 lives. Sall was first elected in 2012 for a seven-year term and



again in 2019 for a five-year term, following a constitutional revision.

The constitution stipulates that a president cannot serve more than two terms — but Sall’s supporters argue the counter has been reset to zero thanks to the 2016 revision.

ISTANBUL

Türkiye accuses Greece of migrant pushbacks

Türkiye has rescued 95 migrants from three overloaded boats in the Aegean Sea, the interior ministry said on Monday, accusing Greece of “pushing back” the dinghies from its shores. Two inflatable boats carrying 37 people and 47 people respectively were rescued off the Greek island of Lesbos on Saturday, the interior ministry said.

Another boat carrying 11 people was spotted near Türkiye’s western port city of Izmir the same day, the interior ministry



said. The ministry described all 95 people as “irregular migrants” but provided no details of their countries of origin.

Ankara regularly accuses Greece of pushing migrant boats back into Turkish waters in violation of international law.

Blasts in Khartoum as army renews call for volunteers

WAD MADANI: Explosions again rocked Sudan’s capital Khartoum on Monday as the army rallied civilians to take up arms against a renewed onslaught by its paramilitary foes.

The sound of artillery fire shook the dawn in northwest Khartoum and progressed towards the centre and east of the city, witnesses said. The fighting “began at 4:00 am and is still going,” one resident said.

The war-torn capital barely saw a few hours of respite after heavy clashes between troops loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The army announced Monday it was ready to “receive and prepare” volunteer fighters, after Burhan last week urged Sudanese “youth and all those able to defend” to join the military.

War-weary civilians have largely rejected the call, pleading

for an end to the relentless war between Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Apart from Khartoum, some of the worst fighting has been in the vast western region of Darfur, where late on Sunday RSF forces “attacked the military base” in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.

Darfur is home to a quarter of Sudan’s population and is still scarred by a two-decade war. Residents there as well as the United Nations, United States and others, say civilians have been targeted and killed for their ethnicity by the RSF and allied groups.

The RSF has been accused of intentionally targeting civilians in Darfur, including by shooting people fleeing towards the Chadian border.

The paramilitaries have also been identified as the main perpetrators of conflict-related

assaults by survivors in both Darfur and Khartoum.

According to the governmental Combating Violence Against Women and Children Unit, most of the 42 survivors in Khartoum — and all of the 46 survivors in the Darfur cities of Nyala and El Geneina — said they were assaulted by RSF fighters.

Late on Sunday, the RSF announced it was cracking down on “looting and vandalism, particularly the theft of civilian cars”.

Since the conflict began, RSF fighters — highly mobile and embedded in densely populated neighbourhoods — have been accused of widespread break-ins and looting.

Residents have been forcibly evicted from their homes, had their vehicles stolen or learned after fleeing Khartoum that their homes were being used as bases.

— AFP



Pope Francis condemns burning of Holy Quran

CAIRO: Pope Francis has condemned the burning of the Holy Quran and expressed his “anger and disgust” at the recent incident in Stockholm when two men burned a copy of the Muslim holy book.

“I feel angry and disgusted by these actions,” he told the United Arab Emirates’ Al Ittihad newspaper in remarks published on Monday.

“Any book considered holy must be respected out of respect for those who believe in it, and freedom of expression should never be used as an excuse to despise others,” he added.

“Allowing this is rejected and condemned,” the pope said.

Two men took part in a demonstration in the Swedish capital where the Islamic holy book was set alight on Wednesday, the first day of Muslims’ Eid al Adha holiday.

Several Muslim-majority countries condemned the incident and castigated Swedish diplomats, saying the act incites hatred and should not count as free speech.

The latest was Saudi Arabia, where the Foreign Ministry said on Sunday it had summoned the Swedish ambassador in Riyadh to express the Kingdom’s “categorical rejection of the disgraceful act carried out by an extremist.” — dpa



In the loving memory of

P.V. Gopalan

15th Anniversary

A d v a n c e d
B u s i n e s s
C o n s u l t a n t s



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | JULY 4 | 2023

7

In brief

■ LONDON



UK SAW HOTTEST JUNE ON RECORD IN 2023

The UK this year has seen its hottest June on record, both in terms of mean temperature and the average maximum temperature, the British Meteorological Office said on Monday.

“The average mean temperature of 15.8 degrees Celsius for June 2023 in the UK is the highest in a series since 1884,” the Met Office said in a statement.

The average temperature in June 2023 was 0.9 degrees higher than a previous joint record of 14.9 degrees registered in June of 1940 and 1976.

“It’s officially the hottest June on record for the UK,” said the Met Office’s Mark McCarthy.

■ BEIJING



CHINA SEEKS COOPERATION WITH RUSSIAN NAVY

China’s defence minister said on Monday he hoped to expand naval cooperation with Russia, in the highest-level public talks between military officials from the two countries.

Li Shangfu spoke in Beijing with Nikolai Yevmenov, head of the Russian navy, and said he hoped both countries could “strengthen communication at all levels,” according to a readout from the Chinese defence ministry.

He also said the two should “regularly organise joint exercises, joint cruises and joint military skills competition”, as well as “expand practical cooperation in professional fields”.

■ JOHANNESBURG



S AFRICA OPPOSITION SET ELECTION COALITION

South Africa’s largest opposition party has teamed up with six small groups to build a coalition aimed at ousting the long-ruling ANC in next year’s elections, they announced on Monday.

The Democratic Alliance, which has a fifth of the seats in parliament, is in the forefront of the plan. The initiative does not include the third largest party, the radical leftist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

The leaders of the seven parties will hold what they dubbed “historic” talks on August 16 and 17 in Johannesburg to map out “a common vision for a new government”.

Ukraine claims limited gains after ‘difficult’ combat



Ukrainian servicemen operate a M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle at a position near a front line, in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine. – Reuters file photo

KYIV: Ukraine on Monday reported making gains in the south and east over the past week in difficult fighting to dislodge Moscow’s heavily entrenched forces.

While Russia’s security service (FSB) said it had foiled an assassination attempt on the head of Crimea, a southern peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014.

Kyiv’s troops, which have faced intense resistance in their counteroffensive launched last month, have urged Western allies for more military support.

“Last week was difficult on the frontline. But we are making progress,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr said. “We are moving forward, step by step!”

Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar noted that Ukrainian forces over the past week recaptured nine square kilometres in the east and 28

Kyiv’s troops have come up against heavily entrenched Russian defensive positions both along the southern and eastern fronts

square kilometres in the south.

Ukraine’s forces have taken back over 158 square kilometres in the south since the start of the counteroffensive, Malyar said.

Kyiv’s troops have come up against heavily entrenched Russian defensive positions both along the southern and eastern fronts.

Malyar said Ukrainian troops were fighting “fierce” battles around the eastern flashpoint city

of Bakhmut.

Russian forces were also on the offensive, and in recent days launched new assaults towards Svatove, in the eastern Lugansk region.

Malyar said Russia was advancing near Svatove, as well as near Avdiivka, Mariinka and Lyman.

“The situation is quite complicated,” she said.

“Ukraine did not reach its goals in any of the sectors,” Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, claiming that nearly all Leopard tanks provided by Poland and Portugal had been destroyed.

Shoigu and the conventional army faced a serious challenge last month when the head of the Wagner mercenary group led his forces in a rebellion against Moscow’s top military brass.

Shoigu said on Monday the rebellion “did not affect the

operations of the troops.”

“The plans failed primarily because the personnel of the armed forces showed loyalty to their oath and military duty,” he said.

Following the rebellion, the Kremlin gave Wagner fighters the choice of signing contracts with the Russian defence ministry, returning to civilian life or going into exile in Moscow-allied Belarus.

Russia however said there was no need for further mobilisation to replace the Wagner troops that left the battlefield.

Kyiv is fighting to try to recapture its territories in the east and south, including the Crimea peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014.

The Russian security service (FSB) said it had foiled an attempt on the life of the Moscow-installed head of Crimea. — **AFP**

German defence minister wants Polish tank hub talks done in 10 days

ZAMOSC: An agreement on extending the deployment of three German air defence units to Poland is being held up by fraught separate negotiations on the establishment of a maintenance hub in Poland for Leopard tanks damaged in Ukraine.

“Time is of the essence ... We believe the talks on the maintenance hub should, if at all possible, be completed within the next 10 days so that we know in what direction to plan,” German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Monday. Pistorius was speaking after talks with his Polish counterpart, Mariusz Blaszczak, in the Polish town of Zamosc.

German and Polish companies are involved in the negotiations on the maintenance hub, as well as both countries’ governments, and the main problems are seen on the companies’ side.

Pistorius’ remark about the need to see in what direction was seen as a veiled threat to choose a location outside Poland for the tank maintenance hub. Together with three Patriot units, 300 German soldiers have been based in Zamosc, about 50 km from the Ukrainian border, since February to protect the southern town and its crucial link to Ukraine. — **Reuters**



German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius talks with his Polish counterpart Mariusz Blaszczak as they visit the site, near Zamosc, Poland. – **Reuters**

Mayors hold anti-riot rallies in France as arrests fall

PARIS: Demonstrations began at French town halls on Monday opposing nearly a week of violent protests over a teen’s fatal shooting by police, even as the first signs emerged that the unrest was beginning to ease.

The government has battled riots and looting since 17-year-old Nahel M. was shot dead by a police officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday, reviving longstanding accusations of racism against the French police force.

During a sixth consecutive night of unrest, a fireman died while seeking to douse burning vehicles north of Paris but it was unclear if there was a link to the violent protests, the interior ministry said.

Monday’s demonstrations -- called a “mobilisation of citizens for a return to republican order” -- came after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb was rammed with a flaming car, prompting widespread outrage.

In a statement, an association of the country’s mayors noted that areas “everywhere in France



Mayor Vincent Jeanbrun sing the Marseillaise, French national anthem, during a march with French politicians, in L’Hay-les-Roses near Paris. – **Reuters**

are the scene of serious unrest, which targets republican symbols with extreme violence”.

Seeking to quell what has become one of the biggest challenges to President

Emmanuel Macron since he took office in 2017, the interior ministry again deployed 45,000 police and gendarmes nationwide overnight Sunday to Monday, the same figure as the previous two

nights.

A total of 157 people were arrested in relation to the unrest nationwide, according to the interior ministry -- a fraction of the number taken into custody

the night before. Three police officers were also wounded.

Among 3,200 people arrested in rioting since Tuesday, the average age was 17 and some were “children, there is no other word, of 12 or 13,” Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

Internal affairs investigators on Monday began interviewing a passenger in the car Nahel was driving without a licence, a police source said.

Vincent Jeanbrun, the conservative mayor of L’Hay-les-Roses outside Paris, had his home rammed with a burning car with the aim of setting it on fire, breaking the leg of his wife who was at home with their children.

The attack was condemned across the spectrum including by the hard left, while prosecutors have opened an attempted murder investigation.

“There is no doubt that they wanted to burn the house” and, when “they realised that there was someone inside, they set off a broadside of fireworks mortars,” Jeanbrun said.— **AFP**

Brussels looks to relax curbs on GM crops

JULIEN GIRAULT

The European Commission will on Wednesday put forward a proposal to ease current restrictions on genetically modified (GM) crops, which is already being denounced by environmental groups and leftwing lawmakers.

The plan could create a new frontline in the EU's Green Deal, elements of which centre-right European lawmakers are already seeking to stall, arguing they would harm farmers.

The commission says the rules on GMOs (genetically modified organisms) need to be relaxed to grow crops that require fewer

pesticides, are better adapted to climate change and need less water.

It wants to allow gene editing within a plant's existing DNA -- which is different from transgenic techniques that introduce a foreign DNA strands and create a distinct species.

"Plants produced by new genomic techniques can support sustainability," EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said in April.

"We are designing a regulatory framework that will strongly signal to farmers, researchers and industry that this is the way forward in the EU," she said.

In this area, the commission wants to reduce the tough restrictions that apply to GMOs,

THE COMMISSION SAYS THE RULES ON GMOS (GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS) NEED TO BE RELAXED TO GROW CROPS THAT REQUIRE FEWER PESTICIDES, ARE BETTER ADAPTED TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND NEED LESS WATER

which include authorisations, labelling and monitoring.

The text of the project, seen by AFP, calls for the existing GMO rules to not apply to genetically edited crops where the modifications could have come about naturally or through

traditional blending procedures of plant species.

Such new crops would be considered "equivalent" to conventional varieties, subject to conditions on the type and number of mutations, a publicly accessible listing, and labelling for the sale of seeds.

No produce coming from these new genomic techniques (NGT) will be able to carry the "bio" label however, and those with herbicide properties would be excluded from the light-touch regulatory approach.

Those that are pesticide resistant would remain in the restrictive regime governing GMOs.

Brussels currently has received 90 authorisation requests for NGT

crops, a third of which are in advanced research stages.

A few have reached the level of testing in open fields, such as corn in Belgium and potatoes in Sweden.

Powerful agri-groups such as Copa-Cogeca have been calling for simplified rules to speed up sales of their products.

Some EU member countries and lawmakers in the European Parliament's centre-right EPP grouping back that stance.

"We need to boost productivity and take into account the limited level of natural resources," Spain's agriculture minister Luis Planas said in mid-June, ahead of his country taking over the EU's rotating presidency. — AFP

Twitter rate limits could upset new CEO

JODY GODOY

Elon Musk's move to temporarily cap how many posts Twitter users can read on the social media site could undermine efforts by the company's new Chief Executive Linda Yaccarino to attract advertisers, marketing industry professionals said.

Musk announced on Saturday that Twitter would limit how many tweets per day various accounts can read, to discourage "extreme levels" of data scraping and system manipulation.

Users posted screenshots in reply, showing they were unable to see any tweets, including tweets on the pages of corporate advertisers, after hitting the limit.

Ad industry veterans said the move creates an obstacle for Yaccarino, the former NBCUniversal advertising chief who started last month as Twitter's chief executive officer.

Yaccarino has sought to repair relationships with advertisers who pulled away from the site after Musk bought it last year, the Financial Times reported last week.

The limits are "remarkably bad" for users and advertisers already shaken by the "chaos" Musk has brought to the platform, Mike Proulx, research director at Forrester, said on Sunday.

"The advertiser trust deficit that Linda Yaccarino needs to reverse just got even bigger. And it cannot be reversed based on her industry credibility alone," he said.

Lou Paskalis, the founder of advertising consultancy AJL Advisory and former marketing boss at Bank of America, said Yaccarino is Musk's "last best hope" to salvage ad revenue and the company's value. "This move signals to the marketplace that he's not capable of empowering her to save him from himself," he said.

Under the new cap, unverified accounts were initially limited to 600 posts a day with new unverified accounts limited to 300. Verified accounts could read 6,000 posts a day, Musk said in a post on the site.

Hours later, he said the cap was raised to 10,000 posts per day for verified users, 1,000 per day for unverified and 500 posts per day for new unverified users.

A Twitter spokesperson did not reply to requests for comment and inquiries about how long the restrictions will last on Sunday.

Capping how much users can view could be "catastrophic" for the platform's ad business, said Jasmine Enberg, principal analyst at Insider Intelligence. "This certainly isn't going to make it any easier to convince advertisers to return. It's a hard sell already to bring advertisers back," she said. — Reuters

Ainu fight to restore last vestige of identity

MOTOKO RICH AND HIKARI HIDA

Masaki Sashima gazed through the fog one recent afternoon onto the gray waters of the Tokachi River in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. From here, his Indigenous people, the Ainu, once used spears and nets to catch the salmon they regarded as gifts from the gods.

Under Japanese law, river fishing for this salmon, an essential part of Ainu cuisine, trade and spiritual culture, has been off limits for more than a century. Sashima, 72, said it was time for his people to regain what they see as a natural right, and restore one of the last vestiges of a decimated Ainu identity.

"In the past in our culture, the salmon were for everybody to enjoy within the community," he said. "The salmon is here for us, and we want to ensure our right to be able to take this fish." Sashima is leading a group suing the central and prefectural governments to reclaim salmon fishing rights, four years after Japan's parliament passed a law recognising the Ainu as the nation's Indigenous people. For centuries, Japanese assimilation policies have stripped the Ainu of their land, forced them to give up hunting and fishing for farming or other menial jobs, and pushed them into Japanese-language schools where it was impossible to preserve their own language.

When the government banned all river fishing during the Meiji era, which ran from 1868 to 1912, the main justification was to protect stocks of salmon as they spawn on their way to the Pacific Ocean.

The move coincided with a government policy to push the Ainu away from fishing as their livelihood to give an advantage to Japanese fishermen who would take salmon from the sea, said Shinichi Yamada, a professor of human sciences at Sapporo Gakuin University who has written about Ainu history and fishing rights. Ainu advocates say Japanese law does not abide by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which stipulates the right to use lands and resources claimed through traditional ownership or practices. Japan voted



An archery dancer performing at the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, Japan.

for the non-binding declaration in 2007.

The ranks of the Ainu have shrunk so low that in the last official survey, taken in 2017, only 13,118 people identified as Ainu in Hokkaido, which has a total population of about 5.2 million. Unesco has designated the Ainu language as "critically endangered." This year, the Japanese

FOR CENTURIES, JAPANESE ASSIMILATION POLICIES HAVE STRIPPED THE AINU OF THEIR LAND, FORCED THEM TO GIVE UP HUNTING AND FISHING FOR FARMING OR OTHER MENIAL JOBS, AND PUSHED THEM INTO JAPANESE-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

embroidery. A historical timeline in the main exhibit hall acknowledges that Japanese invaders "oppressed" the Ainu, bringing diseases that wiped out parts of the population, forcing Japanese customs on them and granting them agricultural land that was "often uncultivable." Critics say neither the new law nor the museum, the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, goes far enough to empower the Ainu after centuries of being ignored by Japanese politicians who insisted that Japan was an ethnically homogeneous nation.

While the government emphasises Ainu crafts, music and dance, "I think we should have political rights," said Kanako Uzawa, an Ainu rights expert and the niece of a prominent Ainu leader. With an education system that barely acknowledges the existence of Hokkaido's Indigenous people in textbooks or curriculum, some Ainu say they want more than an isolated museum.

Miyuki Muraki, 63, deputy executive director of the Ainu museum, said that as a child, her family never talked about their Ainu identity at home, and that classmates compared her and other Ainu children to dogs.

"In the whole society, all we learn about is Japanese culture," she said. "They say that is because there are not enough of us. But that is partly because we have not been able to live our life freely." To Sashima, that can happen only if the Ainu can catch salmon from the river whenever they choose. — The New York Times

Magical power of words

Words that are spoken hold power in them. So we are told to use positive words.

A tongue can be sharper than a sword. The wound that it creates can take forever to heal because it is invisible and no surgeon can patch it up.

It a pain that cannot be seen, except it leaves marks on the health of the individual.

The windows of the mind, the eyes, look empty. Others laugh at them saying, “Always lost.” They are not helping either. Some can express their depression and get help, others might never. And as they silently suffer, their world falls apart.

They lose objective in life, and this is where ego might help - by searching out for ‘I’. At times ‘I’ find you.

Who am I?
Philosophers urge you to seek the answer to this question, ‘Who am I?’

People also say ego is not a good feature to have. But when one is floating on clouds and you do not seem to find the anchors, and have others labeling you, it is the ‘I’, who rebels and emerges to take control of the situation.

Are we what others define us? Should they be even defining us?

Everyone has the freedom to have their own opinions. And should they be even telling you what they think of you?

If it is good, then it is a compliment so you may bask in it for a while. But, wait, did they really mean it?

If they did, enjoy it. If not, take it with a bit of seasoning for you want your peace.

But if it is criticism, let us analyse it, is it constructive?



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

YOU ARE ONLY VULNERABLE WHEN YOU REVEAL YOURSELF NOW WE KNOW WHY THOUSANDS CHOOSE TO SUFFER SILENTLY THAN TO SEEK HELP

Did it hurt you? Did the words break you?

Build yourself again because you do not have a choice as no one can really help but ourselves. The sooner the better because the longer you linger with it the lasting impact is going to be on your health. Some of the damages can be irreversible.

So now we have to think about our purpose in life. This can be a very long or short one. The more we ponder we realise it is one life, and we have a choice to make it a good one or a saga of a struggle. We might never find the answers, and maybe search and read. End of the day, just like our fingerprints, each one of us have our own unique solutions. What worked for others may not provide the answers for us. Hurting others will definitely not provide us gratification. But what about emotional self defence?

You are only vulnerable when you reveal yourself. Now we know why thousands choose to suffer silently than to seek help.

Health is a costly affair that is why insuring it is a solution. But how many can afford it? How many till today can comprehend the concept of health insurance. Once again this is for physical health. How about mental health?

How about reassuring ourselves by maintaining a nutritious diet and staying fit with an exercise routine?

Why not have mental health awareness from an early age so even children become aware of emotions and the impact of words and thoughts.

Sometimes just a few kind words can create magic and a lasting positive impact.

KILTIED OUT



Britain's King Charles III, wearing a kilt, visits Kinneil House in Edinburgh, Scotland on July 3, 2023, marking the first Holyrood Week since his coronation. – AFP

Understanding Biden’s big bet on India

The unprecedented lovefest between the United States and India has been striking and, frankly, puzzling.

Following the pageantry of US President Joe Biden hosting a state dinner for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and of US Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy inviting Modi to address a joint session of Congress for a second time, one wonders if America is giving away the store and getting very little in return.

After all, symbols such as these are the least of it. Among other things, the US is transferring sensitive military technology to a non-treaty partner, nudging its companies to invest in India, easing visa restrictions for Indian nationals, and desisting from publicly chastising Modi’s government for its democratic backsliding. In effect, America has drawn India into a one-sided quasi-alliance: it seems to have taken one, at most one-and-a-half, to tango. The strategic rationale, of course, is the need to counter-balance China. But what is the Indian quo for the American quid?

The former US diplomat Ashley J Tellis believes the US is making a “bad bet,” because India will never participate in coalition warfare with the US against China unless its interests are directly threatened. In a Sino-American conflict over Taiwan, India would remain on the sidelines, despite the generosity the US has shown it. Even US National



ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN

The author is a senior fellow at Brown University

IT IS A CALCULATED PROD AIMED AT NARROWING THE REAL AND PERCEIVED POWER GAP BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA. THE SMALLER THEIR HARD-POWER IMBALANCE, THE MORE EFFECTIVE THE COUNTER-BALANCE FOR AMERICA VIS-À-VIS CHINA

Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has acknowledged this.

But India experts such as Pratap Bhanu Mehta, a former vice chancellor of Ashoka University, point out that the US will increasingly need India as its own hegemony erodes. The new axis of autocracies includes not only China, Russia, and Iran but also Saudi Arabia and even Turkey.

Faced with this geopolitical development, the US at least needs to forestall any potential cooling with India, lest it find itself more isolated. Not only is America’s adversary count rising, but its allies leave something to be desired. Europe is predictably inconsistent and ambivalent, especially when it comes to China; and though Japan and South Korea are reliable allies, their demographic decline deprives them of real heft.

But more to the point, it is not clear that the US needs to go to such lengths to prevent India from joining the axis of autocracies. After all, China is a hostile neighbor and Russia – its primary military supplier – is headed for disorder. Partnership with such countries is not remotely enticing for India. Likewise, India, with its influential diaspora and basic congruence of economic and military interests, has little to gain by openly snubbing the US.

So, the US is giving away quite a lot either for something that India will never sign up to (military engagement against China), or for something that India would do regardless of the enticements on offer. What are American strategists thinking?

One plausible explanation is simply the economic arithmetic of hard power. Democrats and Republicans alike have concluded that China poses an existential threat that cannot be neutralised, only counterbalanced. According to the International Monetary Fund, America’s GDP in 2023 will be \$26.9 trillion, whereas China’s will be \$19.4 trillion (at market exchange rates). But over the next two decades, that 30 per cent

American edge will likely narrow.

Yet for all the euphoria around India’s growth prospects, it is still a long way from matching Chinese economic and financial capabilities. China’s GDP is more than five times greater than India’s at market exchange rates, and about 2.7 times greater at purchasing-power-parity rates. Moreover, China’s military spending is 3-4 times greater, and its foreign exchange reserves (to the extent that they can now be measured) are easily 6-7 times larger. The multiple on China’s total trade over India’s is similar, and its lead in global development lending is astronomical.

China’s overwhelming economic advantage helps

to explain why India often appears helpless in the face of provocations like China’s extensive land grabs along the countries’ border in the Himalayas. Such episodes make it painfully evident that India is no counterbalance to China.

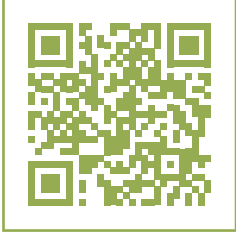
But America’s wager is based not on the present, but on the expectation that China and India’s fortunes may change over the long term. Owing to longstanding structural and demographic challenges, not to mention Chinese President Xi Jinping’s increasingly repressive approach to the private sector, China’s long-run growth rate could well fall to about 2.5 per cent. At the same time, India could continue to grow at perhaps 5-6 per cent per year.

Though by no means guaranteed, this scenario is plausible if India develops better policies and stronger institutions. It would not eliminate the large China-India hard-power differential, but it could narrow the gap enough to force China to re-calibrate its decision-making. For example, if China’s five-fold GDP advantage over India was to be halved over the next two decades, Chinese leaders could no longer afford to discount the possibility of India retaliating on trade or along the border.

Copyright: Project Syndicate 2023



US President Joe Biden with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Oman bowlers to take part in Asian tenpin contest in Bangkok

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 3

The Oman national bowling team will take part at the 21st edition of the Asian Youth Tenpin Bowling Championship which is scheduled to be held at Blu-O Rhythm and Bowl Ratchayothin in Bangkok.

The Asian event will begin on Tuesday and will run until Wednesday.

The national team will be represented by Musaab bin Salim al Adawi and Haitham Lutfi. The team coached by Lee Hoonpyo, the head coach of Oman bowling team. The Sultanate of Oman bowlers are eager to register top results and raise the Sultanate of Oman's flag in this prestigious Asian event.

As many as 151 players representing 17 countries will compete in the Asian youth event including: Australia, Bahrain, China, Hong Kong, Korea Republic, Kuwait, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand, Oman, Philippine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam. The event will conducted accordance to the International

Bowling Federation statutes and playing rules as of September 2019.

Oman's bowler Musaab bin Salim al Adawi and Haitham Lutfi under supervision of the coach Lee Hoonpyo, went into a series of intensive domestic camps that featured different technical and tactical trainings. Moreover, the selected bowlers competed in different local tournaments this year as Oman Bowling Committee (OBC) organised series of local contests around Muscat Governorate to select some potential players for the national team and to boost the sports in the country.

During the holy month of Ramadhan, OBC organised a local tournament that featured many participants from the amateur and professional bowlers.

Beside that, OBC hosted a tournament for schools students where more than 60 participants took part in the event from both genders. In last March, Oman Bowling league took place in presence of ten clubs including: Al Nasr, Al Ittifaq, Jaalan, Salalah, Seeb, Al Nahdha, Oman club, Al Wahda, Al Musannah and Masirah.

Oman hold Algeria to goalless draw in Arab Sports Games

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Oman held host Algeria to a goalless draw in Arab Sports Games group stage at the May 19 Stadium on Monday.

From the very beginning of the match, the Oman Olympic team exhibited relentless offensive pressure, spearheaded by Abdulmajeed al Balushi, who came close to scoring the opening goal with a magnificent header that narrowly missed the mark. Responding with determination, the Algerian team launched a dangerous counterattack, only to be deftly tackled by the solid Omani defence. The Omani team had several opportunities to convert their chances into goals but was unable to capitalise on them. In the 42nd minute, the Algerian team scored, but the goal was subsequently disallowed due to offside.

The second half commenced with both teams trying to break the deadlock. The Algerian team sought to assert their attacking style, creating multiple scoring opportunities that were diligently thwarted by the resilient defences and agile Omani goalkeeper. Oman team, on the other hand, relied on long shots and rebounds to launch their own counterattacks. Despite the intensity and determination exhibited by both teams, neither side managed to find the back of the net, resulting in a hard-fought 0-0 draw.

Oman team currently holds the third position in their group, with one point earned from the first match. While Sudan emerged victorious in their match against Lebanon, securing result 3-0 victory.

In another gripping encounter in the second group competitions, the Saudi Olympic team drew 1-1 against Syria in the first round. The match took place at the Martyr Suleiman Daoudi Hamlawi stadium. Mardik Mardikian scored the lone goal for Syria, while Suhaib al Zaid found the net for the Saudi team.

Furthermore, Mauritania and Palestine engaged in an equally competitive contest, ultimately resulting in a 1-1 draw. Ahmed Alsheikh al Wali contributed



The Oman team is set to face Lebanon in their next fixture, scheduled on July 5. Oman team currently holds the third position in their group, with one point earned from the first match.

the goal for the Mauritanian team, while Ali Rabie netted for Palestine.

Consequently, all four teams find themselves evenly poised with one point and an equal goal difference, fuelling the competition in the group from the very outset.

The Oman team is set to face Lebanon in their next fixture, scheduled on July 5.

These Arab Games fixtures serve as an ideal preparation for Oman before their forthcoming clashes against Syria and Jordan in the Asian qualifiers.

Newcastle sign Tonali from AC Milan for record fee

NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United have signed Italian midfielder Sandro Tonali from AC Milan on a five-year contract until 2028, the Premier League club said on Monday.

No financial details were disclosed but British media reported that Newcastle paid Milan a fee of 70 million euros (\$76.28 million) with add-ons.

"First of all, I want to thank Newcastle United because they are giving me a huge opportunity for my career," Tonali said. "I want to



repay the trust on the pitch, giving it my all, as I always have."

The fee will make Tonali the most expensive Italian player of all time while it is also a record sale for AC Milan, eclipsing the 68 million euros Real Madrid paid for Brazilian midfielder Kaka in 2009.

Once seen as Italy great Andrea Pirlo's heir, 23-year-old Tonali helped guide Milan to their first Serie A title in 11 years in the 2021-22 season and he was a key figure in their run to the

Champions League semi-finals last season.

An versatile midfielder, Tonali played more games than any other Milan player last season, clocking up nearly 4,000 minutes across all competitions.

Although Milan coach Stefano Pioli experimented with different formations last season, Tonali was a constant in central midfield as they managed to finish in the top four to continue playing in Europe's elite competition next season.

Tonali has 14 senior caps for Italy but did not make the squad for the UEFA Nations League finals where they finished third.

Newcastle qualified for the Champions League for the first time in 20 years after a top-four finish under manager Eddie Howe.

Tonali will be their second recruit of the close season after 18-year-old Gambia forward Yankuba Minteh was signed from Danish side Odense Boldklub.

F1 FINDS CONTROVERSY ON THE WRONG SIDE OF A WHITE LINE

Verstappen dominant Austrian Grand Prix to go 81 points clear

LONDON: Max Verstappen's dominance was on full display at Sunday's , with his fifth win in a row for Red Bull from pole and with the fastest lap, but the white lines painted around the track provided as big a talking point.

The most technological of sports struggled to keep up as the world's top drivers, including Mercedes' seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton, repeatedly strayed off the strip of asphalt.

'Track limits' are simple words in the lexicon of motor racing: Drivers must keep all four wheels within the lines or, if repeat offenders, face the consequences.

On Sunday at Spielberg's Red Bull Ring the system was overwhelmed.

According to the governing FIA, race control had to review more than 1,200 potential breaches of the rule that occurred during the 71 lap race.

The end result was a flurry of post-race penalties and changes to the results, although not the podium finishers, five hours after the race ended and long after television viewers had switched off.

In all, nine of the 20 drivers were penalised either during the race or afterwards following a protest by Aston Martin.

Even the most seasoned of paddock insiders, in a sport with a long track record of controversy and confusion, were unimpressed.



"The track limits thing needs to be looked at because it makes us look a little bit amateurish," said Verstappen's boss Christian Horner, Formula One's longest-serving team principal.

Others questioned why, in a sport measured down to the last millimetre and microsecond and with super-computers processing vast amounts of data, it took so long for penalties to be applied.

"I'm at a total loss as to why the most tech advanced sport in the world can't have a tech solution with sensors and transponders

so that no one needs to review anything," commented former McLaren mechanic Marc Priestley on Twitter.

"It's black & white & instant"

LAPS DELETED

Austrian Grand Prix qualifying saw 47 laps deleted for exceeding track limits, including those of Red Bull's Sergio Perez who started 15th as a result and finished third on Sunday.

In the race, drivers were warned after two breaches, then shown a black and white flag

on the third. A fourth brought a referral to stewards and a five second penalty.

Further transgressions meant more penalties. Alpine's Esteban Ocon ended up with 30 seconds added to his time after two five second sanctions and two 10 second ones.

The problem in large part could be blamed on the circuit, with large asphalt runoff areas rather than gravel in the last two turns nine and 10 on a layout that also has to accommodate MotoGP.

Raised 'sausage kerbs' used previously have been removed due to the amount of damage caused to cars running over them.

The governing FIA has also appeared stricter in policing the rules, with a remote operations centre to ensure correct procedures are followed.

"We will renew our recommendation to the circuit to add a gravel trap at the exit of turns nine and 10," said an FIA spokesman.

"We note that while this is not a straightforward solution in relation to other series that race here, it has proved to be very effective at other corners and circuits with similar issues."

Drivers said poor peripheral visibility made it hard to see exactly where the limits were and following in the aerodynamic 'dirty air' of cars in front also had an effect. — Reuters

Hobbs becomes first female to qualify for Olympic 100m in 50 years



SWITZERLAND: Zoe Hobbs became the first female sprinter from New Zealand to qualify for an Olympics Games 100m in nearly 50 years after setting a personal best to win her heat at the Continental Tour Challenger meet in Switzerland.

Hobbs, 25, ran 10.96 seconds in the heats at La Chaux-de-Fonds before winning the final in 11.13. The last New Zealand female sprinter to compete in an Olympic Games 100m was Sue Jowett in 1976 in Montreal.

"When I saw the time come up I couldn't believe it," Hobbs said. "I didn't think I would run that time, especially given the conditions ... The wind was all over the shop with head and tail

winds.

"I didn't think I would run a PB in the heat at all ... It was a bit of a shock when I saw what the time was."

Hobbs, who began her European season at last week's Diamond League in Lausanne, said she was relieved to have achieved the qualifying time for Paris 2024 before the world championships, which begin next month in Budapest.

"It takes a massive weight off my shoulders and makes a big difference leading into the rest of the season," Hobbs added.

"I don't have to chase the time now. I can focus on what I need to in the lead up to the world champs." — Reuters

Fowler snaps four-year win drought with PGA playoff victory

WASHINGTON: Rickie Fowler sank a birdie putt from just inside 12 feet on Sunday to win a playoff for the PGA Rocket Mortgage Classic title and snap a four-year win drought.

Fowler defeated fellow American Collin Morikawa, a two-time major champion, and Canada's Adam Hadwin to capture his first victory since the 2019 Phoenix Open and his sixth PGA triumph overall.

"It's just nice to have this one out of the way," Fowler said. "I'm obviously going to soak this one in and celebrate a bit. It has just been a long road. I'll get emotional at some point"

Fowler, 34, won the 2017 Players Championship but has struggled in recent years, falling to 185th in the world rankings last year before reviving his form this season with nine top-20 finishes in his past 10 events.

"Had to keep putting the time in, keep grinding, keep pushing," Fowler said. "Then started to see some positive results and to build some confidence and momentum last fall.

"A lot of great stuff this year. I knew it was a matter of time the way I've been playing."

In the four years, four months and 29 days between his titles, Fowler became a husband and father and smiled as he held his daughter Maya on the 18th green.

"Winning is great," Fowler



said. "But there's a lot more to life than that."

Morikawa, Fowler and Hadwin all finished 72 holes on 24-under par 264 at rain-softened Detroit Golf Club, where players started early in threesomes to escape a stormy afternoon forecast.

Fowler, Morikawa and Hadwin shared the lead at 23-under as they came down the stretch. Morikawa and Hadwin each birdied the par-5 17th but Fowler needed three to reach the fringe there and settled for par.

At 18, Fowler dropped his approach just over three feet from the hole and tapped in to reach the playoff.

"Our back was against the wall," Fowler said. "Didn't take advantage of some opportunities

I had on the back nine to win in regulation, but I'll take it any way we can get it."

The playoff began at 18 and Fowler booked his tee shot right into the crowd with his rivals in the fairway.

But Fowler dropped his approach just inside 12 feet from the hole while Morikawa went over the green and like Hadwin ended up just over 21 feet from the hole.

Hadwin's putt rolled past, Morikawa's chip was short and Fowler then made his putt, standing in place and smiling at his long-sought victory.

"It was a nice moment just to kind of feel like the weight on my shoulders was finally off," Fowler said. — AFP

Australia lead two-nil in series with dramatic end to second Test

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, JULY 3

The second Test will go into Ashes history as one of the most memorable after an extraordinary innings of 151 by the England captain Ben Stokes. It was a dazzling innings containing 9 sixes and 9 fours that threatened to take the match away from Australia after the tourists had been favourites for much of the game which they eventually won by 43 runs.

Resuming their second innings on the final day on 114 for four and needing a further 257, Stokes, on 29, went on to play a most belligerent innings totally dominating during his five hours at the crease – extending from the previous day – during which he had faced 214 balls.

It took Australia 14.4 overs to break the fifth wicket stand by which time England had added 63 with Stokes having brought up his 29th Test half century. Ben Duckett, 50 overnight, meanwhile had been picking up runs steadily. He reached 79 with the last of his 9 fours and was dismissed four runs later. He was unlucky to have missed a second chance of an Ashes century at Lord's after hitting 98 in the first innings.

He fell after a bowling change brought Josh Hazlewood into the attack. Duckett attempting a hook only got an edge and Alex Carey, behind the stumps, held a leaping right-handed catch above his head.



At that stage England needed a further 194 runs with Jonny Bairstow the only specialist batsman left to partner Stokes. But after hitting two confident fours in his 10 runs, his innings came to a controversial end.

Facing Cameron Green, Bairstow ducked under a bouncer and walked out of his crease presumably to talk to his partner but the wicketkeeper Alex Carey threw the ball immediately at the stumps, Australians appealed and the third umpire gave him out as 'stumped' as the ball was not 'dead'.

This was a highly significant moment within the situation of the match. The manner of dismissal was not in the spirit of the game although strictly it was within the laws of the game. It certainly angered the crowd and the inevitable 'boos' followed from them. England, at that stage were 178 runs short of their target.

With Stokes' aggressive batting

thereafter the run rate shot up. He got into the nineties with a six off Green and sent the next ball over the ropes again to reach his 13th Test century from 141 balls. He took three sixes and a four in one over. At lunch, with Bairstow having departed, he was on 108 from 147 balls with 9 fours and 4 sixes with England needing a further 128 with four wickets remaining.

On 112 Stokes was dropped by Steve Smith off Cummins at deep backward square leg just after he had driven Hazlewood over long-on for six. He soon took his score to 147 with two consecutive sixes of Mitchel Starc, bringing up the seventh wicket stand with Stuart Broad to 100 off 93 balls and the England total then reached 300 in 71.4 overs with Stokes in total command.

Australians were finally able to breathe a sigh of relief when he top-edged an intended pull off Hazlewood and Carey ran towards backward point to take the catch. England were 301 for seven at the end of that partnership between Stokes and Broad of 108 of which Broad had just 11.

The next two overs accounted for the eighth and ninth wickets both on 302 and with an addition of 25 runs for the last wicket the innings as wrapped up with Starc bowling Josh Tongue for 19 to finish with three for 79. Cummins and Hazlewood also had three each for 69 and 80 respectively.

BELGIAN PHILIPSEN SPRINTS TO TOUR DE FRANCE THIRD STAGE WIN

BAYONNE: Belgian sprinter Jasper Philipsen outpaced and out-muscled the other fast men to take the high-speed bunch finish at the end of the third stage of the Tour de France on Monday.

The Alpecin rider appeared to cut off a rival as he moved to his right in the finale, but the race commissioners approved the Belgian's win, ahead of Phil Bauhaus and Caleb Ewan.

"It was tense but it's the Tour de France," said Philipsen at the finish.

"Everyone wanted to put everything into this sprint."

English rider Adam Yates of the UAE Team retained the overall lead as all the chief contenders finished together after a 182km run from northern Spain to Bayonne.

Sunday's star Victor Lafay, who remained fourth overall, retained the sprint points green jersey, while 2020 and 2021 champion Tadej Pogacar kept second place and the best young rider's white tunic.

Philipsen attracted ridicule at the Tour de France last year for celebrating what he believed to be a stage win when in fact Wout van Aert had already crossed the line on a solo escape.

A Netflix series about the 2022 Tour then nicknamed him 'Jasper the disaster'.

Orange hats and green and red Basque flags were an ever present on the early climbs as American rider Neilson Powless extended his lead in the mountain classification.

As the Tour caravan crossed the border fans cheered breakaway rider Frenchman Laurent Pichon of Arkea Samsic with every push of the pedals but he was caught 30km from home.

Tuesday's stage four is a largely flat 182km run from Dax to Nogaro with a racing circuit finish line which should culminate in another mass sprint.— AFP

“It was tense but it’s the Tour de France. Everyone wanted to put everything into this sprint”

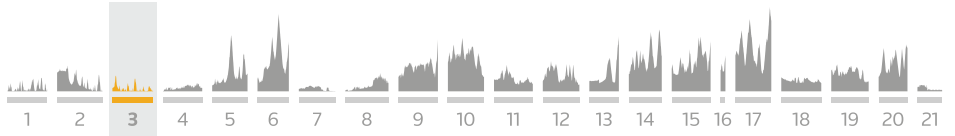
JASPER PHILIPSEN
Belgian professional cyclist



Alpecin-Deceuninck's Jasper Philipsen celebrates winning stage 3. — Reuters

Stage 3

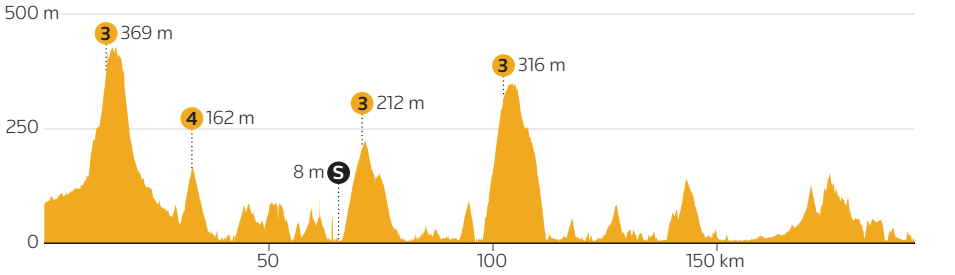
AMOREBIETA-ETXANO – BAYONNE
JULY 3



ROUTE



ELEVATION



Note: Maps and elevation profiles are based on existing roads. Some discrepancies may occur.
Sources: Maps4News; GPS Visualizer; Amaury Sport Organisation.
Aditi Bhandari, Prasanta Kumar Dutta, Sudev Kiyada and Jitesh Chowdhury | Reuters, June 30, 2023



Easypost's US rider Neilson Powless celebrates on the podium with the best climber's dotted jersey after the 3rd stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 193,5 km between Amorebieta-Etxano in Northern Spain and Bayonne in southwestern France, on Monday. — AFP

business

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
4,792.00



CRUDE OIL PRICE
Oman Crude \$75.36
Brent Crude \$76.05
Light Crude \$71.38



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business

Up to 4% interest

With High-Yield Savings Account

To apply, simply visit one of our expanding network of branches, or call us on 2479 1111.

2479 1111

www.bankdhofar.com

/bankdhofar

@bankdhofar

@bankdhofar

CBO launches composite financial stability indicator for Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has unveiled the first-ever Composite Financial Stability Indicator (CFSI) for the Sultanate of Oman.

The CFSI, outlined in a newly published working paper, serves as a comprehensive measure to capture the essence of financial stability in Oman, providing stakeholders and policymakers with valuable insights into the current state and evolution of financial stability over time.

The CFSI aggregates five essential sub-indicators that effectively reflect the financial stability landscape in Oman, with the aggregate CFSI rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing lower stability and 5 higher stability.

These sub-indicators include Banking stability, systemic risk, debt sustainability, currency stability and capital market certainty.

The overall results of the CFSI from 2008 to 2021, demonstrates strong stability.

However, during the early stages of the pandemic, the CFSI of the Sultanate of Oman saw a drop primarily attributed to deteriorating debt sustainability, capital market deterioration, and increased systemic risk resulting

from the contraction of economic activity vis a vis bank lending and higher lending premiums during the pandemic period.

The CFSI will be updated annually and made available to the public through the annually published Financial Stability Report, with the objective of enhancing transparency and ensuring that vital information reaches a wide range of stakeholders.

The roll-out of the CFSI is a reaffirmation of the Central Bank's commitment to transparency, open communication with stakeholders, and evidence-based policy making, it added in a statement.

Expo to spotlight Dhofar's adventure tourism potential

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 3

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in Dhofar Governorate has joined hands with local events firm Al Kheyali Comprehensive Trading & Contracting Company, in hosting the Dhofar International Exhibition — a weeklong expo that showcases the governorate's diverse attractions associated with adventure tourism.

The event will take place from July 28 to August 3, 2023, at the Dhofar International Exhibition Center in Salalah.

The fair is open to all businesses and organisations involved in the caravan, camping, equestrian, marine sports, mountain climbing, motorcycles, and SUV supply industries. To register, businesses and organisations must be registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

Priority will be given to businesses and organisations that hold a valid Entrepreneurship

Card. Registration does not guarantee acceptance, and all applications will be subject to review.

Participants are free to prepare their space according to their activity. The fair will feature a variety of exhibits, demonstrations, and competitions. There will also be a number of networking opportunities for businesses and organisations.

The Dhofar International Exhibition is a great opportunity for businesses and organisations to showcase their products and services to a large audience of potential customers. It is also an opportunity for businesses and organisations to network with other businesses and organisations in the industry.

The deadline to register for the Dhofar International Exhibition is July 8, 2023.

Oman's first public P2P crowdfunding campaign concludes successfully

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Ethical and Sharia compliant crowdfunding platform operator, Ethis Investment Platform LLC (EthisX), has announced the successful conclusion of its inaugural peer-to-peer (P2P) crowdfunding campaign.

The campaign, named Rakwa Roastery, showcases a remarkable milestone as the Sultanate of Oman's first-ever successful public P2P crowdfunding initiative.

The campaign surpassed its minimum target of RO 40,000 and went on to be overfunded, reaching the maximum target of RO 50,000 (\$130,000), entirely sourced from public contributions.

Rakwa Roastery, a coffee roastery SME with its primary operations based in Nizwa, attracted both local and global retail investors. The campaign presented an enticing opportunity, offering a projected return on investment (ROI) of 15%

over a one-year term. The raised funds will be allocated towards acquiring specialised packaging machinery, expanding inventories, and venturing into new markets.

The success of Rakwa Roastery's crowdfunding campaign marks a significant milestone for EthisX and the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting the growing demand for ethical and Sharia compliant investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

Through the collective support of local and global investors, EthisX successfully demonstrated the power of enabling public participation to fuel sustainable economic growth and empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Rising temperatures spurring more intense heatwaves in Oman: IEA

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Temperature increases recorded over the past several decades in the Sultanate of Oman are behind an escalating trend in heatwaves witnessed in recent years, according to key report released yesterday by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The Paris-headquartered intergovernmental body also cautioned that electricity demand is expected to scale new highs as the uptake of air-conditioning inevitably grows in these conditions, potentially straining the country's predominantly gas-fired power generation system.

Likewise, water-related challenges could be exacerbated due to climate impacts, while extreme weather events are likely to trigger floods with potential consequences for infrastructure and the environment, it said.

The report, titled 'Climate Resilience for Energy Transition in Oman', welcomes efforts by the Omani government to address climate change, notably through its commitments to Net Zero as part of a broader transition to a green-energy based future.

"Oman Vision 2040 and its National Energy Strategy set a target of scaling up renewables

ELECTRICITY DEMAND IS EXPECTED TO SCALE NEW HIGHS AS THE UPTAKE OF AIR-CONDITIONING INEVITABLY GROWS IN THESE CONDITIONS, POTENTIALLY STRAINING THE COUNTRY'S PREDOMINANTLY GAS-FIRED POWER GENERATION SYSTEM

and improving energy efficiency, while the National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change and the second nationally determined contribution (NDC) recognise the need for energy infrastructure resilience against climate change impacts," it said.

Nevertheless, the IEA stressed the need for further policy measures to achieve climate-resilient energy transitions in Oman. It noted in this regard the

need for the completion of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and climate impact assessments.

"Government efforts to bring climate resilience considerations into the core of decision-making on energy projects through guidelines, regulations and project approval processes will catalyse action on resilience.

In addition, its continuous support for the diversification of energy technologies and higher penetration of renewable energy will help the country cope better with climate-related shocks, facilitating its shift to alternative options and limiting energy supply disruption," the report stated.

Citing the rising trend in mean temperature increases, the IEA report warns that Oman is expected to witness more frequent heatwaves in the coming decades.

The mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 5 deg C on average from 1990 to 2100, according to the Agency.

In worst-case scenarios, the duration of heatwaves, lasting about 15 days in 1990, could lengthen to a staggering 280 days on average in 2100, it further cautions.

Two heatwave episodes that caused particular alarm were recorded in the past five years. In June 2018, the coastal town of Qurayat in Muscat Governorate recorded a minimum temperature that remained consistently above 41.9 deg C for 24 hours.

Three years later in June 2021 a heatwave persisted for nearly one month in several parts of the country with temperatures hitting peaks of over 50°C.

Given these trends, implications for power generation networks, having to handle increasingly intense air-conditioning loads, will be significant, according to the report.

Peak electricity demand, corresponding to the May-July period of the year, increased from 6,060 MW in 2015 to 7,081 MW in 2021, recording an average growth rate of 3 per cent.

This trend is anticipated to rise to around 4 per cent until 2027, the report added.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds forays into Europe; launches 320th showroom in London

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally, has launched their new showroom in the UK in London. This marks the global jewellery brand's expansion into its 11th country of operation and its first foray into the European continent.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently has an extensive retail presence of 320 showrooms in India, the UAE, the KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, Singapore, the USA & the UK.

The inauguration of the new showroom was conducted by Lyn Brown, Member of Parliament for West Ham and Shadow Minister for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development affairs, in the presence of Abdul Salam K P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, Shamlal Ahamed, International Operations Managing Director of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Faisal A K, Head of Manufacturing at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other senior Malabar Gold & Diamonds management team members, customers and well-wishers.

"We are immensely proud to



launch our inaugural showroom in Europe, in London.

What began as a single jewellery showroom in 1993 has now grown into an expansive global enterprise spanning 11 countries. Our dedication to delivering an exceptional jewellery shopping experience, encompassing top-quality products and exemplary

service, has been the driving force behind our ascent as the premier Indian international jewellery retailer.

As we mark the 30th anniversary of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, we are one step closer to our dream of being crowned as the world's largest jewellery retailer. We express heartfelt appreciation to

our customers, shareholders, team members, and associates for their invaluable support throughout the years, as they have been an integral part of our journey", commented M P Ahamed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

The showroom in London, which is in the East shopping centre on Green Street, will house

a wide collection of gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery in addition to exclusive brands and collections curated by Malabar Gold & Diamonds from over 15 countries. The new store will also showcase an extensive collection of bridal jewellery, alongside a wide range of options for occasional wear, daily wear & office wear.

"The new showroom in London not only marks a significant milestone for Malabar Gold & Diamonds but also carries immense importance of being the cornerstone for our growth aspirations in the region and play a pivotal role in shaping our future endeavours and fostering growth throughout the European continent. Over the years, we have catered to the needs of customers residing in the UK and Europe through our diverse array of stores located in India and the Middle East.

The persistent demand from our customers for a physical presence in Europe has led us to establish our presence in the region as a priority. In addition to crafting a unique experience for jewellery lovers in

London, we also aim to leverage our experience of adorning over 10 million brides to redefine and make bridal jewellery shopping more accessible and convenient in Europe., commented Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

"Upholding the motto of 'Make in India; Market to the world', Malabar Gold & Diamonds has been instrumental in the proliferation of Indian jewellery at the global stage; crafting, promoting, and selling jewellery that is an intersection of Indian art, heritage, culture and tradition to a global audience.

Our expansion into the United Kingdom signifies a significant step in this direction.

The ambitious and exciting plans that we have laid out for the future include strengthening our retail presence in existing markets, as well as expansion into new markets such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, Egypt, Bangladesh, Turkey and New Zealand," commented Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group.

ARA Petroleum inks MoU with NUST

MUSCAT: ARA Petroleum E&P (ARA), a dynamic energy company within The Zubair Corporation group recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Oman. The MoU, which was signed by Dr Omar al Jaidi, General Manager of ARA EP, and Dr Salem al Araimi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, on behalf of the university, aims to enhance cooperation between the energy and the academic sectors in the fields of research and innovation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Omar said, "We are aware of the role the National University plays in developing a working system of scientific research and innovation across several fields.

The MoU with the National University of Science and Technology will enhance ties between the industrial and academic sectors through innovative solutions and applied research to meet challenges and raise efficiency within industrial and energy sectors."



The National University of Science and Technology believes that partnerships with other industrial organisations enables the University to lead in these sectors by utilising the most diverse, highest-attaining student bodies. These partnerships also have the potential to make an impact on curriculum development, collaborative teaching programmes and research networks.

Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, Vice Chancellor of National University of Science and Technology added, "The collaboration aims to find solutions to the challenges faced by the two institutions, whether

in the field of education or in the field of energy.

He stressed that the memorandum would help contribute to the professional development of students and faculty members at the University as well as implement joint research projects in areas of interest to both the University and ARA.

Results and achievements will be monitored and evaluated over a period of 6 months. We hope to evaluate our accomplishments after this period to continue our journey of technological advancements that aid both entities."

Genetco honoured with 'Best Operations Award' by TCL

MUSCAT: Genetco, the leading consumer electronics and home appliances distributor has been bestowed with the prestigious 'Best Operations Award' by TCL for excellence in sales operations in LED TV category for the year 2022.

The award was presented during the 2023 MEA Product Launch Conference of TCL held at the prestigious Madinat Avenue Hotel in Dubai. Bill Jiang, TCL Overseas Business Group (OBG) General Manager and Sunny Yang, TCL Middle East, and Africa General Manager, presented the prestigious award to Dr Muthanna Al Durrah, Acting CEO & Board Adviser of Genetco and Dr P SPadmaKumar, General Manager. This recognition reaffirms Genetco's dedication to excellence and its exceptional performance for the year of 2022 in Oman.



The TCL MEA product Launch and Award Function is a prominent event in the TCL calendar where they unveil the latest innovative products in various categories for the Middle East and Africa region.

Further it is the venue to recognise the outstanding contributions and achievements of TCL distribution partners operating in the Middle East and Africa region.

During the Event TCL, the world's # 1 Google TV brand and #1 98-inch TV brand, unveiled its latest multi-category products for the Middle East and Africa (MEA). From stunning picture quality with its 2023 C Series Mini LED and QLED TVs, TCL's latest product line-up underscores its commitment to bringing customers in the region the very best in technological innovation.

Own a Kia with exclusive benefits including attractive instalments

MUSCAT: Kia customers looking forward to owning a Kia can now benefit with service up to 3 years/30,000 kms (whichever is earlier), 1 year comprehensive insurance and attractive instalments. Kia Oman has a range of vehicles to cater to every need which includes the Cerato, Sonet, Seltos and Sorento.

Kia Cerato is available with instalment starting from RO 93. The Cerato is designed to make an impression from any angle with full LED headlights which appear as slender lines with the radiator grille to underline the redesigning

of the face of the model. Defining the car's sporty exterior. At the rear, strong horizontal lines add a bold appearance with depth to the fluid exterior design.

Kia Sonet is available with instalment starting from RO 92. The Sonet is equipped with a powerful 1.5L engine that is paired to a CVT transmission. Offering comfortable space to passengers with its 5-seater capacity, this SUV goes the distance giving an impressive average of 17.5 kmpl.

Kia Seltos is available with instalment starting from RO 108. The Seltos SUV has a stylish exterior with long hood, a strong,



character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork. The Seltos is equipped with a 1.6-litre gasoline engine

producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission.

To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped

with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from 'Normal', 'Eco' and 'Sport' mode.

Kia Sorento is available with instalment starting from RO 166.

The Sorento's redefined exterior and attractive cabin set it apart as much more than a work of engineering efficiency. Powering the all-new Sorento SUV are the 2.5L variant and the 3.5L variant. The 2.5L engine with 177 hp and 23.7 kg.m. torque is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

For more details please

visit any Kia showroom. Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership award', 'Family Like Care' Service award', and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award.



Global factory output slumps as weak demand weighs

LONDON: Global factory activity slumped in June, business surveys showed on Monday, as sluggish demand in China and in Europe clouded the outlook for exporters.

Across the euro zone manufacturing contracted faster than initially thought, as persistent policy tightening by the European Central Bank squeezed finances, and in Britain the pace of decline steepened as optimism faded.

In Asia, while factory activity expanded marginally in China, it contracted in Japan and South Korea as Asia's economic recovery struggled to maintain momentum. Data due later on Monday are expected to show a further contraction in the United States.

"There are no real signs we are going to get any rebound in the manufacturing sector this year. On the whole we are still talking about a negative assessment," said Rory Fennessy, European economist at Oxford Economics on the euro zone release.

Compiled by S&P Global, HCOB's final euro zone manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 43.4 from May's 44.8, its lowest since the Covid pandemic was cementing its grip on the world, below a preliminary reading and further



Worker polishes a bicycle steel rim at a factory manufacturing sports equipment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. — Reuters

from the 50 mark separating growth from contraction. June's downturn was broad-based with surveys published earlier on Monday showing factory activity in all four of the euro zone's biggest economies contracted last month.

The S&P Global/CIPS UK

Manufacturing PMI fell to 46.5 from 47.1 in May, its lowest reading this year and one of the weakest since the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Asia's surveys underscore the toll China's weaker-than-expected rebound from Covid lockdowns is inflicting on the region, where

manufacturers are also bracing for the fallout from aggressive US and European interest rate hikes.

"The worst may have passed for Asian factories but activity lacks momentum because of diminishing prospects for a strong recovery in China's economy," said

Toru Nishihama, chief emerging market economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"China is dragging its feet in delivering stimulus. The US economy will likely feel the pain from big rate hikes. These factors all make Asian manufacturers gloomy about the outlook."

China's Caixin/S&P Global manufacturing PMI eased to 50.5 in June from 50.9 in May, the private survey showed.

The figure, combined with Friday's official survey that showed factory activity extending declines, adds to evidence the world's No. 2 economy lost steam in the second quarter.

The impact is being felt in Japan where the final au Jibun Bank PMI fell to 49.8 in June, returning to a contraction after expanding in May for the first time in seven months. New orders from overseas customers decreased at the fastest rate in four months reflecting feeble demand from China.

South Korea's PMI fell to 47.8 in June, extending its downturn to a record 12th consecutive month on weak demand in Asia and Europe. Factory activity also contracted in Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia, the PMI surveys showed.

There were bright patches

among the economic indicators with India's manufacturing industry bucking the trend and expanding at a brisk pace in June, albeit slightly slower than in May, supported by robust demand.

The Bank of Japan's closely watched tankan survey also showed Japanese business sentiment improving in the second quarter as raw material costs peaked and the removal of pandemic curbs lifted consumption.

Asia is heavily reliant on the strength of China's economy, which saw growth rebound in the first quarter but subsequently fell short of expectations.

The fate of Asia's economy, including China's, will have a huge impact on the rest of the world with aggressive monetary tightening also expected to weigh on US and European growth.

In forecasts released in May, the International Monetary Fund said it expects Asia's economy to expand 4.6% this year after a 3.8% gain in 2022, contributing around 70% of global growth.

But it cut next year's Asian growth forecast to 4.4% and warned of risks to the outlook such as stickier-than-expected inflation and slowing global demand.

— Reuters

Pakistan shares see biggest one-day gain in 15 years post IMF deal

KARACHI: Pakistan's benchmark share index scored its biggest single-day jump in 15 years on Monday, gaining 5.9% on the first trading session after the country secured a last-gasp funding deal from the International Monetary Fund.

The country on Friday secured a \$3 billion short-term financial package from the IMF, giving its economy some much-awaited respite as it teeters on the brink of default. "Investors' confidence is sharply reviving as a result of the staff-level agreement with the IMF and \$3 billion standby arrangement," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a statement.

The KSE 100 index closed up 2,442.06 points at 43,894.7, marking its biggest percentage gain since June 24, 2008, when it rose 8.6%, as per Refinitiv data.

Topline Securities noted that in points terms the increase was even more significant. "Today's gain in the benchmark KSE 100 Index will likely be highest



An investor can be seen looking at the digital stock board at the Pakistan Stock Exchange. — Reuters

in the history of Pakistan Stock exchange," it said.

The Pakistan rupee was little moved amid an inter-bank trading holiday due to the start of the new fiscal year, with the local unit trading steady on the day at around 286 against the US dollar.

However, there was a growing interest in Pakistani eurobonds maturing in 2024 and 2025, with limited indicative offers of any sellers. Among key stocks to advance, automakers rose by between 6% and 7.5% on expectations that import restrictions on car parts would be lifted under the IMF deal. — Reuters

Saudi Arabia extends oil production cut as Russia reduces exports

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia said on Monday it was extending a voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels per day, and Russia said it was slashing exports by 500,000 bpd.

The moves were the latest attempts by major producers to stabilise markets rocked by factors including continued fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's faltering economic recovery.

The cut by Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, was first announced after a June meeting of oil producers and took effect at the weekend. Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman noted at the time that it was "extendable".

In a report on Monday announcing that the cut would continue through August, the official Saudi Press Agency said it "can be extended" further, citing an energy ministry source.

"The source confirmed that this additional voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts



Flames are seen at the production facility of Saudi Aramco's Shaybah oilfield in the Empty Quarter in Saudi Arabia. — AFP

made by Opec+ countries with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets," SPA said.

Monday's extension announcement leaves the kingdom's production at approximately nine million bpd. Also on Monday, Russia unveiled its export cut of 500,000 bpd for August "as part of efforts to ensure that the oil market remains balanced". The announcement by Alexander

Novak, Russian Deputy Prime Minister responsible for energy policy, came on the back of cuts to Russian oil production this year by the same volume as part of Moscow's response to Western sanctions levied over the conflict in Ukraine.

"Saudi Arabia is hoping to bring down global inventories over the summer in order to lend support to prices," said Jamie Ingram, senior editor at MEES.

"There will be little expectation that Russia will fully comply with this latest commitment, but the key thing here is that it's a public statement of commitment to Saudi Arabia's market management strategy."

The initial market reaction to Monday's announcements by Riyadh and Moscow was muted. Brent was up 0.98 per cent to \$76.15 per barrel, and West Texas Intermediate was up 1.02 per cent to \$71.36 per barrel.

Recent efforts by Opec+ to bolster prices by reducing output have not succeeded.

In April, several Opec+ members opted to slash production voluntarily by more than one million bpd — a surprise move that briefly raised prices but failed to bring about lasting recovery.

Brent is down 11 per cent since the beginning of the year and WTI is down 7 per cent, as a sluggish recovery in China and worries about the US economy weigh on demand forecasts. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

MANILA

Philippines tourism sector records growth

The Department of Tourism (DOT) foresees a robust recovery for Philippines Tourism, underpinned by the encouraging figures in the Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts for 2022, as compiled by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The Tourism Direct Gross Value Added share of tourism to the Philippine economy, as measured by the GDP, was estimated at 6.2 per cent for 2022.

The TDGVA last year amounted to PHP 1.38 trillion,



36.9 per cent higher as compared with the PHP 1.00 trillion in 2021.

Internal tourism expenditure, combining inbound and domestic tourism expenditure, saw a growth last year. — AFP

LONDON

Oil rallies on Saudi and Russian supply cuts

Oil rose on Monday after top exporters Saudi Arabia and Russia announced supply cuts for August, overshadowing concern over a global economic slowdown and the potential for further increases to US interest rates.

Saudi Arabia on Monday said it would extend its voluntary cut of one million barrels per day (bpd) for another month to include August, the state news agency said.

Russia, seeking to nudge

up global oil prices in concert with Saudi Arabia, will reduce its oil exports by 500,000 bpd in August, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Monday, further tightening global supplies.

The cuts amount to 1.5% of global supply and bring the total pledged by Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries oil producers to 5.16 million bpd.

Both Riyadh and Moscow have been trying to prop up prices. — Reuters

BERLIN

Germany plans \$18.1bn in new borrowing for 2024

German Finance Minister Christian Lindner (pictured) is planning 16.6 billion euros (\$18.1 billion) of net new debt for the 2024 federal budget, which includes record spending on defence, finance ministry sources said on Monday.

The financial plan to 2027 shows new borrowing falling to 15.0 billion euros by that year. But the sources estimate there is still a gap of 14.4 billion euros in the medium-term budget plan as Lindner tries to balance fiscal



responsibility with spending demands from within the three-party ruling coalition.

Expenditure of 445.7 billion euros is planned for next year, after 476.3 billion estimated for 2023. — Reuters

Opportunity Oman: Strategic partnerships



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

Oman's ongoing development journey has been nothing short of inspiring, with significant progress across all indicators, both domestically and on the global stage.

Oman's Vision 2040 sets a clear goal for the nation: to join the ranks of developed countries with a diversified economy, thriving private sector, increased investment, international cooperation, and a robust business climate. This ambitious vision emphasises the importance of forming strategic partnerships with selected countries and multinational corporations to achieve sustainable growth.

In today's global landscape, strategic partnerships have become the bedrock of contemporary development, fostering collaboration between entities and countries with shared objectives.

These alliances yield mutually beneficial outcomes and play a vital role in driving development, growth, and innovation across industries and nations. By facilitating knowledge exchange, resource pooling, risk sharing, and technological advancements, strategic partnerships empower organisations to thrive in an interconnected world.

Recognising their multifaceted importance underscores their indispensable role in every organisational and functional structure.

Oman finds itself at a crucial juncture, where urgent and necessary reforms are vital for its future.

The country heavily relies on hydrocarbons as its primary



revenue source, but the global oil market is gradually reaching peak-demand while renewable energy gains momentum. This necessitates diversifying Oman's economy away from oil and embracing new opportunities.

Additionally, Oman's large youth population seeks productive employment, which can be achieved through expanding the production and private sector activities.

Acknowledging the need for transformation, Oman realises that remaining relevant in an ever-shifting world requires an innovative and fresh approach.

The Vision 2040 serves as a catalyst for change, calling for a dramatic paradigm shift across all aspects of development. To achieve this, Oman must understand new dynamics on strategic, tactical, and operational levels.

Building on its readiness in different dimensions in terms of infrastructure and educating the people, Oman is moving to a new renaissance towards the best utilisation of its abundant natural resources, as well as ambitious strategies to develop

several sectors including: tourism, fisheries, logistics, mining, manufacturing and technology.

Forming a strategic partnership, attracting FDI and joining hands with friends who are advanced in certain industries possessing the know-how, technology and the right team can fill a lot of gaps Oman aspires to fill. It is essential to note that countries share many common complimentary features which require focus to gain better value.

Oman offers an ideal environment for Strategic Partnerships and there are many ingredients that make it a great destination, to name a few:

- A world-class business destination due to its strategic location which is less than a four-hour flight from over a third of the world's population;

- Rich in resources, such as a highly skilled workforce, abundance of natural assets, world-class infrastructure, pro-business legislation, and legal transparency are just some of the many elements that make the Sultanate of Oman.

- Possess a competitive market with a robust

diversifying economy, world-class infrastructure, a business-friendly regulatory framework, a wealth of natural resources, an outstanding multi-lingual talent pool and political stability which make Oman a highly attractive destination for international investors.

- A renowned trade route, as with its highly advantageous strategic location at the crossroads of east-west trade routes and a coastline stretching over 3,000 kilometres, Oman offers direct trade routes from its deep-water ports to the fast-growing markets of the GCC, India, Africa, Far East and Europe.

All major ports in these regions can be reached within two weeks, two days faster than any other port inside the Strait of Hormuz.

- Stability: With a long-standing tradition of international diplomacy, Oman is consistently ranked first in peace and stability in the Middle East.

Oman Investment Authority, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Foreign Ministry and OPAZ are

helping drive the establishment of strategic partnerships. Special Economic Zone (SEZ) designated areas provide a host of advantages, including tax incentives, simplified regulations, and access to top-notch infrastructure, all designed to attract foreign investors and stimulate innovation.

As a result, major players in sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, and renewable energy have been drawn to these SEZs, solidifying Oman's reputation as a regional business centre.

The newly formed company, Hydrom, has successfully positioned itself as an anchor for global strategic partnerships in hydrogen.

By actively seeking out and engaging in international collaborations, Hydrom is able to leverage the expertise and resources of its partners to achieve mutual growth and success.

This strategic approach enables Hydrom to expand its market reach, access new technologies, and tap into diverse talent pools. By forging strategic partnerships, Hydrom can enhance its competitive advantage and

contribute to the sustainable development of Oman's economy.

Strategic partnerships have gained increasing significance due to various factors. Globalisation has interconnected economies, necessitating collaborative efforts for resource optimisation.

The urgency of addressing complex issues like climate change requires collective actions. Technological advancements have made knowledge sharing crucial for innovation and competitiveness.

Strategic partnerships serve as platforms for leveraging individual competencies to effectively mitigate risks and achieve sustainable development objectives.

These partnerships hold great importance in multiple areas:

- Enhancing innovation and technological advancement by pooling resources and expertise.

- Expanding market access and driving economic growth by tapping into new opportunities.

- Mitigating risks and sharing resources through mutually beneficial relationships.

- Strengthening geopolitical influence and diplomatic power for improved negotiations and stability.

- Fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building through collaboration with organisations possessing specific expertise.

To conclude, strategic partnerships are key players in driving development and growth across industries and nations alike. These joint ventures foster innovative ideas while increasing market reach with reduced risk giving rise to stronger political influence establishing knowledge sharing networks around the globe.

The quantitative data laid out in this article highlights the positive impact these relationships have on economic performance from a technological perspective alongside diplomatic improvements.

Organisations worldwide need to prioritise such alliances as integral core drivers that will undoubtedly steer progress towards prosperity bringing about a holistic change across industries that operate in today's complex world.

Oil giants drill deep as profits trump climate concerns

RON BOUSSO & NERIJUS ADOMAITIS

Oil and gas companies have intensified the hunt for new deposits in a long-term bet on demand, as they reinvest some of the record profits from the fossil fuel price surge driven by the Ukraine war, according to data and industry executives.

The exploration revival — on the part of European majors in particular — reflects a renewed commitment to oil and gas after Shell and BP went back on pledges to reduce output and invest in renewables as part of the energy transition.

It responds to pressure from a majority of investors to maximise their oil and gas profits rather than invest in lower margin renewable energy businesses.

It also defies protests from a minority of activist investors who want oil companies to be more closely aligned with global efforts to mitigate climate change.

The renewed appetite for oil and gas reserves and production is an especially big turnaround for BP, which got rid of most staff from its exploration unit three years ago.

Exploration is a long-term, high-risk business. Big-ticket offshore projects typically take five years to develop from discovery and at least another 10 years to return the initial investment.

But as a source of profit, it has proved more reliable for the energy majors than the very different business model of producing renewable energy.

Upstream oil and gas have historically had returns of around 15%-to-20%, while most renewables projects have delivered up to 8%. An oil and



Drilling platforms stand together at a dock yard in Singapore port. — Reuters

gas price rally driven by energy producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine translated into record profits for the energy majors.

That has increased confidence in the most costly, high-risk offshore exploration that can also deliver the highest rewards.

"Offshore is experiencing a

renaissance," oilfield services company SLB Chief Executive Olivier Le Peuch said on June 21. Leading industry data providers and consultancies endorse the view.

The number of offshore drilling vessels used to explore and produce oil and gas recovered

in May to pre-pandemic levels, rising by 45% from October 2020 lows, an analysis of data from oil services firm Baker Hughes showed.

Wood Mackenzie analysts predict a continued increase in activity, forecasting offshore exploration and drilling activity to grow by 20% by 2025.

Already, the rise in drilling has helped to drive daily rates for leasing drilling rigs to the highest levels since a 2014 downturn when commodity markets crashed.

"Higher oil prices, the focus on energy security and deep water's emissions advantages have supported deep water development and, to some extent, boosted exploration," Wood Mackenzie analyst Leslie Cook said.

The potential size of offshore deposits can ensure economies of scale, meaning less energy is used

to extract each barrel, limiting emissions.

The International Energy Agency forecasts global upstream oil and gas investments are set to increase by around 11% to \$528 billion in 2023, the highest level since 2015.

Barclays expects the number of offshore projects to get approval this year will reach a 10-year high.

Wood Mackenzie meanwhile predicts the commitment of up to \$185 billion to develop 27 billion barrels of oil reserves, with international oil companies focused on the higher-cost, higher-return deepwater developments.

It also anticipated the so-called Golden Triangle — US Gulf of Mexico, South America and West Africa — as well as part of the Mediterranean will account for 75% of global floating rig demand through 2027. — Reuters

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

WhatsApp

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

TUESDAY JULY 4, 2023 DHUL HIJJA 16, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almaashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

AL NAMANI CARGO DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP 96353654 TOLL FREE NUMBER 80066766

Follow us: f i n t www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

سماء الخضراء للتجارة SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566

Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

FOR RENT

Flat for rent

1) Darsait, near Indian School: Two bedroom flat, bath attached. Hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat, hall, kitchen and toilet.

2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco: One bedroom, bath, kitchen, AC, curtains.

3) Al Ghubrah near Mars Hypermarket: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

4) Al Ghubrah near Indian School: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

*All flats provided with airconditioners.

Contact GSM: 91473374/97886085.

FOR RENT

FLAT for rent.
96379095,
98403020

FLATS 2BHK and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

SIT. WANTED

SENIOR Quantity Surveyor. Chamidu Fernando. BSc Quantity Surveying and Construction. Over 5 years experience. Visa and driving licence. +968 96295650

27 YEARS experience in Oman looking for sales or admin job with valid driving licence. Email: msenizwa@gmail.com, contact: 99049651

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES

INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126

Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696 95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

ROYAL CARGO DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA INDONESIA NEPAL AIR EXPORT (Port to Port) SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL CUSTOMER CARE 93213207

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206

SIT. VACANT

REQUIRED indoor/ outdoor sales staff for building material and oilfield supply. Oman driving licence required. Email: sangita@dhiyahilal.com Contact: 93559800

INDIAN male, accountant with proficiency in Excel & Tally solutions required for a position in a company. Contact: 99810884. Email: damas.oman1@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503 Direct Line: 24786077 GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

LOOKING for private nurse for wheelchair patient, Asian nationality. on call duty 24 hours in Salalah. Contact: 92800252/ 99779501.

Now get news on the go

WhatsApp <your name> to 96473232

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: 99639264

DAWOOD JOB VACANCY

An Excellent grade, ISO 9001:2015-QMS accredited Construction company wishes to recruit enthusiastic personnel for the following positions:

- Head of Tendering Department:** Bachelor degree with min 18 yrs experience.
- Contracts Manager:** Bachelor degree with min 12 yrs experience.
- Estimator/Post QS:** Bachelor degree with min 10 yrs experience.

Required: Oman Driving License holder.

Interested candidates pls forward your CV's to info@dawood.om

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team 95210257

OMAN OBSERVER

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi 99841230 m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri 92998577 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari 99639264 wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri 99429094 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi 99429192 soharaaily@outlook.com

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Be Careful, Be Responsible! #LivingWithCOVID

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 18, 1441 AH

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Be Careful, Be Responsible! #LivingWithCOVID

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

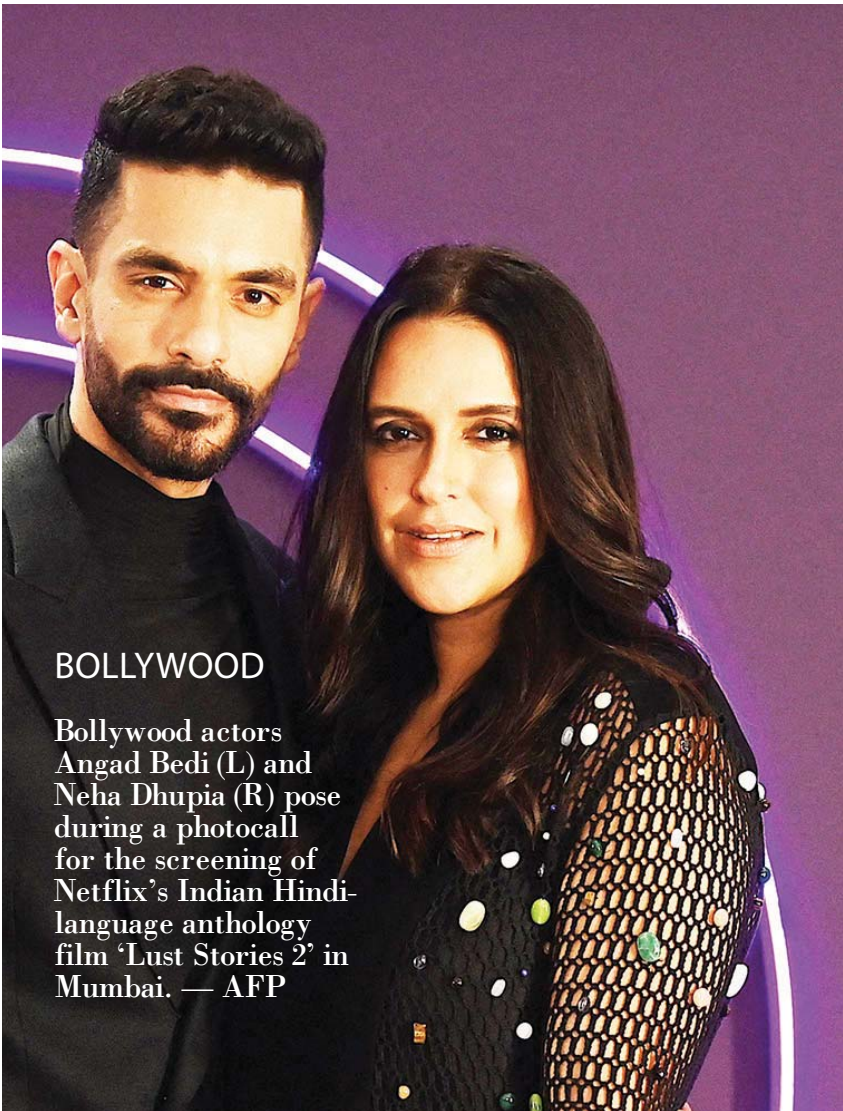
STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN



GALLERY
A visitor walks under a vintage US Air Force Douglas C-47B aircraft (known as a “candy Bomber” - Rosinenbomber) on Permanent display on the terrace of the German Museum of Technology (Deutsches Technikmuseum - DTM) in Berlin. — AFP



LIFESTYLE
A guest waits for the Queer Family Ball performance in AGOG Art Gallery in Maboneng Precinct in Johannesburg. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD
Bollywood actors Angad Bedi (L) and Neha Dhupia (R) pose during a photocall for the screening of Netflix's Indian Hindi-language anthology film "Lust Stories 2" in Mumbai. — AFP



MUSIC
French singer Nicolas Sirkis from French rock band Indochine performs on stage during the 33rd edition of the Eurockeeennes de Belfort rock music festival in Sermamagny, eastern France. — AFP



FASHION
French designer Charles de Vilmorin, poses during a photo session in his apartment in Paris. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | JULY 4, 2023 | DHUL HIJJA 16, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [www.omanobserver.om](#) [features@omanobserver.om](#)

Harnessing the healing power of art therapy for mental recovery

Niaa aims to strengthen focus, excite the five senses, reduce anxiety and stress, and cultivate physical skills through the combination of artistic panels and the use of art therapy approaches.

FASHION

Couture week comes to Paris amid riot fears

THE FASHION WORLD is on edge as haute couture week kicks off on Monday in Paris, which has seen nights of violent riots over the police killing of a teenager. French label Celine cancelled its menswear show — scheduled outside the official calendar — on Sunday due to the riots, with designer Hedi Slimane saying it was “inconsiderate” to hold a fashion show when Paris was “bereaved and bruised”. Hundreds have been arrested across the country as mostly young protesters have torched cars and attacked infrastructure following the death of 17-year-old Nahel M., who was shot dead when

he tried to flee a traffic stop on Tuesday. Violence appeared to be ebbing somewhat in and around the French capital over the weekend, and the haute couture shows — celebrating the most expensive, tailor-made end of fashion — were due to go ahead as planned, the French fashion federation said on Sunday. First up is Schiaparelli, with fashionistas wondering if it can beat the social media meltdown caused by last season's fake animal heads. The heads, sported by the likes of Kylie Jenner, were another publicity coup for Schiaparelli artistic



director Daniel Roseberry, who has overseen a revamp of the brand and attracted the likes of Lady Gaga and Beyonce as clients. Animal activists seemed unsure what to think. The US branch of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals) called the heads “fabulously innovative”, while PETA's French branch said a thought should be spared for the silkworms and sheep “who have really suffered”.

SAUDI MONEY

A dominant feature of this season in Paris has been the lavish spending by Saudi Arabia as it tries to establish its own fashion industry. That continues this week, with couturier Mohammad Ashi becoming the first Saudi designer to show as part of the official haute couture week roster with his eponymous label. There have been multiple events across the menswear and couture weeks to introduce newcomers from the kingdom, including a cocktail soiree at the Ritz hotel on Monday. Ashi has been a favourite of celebrities for a while, dressing the likes of Queen Rania of Jordan, Penelope Cruz and star of the new Indiana Jones movie, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who wore one of his creations to the London premiere last week. Saudi Arabia has been pumping billions, not just into fashion but everything from film to football, as part of radical social changes overseen by de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. Couture week will also see first-time appearances by the United States' Thom Browne and France's

Charles de Vilmorin alongside regulars like Christian Dior. De Vilmorin, just 26, will present for his own brand after a short-lived tenure as artistic director of Rochas. “I’m super happy to have lived through all this and to do my first show,” he said in his apartment-workshop last week while finalising the collection. Fellow couturier Stephane Rolland is presenting his latest collection, dedicated to legendary singer Maria Callas, at the Opera Garnier. It will be filmed by veteran French director Claude Lelouch for his next movie. Rolland said it was vital to merge fashion and other art forms. “It’s very important in our profession. I find that from time to time it lacks a bit of refinement. Money is not everything,” he said. He welcomed the increasing presence of Saudis in fashion, and Ashi in particular. “I’m very happy for him,” he said. “There is a pool of talent in Saudi Arabia that hasn’t been able to express itself the way it wanted for a long time.” — AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

mylens_me
ولاية بديّة

Follow

sugan_path
Salalah Dharis

Follow

yunushikes
Muscat, Oman

Follow

THE WAITING GAME

INTIMATE AFFAIR

HARD AT WORK

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.

By Zuwaina al Sulimani

Innovative methods for mental rehabilitation are emerging in a time when the importance of mental health is being recognised more and more. Niaa, an outstanding project propelled by a strong aim, has emerged as a haven of joy, artistry, and transforming advantages for those seeking tranquillity and clarity of thought. Niaa aims to strengthen focus, excite the five senses, reduce anxiety and stress, and cultivate physical skills through the combination of artistic panels and the use of art therapy approaches. This article explores Niaa's remarkable trajectory and its enormous effects on people's mental health.

Niaa, which was founded in 2015 with the lofty goal of being a source of joy and value for people, embodies the founder's unwavering dedication. The founder is Hajar al Rehabya who believes in art therapy that helps people reach their mental clarity. Inspiring people from an office in the Youth Centre. The initial level of demand for Niaa's products was low. Nevertheless, the project had a stunning comeback in 2020 with the start of Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns that followed. Al Rehabya has cleverly created highly requested items that were strongly associated with the demanding market, those are Diamond painting, colour-by-number panels, sculpting, and colouring notebooks.

Niaa made a crucial choice to embrace art therapy after seeing its significant therapeutic benefits. Niaa broadened its scope and acquired the knowledge required to serve a variety of people by assiduous research and the acquisition of certified credentials from prestigious worldwide certification bodies including IPHM, CMA, and CPD.

The artworks of Niaa are beyond mere aesthetic expression in which they play a crucial part in encouraging mental health. The project needs great satisfaction in offering panels that are specifically created to meet the special requirements of people dealing with conditions like autism, Down syndrome, and the rigours of chemotherapy. Colour-by-number or crystal panels have produced impressive results when strategically used in



the context of art therapy, improving the wellbeing of those receiving treatment and highlighting the immense potential of Niaa's services.

Niaa's path from humble beginnings to becoming seen as a flourishing business is an example of steadfast commitment, resilience, and compassion. Al Rehabya experiences a profound appreciation and fulfilment as a result of seeing the consistent demand for her products and personally witnessing the beneficial effects on people's lives. She feels tremendously delightful in having developed an original concept into a huge success, an art therapy platform that may profoundly improve the brains and bodies of many people.

Because of its persistent dedication in promoting mental healing via the transforming potential of art therapy, Niaa has established itself as a remarkable business and project with a significant influence. Niaa has been recognised as a catalyst for healing and renewal. Niaa's strong devotion to helping those with special needs and those who went through frustrating treatments like chemotherapy further emphasises the project's everlasting compassion and desire to improving lives. Niaa's unwavering commitment to becoming a forerunner of happiness and holistic wellbeing for everyone endures as it develops and grows, solidifying its position as a priceless symbol of hope and transformational healing in the field of mental rehabilitation.

ENTERTAINMENT

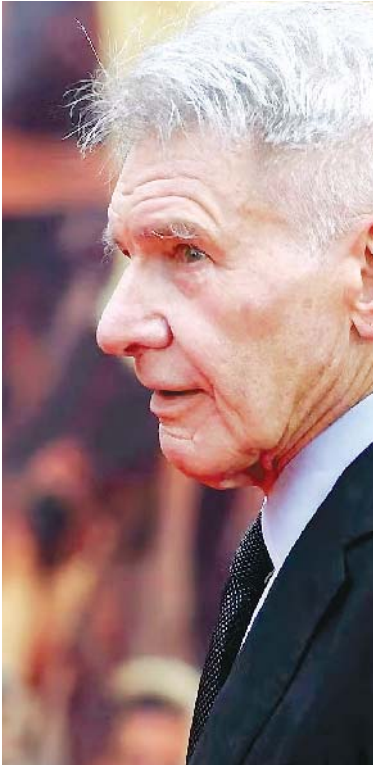
New 'Indiana Jones' tops North America box office despite tepid debut

THE LATEST — AND LIKELY last — instalment in the popular "Indiana Jones" franchise lassoed the competition at the North American box office, industry estimates showed on Sunday, but analysts noted the weak debut for the fan favourite.

"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," starring Harrison Ford in the role the archeologist he first made famous more than 40 years ago, earned about \$60 million, according to Exhibitor Relations.

With that, Indy booted animated sequel "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" from the top spot, but analysts said it was a weak start for the fifth Indiana Jones movie.

"Audience ratings are good, while critics reviews are lukewarm," said David A. Gross of Franchise



Entertainment Research.

Gross noted the Disney film is believed to have cost a whopping \$295 million to make before marketing, but

added that it was likely to make up ground overseas, where it opened with \$70 million in sales.

"Across the Spider-Verse," the second instalment in Sony's inventive animated take on the web-slinging superhero, brought in \$11.5 million for second place, bringing its domestic total to nearly \$340 million.

Pixar's animated immigrant fable "Elemental," which was bumped from second to third place, raked in \$11.3 million.

Also from Sony, "No Hard Feelings" — a throwback to the once-ubiquitous raunchy comedy genre, starring Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence — brought in \$7.5 million for fourth place.

"Transformers: Rise of the Beasts," one of the many spin-offs and sequels dominating theatres this summer, brought in \$7 million for fifth place.

"Ruby Gillman: Teenage Kraken" debuted this weekend in sixth place, bringing in what Gross called a "weak" \$5.2 million.

The animated offering from Universal's Dreamworks follows a shy teenager who discovers she is a descendant of the titular mythic sea creatures.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Little Mermaid" (\$5.15 million); "The Flash" (\$5 million); "Asteroid City" (\$3.8 million); "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" (\$1.8 million). — **AFP**

ART

Rembrandts of 'extraordinary rarity' could fetch \$10 m at auction

TWO REDISCOVERED REMBRANDTS, the last known pair of portraits by the Dutch master to have remained in private hands, could fetch around \$10 million at auction next week.

Signed and dated 1635, the depictions of married couple Jan Willemsz van der Pluym and Jaapgen Carels, who were close to the artist's family, have a price estimate of 5 million - 8 million pounds (\$6.35 million - \$10.16 million).

They were bought at Christie's by an ancestor of the present UK-based owners nearly 200 years ago.

"It's extraordinary that the pictures have... remained virtually unknown for such a long time. So they've never been addressed in any of the vast amounts of Rembrandt lit-



erature over the years," Henry Pettifer, International Deputy Chairman of Old Master Paintings at Christie's, said on Friday.

"They are things of extraordinary rarity," he said, adding the Amsterdam-based Rijksmuseum had analysed them.

The portraits are among the highlights of Christie's July 6 "Old Masters Part I Sale", part of the auction house's Classic Week.

Also on offer is a panel by Greek-born Spanish Renaissance painter El Greco, "The Entombment of Christ" (6 million — 8 million pounds) and a bust of Helen of Troy by neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova (2.5 million — 4 million pounds).

An early work by the Italian early Renaissance painter Fra Angelico, "The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Baptist and the Magdalen at the Foot of the Cross", is being offered with an estimate of 4 million - 6 million pounds.

A medallion commissioned by Queen Charlotte as a gift to friends who supported her during King George III's illness will be offered at the July 7 sale "Bayreuth: A Connoisseur's Collection of English Silver and Gold Boxes", with an 3,000 — 5,000 pounds estimate. — **Reuters**



CULTURE

Meet the French luthier making music out of mushrooms

LEAVE MUSHROOM spores in a mold for a couple weeks and they'll bloom into a puffy material akin to brie, says Rachel Rosenkrantz, a sustainability-minded guitar-maker innovating with biomaterials.

Once her mycelium, the root-like structure of fungus that produces mushrooms, mimics the rind of a soft-ripened cheese Rosenkrantz

Design. The basement atelier below her sunny apartment full of plants and books is home to her craft and doubles as a science lab, where she's growing materials like kombucha leather to make banjo heads, and using fish leather to make pickguards. "In the design world, everybody's working with biomaterial, it's expo-

ing have led makers like Rosenkrantz toward more sustainable options, reclaiming wood and sourcing from local woods. "Do we really need to use the same species as 400 years ago, because who really plays music like 400 years ago? A few students at Juilliard," she said, referring to the elite Manhattan conservatory.

"This is an industry where I feel because it's craft-based, there's a lot of 'how things are supposed to be,'" she continued, adding that woods like poplar or bamboo were long ignored but could offer new opportunities. "What if it's frankensteining parts of guitars that are still good, so we don't discard the whole instruments?" Rosenkrantz said.

She's found the mushroom materials generally work best with electric formats. "There's a regular pickup, so it sounds like a normal electric guitar, and there's also another microphone that's in the mushroom." "So then you can switch how much mushroom sound you want."

HELP THE CAUSE

Some of Rosenkrantz's custom-made guitars are made completely out of wood, and others integrate the more experimental biomaterials. Given the time it takes to make a unique guitar from scratch, her instruments start at about \$6,000. But when it comes to the mushroom-based prototype, "my dream is for a big company to say, 'Let's pro-



dehydrates it into a lightweight, biodegradable building material — in this case, the body of a guitar. The musician trained as an industrial designer embarked on her career as a luthier — maker of string instruments — about a decade ago, and over the past several years has integrated mycelium and other biomaterials in her quest to create more environmentally friendly, plastic-free instruments. Rosenkrantz chuckles as she delivers her brie analogy that's also a nod to her French roots; the designer was raised in Montfermeil, an eastern suburb of Paris, and now resides near Providence where she teaches at the prestigious Rhode Island School of

Design. The basement atelier below her sunny apartment full of plants and books is home to her craft and doubles as a science lab, where she's growing materials like kombucha leather to make banjo heads, and using fish leather to make pickguards. "In the design world, everybody's working with biomaterial, it's expo-



"We have to keep our eyes peeled and see the potential in different things."

MUSHROOM SOUND

Cue mycelium, the fungal network that lies beneath the fruit we know as mushrooms. It's easy to grow, easy to mold and easy to replace even if it begins to disintegrate, and can be made into both acoustic and electric instruments. And sound-wise? Rosenkrantz's mushroom guitar is layered and fine-tuned, and doesn't sound just like a traditional guitar. It's a bit nasal — but rife with possibility. "The idea came about when I was looking at packaging, since mushroom has been used to replace polystyrene" which "is known to be a good sound conductor, because it's full of air," she said. The designer found that her mycelium also conducted sound — "but it has a different timbre. So it doesn't sound like something else before." "It's just a new sound," she continued. "It won't replace cedar because it's not cedar."

duce it, 50 bucks, every kid can have one," Rosenkrantz said. "Some students cannot afford an instrument... what if that could be a solution? Hello Fender, if you hear that," she said with a smile. Much of Rosenkrantz's work is driven by curiosity. She keeps bees, and trained them to build an art piece of a guitar by providing them the instrument's bracing — the part "that guides the sound and give some stiffness to the instrument." The bracing mimics the top bars of a hive, and "the bees communicate through the comb at 309 hertz, which is in the guitar range," she explained. "So we're gonna make a honeycomb that is a natural sound diffuser." And it worked: the bees built their comb along her structure, ate their honey over the winter, and left Rosenkrantz with a cleaned-out guitar that resonated. The project was less about future use and more about "the poetry of it," she said, another test to find biomaterials with acoustic qualities. It's exploration she hopes can help build a more sustainable future: "I'm experimenting to help the cause in some way." — AFP

LIFESTYLE



Buzz off: wasps wreak havoc on Albania's chestnuts

THE NORTHERN ALBANIAN village of Rec is locked in a life or death battle with a tiny wasp. Beautiful but impoverished, its villagers have made a living by selling their chestnuts for centuries. But in the space of just a few years, a tiny invasive wasp, originally from China, has caused havoc, killing its chestnut trees and forcing villagers to pack up and leave. Already hit hard by the exodus from rural northern Albania since the fall of communism, half of Rec's 200 families have left since the wasp's arrival in 2020. "It's killing our trees," said Prek Gjeshaj, a 64-year-old farmer, pointing to the blight caused by the insect, which inserts its eggs into the tree's buds and prevents fruiting. "The damage is everywhere," he said. "For us, every tree that dies is like the death of a human being." Experts say Rec's chestnut sector has all but collapsed as a result. "Production, which used to be between 400 and 600 tonnes a year, has fallen by 80 per cent," said Rexhep Metaj, a 68-year-old agronomist. Rec has some 500 hectares of chestnut groves which provide between 60 and 70 per cent of its income. The chestnut gall wasp has laid waste to chestnut trees for decades as it spread across Asia, before arriving in the United States and later Europe in the early 2000s.



WASP VS WASP

To combat the plague, Albania has turned to the insect's natural predator — another Chinese wasp — the *torymus sinensis*. The authorities have released several thousand of the species in Rec, where they lay their eggs on the larvae of the gall wasp. "We are determined to defeat the wasps, which have caused a drop in production and even tree mortality," said Irfan Tarelli, the director general of Albania's Ministry of Agriculture. However, experts warn that patience is required, saying the fight between the rival insects will take time. Scientists have cited successful use of the predatory wasp in France and Italy. The residents of Rec, however, are still waiting for results. "Not only has the disease not been curbed, it has actually gained ground," complained agronomist Metaj.



In another blow to the region, a second infestation of gall wasps has just been detected some 200 kilometres to the northeast in Tropoja near the border with Kosovo, which is also famous for its chestnut honey. According to Shpend Nikoci, a representative of a local farmers' association in Tropoja, the parasite will likely cost the sector 6.5 million euros (\$7.1 million). The drops in production are expected to increase, with officials unable to deploy the *torymus sinensis* wasps until next year. Experts say they have to respect the life cycle of the wasps for the campaign to succeed. Scientists have argued that more field studies are needed to find workable solutions for Albania, where 400,000 trees produce between four and six million tonnes of chestnuts annually — with over a quarter exported. But for forestry engineer Abdulla Diku "biological control is the only way to counter the scourge, control it and ensure the return of the natural balance of chestnut forests." — AFP