

Air survey for metallic minerals

Minerals Development Oman (MDO), announced the start of the air survey for exploration of metallic minerals, which is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and a number of government units. The survey aircraft started flying from Monday over Masirah Island, as part of the first phase of the project. **DETAILS ON P13**



P10

LEWANDOWSKI SCORES TWO AS BARCELONA THRASH REAL



P13

POWER AND WATER SUBSIDY SCHEME COVERS 80,000 HOMES



P18

GETTING INTO THE HEART OF SOLO TRAVELLING



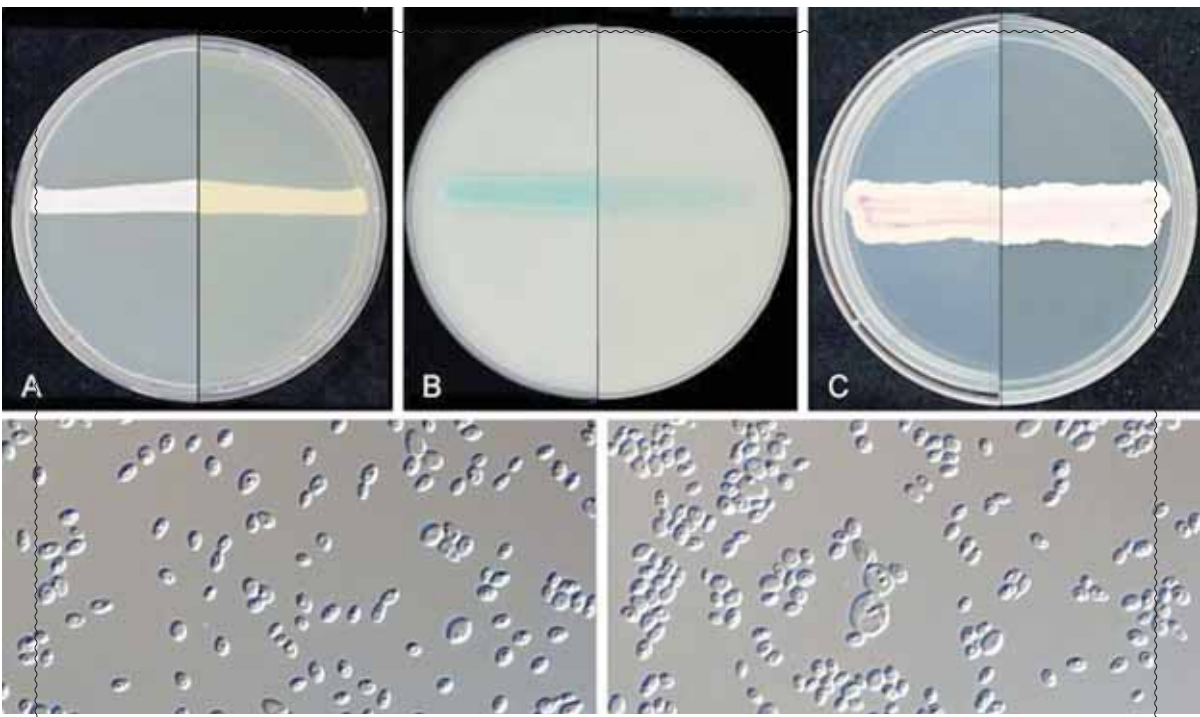
MUSCAT

PRODUCER PRICE INDEX UP BY 40.7%

Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) shows that the Producer Price Index (PPI) in the Sultanate of Oman registered a rise of 40.7 per cent during the second quarter of this year (2022), compared to the corresponding period in 2021. Oil and gas products took the lead in the upward trend, constituting 48.7 per cent, while non-oil products registered 7.8 per cent. Data point to the fact that the hike in prices of oil and gas products results from a 50.3 per cent rise in prices of refined oil products. **DETAILS ON P2**

CRUDE PRICES AT \$94.64 A BARREL

Oman oil price for October delivery on Monday reached \$94.64, comprising a drop by 38 cents from the price of last Friday, which was \$95.02. The average price of Oman oil for August delivery has stabilised at \$112.93 per barrel, thus \$5.71 per barrel higher than July delivery. World oil prices were also under pressure, amid worries about global demand and the robust dollar, as well as consultations between the United States and the European Union on Iran's response to the latest nuclear pact proposal. Brent was down 15 cents at \$96.56, while US crude lost 12 cents to \$90.65 per barrel.



TREATING CANDIDA AURIS INFECTION

Represented by the Natural and Medical Sciences Research Centre, the University of Nizwa has developed a new antifungal formula which has proved efficient in eliminating Candida Auris infection, after two years of study. The achievement was made in cooperation with a number of international universities and medical research centres in the United States, Europe and Brazil. **DETAILS ON P2**

Iran N-deal meeting likely ‘this week’

MADRID: A possible meeting on resurrecting the Iran nuclear deal could be held “this week” after Tehran submitted its response to an EU proposal, the European Union’s top diplomat said.

Efforts to revive the so-called JCPOA — the 2015 agreement between world powers and Tehran aimed at curbing Iran’s nuclear ambitions — are at a critical juncture.

“A meeting was scheduled to take place in Vienna at the end of last week, but it was not possible,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a news conference in Santander, Spain. **SEE P5**

New panel to oversee auditing at civil units

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance has formed a joint committee with the State’s Audit Institution (SAI) to enhance the role of internal auditing and monitoring in civil units of the State’s Administrative Apparatus (government departments).

The new committee will also activate the Human Resources Development Plan and set up a comprehensive monitoring system.

The joint committee will take steps to refurbish the capabilities of employees of internal audit units by organising training programmes, raise the efficiency of control over public spending and revenue collection.

It will also propose recommendations to grant internal audit departments complete autonomy, so that they could better exercise powers

The committee will propose recommendations to grant internal audit departments complete autonomy, so that they could better exercise powers related to functional aspects.

The committee aims to train 900 employees in internal audit units and other civil departments. The overall objective is to regulate financial control measures, carry out projects in accordance with approved plans and legal procedures and raise the Sultanate of Oman’s status in global indices on governance and institutional performance.

— ONA

Tayseer – easy direct financing from Al Mouj Muscat

Al Mouj Muscat’s direct financing plan provides buyers with an easy way to own a dream property, within the leading lifestyle community. An exciting gateway to home ownership in Al Mouj Muscat, Tayseer is simple, straightforward, open to everyone and requires no bank approvals. For

ready apartments a 20% down payment is all that is needed to move in to the leading lifestyle destination. For the under construction property such as Juman Two, which offers a luxurious lifestyle at the heart of the prestigious Al Mouj Muscat

Marina, Tayseer allows investors access to finance directly from Al Mouj Muscat. Through the payment of a 10% deposit, followed by 20% at handover, and settling the remaining 70% over five years. This inspiring scheme is available on a special selection of premium Al Mouj Muscat properties and is available for a limited time.



Why was Tayseer introduced?

Al Mouj Muscat has long held a reputation as an ideal lifestyle destination as people value its vibrant sense of community as well as its beautifully designed properties. Financing, however, is often not straightforward with many investors not able to fulfil the strict lending criterion set out by banks.

It can be the case that buyers or investors cannot secure a loan because of their age and or health insurance requirements. Business owners can also face obstacles because they do not have proof of monthly salary. Plus, those looking to invest can find that if they have an existing loan, a new housing loan will not be approved.

With a clear understanding of the issues faced by buyers, as well as the aspiration of homeowners and investors, Al Mouj designed Tayseer not only to provide a simple way to access finance but also ensured that the process is straightforward and well-managed.

How does Tayseer work?

Tayseer is a flexible payment plan that simplifies the buying process as it is available directly from Al Mouj Muscat. Buyers or investors need a valid ID, passport and an attested proof of relationship if two joint purchasers plan to buy the property.

There are two ways to initiate the payment plan, depending on whether a property is ready to move in to or if it is under construction.

For both ready to move in and under construction properties, the Title Deed is issued and transferred to the purchasers’ name at the 100% payment

Ready to move in	Under construction properties
20% Down payment and move in today Clear 5 years Properties available: Juman One, The Gardens and Marina Gardens	30% Down 20% Payment at handover 70% Clear 5 years Properties available: Juman Two (handover end of 2022)

completion and the 5% VAT charge on all property purchases is settled.

What do buyers say about Tayseer?

Tayseer is designed for people looking to live or invest in a selection of premium homes available for sale at Al Mouj. It set out to smooth the buying process and has been a huge success, with over 85 homes having been purchased through Tayseer since it was launched in June 2020. So how have buyers found the process and what attracted them to the scheme?

One investor explains how Tayseer helped make homeownership a reality: “I looked at a home in the Juman One and saw that it offers the ideal lifestyle I was looking for because of its location. It is close to shops, a stunning Marina, restaurants, plus it is easy for me to reach my parents’ home. I knew I wanted to live here, and this is where Tayseer was so helpful.

“With Tayseer, the process was clear and easy as financing is directly with Al Mouj. The staff welcomed us and truly took the time to go through all the details we required. The process was smooth and easy to pay by just provide cheques. I would certainly recommend Tayseer.”

Al Mouj Muscat is renowned for the quality of life it

offers, promising residents ‘great moments, every day’. The apartments at Juman Two, set at the edge of the award-winning Gold Anchor Al Mouj Marina: “This is the ideal lifestyle community,” confirms another resident, “there is an array of amenities, the community is easy to get around, it is safe and secure, I only wish I could spend more time here but I am a doctor and I work long hours.”

A resident of Ghadeer Villas echoes why the direct payment plan helped them achieve their goal of life in an ideal home in the ideal location: “The location is perfect for my family. It is just what we hoped for as our children enjoy open space and they get to play with other kids during events. There is privacy within the community, and we feel it is safe for the children to play outdoors. And we enjoy visiting the marina and taking boat trips.

“Tayseer made a difference as it meant no hassle going to a bank and we found it very straightforward. The payments are easy, and the staff are very well versed and willing to help us any way we need.”

The overwhelming impression that Tayseer had on investors was made apparent through the addition of Ghadeer Villas to the portfolio. This financing scheme paved way for all Ghadeer Villas to be sold in within 6 months of their addition to this scheme.

An exceptional investment opportunity

Tayseer has attracted a significant number of local expats and Omani investors as it offers clear and unique advantages. As a direct payment plan, investors, who may own other properties, do not need to apply for a bank home loan. Ease of financing is only

the start of the benefits that property ownership at Al Mouj Muscat offers.

With its reputation as the leading lifestyle destination, from enviably positioned homes to a vibrant community and world-class amenities, there is a high demand for rental properties at Al Mouj. Its oceanside location also benefits from connections to all major road networks and its proximity to Oman’s International Airport, adding to its appeal for tenants.

Beyond the potential to achieve consistent returns, Al Mouj Muscat appeals to many investors because it offers a dedicated Leasing team, there to take care of every detail. A single point of contact stays on hand to manage an investment property, from advertising to finding and selecting tenants and handling all details of their residency.

Tayseer is part of a complete package for investors, as residents enjoy a host of retail, leisure and dining experiences and property owners enjoy competitive returns, a seamless service and consistent demand.

How can I benefit from Tayseer?

The scheme is open to anyone who can provide post-dated cheques from a local bank in Oman.

This easy method of financing will also provide its investor with residency visas for immediate family members upon completion of payments and transfer of title deed, making it the ideal way to become part of a vibrant community in the heart of Muscat.

The leading lifestyle destination

Oman’s first integrated tourism complex, Al Mouj Muscat, offers an array of homes, world-class amenities and oceanside community living attracting 8,000 residents from 85 nationalities. Always seeking to innovate and respond to buyers’ expectations, Al Mouj introduced its Tayseer payment plan in 2020, a direct finance scheme that has proven to be a game changer for both buyers and investors.

How do I find out more about Tayseer and properties I can purchase?

Tayseer is the ideal way to make your dreams of ownership at Oman’s finest lifestyle destination come true. To find out more, visit www.almouj.com or call 8007 7776.



ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES SAUDI ENVOY



Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Abdullah Saud al Enezi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Monday. The visit comes within the framework of bolstering fraternal relations between Oman and the KSA. The Saudi ambassador expressed his appreciation for Oman's goodwill efforts in various issues in the region and the world at large. He also lauded the deep-rooted relations binding the Sultanate of Oman with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They reviewed areas of cooperation and means of enhancing them to serve aspirations of the two countries. – ONA

SAF Chief of Staff receives US military official

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, Commander of the United States (US) Naval Forces Central Command, in Muscat on Monday. They exchanged views and discussed several military matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Mandhari, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, the Ambassador of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman and the military attaché of

the US embassy in Muscat. Commodore Tarik bin Issa al Raisi, Acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), also met Vice Admiral Brad Cooper at the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The guest and his accompanying delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the MSC within its national duties, as it coordinates with relevant authorities in ensuring the safety of the maritime environment. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies.

Vice Admiral Brad Cooper also called on Air Commodore Zahran bin Nasser Ambosaidi, Acting Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the relations between the two countries and exchanged views on matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman and the Military Attaché at the US embassy in Muscat.

Nizwa University develops therapy for Candida Auris

MUSCAT: The University of Nizwa's Natural and Medical Sciences Research Centre (NMR) has developed a new antifungal formula that proved efficient in eliminating Candida Auris infection, after two years of study. The accomplishment was made in cooperation with a number of international universities and medical research centres in the United States, Europe and Brazil. The therapy was lauded by international scientists, who considered it as a breakthrough in tackling the antibiotic resistant fungus. Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Hatmi, Assistant Professor at the NMR, in-charge of the microbiology laboratory at the Centre, said that the study conducted by the NMR is the first of its kind in addressing Candida Auris with such intensity.



The study is based on assessing the activity of two antibiotic formulas of nikkomycin Z (nikZ) and diphenyl diselenide (PhSe2) used against the antibiotic resistant fungus, Dr. Abdullah said. The study was prompted by an observed rise in rates of Candida Auris infection cases over the

past 10 years in many countries, including Oman, said Dr. Abdullah. Besides keenness to tackle the problem here, the NMR's study was also in response to international calls to address the global issue, he added. Dr. Abdullah explained that the newly discovered antibiotics, tested at nikZ labs, proved effective (during laboratory experiments) against Candida Auris, hitherto resistant to antibiotics. The forthcoming few years will see further experiments that will prove whether or not the newly discovered antibiotics could be used in the production of medical drugs of use to human beings. Dr. Abdullah al Hatmi was among the scientists who shared experiments in developing this type of antibiotics, and he authored a number of scholarly articles published in Journal of Fungi.

PPI up by 40.7% in second quarter of 2022

MUSCAT: Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that the Producer Price Index (PPI) in the Sultanate of Oman registered a rise of 40.7 per cent during the second quarter of this year (2022), compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

Oil and gas products took the lead in the upward trend, constituting 48.7 per cent, while non-oil products registered 7.8 per cent. PPI data from a quarterly survey conducted by the NCSI point to the fact that the hike in prices of oil and gas products results from a 50.3 per cent rise in prices of refined oil products and a 48.4 per cent rise in crude oil and natural gas.

The growth in prices of non-oil products is attributed to a 9.4 per cent rise in prices of the converting industries group and a 1.8 per cent rise in the mining, electricity and water group. In the converting industries group, the prices of most sub-groups grew in varying proportions: foodstuff prices increased by 15.2 per cent, mineral products, machinery and equipment by 11.6 per cent and other movables by 5.7 per cent.

A breakup of figures shows that the prices of fish, fruits, vegetables and oils grew by 34.8 per cent, textiles by 11.7 per cent, beverages by 8.6 per cent, dairy products by 8.5 per cent, bakery and other



The prices of fish, fruits, vegetables and oils grew by 34.8 per cent, textiles by 11.7 per cent, beverages by 8.6 per cent, dairy products by 8.5 per cent, bakery and other food products by 3.9 per cent and footwear items by 2.7 per cent

food products by 3.9 per cent and footwear items by 2.7 per cent. In the minerals, machinery and equipment Group, the prices of products made from iron, steel or aluminium grew by 35.7 per

cent, vacant compressed cylinder products by 15.4 per cent, crude, iron, steel and aluminium up by 11.4 per cent and water heater products up by 10.4 per cent, while the prices of power transformers, cables and electrical appliances registered an increase of 6.1 per cent. As for the movables Group, the prices of paints and pharmaceutical items grew by 13 per cent, chemical products by 11.6 per cent, rubber and plastics by 6 per cent, re-melted iron waste by 4.9 per cent and paper products by 1.6 per cent, while the prices of glass products, cement and marble went down by 6.1 per cent. — ONA

Nepal Ambassador presents copies of credentials



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, received a copy of credentials of Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal appointed to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Monday. Shaikh Khalifa welcomed the ambassador and wished him success in carrying out his duties.

Rains and dust storm in some areas likely till Thursday

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Motorists must be cautious while driving as rains and dust storms are likely in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Chance of convective clouds formation and isolated thundershowers over Al Hajar Mountains towards afternoon associated with fresh downdraft wind is expected on Tuesday, Wednesday and could include Thursday afternoon as per the weather forecast from the Oman Met Office. On Monday morning Oman Met Office said there were chances for the formation of cumulus clouds and thunderstorms accompanied by active winds and hail storm on the Al Hajar Mountains and the neighbouring areas and Dhofar, which may extend to the interior deserts, the

Al Dhahirah deserts and parts of the central deserts during the afternoon and evening. They also indicated extension of local formations on the eastern and western Al Hajar Mountains and about the movement south towards the deserts, with rainfall of varying intensity on parts of the North Al Sharqiyah and Al Dakhiliyah. By afternoon the activity of local formations on the eastern and western Al Hajar Mountains had begun with rainfall of varying intensity, accompanied by the fall of hail in some wilayats of South Al Batinah. The Met Office said there would be opportunities for cloud formations to expand to the rest of the Al Hajar Mountains and neighbouring areas. Meanwhile, the continuous wind activity had brought in the rising of dust in the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta



and Dhofar especially the road connecting Adam and Salalah. The weather officials said during the day due to fresh wind the dust rising that began on Monday

evening will continue until the next two days. It was partly cloudy to cloudy skies along the coastal areas of Dhofar governorates and adjoining

mountains with intermittent drizzle, occasionally isolated rain. Expected are chance of thundershower over desert areas of Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates

in addition to chance of low clouds or fog at late night or early morning over parts of the coastal areas of Oman Sea and Arabian Sea. Along the Arabian Sea winds are expected to be southwesterly moderate to fresh. The forecast stated, "Along coastal areas it will be southeasterly to easterly light to moderate, while over rest of the governorates it will be southerly to southwesterly light to moderate and fresh over deserts and open areas of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates with chances of blowing dust." Along the Arabian Sea coasts it is rough sea with maximum wave height of four metres and slight along rest of the coasts with maximum wave height of 1.25 metres. The weather officials from Civil Aviation has cautioned that the visibility may reduce during rain and dusty winds.



Check dates of cosmetics before buying: CPA

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Il cosmetics products are not genuine and one needs to exercise caution while buying them, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has warned.

“Consumers of cosmetics and other products that give a boost to the looks need to verify the quality of the product besides checking its manufacturing and ‘best before’ dates,” said an official from the CPA.

The present announcement comes in the wake of the CPA officials seizing expired cosmetics and accessories from two shops in the Wilayat of Liwa.

It has been revealed that the majority of people buy makeup and other cosmetics items from local vendors as branded ones are, according to them, priced high.

“I’m a sort of budget-conscious person and I don’t go for branded ones. Instead, I buy from local vendors and from souqs but make it a point to buy from reliable sources,” said Manar al Hinai, a graduate in electrical engineering.

These sellers of expired goods were charged for violation of Article 7 of the Consumer Protection Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 66/2014.

Mini Suresh, a beauty expert in Muscat, suggests not to take a chance with your own

The present announcement comes in the wake of the CPA officials seizing expired cosmetics and accessories from two shops in the Wilayat of Liwa

health, skin, and appearances by resorting to cheaper beauty service parlours and inferior beauty products.

“Always go for branded ones even if the price is high because it’s for your own safety and never go for low quality products,” said Mini.

She further advised to avoid products and services that help bleaching brightening or lightening as there are cheaper services but it also has side effects like pimples and rashes which will appear later on and glowing is short lived.

The Consumer Protection Law states that it is prohibited to trade in any fraudulent, corrupt, counterfeit or unauthorised commodity, and it is also prohibits to advertise it, and the regulation determines what is considered fraudulent, corrupt or counterfeit. The Consumer Protection Authority further called on all commercial establishments to adhere to the laws and quality regulations decisions.

MoHT seeks to boost e-services ahead of peak tourism season

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Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism launched the Services Guide 2022 to improve the digital user experience within the framework of digital transformation. As part of the efforts to provide better services and with the country bracing for a peak tourism season this winter, the upcoming directory will include details about the establishments operating in various governorates.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has urged all tourist establishments operating in



the Sultanate of Oman to register in the directory.

“The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) invites all partners in the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman, to register in the tourism establishments directory, which will include data and contact numbers for all tourist establishments operating in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. For further clarification and registration, contact at 99414492,” the ministry said.

The Sultanate of Oman received 36,097 tourists in July this year, including those from India, which is the highest for this decade.

Blood bank needs 500 donors this week

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The Central Blood Bank in Bausher needs more than 500 blood donors this week to meet the needs of health institutions for blood units, and given the low stock of most blood types, an official statement said.

Making a desperate call, the blood bank urged all citizens and

residents to take the initiative and continue to donate blood.

“Generally, blood banks face difficulty in providing negative blood types. If your blood type is negative, do not delay your bid, and remember that there are those who are in dire need of your blood donation, the central blood bank said.

An official at the blood bank said, “We can collect

500 units of blood within two days, and I am sure that the community will respond. We are facing a decrease in the number of blood donors and in donation campaigns, and we urge the community to help restore the stockpile to normal. One person’s donation saves the people.” Allaying any fears about blood donation, the central bank said that

around 450 ml of blood is collected from a donor, which represents a small proportion of the blood in a person’s body (approximately less than 10% of the donor’s blood volume).

An average adult has about 5 litres of blood. The actual blood donations take five to 15 minutes. The donor must be between 18 and 65 years old, weight should not be less than 50 kg.

ROHM’s new dazzling season kick starts in September

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) unveiled 2022 — 2023 season, which will kick off in September. The programme will be bringing more than 50 events and 90 performances and cultural initiatives including six operas, nine Arab concerts, three ballet shows, nine concerts, two jazz stars, four world music celebrations, three spectacular shows, one permanent and two exhibitions, and a rich schedule of educational and outreach events.

La Traviata
The 2022 — 2023 Season begins in spectacular fashion with ROHM’s critically acclaimed production of La Traviata returning to the opera house following the premiere of 2019, with direction from the doyenne of grand opera staging, Marta Domingo. ROHM announced the return to the opera house of one of the greatest artists of our time, Plácido Domingo. As with the premiere, Domingo will perform the role of Germont on the opening night of the opera and will conduct for the following two evenings.

Mozart and Rossini
As for the 2022 performance, ROHM welcomes two of the greatest opera singers in the world in the roles of Violetta and Alfredo : Nino Machaidze and Vittorio Grigolo. The production will be performed by the Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro Carlo Felice of Genova conducted, in occasion of the first performance, by the acclaimed conductor Giampaolo Bisanti.

Engelbert Humperdinck’s full original opera Hansel und Gretel, will be performed by the Deutsche Opera Berlin and conducted by



Donald Runnicles. The fourth in the series of farce presented by ROF, La Cambiale di Matrimonio, showcases ROHM hand in hand with the most respected Rossini artists.

Donizetti’s opera
In January 2023, ROHM presents Donizetti’s opera L’Elisir d’Amore, performed by Teatro Lirico di Cagliari conducted by Jordi Bernacer with a stunning all-star cast of Nina Minasyan, René Barbera, and Erwin Schrott. ROHM’s final two operas, in February and May 2023, are a pair from Mozart, the popular Le Nozze di Figaro, with the historical Giorgio Strehler direction and performed by the Accademia Teatro alla Scala and conducted by Sesto Quatrini and Così fan Tutte, for which ROHM welcomes Opera

Australia, alongside the acclaimed director Sir David McVicar and the conductor Sebastian Lang-Lessing. Kadim Al Sahir is enduringly, unfailingly popular with audiences for his charismatic and engaging style, with this in mind he is scheduled to appear early in the season.

Omani Music
The Arabic programme is designed to encapsulate the season’s core emphasis on tradition, innovation, and talent. The Omani Women’s Day concert, featuring a surprise guest artist, an incredibly talented young star from Kuwait, carries on an ROHM tradition while the house celebrates a different perspective with Oman Traditional Music traversing the regions to explore a rich heritage in Omani music.

Umm Kulthum
ROHM will resume the series celebrating Umm Kulthum: an historic series paying homage to a legend whose legacy has brought joy to millions around the world as Kulthumiyat will feature Yosra Manouch and Mai Farouk. Award winning singer, Hussain al Jassmi, returns to the opera house for the second time due to popular demand.

The ballet genre is represented this season by three landmark presentations.

The first sees Roberto Bolle, étoile at La Scala and ballet superstar, bringing Roberto Bolle and Friends, a gala ballet gathering the ballets stars of the world together to create new and exciting choreography of the highest standard. Cairo Opera brings a

vibrant and colorful production of two stories, El Leila el Kebira, and Zorba the Greek. To round off the genre, Opera di Roma Ballet and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sergey Smbatyan present the world acclaimed classic tale of Giselle, a much-loved ballet presented with choreography paying homage to Carla Fracci, the late director of Opera di Roma. No less than nine concerts provide the backbone to this year’s season, delivering a range and choice of concerts.

The Swan of Pesaro
The concert run begins with Homage to The Swan of Pesaro with the Rossini Symphonic Orchestra conducted by Nikolas Nägele, followed by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, alongside the stunning pianist

Nikolai Kuznetsov conducted by Alessandro Cadario, with the year ending with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra starring Gile Bae on piano, conducted by Jan Latham-Koenig, a grand celebration of the conclusion of 2022. The second half of the opera house season offers six further concerts exploring opera in Opera Hits with the Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro Lirico di Cagliari conducted by Gaetano Lo Coco and a special concert to be announced later in the season.

Chris Botti
ROHM also announced the rescheduling of Chris Botti. Botti is a consummate musician and performer who remains the top of the chart as the best-selling instrumentalist of all time in the US. He blends jazz with classical music demonstrating unbelievable musicality. He is matched only in jazz stature by the legendary Kenny Garrett who will also grace the season. Shows which are brought to the opera house are unfailingly popular with ROHM audiences.

For the new season ROHM announced three distinctive shows each bringing a special dimension to the season.

In October, the Compañía Flamenca Antonio Andrade, the Quinteto Cinco and three of tango’s most famous dance couples bring the world premiere of Flamenco meets Tango, a cultural match with passion and flare.

The final show of the season is Beyond Time; the Taiwanese production company takes audiences into another dimension, exploring themes of space and the solar system through drumming, acrobatics and more.

— ONA



IF THERE IS LIGHTNING, STAY INDOORS



AVOID USING WATER OR SWIMMING IN WATER BODIES; MOVE AWAY FROM OPEN PLACES

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

The best way to stay safe in the event of a thunder flash – stay indoors. Although they last just 0.1 to 0.01 seconds, lightning strikes carry an amount of energy greater than 10 million volts.

The odds of being struck by lightning each year are less than 1 in a million, some factors can put you at greater risk, according to Centres of Disease Control and Prevention of the US. Lightning most often strikes people who work outside or engage in outdoor activities.

Find a safe, enclosed shelter like homes, offices, shopping centres, and hard-top vehicles with the windows rolled up.

The most important action is to remove yourself from danger. Crouching or getting

low to the ground can reduce your chances of being struck but does not remove you from danger. If you are caught outside with no safe shelter nearby, the following actions may reduce your risk:

- 1.Immediately get off elevated areas such as hills, mountain ridges, or peaks.
2. Never lie flat on the ground. Crouch down in a ball-like position with your head tucked and hands over your ears so that you are down low with minimal contact with the ground.
3. Never shelter under an isolated tree.
- 4.Immediately get out of and away from ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water.
5. Stay away from objects that conduct electricity (such as barbed wire fences, power lines, or windmills).
- 6.If you are in a group during a thunderstorm, separate from each other. This

will reduce the number of injuries if lightning strikes the ground.

- 7.If you are out in the open water and a storm rolls in, return to shore immediately.
8. Stay away from tall structures, such as telephone poles and trees; lightning tends to strike the tallest object around.

Being indoors does not automatically protect you from lightning. In fact, about one-third of lightning-strike injuries occur indoors. Here are more tips to

1. Do not bathe, shower, wash dishes, or have any other contact with water during a thunderstorm. Lightning can travel through plumbing.
2. Avoid using electronic equipment of all types. Do not use anything connected to an electrical outlet, such as computers, laptops, game systems, washers, dryers, or stoves. Lightning can travel through electrical

systems and radio and television reception systems.

3. Avoid using corded phones. Corded phones are not safe to use during a thunderstorm. However, cordless or mobile phones are safe to use during a storm.
4. Do not lie on concrete floors or lean on concrete walls during a thunderstorm. Lightning can travel through any metal wires or bars in concrete walls or flooring.

Lightning strikes may be rare, but they still happen, and the risk of serious injury or death is severe.

If a person is struck by lightning, it can cause cardiac arrest, which stops a person's body from circulating blood and cause direct injury to the brain and nervous system.

Strikes can also cause a brain haemorrhage or stroke, as well as tissue injuries and deep thermal burns within the body.



EU says Iran N-deal meeting possible soon

MADRID: A possible meeting on resurrecting the Iran nuclear deal could be held “this week” after Tehran submitted its response to an EU proposal, the European Union’s top diplomat said on Monday. Efforts to revive the so-called JCPOA — the 2015 agreement between world powers and Tehran aimed at curbing Iran’s nuclear ambitions — are at a critical juncture.

“A meeting was scheduled to take place in Vienna at the end of last week, but it was not possible,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a news conference in Santander, Spain. “It is possible that it could take place this week.”

Earlier this month, after more than a year of talks coordinated by Borrell and his team, the EU submitted what it called a “final” text.

The document aims at fully restoring the nuclear deal by bringing the United States back into it, after then-president Donald Trump had Washington withdraw in 2018.

That move prompted Iran to roll back its commitments under the JCPOA and steadily enrich its stock of uranium to close to



EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell

weapons-grade levels.

Borrell said the negotiations had gone as far as they could go and “this is the inflection point.”

“There was an Iranian response that I considered reasonable to transmit to the United States.

“The United States has not formally replied yet. But we are waiting for their response and I hope that response will allow us to finish the negotiation — I hope so, but I can’t assure you of it.”

The other parties to the JCPOA are Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

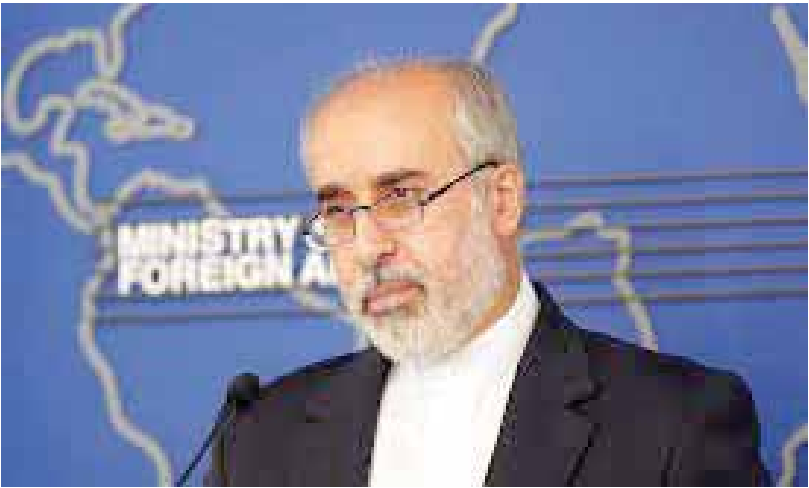
French President Emmanuel

Borrell says the negotiations had gone as far as they could go and ‘this is the inflection point’

Macron on Monday spoke by phone to Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who claimed the new terms “go beyond the limits of the original JCPOA.”

Tehran is Israel’s arch foe and Lapid warned that reviving the landmark accord could boost funding to Iran’s regional proxies.

“It will pave the way for significant investment to flow into Iran’s terrorist network and to strengthening the Iranian



Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani

military,” said a statement from Lapid’s office.

PROCRASTINATING: Meanwhile, Iran accused the United States on Monday of procrastinating in indirect talks aimed at reinstating Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal, and said a prisoner swap with Washington was not linked to the negotiations.

After 16 months of fitful, indirect US-Iranian talks, with European Union officials shuttling

between the sides, a senior EU official said on August 8 it had laid down a final offer and expected a response within a “very, very few weeks.”

Iran last week responded to the EU’s text with “additional views and considerations”, while calling on Washington to show flexibility to resolve three remaining issues.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Nasser Kanaani, said Tehran wanted a sustainable deal that would preserve Tehran’s legitimate rights.

“The Americans are procrastinating and there is

inaction from the European sides...America and Europe need an agreement more than Iran,” Kanaani told a news conference.

“Until we agree on all issues, we cannot say that we have reached a complete agreement.”

The United States has repeatedly called on Tehran to release several Iranian-Americans held in Iran on security charges. Iran has demanded several Iranians detained on charges linked to US sanctions to be freed.

“We emphasize that the exchange of prisoners with Washington is a separate issue and it has nothing to do with the process of negotiations to revive the 2015 pact,” Kanaani said, adding that Tehran was ready to swap prisoners.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump reneged on the deal reached before he took office, calling it too soft on Iran, and reimposed harsh US sanctions, prompting Tehran to begin breaching the pact’s nuclear curbs.

“We seek a good agreement which would guarantee Iran’s national interests and would be long-lasting...We won’t be bitten twice,” Kanaani said. — **Reuters**

Palestinians arrive in Cyprus, fly out from Negev desert airport

LARNACA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT: A group of Palestinians from the occupied West Bank flew abroad from an airport in Israel’s Negev desert for the first time on Monday, arriving in Cyprus under a newly launched pilot scheme.

“This is the first trip for us from Ramon” airport, said Sofiane, a Palestinian pharmacist who declined to provide his surname.

“We got this opportunity for the first time as Palestinians,” he said, adding that the group was made up of pharmacists from around the West Bank.

An AFP correspondent said around 25 Palestinians arrived on Israel’s Arkia airlines flight from Ramon airport, near the southern Israeli resort city of Eilat, into Larnaca airport on Monday



Palestinians leave Larnaca International Airport after arriving aboard the first flight from Israel’s Ramon airport in Cyprus. — **AFP**

afternoon.

A spokeswoman for the Israel Airports Authority had earlier said that around 40 Palestinians were expected to be on board.

While residents of Israeli

settlements in the West Bank can travel abroad from Israel’s main international airport near Tel Aviv, the vast majority of Palestinians from the territory are banned from doing so. — **AFP**

Egypt’s deal for Indian wheat stands: minister

CAIRO: Egypt’s supply minister said on Monday that an agreement to buy wheat from India still stood despite recent curbs on Indian exports, although it is unclear when the grain will be shipped.

Egypt, one of the world’s biggest wheat importers, has sought to diversify its suppliers since facing higher global prices and disruptions to purchases from the Black Sea after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February.

Supply Minister Aly Moselhy said in June that Egypt had contracted to buy 180,000 tonnes of wheat from India, after initially agreeing to purchase 500,000 tonnes.

“We have an agreement on quantity and price — 180,000 tonnes of wheat, and price was \$400 per tonne,” Moselhy told reporters on Monday, disclosing the price for the first time. The wheat had not yet left India, he added however.

India, the world’s second biggest producer of wheat, banned private overseas sales of the grain on May 14, but made allowances for countries like Egypt with food security needs.

A scorching heatwave has



A worker sifts wheat before filling in sacks at a market yard on the outskirts of Ahmedabad

curtailed India’s output this year.

“You know about the strong heatwave that happened in India and that affected next year’s harvest, so it’s natural that they would want to keep their own supply. It’s their right,” said Moselhy. “But to be honest our cargo is at the port.”

In an effort to boost its strategic wheat reserves, Egypt’s government has bought around 1.8 million tonnes of wheat since the start of the current fiscal year, Moselhy

said, making big purchases from countries including France and Russia since the Indian deal was announced. Moselhy said Egypt’s strategic wheat reserves currently stand at around seven months.

ARAB SUMMIT: Meanwhile, Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al Sisi is to host a five-nation Arab summit on Monday with the Ukraine war-related energy and food crisis on the agenda, a government newspaper said.

— **AFP**

Two more bodies pulled from Iraq shrine landslide

KARBALA: The bodies of two pilgrims were pulled from an Iraqi shrine on Monday, two days after its partial collapse in a landslide, taking the overall toll to seven dead, rescuers said.

Emergency workers were trying to remove the rubble and debris from the shrine known as Qattarat al Imam Ali near the holy city of Karbala in central Iraq.

“Unfortunately, we found this morning two bodies, a man and a woman”, under the rubble, Jawdat Abdelrahman, director of the civil defence media department, said.

So far, the bodies retrieved from the site were a child, four women and two men, while three children had been rescued and rushed to hospital.

“We are continuing the



Iraqi rescue workers search for survivors trapped under the rubble of the Qattarat al Imam Ali shrine on the outskirts of Karbala. — **AFP**

search for other victims,” Abdelrahman said, adding eyewitnesses had reported that there was another body, of a woman, still under the rubble.

Civil defence spokesman Nawas Sabah Shaker had said

on Sunday that between six and eight pilgrims had been reported trapped under the debris of the shrine, near the holy city of Karbala.

The three children rescued earlier were in “good condition”

and being monitored in a hospital, emergency services had said on Sunday.

Search and rescue operations have been carried out since the shrine, which sits at the base of high, bare rock walls, became partially buried when earthen embankments collapsed on Saturday due to saturation from humidity, according to the civil defence.

It is the latest tragedy to befall oil-rich Iraq, which is trying to move past decades of war but is hobbled by political paralysis and other challenges.

Anger has erupted at officials as grieving locals demanded an explanation. “We want to know what happened, why it happened,” said Bassem Khazali, whose nephew was among the victims. — **AFP**



Invitation and Agenda to the Extraordinary General Meeting of Taageer Finance Company SAOG

The Board of Directors of Taageer Finance Company SAOG (the “Company”) has the pleasure to invite the Shareholders of the Company to the Extraordinary General Meeting to be held at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 7 September 2022 at the e-portal for convening general meetings which you may access through MCDC website (www.mcd.gov.om).

Failing quorum of Extraordinary General Meeting, a second Extraordinary General Meeting shall be convened at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 September 2022 at the e-portal for convening general meetings which you may access through MCDC website (www.mcd.gov.om) to discuss and consider the following agenda:

Agenda for the Extraordinary General Meeting

1. To consider and approve issuance of unsecured and unconvertible secondary bonds (hereinafter referred to as Bonds) upto RO 7,500,000 (Rials Omani Seven Million & Five Hundred Thousand only) with a green shoe option for an amount upto RO 7,500,000 (Rials Omani Seven Million Five Hundred Thousand only) by way of a private placement at the nominal value of RO 1 (Rial Omani One) for each bond, in addition to issue expenses in accordance with the regulatory approval. The bonds shall be valid for two (2) years and shall be listed on the Bonds section of Muscat Stock Exchange.
2. To authorize the Board of Directors to take all necessary actions to complete the aforesaid transaction, including approving the interest rate, issue price, names and numbers of investors, and determining the amount to be allocated to each investor, and other terms and conditions. Furthermore, the Board shall be authorize to sign the Prospectus and other required documents and instruments to complete this transaction, and to appoint an issue manager, a legal advisor, a trustee, and other advisors for the transactions.

For more information, please contact Mr. Mustafa Al Lawati of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, on telephone no. (+968) 24839810.

Chairman

Auditor

Legal Adviser



Imran’s supporters vow to block his arrest on terrorism charges

ISLAMABAD: Supporters of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan gathered outside his home on Monday to stop police arresting him on anti-terrorism charges related to a weekend televised speech.

Police filed charges against former cricket star Khan on Saturday over what they said was a threat in the speech in which he spoke about police torture of an aide who faces sedition charges for inciting mutiny in the military.

“We will not spare you,” Khan said in the speech, in which he named the police chief and the judge involved in the case against his aide. “We will sue you.” Police cited that comment in a report seen by Reuters.

“The purpose of the speech was to spread terror amongst the police and the judiciary and prevent them from doing their duty,” police said in the report.

Dozens of supporters gathered outside his home on Monday chanting slogans against the government and the police.

“They will have to run over us before they can reach Khan,” supporter Sher Jahan Khan said outside Khan’s hilltop home overlooking the capital, Islamabad.

“If Imran Khan is arrested ... we will take over Islamabad with people’s power,” a former minister in Khan’s cabinet, Ali Amin Gandapur, threatened in a post on Twitter.

Later in the day, a court granted Khan three days of pre-arrest bail, Khan’s lawyer, Babar Awan, told reporters, after which



Supporters of Pakistan’s former prime minister Imran Khan shout slogans as they guard outside the Khan’s residence in Islamabad. — AFP

the protesters began to disperse.

Khan was prime minister from 2018 until April this year when he was forced to step down after losing a confidence vote in parliament.

Khan appeared at the main gate of his home to wave to supporters, according to a tweet posted at the official page of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

Khan was not available for comment but Fawad Chaudhry, a spokesman for the PTI, dismissed the accusations against Khan as politically motivated, telling reporters they were being used to block Khan from leading anti-government rallies.

The use of anti-terrorism

laws as the basis of cases against political leaders is not uncommon in Pakistan, where Khan’s government also used them against opponents and critics.

Khan rose to power with what political analysts said was the support of the military and he won election on a conservative agenda that appealed to many middle class and religious voters.

But analysts said Khan fell out with the military after a dispute over the appointment of a spy chief.

Khan denied ever having military support and the military, which has ruled the country for more than three decades of Pakistan’s 75-year history, denies

involvement in civilian politics.

Meanwhile, Pakistani authorities closed all educational institutions in the south-western province of Balochistan on Monday after flash floods triggered by heavy rains disconnected the region from the rest of the country.

The Balochistan government ordered the closure of schools for one week as more rains and floods are expected in the coming days, a spokesperson for the provincial government said.

Train operations in Balochistan and Sindh have been suspended after the track was washed away at several points in the two provinces. — Reuters

S Korea, US begin largest military drills in years

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States began their largest joint military drills in years on Monday with a resumption of field training, officials said, as the allies seek to tighten readiness over North Korea’s potential weapons tests.

The annual summertime exercises, renamed Ulchi Freedom Shield this year and scheduled to end on September 1, came after South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, vowed to “normalise” the combined exercises and boost deterrence against the North.

South Korea separately launched the four-day Ulchi civil defence drills on Monday, designed to boost government readiness, for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic emerged.

The military and civil exercises are aimed at improving the country’s preparedness to match the changing patterns of war, with evolving cyber threats against key facilities such as chip factories and supply chains,

Yoon said. “Maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula is built on our airtight security posture,” Yoon told a cabinet meeting, calling for thorough exercises based on real-world scenarios.

The drills were the largest since 2017 after being scaled back because of Covid-19 and as Yoon’s predecessor sought to restart talks with Pyongyang, which has called the exercises a rehearsal for invasion.

North Korea fired two cruise missiles from the west coast last week, after South Korea and the United States kicked off preliminary training for the exercises. North Korea has conducted missile tests at an unprecedented pace this year and is ready to conduct its seventh nuclear test at any time, Seoul officials said.

Yoon has said his government is willing to provide economic aid if Pyongyang takes steps toward denuclearisation, but North Korea has rebuffed his offer, openly criticising him.

—Reuters



South Korean protesters hold a placard reading ‘Stop the joint military exercise!’ during a rally against the joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States in Seoul. — AFP

China’s scorching southwest extends power curbs

SHANGHAI: China’s scorched southwestern regions extended curbs on power consumption on Monday as they deal with dwindling hydropower output and surging household electricity demand during a long drought and heatwave.

State weather forecasters issued a heat “red alert” for the 11th consecutive day on Monday, as extreme weather continues to play havoc with power supplies and damage crops.

The drought has already “severely affected” mid-season rice and summer corn in some southern regions, the ministry of agriculture said on Sunday.

The National Meteorological



Dry sections of a lake in Nanjing in China’s eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

Center said as many as 62 weather stations, from Sichuan in the southwest to Fujian on the

southeastern coast, saw record temperatures on Sunday. The situation could improve starting

China announces 11th consecutive heat ‘red alert’ as Sichuan extends industrial power use curbs until August 25

on Wednesday as a cold front moves into China via Xinjiang.

The region of Chongqing, which hit temperatures of 45 degrees Celsius late last week, announced that opening hours at more than 500 malls and other commercial venues would be shortened starting on Monday to ease power demand.

Malls on the list on Monday

confirmed they had received the government notice and would abide by the rules. Two hotels on the list said they were still operating normally but would restrict air conditioner use.

In neighbouring Sichuan province, a major hydropower generator, authorities also extended existing curbs on industrial power consumers until Thursday, financial news service Caixin said on Sunday. Power generation in Sichuan is at just half the normal level after a massive decline in water levels.

Caixin cited battery industry firms as saying that industrial power users in the cities of Yibin and Suining had been told to

remain closed until Thursday. Sichuan - a major power supplier to the rest of the country - has recently put a new coal storage base into operation to make sure its thermal plants can operate without disruption.

However, around 80 per cent of its installed capacity is hydropower, making it especially vulnerable to fluctuations in water supplies.

Several companies confirmed on Monday that they were restricting output because of extended power supply curbs. Pesticide producer Lier Chemical Co Ltd confirmed in on Monday that restrictions would continue until Thursday. — Reuters

NEW DELHI

Farmers protests return to Indian capital

Protesters broke barricades and shouted slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Indian capital, after thousands of farmers gathered to protest against what they said were unfulfilled promises by the government.

More than eight months after farmers called off a year-long protest and the government conceded to several of their demands, more than 5,000 farmers gathered in the capital to protest against Modi and



his government. Farmers are demanding that the government guarantee a minimum support price for all produce and clear all farmer debts, among other things. — Reuters

MANILA

Philippine classrooms reopen after more than 2 years

Millions of children in the Philippines returned to school as the academic year started on Monday, with many taking their seats in classrooms for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

The Philippines is one of the last countries in the world to resume full-time, in-person lessons — sparking warnings that the prolonged closure of classrooms had worsened an education crisis in the country.

Children in masks and



uniforms lined up for a temperature check and squirt of hand sanitiser at Pedro Guevara Elementary School in Manila, which had shut classrooms since March 2020. —AFP

TOKYO

Japanese woman photojournalist dies aged 107

Tsuneko Sasamoto, a pioneering photographer considered to be Japan’s first female photojournalist, who swore by a glass of red wine each night as one of the keys to good health, has died at the age of 107, domestic media said.

She died on August 15 of old age, media added - just over two weeks before her 108th birthday. Born in Tokyo the year World War One began, Sasamoto originally wanted to be a painter but was discouraged from it by



her father. Inspired by a black-and-white film she saw with a friend, she began working as a photographer and in 1940 joined the Photographic Association of Japan. — Reuters



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In brief

■ LONDON



UK DOCK WORKERS' UNION THREATENS FURTHER STRIKES

A trade union warned of more strikes at the UK's largest container port if pay demands are not met, threatening to cause further disruptions to the supply chain. Workers at Felixstowe port in southeastern England began an eight-day strike over pay on Sunday, in the latest industrial action as decades-high inflation intensifies the country. They say the pay offer they received does not keep up with inflation — which has surged above 10 per cent — and includes a one-off lump sum payment. “If we don't achieve what we're trying to achieve, there will be more strikes,” Robert Morton, national officer for the Unite union, said. — AFP

■ MOSCOW



FOREST FIRES SOUTH OF MOSCOW FLARE UP AMID HEATWAVE

Forest fires raging south of Moscow have intensified, Russian authorities said as residents of the capital complained of a sharp smell of smoke pervading the air. Since early August fires have been raging across the Ryazan region, some 200 km southeast of Moscow, where officials have been scrambling personnel to put them out. Sergei Sobyenin, the mayor of Moscow, said the city had sent equipment and personnel to the Ryazan region but that their efforts had not been enough to contain the blazes. “The fires have flared up,” TASS news agency quoted Sobyenin as saying during a visit to Ryazan. —Reuters

■ GOTTINGEN



RADIOACTIVE MUSHROOMS LIVE ON IN BAVARIA

There are still wild mushrooms in southern Germany contaminated with radioactive caesium decades after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, according to a new study released on Monday. The results of the latest study by the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) show that the mushrooms are contaminated with caesium-137 isotopes, which originate from the reactor accident in Chernobyl in April 1986. Cancer researchers say caesium-137 can accumulate in bone tissue and damage genetic material. In the long term, this could lead to bone cancer and leukaemia. — dpa

Kenya's Odinga challenges election result in court

NAIROBI: Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga on Monday challenged Kenya's presidential election results in the Supreme Court and alleged the tally had involved “criminality”, sharpening a political contest gripping East Africa's powerhouse.

In the petition, Odinga asks the court to nullify the vote's outcome on several grounds, including a mismatch between the turnout figures and the result, and alleges the election commission failed to tally ballots from 27 constituencies, rendering the result unverifiable and unaccountable.

“We have enough evidence to prove all of the criminality that occurred,” Odinga told a news conference after the filing. “We are confident that in the end, the truth will be revealed.”

This is Odinga's fifth stab at the presidency; he blamed several previous losses on rigging. Those disputes triggered violence that claimed more than 100 lives in 2017 and more than 1,200 lives in 2007.

Last week the election commissioner declared Odinga's rival, Deputy President William Ruto, had won the August 9 election by a slim margin, but four out of seven election commissioners dissented, saying the tallying of results had not been transparent.

The commission, its chairman and Ruto have four days to



Kenya's defeated presidential candidate Raila Odinga speaks to supporters at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi after filing a petition to the country's top court. — AFP

Result was not 'complete, accurate, verifiable' as election was Odinga's fifth attempt to become president

respond to Odinga's claims through court filings.

Last week Odinga said the results were a “travesty” but said he would settle the dispute in court and urged supporters to remain peaceful. His supporters have said the results were the outcome of intentional fraud by election authorities. The election commission has denied any

wrongdoing.

In 2017, the Supreme Court overturned the election result and ordered a re-run, which Odinga boycotted, saying he had no faith in the election commission.

This time, Odinga is backed by the political establishment. President Uhuru Kenyatta endorsed Odinga's candidacy after falling out with Ruto after the last election.

At stake is control of East Africa's wealthiest and most stable nation, home to regional headquarters for firms like General Electric, Google, and Uber. Kenya also provides peacekeepers for neighbouring Somalia and frequently hosts

peace talks for other nations in the turbulent East Africa region.

The case will be heard by the seven-member Supreme Court and presided over by Martha Koome, Kenya's first female chief justice, who was appointed by Kenyatta last year.

The court will next conduct a status conference with all parties to define the hearing schedule and ground rules. The constitution requires judges to issue their decision within 14 days of the lawsuit being filed.

Due to the tight schedule, it normally issues a summary judgment within 14 days, followed by more thorough decisions from each of the seven judges at a later date.

One week ago, electoral commission chairman Wafula Chebukati declared Ruto the winner with 50.49 per cent of the vote against Odinga's 48.5 per cent.

But minutes earlier, his deputy Juliana Cherera had told media at a separate location that she and three other commissioners disowned the results.

She said the elections had been conducted in a proper manner - and most international observers agreed - but that results were erroneously aggregated.

Public confusion reigned over the tallying after the Kenyan media suspended a count of 46,229 polling-station level results with around 80% of the vote counted. — AFP

Somalia PM vows accountability over hotel siege

MOGADISHU: Somalia's prime minister pledged that the government will be held accountable over the deadly Mogadishu hotel siege by Al Shabaab fighters.

Hamza Abdi Barre also called on Somalis to unite against the Al Qaeda-linked group, which has been waging a bloody insurgency in the impoverished Horn of Africa nation for more than 15 years.

“There will be accountability in the government... anyone who neglected the responsibility he was entrusted with will be held accountable,” Barre told reporters late on Sunday.

He was speaking after visiting a hospital treating victims of the bomb and gun attack on the Hayat Hotel that the health ministry says claimed the lives of 21 people and wounded 117.

The 30-hour siege was the deadliest attack in Mogadishu since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected in May after a protracted political crisis. Al Shabaab commandos stormed the hotel on Friday evening, with the siege only ending at around midnight on Saturday after security forces bombarded the building, leaving much of it in ruins.

Police said more than 100 people, including women and children, had been rescued.

“There is only one of two choices here, we either allow Al Shabaab — the children of hell — to live, or we live.” —AFP

Ukraine bans I-Day rallies for fear of Russian strikes

KYIV: Ukraine's capital Kyiv banned public celebrations this week to commemorate independence from Russian-dominated Soviet rule, citing a heightened threat of Russian attack in a war that the United Nations said on Monday has killed more than 5,500 civilians.

Near frontlines in the south of the country, Ukraine said Russia fired rockets into several southern Ukrainian towns north and west of Europe's largest nuclear power plant, captured by Russian forces shortly after they invaded Ukraine in February.

Artillery and rocket fire in the region of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear reactor complex, on the Russian-occupied south bank of the Dnipro River, has stirred fears of a nuclear disaster and led to calls for the surrounding area to be demilitarised.

Russia launched what it calls a “special military operation” on February 24 to demilitarise its smaller neighbour and protect Russian-speaking communities. Ukraine and its Western backers accuse Moscow of waging an imperial-style war of conquest.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned at the weekend of the risk of more severe attacks ahead of Ukraine's 31st anniversary on Wednesday of independence from Russian-dominated Soviet rule.

Local authorities in Kyiv have banned large public events, rallies and other gatherings related to the



A boy jumps from a tank at an exhibition of destroyed Russian military vehicles and weapons, dedicated to the upcoming country's Independence Day in the centre of Kyiv. — Reuters

Zelenskiy says Moscow could try ‘something particularly ugly’ as Russia blames Ukraine for ultra-nationalist killing in Moscow

anniversary from Monday until Thursday due to the possibility of rocket attacks, according to a document published by the Kyiv military administration and signed by its head Mykola Zhynrov.

In Kharkiv, a northeastern city that has come under frequent and deadly longer-range artillery and rocket fire, Mayor Ihor Terekhov announced an extension to an

overnight curfew to run from 4 pm to 7 am effective from Tuesday to Thursday.

In the port of Mykolaiv near Russian-held territory to the south, regional governor Vitaliy Kim said authorities planned a precautionary order for residents to work from home on Tuesday and Wednesday and urged people not to gather in large groups.

Fears of intensified attacks were likely to rise after Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) accused Ukrainian secret services on Monday of killing Darya Dugina, daughter of a Russian ultra-nationalist ideologue, in a suspected car bombing on Saturday, Russian news agencies reported. — Reuters

Angola's ruling party faces tight poll test

LUANDA: Millions of Angolans will vote on Wednesday in polls expected to be the most competitive since the country's first multiparty vote in 1992 but with electoral fraud a concern among voters.

A youthful and largely poor electorate will decide whether to continue with the liberation movement that has ruled since independence or embrace change with the opposition led by a charismatic coalition-builder.

Eight political parties are standing, but the real contest is between the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and its long-standing rival and former rebel movement the National Union for the Total Independence of

Angola (UNITA). Stakes are high for MPLA now led by incumbent President Joao Lourenco, who was first elected in 2017 and is seeking a second term.

Many Angolans are weary of the party that has held power since the country won independence from colonial power Portugal in 1975.

Despite the oil wealth that benefited the former president, late Jose Eduardo dos Santos and his family, many of Angola's 33 million people live in poverty and seek change.

“There is a lot of expectation within society,” said Claudio Silva, a political commentator in the capital Luanda.

“People are very excited because there is a prospect for actual change.” — AFP

Elections in Angola

Eight parties in legislative elections Aug 24, the leader of the majority party in parliament automatically becomes president

LEADERS OF MAJOR PARTIES

JOAO LOURENCO



age: 68

- Former army general
- Ex-defence minister under President Jose Eduardo dos Santos
- President since 2017
- Leader of People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) (in power since independence in 1975)

AFP Photos

ADALBERTO COSTA JUNIOR



age: 60

- Engineer
- Member of parliament
- Leader, since 2019, of National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (largest opposition party)
- Broadened party base, joining with other opposition factions

AFP

A leap of faith towards a better future



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

If there is one theme that would make or break this decade is impact investing, or investing in social, economic, environmental (or ESG) efforts that matter for our present and future. It is safe to say that we can make no progress in any of these issues without leveraging knowledge and technology in a way that makes life better.

This is because, today more than ever, technology is an integral part of our lives as opposed to a side topic. The question today is why do we need a leap of faith and invest in leveraging technology to build a better present and future?

Disruption is coming
One of the toughest challenges facing a smooth embrace of advanced technologies is terminology. Disruption linguistically and in context implies

challenging and changing the system of status quo. Therefore, the mere mention of how technology advancement is radically transforming us and our lives invites the suspicion of people and existing systems.

Let alone the fact that in Arabic language for example disruption is associated with strongly shaking a system.

This is why the first investment humanity needs to make is an investment in language - we need to agree on a definition of disruption that alleviates concerns of all stakeholders and brings back the focus to leveraging technology as a mean to achieve social, economic and environmental ends.

Digital transformation
The Sultanate of Oman is one of the first countries in the

WE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO BE AMBIVALENT ABOUT WHETHER WE SHOULD EMBRACE TECHNOLOGIES THAT WE WITNESSED THEIR POSITIVE IMPACT OF OUR HEALTH, RELATIONSHIPS, AND WORK DURING THE PANDEMIC

region to development a national digital strategy related to digital transformation more than a decade ago.

For the past two years, the new Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has turned this strategy into a detailed Digital Transformation Plan with

stakeholder focused paths, initiatives, and projects.

"Inclusive digital participation is key to leveraging technology to achieve our common goals," had rightly said Dr Ali al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology in a public engagement gathering on digital transformation.

Keeping the faith
One matter that will clearly make the difference is realising that we have what it takes to excel and lead in the field of emerging technologies.

Our present and future generations have the knowledge and skills to leverage technologies without fearing that these tools will dominate our lives. We can

no longer afford to be ambivalent about whether we should embrace technologies that we witnessed their positive impact of our health, relationships, and work during the pandemic.

Artificial Intelligence contributed to developing our vaccines, social media platforms helped check on our loved ones, and online applications contributed not only to remote working but also building the foundations for a future of work.

All of this can only be done when we invest in believing that we can adapt technologies to our favour, without fearing advancement or depending on it completely.

This faith is the pre-requisite to a true digital transformation where a society builds a sustainable planet for present and future generations.

Crises threaten UK monarchy's image years after Diana's death

JOE JACKSON

The royal family's perceived botched response to Diana's death sparked a gradual and largely successful shift in its image management, but recent crises have renewed questions about that modernisation effort.

The death of the princess of Wales on August 31, 1997, prompted an outpouring of national grief that senior royals, including Queen Elizabeth II and her son Prince Charles, initially seemed out of step with.

There was eventually an acknowledgement missteps were made and that the family needed to turn the page on a damaging decade of divorces, family infighting and scandals that had dented their public standing.

A quarter-century on, the monarchy now has a far more nimble PR operation, adept at social media and rapid-response while still able to stage grand events like June's Platinum Jubilee celebrations with aplomb.

However, recent controversies — notably Prince Andrew's links to billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle quitting frontline royal duties — have cast doubts on the monarchy's remoulding.

"Diana's death is this whirlwind moment, which requires the monarchy to reorientate its public image, to embrace a more modern, expressive kind of celebrity image as a way of appealing to audiences," royal historian Ed Owens said. Noting "that story lives on through her sons", he sees particular peril in Harry's apparent estrangement, the queen's recent handling of scandal-tarred Andrew and heir Charles' looming reign.

"I think there are troubled times ahead," Owens predicted. In the immediate aftermath of Diana's death, the queen and Charles, whose divorce from Diana had been finalised the previous year, remained for days at Balmoral Castle, their remote Scottish residence, making no public statements. Fuelled by other missteps, a media-driven narrative took hold that the family were out of touch at a moment of national significance.

Royal commentators disagree on how fair this criticism was, noting the family's priorities were supporting William and Harry over the sudden loss of their mother as well as organising an elaborate funeral service.

Nonetheless, Buckingham Palace's press operation was gradually revamped, with more PR-savvy people brought in. Robert Hardman, author of this year's "Queen of Our Times: The Life of Elizabeth II", argued it was a measured "evolution" as the 24-hour news cycle ramped up and then social media arrived. "Monarchy is not like a— AFP



Apoorva Mandavilli

The writer is an American investigative journalist whose work has focused on medical science

Polio was almost eradicated. This year it staged a comeback

At the beginning of this year, there was a thrum of excitement among global health experts: Eradication of polio, a centuries-old foe that has paralysed legions of children around the globe, seemed tantalisingly close.

Pakistan, one of only two countries where wild poliovirus still circulates, had not recorded cases in more than a year.

Afghanistan had reported only four. But eradication is an uncompromising goal.

The virus must disappear from every part of the world and stay gone, regardless of wars, political disinterest, funding gaps or conspiracy theories. New signs of the virus in a single country can derail the effort.

In polio's case, there were several ominous setbacks.

Malawi in February announced its first case in 30 years, a 3-year-old girl who became paralysed after infection with a virus that appeared to be from Pakistan.

Pakistan itself went on to report 14 cases, eight of them in a single month last spring.

In March, Israel reported its first case since 1988. Then, in June, British authorities declared an "incident of national concern" when they discovered the virus in sewage.

By the time New York City detected the virus in wastewater last week, polio eradication seemed as elusive as ever.

"It's a poignant and stark reminder that polio-free countries are not really polio-risk free," said Dr Ananda Bandyopadhyay, deputy director for polio at the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest supporter of polio eradication efforts.

The virus is always "a plane ride away," he added.

Polio is a highly contagious and sometimes deadly enemy, capable of ravaging the nervous system and causing paralysis within hours.

Those who recover could relapse and become seriously ill years later.

The virus multiplies in the intestine for weeks and could spread through feces or contaminated food or water — for example, when an infected child uses the toilet, neglects washing hands and then touches food.

For decades, the virus terrorised



Charles Bizimaki administers a polio vaccine at the Makhwira Health Center in Chikwawa, Malawi.

POLIO IS A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS AND SOMETIMES DEADLY ENEMY, CAPABLE OF RAVAGING THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AND CAUSING PARALYSIS WITHIN HOURS. THOSE WHO RECOVER COULD RELAPSE AND BECOME SERIOUSLY ILL YEARS LATER

families, causing paralysis among more than 15,000 American children each year and hundreds of thousands more worldwide. Its retreat is a triumph of vaccination.

After the first vaccine arrived in 1955, the number of cases dropped precipitously, and by 1979, the United States was declared polio-free. Although the United States and Britain have high immunisation rates, they also have pockets of low immunity that allow the virus to flourish.

In those communities, all unvaccinated people — not just children — are at risk. If polio continues to spread in the United States for a year, the country may lose its polio-free status under World

Health Organization guidelines.

Aid organisations first aspired to eradicate polio in 1988 and poured billions of dollars into the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a consortium of six partners, including the Gates Foundation, WHO, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Despite the recent cases, the progress is unmistakable: Global cases of polio have fallen by 99 per cent — from 350,000 cases of paralysis in 1988 to about 240 so far this year.

That success "is both a miraculous thing and a thing that's taken way, way longer than people expected," Bill Gates, who has taken a pointed interest in polio, said in an interview in February.

"Eradications are super hard, and they rarely should be undertaken."

Ending polio has been particularly challenging.

There are three strains of the wild poliovirus. Type 2 was declared eradicated in 2015, and Type 3 in 2019. Only Type 1 poliovirus remains at large, and only in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Immunisation for polio can be done in one of two ways.

The injected vaccine used in the United States and most rich countries contains killed virus, is powerfully protective against illness but doesn't prevent the vaccinated from spreading the virus to others.

—The New York Times

Learning to co-exist



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

It was a khareef holiday in Salalah and the location was Ain Hamran drenched in monsoon.

The natural springs of Dhofar are beauties to watch and enjoy the ambience. One feels the lungs full of fresh air generating happiness so much that it makes you smile even if there is no one to reciprocate it. The rock formations are artistic galleries in their own right and it was while walking through nature's

theatre set when I came across the subject - a reptile that was sleek and shiny all I could do was scream and run across the rocks, slipping but managing not to fall. I had startled the poor creature so much that it slithered and high-walked or rather ran under the immense stress of wanting to save ourselves from each other. Other visitors stood still not knowing what the commotion was about only to see a human run from one side of the rock and something on the ground spurting out scattering tiny stones onto all directions. That was a classic example of flight, fright or fight. The fear of the unknown or was it the eyes that were looking into mine?

There are 111 species of reptiles in the Sultanate of Oman, but out of them there are some of which are endemic to Oman. Most of them merge into the surroundings, but then there are ones with vivid colours and combinations.

WE HAVE READ FOLK STORIES WHERE MOST OF THE TIME DONKEYS ARE PORTRAYED AS SILLY AND STUBBORN HOWEVER THEY ARE SENSITIVE TOO. THEY LIKE COMPANIONSHIP OF OTHER DONKEYS AND CAN GET LONELY VERY EASILY

They have every right to be where they are and enjoy the weather as much as we do. They are part of the natural ecosystem with an important role to play. There is so much of wisdom one can learn from the the animal world. A friend from Bangladesh said that you can rest assure where a cat sleeps is a clean place, what a horse drinks is clean water and a donkey may not be willing to move if the load is light, but willingly to walk when the load is heavier.

We have read folk stories where most of the time donkeys are portrayed as silly and stubborn however they are sensitive too. They like companionship of other donkeys and can get lonely very easily. Horses too are known for life long relationships and have great memory. Separation causes great distress in them. We have chosen to enter their world in most cases initially for our own benefits as in the case of horses and donkeys. While horses continue to have a special place would the donkeys ever gain back their importance? They were important in the past for transportation and economically too they played a significant role. So what happened to those donkeys? People rode donkeys patiently as they went about peacefully from one wilayat to another as a friend recollected travelling from Muttrah to Ghala, which took days not hours. They also used to go up Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and back.

Now of course we are looking at futuristic means of transport and electric vehicles.

Over all we have come far away from nature it would seem but this month of August has given us immense opportunity with khareef Dhofar and now the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Tourism Festival happening from August 23 to 27, 2022. And guess what, the festival will be featuring the horse trail up on the Green Mountain.

Now going back to the reptiles, the Al Hajar Mountains are home to a variety of reptiles and about five endemic species as per the book 'A field guide to reptiles of Oman.' While we enjoy the beauty of nature we should also respect their habitats and maybe what we need is more awareness on them. The more we know about the importance of reptiles in our ecosystem more we would want to take personal responsibility in conservation. Of course one obsession has been about the Arabian horned viper that likes to hide underneath the sand in the desert. You can imagine what crosses the mind. But this viper too is part of the existence. The land might look plain and arid or salt flats or lush green and mountainous and coastal but these living creatures have learnt to adapt and survive and if they can and others can too. They could tell us more about their journey through the centuries but most importantly 16 of those 111 reptiles are only found in Oman as they are endemic. And to safe guard them is a responsibility.



OUT OF CURIOSITY

People climb on a destroyed Russian vehicle at Kyiv's 'Maidan' Independence Square, that has been turned into an open-air military museum ahead of Ukraine's Independence Day on Wednesday, amid Russia's war on Ukraine. - AFP

Trump's blackmail defence



Kent Harrington

The writer is a former senior CIA analyst, served as national intelligence officer for East Asia, chief of station in Asia, and the CIA's director of public affairs

Donald Trump and his Republican Party minions have presented a dog's breakfast of explanations, evasions, accusations, and lies about the classified documents — including top-secret files — that federal agents reclaimed from Trump's Mar-a-Lago basement this month.

But ultimately, Trump's best defence, if he is criminally charged, will be blackmail.

Authorised by Attorney General Merrick Garland, the unprecedented search of a former president's home was based on a warrant, approved by a federal judge, that cited possible violations of the Espionage Act and other statutes.

For months, the US Department of Justice had attempted to work with Trump's team to collect all the documents, only to be met with lies.

The warrant's ample legal justification suggests that Trump is at risk of being indicted for endangering national security.

That would come on top of an already lengthy list of other potential criminal and civil charges that could come out of various federal, state, and local investigations that are under way.

Given Trump's deep ignorance of international affairs and contemptuous treatment of national-security agencies while in office, his attempt to stash away some of their most highly classified secrets raises obvious counter-intelligence questions about his intentions.

It confirms once again that Trump has nothing but disdain for the agencies' integrity and the laws and rules that govern them.

And it is a reminder that Trump would pose a direct threat to national security were he to win the presidency again in 2024.

Contrary to what Trump claims, the pilfered documents are not his property. In 1978, Congress passed the Presidential Records Act, strengthening and expanding a 1974 post-Watergate law that gave the National Archives — not the outgoing president — sole ownership and custody of all White House documents. Equally false is Trump's assertion that he declassified the top-secret papers found in the 11 boxes that the FBI hauled away. He has produced no records of any such action, and it wouldn't matter if he had: Unauthorised removal of White House documents — classified or not — is illegal, and ex-presidents do not have the power to declassify anything.

In the past, White House or Cabinet-level officials who have flouted national-security rules have paid a price for it.

In 1996, after John M Deutch stepped down as CIA director, officials discovered that he had routinely stored highly classified intelligence on an unsecured personal computer that was also allegedly used to surf banned sites. Deutch lost his security clearances and ultimately

DONALD TRUMP'S ATTEMPT TO STASH AWAY CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS SHOULD CONCERN ALL AMERICANS AND US ALLIES, GIVEN THE DISREGARD THAT HE SHOWED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY WHILE IN OFFICE. BUT PROSECUTING THE OFFENCE COULD COME WITH SIMILAR RISKS, DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE SECRETS INVOLVED

agreed to plead guilty to mishandling classified information (though President Bill Clinton pardoned him before federal prosecutors could bring their case).

In 2005, Sandy Berger, Clinton's former national-security adviser, paid a \$50,000 fine and lost his security clearances for three years after pleading guilty to removing secret documents from the National Archives.

And in 2015, David Petraeus, another former CIA director, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for egregious security breaches (thus avoiding what would have been felony charges).

He had to cough up \$40,000 and serve two years of probation for allowing his biographer-turned-mistress to see notebooks containing secrets that would have done "exceptionally grave damage" if they had leaked.

But the Petraeus case attests to the difficulties facing federal prosecutors, and to the dangers involved in charging Trump for mishandling secret information.

The Justice Department offered a plea bargain to Petraeus because it feared what would come out in open court (including clandestine agents' names, classified operations, and sensitive ties with foreign-intelligence services).

Hefty fines or not, the reduced penalties for Petraeus and Berger show the lengths to which prosecutors will go to avoid such risks. (The lighter penalties also point to the double standard for

senior officials compared to rank-and-file employees, who generally receive prison time for similar offences.)

Obviously, Trump would play the same cards to avoid a court trial or a criminal conviction.

His history of erratic, reckless behaviour speaks for itself. From pointlessly disclosing a sensitive counterterrorism operation to the Russian foreign minister to posting highly classified satellite images on Twitter, his presidency defined irresponsibility. President Joe Biden had no choice but to bar Trump from receiving intelligence briefings two years ago.

Though no other past president has been denied this courtesy, nor has any past president posed such a clear and present danger to US interests (nor has any attempted a coup, for that matter).

How Trump planned to use the classified documents remains a question that investigators presumably have made a high priority.

Depending on the answer and the resulting charges, if any, one thing is certain: Trump will play hardball, including by amplifying his claims of victimise at the hands of the fictional Deep State, and denying any wrongdoing in purloining the documents.

His lies and hyperbole, however, don't preclude seeking a plea deal. In his previous tangles with the law, such as his Trump University scam, he agreed to compensate the victims (in that case \$25 million) after his prevarications were exhausted.

Given Trump's past behaviour and ambitions for 2024, the FBI's discoveries at Mar-a-Lago should concern all Americans and US allies.

At a minimum, they further confirm Trump's blatant disregard for US national security.

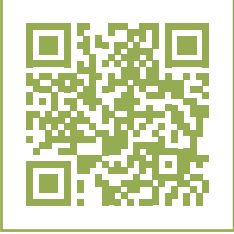
For the national-security and intelligence officials who dealt with Trump's instability and authoritarian ambitions for four years, a second administration would present formidable challenges, not least as a test of their oaths to uphold the Constitution and adhere to the law. ©Project Syndicate, 2022



Trump's best defence, if he is criminally charged, will be blackmail.

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LEWANDOWSKI SCORES TWO AS BARCELONA THRASH REAL SOCIEDAD

MADRID: Robert Lewandowski scored a brace as Barcelona cruised to a 4-1 victory at Real Sociedad on Sunday, their first win of the new LaLiga season.

Spanish teenage sensation Ansu Fati, who has been struggling to recover after a series of knee surgeries to repair a November 2020 injury to his left knee, came off the bench in the second half and took charge of the proceedings with two assists and a goal.

The Polish striker scored his first goal in competition for Barcelona when he opened the scoring in the

first minute, rifling in a shot after a great pass from Alejandro Balde inside the penalty area.

But Alexander Isak equalised five minutes later after latching onto a pass from David Silva.

Barca struggled to break the deadlock until coach Xavi Hernandez sent on Raphinha and Fati in the 64th minute, with both proving crucial to Barca's success.

First, Fati assisted Ousmane Dembele with a brilliant heel pass after a fine piece of individual play from Raphinha.

Then Fati finished off a beautiful

team effort to assist Lewandowski for Barca's third.

Barca new signing returned the favour 10 minutes later, enabling 19-year-old Fati to score Barca's fourth to wrap up the points in a game that Barca delivered what was expected from them after a host of strong signings this summer.

"We took a risk with the substitutions as we needed to be aggressive and I'm glad that it worked," coach Xavi Hernandez told Movistar Plus.

"With Raphinha and Fati we

played almost with five players up front, but we talked in the locker room during half time about how we needed to attack more within the spaces.

"Last week (a goalless home draw against lowly Rayo Vallecano) was a major disappointment, but this victory strengthens us because it's about insisting and having the will to overcome challenges".

It was also a chance for redemption for Fati, who inherited Barcelona's number 10 jersey from Lionel Messi when the Argentine

left for Paris St Germain.

Fati has been plagued by injuries since bursting onto the scene for Barcelona at the age of 16 when he became the second-youngest player in LaLiga history, after coming through the youth system at the Catalan club.

He quickly established himself as one of the most exciting young talents in the world, becoming the youngest player to score in the Champions League as well as the youngest to score for Spain. (Reporting by Fernando Kallas; Editing by Hugh Lawson)

India win toss, bat in pursuit of Zimbabwe ODI sweep

HARARE: India captain KL Rahul won the toss and chose to bat in the third one-day international against Zimbabwe in Harare on Monday.

The tourists began the three-match series last Thursday with a 10-wicket victory and won by five wickets two days later to build an unassailable 2-0 lead.

"We want to challenge ourselves," said Rahul. "There will be some movement early on. I have not spent time batting and it will be good to gain some confidence before the Asia Cup."

Rahul did not get an opportunity to bat in the first match and made only one run in the second before being trapped leg before wicket.

India changed two of the side that won on Saturday with Deepak Chahar and Avesh Khan replacing Prasad Krishna and Mohammed Siraj.

Zimbabwe also made two changes as they sought to avoid a whitewash with Tony Munyonga and Richard Ngarava promoted and Wessly Madhevere and Tanaka Chivanga dropping out.

Both teams are in the middle of busy schedules, with India facing arch rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup on Sunday, the same day Zimbabwe begin an ODI tour of Australia. — AFP



Nesma of Al Hashar stable impress at Polish Warsaw Racetrack



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

In its fourth participation on the Polish Warsaw Racetrack, "grass track", the horse (Nesma) belong to Al Hashar Sable, owned by Shaikh Nasser bin Mohammed al Hashar, produced top performance to claim the first place in the race which was for purebred Arabian horses with three years category and for a distance of 1,800 metres.

The horse finished the race in a timing of 2:8:28 and it was led by the rider Kamel Jerzybowski and under the supervision of the coach Connie Friesel. The triumph is a deserved victory after three participations of horse in which she came in second place twice and once in third place. In the fourth participation she crowned the first win in its record, thus proving horse worth and developing the level and highlighting with the top performance and high quality of the stable production.

Ibrahim bin Zahir al Hadhrami, the supervisor of the Al Hashar Sable, pointed out that the horse "Nesma" is a product of the Al Hashar Stable in France and its lineage goes back to the 'mare Avin Kinnear' and the stallion 'Josco de Cairo', which is the first production of the stable in France.

SAM BENNETT AT THE DOUBLE ON VUELTA



Irish cyclist Sam Bennett (C) celebrates as he wins the third stage of the Vuelta a España in Breda, The Netherlands. — AFP

BREDA: Sam Bennett of Bora won stage three of the Vuelta a Espana on Sunday, as he was again fastest in a sprint at the end of an almost entirely flat 193.2km run around Breda.

The Irishman, who also won Saturday's stage, tightened his hold on the sprint points green jersey by edging out Mads Pedersen and Dan McLay on the last of three days in the Netherlands.

"It was a hard fight with some tough moments," said Bennett,

whose barren patch has been forgotten with two consecutive winning performances.

Dutch team Jumbo-Visma finished the stage with a third different rider in the overall leader's red jersey with Italy's Edoardo Affini top of the rankings.

Bennett was jostled out of position on the run-in but his lead-out man Danny van Poppel powered late up the left to deliver his leader with split-second timing. "Danny, it was a masterclass,"

Bennett said.

His winning time of 4hrs 05min 53sec means the peloton rode the stage at around 46kph despite some windy conditions on a cool summer's day at 20C.

Ineos had a stressful moment when their leader Richard Carapaz fell 20km from the line, but he eventually finished with the main bunch. "Richard had a small crash, I think he'll be alright," said teammate Ethan Hayter.

Of the favourites to win the

overall title, defending champion Primoz Roglic of Jumbo is best-placed with Carapaz just 13sec off the Slovenian's pace.

Remco Evenepoel, the 22-year-old Belgian, is at 14sec while 2018 Vuelta champion Simon Yates is 31sec off the lead with current Giro champion Jai Hindley at 41sec.

Jumbo won the team time-trial on day one by a clear 13sec, and with flat stages suited to bunch sprints over the weekend, were able to set up a situation whereby

they have shared the overall lead between team members.

Two Dutch riders from Jumbo took the honours in the first two stages in Robert Gesink and Mike Teunissen.

"The team had it thought out from the beginning," said Affini.

"It was very nice of them to do that. Imagine how it felt for the Dutch lads?" said the Italian.

Another Dutch rider Julius van den Berg, retained the climb points jersey. Israel-Premier Tech leader

Michael Woods pulled out of the race after taking a nasty knock to the head in a fall inside the first hour. He was taken to hospital with grazing but no broken bones.

Now the Vuelta heads home to Spain with a transit on Monday followed by stages four to nine in the Basque Country and Asturias, all over rugged hilly or mountainous terrain.

Tuesday's stage four is a 152km ride in medium mountains between Vitoria and Laguardia. — AFP

Coric upsets Tsitsipas to win Cincinnati Masters title

CINCINNATI: Borna Coric, who only returned in March after missing a year with a shoulder injury, dominated fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas on Sunday to win the ATP Cincinnati Masters.

The world number 152 from Croatia dispatched the Greek star 7-6 (7/0), 6-2 to become the lowest-ranked player to ever lift a Masters trophy.

"I have no words, to be honest. It's just an unbelievable feeling," the winner said. "I'm just gonna enjoy this.

"I thought I could play well. I was training hard, and I knew I could play good tennis, but to play this level of tennis — I was just not aware. "I'm just super happy, obviously."

Coric lost his only previous final at this level, going down to Novak Djokovic in Shanghai four years ago.

On Sunday, Coric replaced 143rd-ranked Spaniard Roberto Carretero, the 1996 Hamburg champion, as the lowest-rated Masters trophy lifter.

"It's been very stressful for my body this whole week," the Croat said. "I came into the tournament with many, many (training) sessions

"I played five matches now in a row. So I need to rest for a couple of days. I need to recover and just get ready for the US Open."

Coric came back from an early deficit, trailing Tsitsipas 4-1 before turning the corner and sweeping the tiebreaker to love.



Borna Coric (CRO) celebrates winning the men's final match against Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) at the Western & Southern Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. — USA Today Sports

Momentum shifted further in the second set for the Croat, who was supported by a few fans wearing the national colours.

"I realised that I needed to be more aggressive," Coric said. "He's an unbelievable player, and he's not gonna miss on my solid balls.

"I said to myself, 'I have nothing to lose. If I continue like this, I'm going to lose anyway, for sure.'"

"He was also playing very, very well, putting the pressure on me."

Coric fired seven aces and saved three of four break points in a two-hour victory. Coric improved to 2-1 all-time against

Tsitsipas, having retired from their first meeting in Rome in 2018 and won in the third round of the 2020 US Open in a fifth-set tiebreaker.

"You've kicked my ass the last couple of times," Tsitsipas said to Coric in the trophy ceremony.

Then he praised Coric's title run at Cincinnati, which included victories over Rafael Nadal, Britain's Cameron Norrie and Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime.

"You've proved yourself over and over again," Tsitsipas said.

"It was an incredible comeback from injury. You are proving that you are up there with us."

Tsitsipas said he is still seeking a first title on outdoor hardcourt losing six finals played on cement.

"It kind of sucks," the Greek said.

"I still hope to come back here and win it one day. "I was definitely not choking — I just played robots every time in finals."

Ominous clouds unleashed rain over the area shortly after the trophy ceremony was completed.

There were storm delays much of the week at the Midwest event, the last major tune-up for the US Open, which begins on August 29. — AFP

Giovinazzi to take part in F1 practice sessions with Haas

ITALIA: Italy's Antonio Giovinazzi will take part in Friday free practice sessions with Haas at the Italian and US Grands Prix, the Ferrari-powered Formula One team said on Monday.

Giovinazzi, 28, is the Ferrari reserve driver and has competed for Dragon Penske in the electric Formula E series since he lost his F1 seat at Alfa Romeo at the end of last season.

"Ferrari were keen to give Antonio some seat time in a current-spec Formula One car on a race weekend and we were naturally happy to assist," said Haas team boss Guenther Steiner.

Giovinazzi has competed in 62 Formula One races and will take the place of Mick Schumacher and Kevin Magnussen respectively in the opening sessions at Monza and Austin, Texas.

Formula One teams are obliged to hand two practice sessions to young drivers, or those with limited F1 running, and Haas will still have to do that given Giovinazzi's level of experience.

Brazilian-American reserve Pietro Fittipaldi is expected to



Ferrari reserve driver Antonio Giovinazzi. — Reuters

take those slots.

"I'm so glad to have the chance to drive again in official F1 sessions," said Giovinazzi, who took part in seven first free practices with Haas in 2017.

"It'll be an opportunity to get confident with the new generation cars — it's the best way to be ready if I were called as reserve driver."

Haas could also be looking for a driver for 2023, with Ferrari-backed Mick Schumacher out of contract at the end of this season. — Reuters

Lueckenkemper strikes again to help Germany top Euro athletics medals table

MUNICH: Newly-crowned European 100m champion Gina Lueckenkemper won a second gold as she spearheaded Germany to a decisive victory in the women's 4x100m relay in Munich on Sunday.

The end of seven breathtaking days of top-quality track and field could not have been better scripted as the German quartet motored to victory in 42.34 seconds in the final event.

Status Quo's 'Rockin' all over the world' blasted over the tannoy as a packed-out Olympic Stadium went wild as Lueckenkemper celebrated with teammates Alexandra Burghardt, already a silver medallist in the two-woman bobsleigh at this year's Winter Olympics, Lisa Mayer and Rebekka Haase.

The fancied British quartet, featuring 200m silver medallist Dina Asher-Smith on anchor, didn't get the baton past the first leg thanks to a botched handover.

The Germans did, and swiftly, their gold ensuring the host country topped the overall athletics medals table with seven golds, seven silvers and two bronzes.

Britain finished second with six golds, six silvers and eight bronzes.

"If someone would have told me before the championships that I would come home with two gold medals, I would have said they're crazy," said Lueckenkemper.

Anchor leg Haase added: "Gina always told us that she has a gold medal and that she wanted one more medal tonight. One more, so we made it."



DO THE MATHS!

The men's 4x100m relay was missing Italy's Olympic and European 100m champion Marcell Jacobs.

The Italian quartet, whom Jacobs led to Olympic gold in last year's Tokyo Games, was deprived of a place after Turkey were reinstated after being impeded in the heats.

It was left to a strong British foursome to claim gold in a championship record of 37.67sec, smashing the previous best of 37.94 set by France in Split in 1990.

Jeremiah Azu, bronze medallist in the 100m, led off, handing over to Zharnel Hughes, the 200m champion and 100m silver

medallist.

Jona Efoloko ran the second bend before handing over to Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake, the 200m silver medallist purring home for a comprehensive victory.

"Zharnel has got three medals, Jona has now got one, Jeremiah has got two, and I've got two - just do the maths!" beamed Mitchell-Blake.

GARCIA TRUMPS WIGHTMAN

In another night of top-notch performances, reigning world indoor champion Mariano Garcia of Spain held off Britain's Jake Wightman to win the men's 800m.

Garcia clocked a personal best of 1min 44.85sec for gold, world

1500m champion Wightman taking silver in 1:44.91.

"I was feeling strong and I knew I could fight for a place on that podium so I decided to go for it," said Garcia.

Wightman had stepped down to the 800m after surprising Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen — who did a 1,500-5,000m double in Munich — for 1,500m gold in last month's world championships in Oregon.

"I was not quite close enough in the last straight and it is tough when you are not that close with strong opponents," said the Briton.

"I did not manage to stay strong enough to pass Garcia. This is a tough race with lots of tactics."

There was a second title for

war-torn Ukraine as world indoor champion Yaroslava Mahuchikh triumphed in the women's high jump.

Mahuchikh, who fled her native country on a three-day odyssey by car to get to the world indoors in Belgrade in March, managed a best of 1.95 metres.

She won on countback from Montenegro's Marija Vukovic, with Serbian teenager Angelina Topic claiming bronze (1.93).

"I would like to dedicate this medal to the Ukrainian people," Mahuchikh said.

"I hope to go back home in September, I left my country in March and I miss my home and my friends and my father."

Germany's Julian Weber had

earlier sent the large home crowd wild in a fair warning to the likely reaction to the women's relay team as he won javelin gold with 87.66m on his fifth attempt.

Yemaneberhan Crippa of Italy produced a devastating final 50-metre sprint to win the men's 10,000m in 27:46.13, while the women's 100m hurdles went the way of Poland, 21-year-old Pia Skrzyszowska producing a textbook display for a runaway triumph in 12.53sec.

Hungary's Luca Kozak claimed silver in 12.69sec while Swiss family fortunes looked up as Ditaji Kambundji took bronze, following elder sister Mujinga's gold and silver medal-showing in the 200 and 100m respectively. — AFP



Garcia trumps Wightman to win men's European 800m title

MUNICH, Germany: Reigning world indoor champion Mariano Garcia of Spain held off Britain's Jake Wightman to win the men's European 800m title in Munich on Sunday.

Garcia clocked a personal best of 1min 44.85sec for gold, world 1500m champion Wightman taking silver in 1:44.91.

Ireland's Mark English claimed bronze in 1:45.19.

"I was feeling strong and I knew I could fight for a place on that podium so I decided to go for it," said Garcia, who won the world indoor title in Belgrade in March.

"In the end I came away with a gold medal at these European championships, I am very pleased with it."

Garcia, eliminated at the 800m semi-final stage at the worlds in Eugene, added: "I was expecting a much slower race, but it wasn't so I just went with it and decided to control it from the start."

"When I decided to take the lead, I knew I had to give it my all because towards the end of the race, that's when you have less energy, so I needed to get that right."

Wightman had stepped down to the 800m after surprising Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen for 1500m gold in



last month's world championships in Oregon.

The Briton had bet on being able to re-focus better by choosing the two-lap race in Munich as he sought motivation after his shock triumph in Eugene.

But he hadn't counted on Garcia's experience, the Spaniard hugging the inside line after taking the race by the scruff of its neck with 450 metres to run.

Wightman went wide as a bunched field hit the home stretch on the seventh and final day of action at Munich's Olympic Stadium.

Garcia reacted immediately, spurting forward to keep Wightman at bay at the line in a dramatic finish.

"I came here to get one of these medals," said Wightman. "Going from round to round, I saw that there was a good chance to win it so I was ready. — AFP

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MDO announces start of airborne survey for mineral exploration



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

Minerals Development Oman (MDO) has announced the start of the airborne survey for exploration of metallic minerals, which is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy & Minerals (MoEM) and a number of government entities. The survey aircraft started today flying over Masirah Island, as part of the first phase of the project.

The MDO’s CEO, Eng Nasser bin Saif al Maqbali, said: “We are pleased to start the airborne survey on MDO’s concession areas in order to obtain geophysical and geological data, which will contribute to supporting the exploration of metallic minerals.”

He added: “The first phase of the programme will cover Masirah Island on an area of 658 km2. The next phases will target big areas in number of governorates including North and South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Sharqiyah. Last month, MDO conducted a mini-pilot programme over 14 days in Suhar successfully, in order to identify the potential challenges that the survey may face when it launches.”

The airborne survey is the first step in the exploration for metallic ores, which hopefully will result to a number of potential sites. Excavation activities will continue in these sites by conducting geochemical studies, excavation works and other exploration activities. Last March, MDO signed an agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM), granting MDO 12 concession areas in a solid reflection of the recent Government directions aimed at promoting mining sector for effective contribution into the national economic growth.

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

Energy Development Oman receives ‘BB/Stable’ rating from Fitch

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Energy Development Oman SAOC (EDO) has received a ‘BB’ long-term issuer default rating (IDR) with a stable outlook from international ratings agency Fitch. This comes after S&P rated EDO with BB- with stable outlook earlier this month. Fitch also assessed EDO’s Standalone Credit Profile (SCP) at ‘bbb’, supported by large-scale oil and gas operations and low leverage.

The inaugural assessment by Fitch Ratings is another milestone in EDO’s development, as it serves to enhance the status of Oman’s hydrocarbon and alternative energy sectors as attractive spheres for investment and financing.

Furthermore, the rating increases transparency and comparability for debt investors and capital market participants active in the Sultanate of Oman.

Commenting on the credit rating, Sultan bin Ali al Maamari, Chief Financial Officer – EDO, stated, “This assessment by Fitch is a recognition of EDO’s financial strengths as well as the prudent fiscal management of the economy by the Omani government. The rating provides a firm platform to attract multiple forms of investment into the country.”

“As a landmark achievement for EDO, this is an important step towards our objective of leading the energy transition in alignment with Oman’s Vision 2040,” the CFO added.

Fitch views EDO’s socio-political implications of default as ‘Strong’. The oil and gas sector represents a significant part of the Omani economy, with EDO’s Block 6



concessions accounting for a very large portion of the nation’s total oil and gas reserves. Furthermore, EDO in one of the largest corporate employers in Oman.

The agency also rates EDO’s financial profile as ‘Strong’. EDO plans to maintain FFO net leverage

FITCH COMMENDS EDO’S IMPROVING ESG FOOTPRINT. EDO CONTINUES TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM OPERATIONS AND FLARING AS WELL AS IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY. PDO ALSO PLANS TO EXPAND ITS GREEN GENERATION PORTFOLIO TO 30 PER CENT OF ENERGY CAPACITY BY 2025, WITH THE COMMISSIONING OF AMIN AND MIRA AH SOLAR PROJECTS IN RECENT YEARS

100 per cent interest in the Block 6 gas concession. Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) operates the onshore Block 6 oil and gas concession, which has more than 50 years of production history. Fitch expects an output of around 865,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (kboe/d) until 2026.

Contracts for sales of oil at market prices are signed by the government, but EDO receives payments directly from customers. Non-associated gas (NAG) is sold to the government, which pays EDO a fixed transfer price, subject to annual indexation.

In 2021, EDO’s total production costs before royalties amounted to around \$3/boe of direct production costs and around \$10/boe of capex, which puts EDO at the lower end of the global cost curve. However, adding Fitch-estimated generous royalties of around \$10/boe sharply increases total production costs.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Power and water subsidy scheme covers 80,000 Omani homes

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

An estimated 80,000 Omani households are currently eligible to receive monetary support under the National Subsidy System (NSS) set up by the government to help mitigate the impact of subsidy reform in the country’s electricity and water sector.

The NSS scheme, previously designed to ease the impact of rising motor fuel prices on economically vulnerable citizens, was expanded in 2021 to include households faced with steeper electricity and water bills in the wake of the government’s decision to roll back subsidy on most utilities.



Subsidy reform is a key objective of the Medium Term Fiscal Balance programme adopted by the government in 2020 to help rein in widening annual budget deficits and soaring public debt at the time.

According to the Authority for Public Services Regulation

(APSR), electricity and water subsidy is envisioned to be gradually rolled back over a 10-year timeframe.

Explaining this move, the regulator stated: “The government of the Sultanate of Oman approved the Subsidy Reform programme for the electricity and water sectors.

The revised tariffs were approved in line with the rest of the countries that have changed the subsidy mechanisms. The previous mechanism was provided to all groups of customers, whereas the revision focuses on targeted groups in the society.

The (subsidy) is planned to be gradually lifted starting from January 2021 until 2031.”

The reform strategy, the Authority noted in its newly published 2021 Annual Report, aims to, among other things, enhance the social safety net system in the country.

Other objectives are: to achieve financial sustainability, promote a culture of rational consumption and raise the efficiency of government spending, and encourage the use of other energy alternatives such as solar energy and reduce dependence on gas and mitigate pollution.

As of end-2021, as many as 79,966 economically vulnerable Omani households benefited from the subsidy for the electricity and water sectors, according to the report.

Bank Muscat signs agreement with Savills Oman for transaction banking solutions

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman and Savills Oman, the leading global real estate advisor, have signed an agreement to extend Bank Muscat's cutting-edge digital solutions of Corporate Online Banking and Remote Deposit Capture (RDC) solution to the company.

Through this agreement, Bank Muscat leverages its digital capabilities in providing industry proven digital solutions for payments and collections of receivables through an efficient, seamless and secure channel.

The agreement was signed by Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmiyah, Assistant General Manager - Transaction and Government Banking, Bank Muscat and Ihsan Kharouf, Head of Savills Oman.

Speaking on the occasion, Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmiyah, Assistant General Manager - Transaction and Government Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "At Bank Muscat, we have always been at the forefront of providing innovative digital



Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmiyah



Ihsan Kharouf

solutions to our customers. Our corporate and institutional customers are on a digital transformation journey and are looking for digital solutions to improve their transactions and processes.

We are delighted to tie up with Savills Oman by offering our state-of-the-art digital solutions of corporate online banking and remote data capture, which will bring increased efficiencies in Savills Oman's business.

Ihsan Kharouf, Head of Savills Oman stated: "Savills Oman and Bank Muscat have a strong banking relationship and this latest partnership strengthens it

further.

The implementation of digital solutions for payments and collection of receivables is a hugely significant step in our strategy for streamlining operations for our property management clients.

The Corporate Online Banking and Remote Deposit Capture solutions will provide us with enhanced control and efficiency, faster payment clearance as well as prompt identification of bounced cheques.

We are delighted to tie up with Bank Muscat for our digitisation efforts to increase business efficiencies, and are proud to offer this enhanced service to our

clients."

With business connectivity and digitalisation now more important than ever, Bank Muscat's corporate banking solutions are providing its valued clients with seamless access to a number of corporate services that is crucial to their success in the modern world.

Bank Muscat's RDC solution offers a host of benefits and features to corporates including faster clearing of cheques; elimination of financial losses related to missed or delayed presentation of cheques; faster reconciliation of cheques using the reports available to the company from the RDC system and better management of post-dated cheques.

Corporates have the facility to scan cheques from any bank from the convenience of their offices without the need to manually sort the cheques or visit a Bank Muscat branch daily.

The RDC solution also facilitates electronic endorsement on scanned cheques eliminating the need for manual stamping.

Customer wins fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup 2022 in Qatar



MUSCAT: Jamal bin Nasser bin Ali al Jahdhami, a resident of Muscat, recently won fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup 2022 in Qatar. As part of the campaign, Kia customers buying a brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, live in action.

Apart from Fifa Qatar match tickets, customers will also get comprehensive service up to 50,000 km and 1 year insurance. There are lots of fully paid trips to Fifa world cup 2022 in Qatar yet to be won. So visit any Kia showroom to make the most of it. The campaign will end on November 4, 2022. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.)

An elated Jamal bin Nasser bin Ali al Jahdhami could not believe his luck. Sharing his view he said, "I am absolutely delighted to have won this with Kia. I have always heard a lot of good things about Kia and wanted to experience this exceptional brand. Kia's products and services are really inspiring. In fact their designs are so eye-catching that every new Kia model introduced is always ahead of its time. Given an opportunity, I always recommend a Kia to my friends or family."

Speaking about Kia Oman's ongoing campaign, he said, "There is no doubt that Kia always surprises. In terms of design, technology, features and more. Similarly, when it comes to the campaigns too, it is always different and has a lot more to offer when compared. This time while buying a vehicle, I did my bit of research and finally narrowed down to what I felt, would offer me the best value for money. I am glad I took this decision. Thank you Kia Oman for this fantastic campaign."

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.

Energy Development Oman receives 'BB/Stable' rating from Fitch

FROM PAGE 13

The increase in cost is somewhat mitigated by EDO's still strong financial profile, by EDO's and the government's interests being largely aligned and by the progressive nature of taxation with respect to oil prices.

Fitch commends EDO's improving ESG footprint. EDO continues to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and flaring as well as improving energy efficiency. PDO also plans to expand its green

generation portfolio to 30 per cent of energy capacity by 2025, with the commissioning of Amin and Miraah solar projects in recent years.

Energy Development Oman was established in December 2020 by Royal Decree (2020/128) to focus on realising efficiencies and pursuing new growth opportunities in Oman's energy sector. The company's stated vision is to be a world-class partner for growth, while driving a sustainable energy future.

GLOBAL MONEY EXCHANGE OPENS 56TH BRANCH AT IKEA



MUSCAT: Global Money Exchange Co LLC, one of Oman's most trusted brands opened its 56th branch at the hottest shopping destination in Muscat - IKEA (Oman Avenues Mall) . The branch was inaugurated by Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Khalili in presence of other dignitaries. The branch offers currency exchange at very attractive rates along with remittance services. The branch also features a specialised division for exclusively serving the corporate customers. The management of Global Money Exchange Co LLC expressed their hope that people will continue to patronise the new branch like the way they have supported Global's ventures for the past 20 years.

Bank Nizwa enrolls senior executives to Cambridge Islamic Finance Leadership Programme

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman enrolled five management committee members to attend the Cambridge Islamic Finance Leadership Programme (Cambridge - IFLP), as part of their talent management and employee training strategy.

Held at Clare College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, this programme aims to nurture the right type of talent for the industry that is facing a shortage of quality human resources, especially at the leadership level.

The five employees, holding senior positions in the bank, are Mujahid al Zadjali, General Manager IT & Operations, Arif al Zaabi, Assistant General Manager for Retail Banking, Khalid al Barwani, Deputy General Manager of Wholesale Banking Group, Saif al Rawahi, Assistant



General Manager Investment Treasury, Government Relations and Project Finance, and HH Sayyidah Wisam bint Jaifer al Said, Head of Marketing and Corporate

Communications.

"Bank Nizwa places a keen focus on workforce performance and productivity as part of its 2025 strategy. For the bank to

achieve its overall business goals and improve customer service, these focus areas are essential. We believe that a competent workforce is a major asset for an organisation and, as such, our efforts are centred on advancing their capacities and capabilities to become tomorrow's leaders in Islamic banking.

Qualifying and training employees by providing them with the appropriate skills in various banking and management areas, augment their knowledge and experience, enabling them to develop their capabilities and expertise, thereby, enhancing overall performance," said Khalid al Kayed, CEO, Bank Nizwa.

"Five senior executives' involvement in the Cambridge-IFLP would enable them to lead effectively in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era and transform them into influential leaders in their respective domains as well

as the global Islamic financial services sector," he continued.

Cambridge-IFLP aims to build its participants' soft skills so they can become effective and influential leaders in their respective organisations and the global Islamic financial services industry.

Through this programme, participants acquire new skills and gain a contemporary perspective on leadership. It is a journey of self-discovery, where individuals polish their skills and enhance their capabilities by becoming a part of a global event.

Through this programme, participants develop an understanding of their leadership philosophy, sharpen their leadership skills, and enhance their ability to improve their leadership abilities. Innovative perspectives, creativity, and original ideas are the hallmarks of this programme.



Top corporates to address industry issues at Oman Corrosion Conference 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

The Sultanate of Oman's first-ever corrosion event, Corrosion Conference 2022-Oman Edition, aims to set the direction of the sector with a carefully thought-out, meticulously crafted technical agenda that was rigorously discussed and gleaned from challenges and requirements in the present industry scenario.

Headline topics—Corrosion Control and Management, Asset Integrity Management and Big Data Analytics—Corrosion Modelling—dominates the sessions on Tuesday, August 30.

The main conference will open with an address by Salim al Mahrouqi, Trustee, AMPP Oman Chapter and Chairman of the Corrosion Conference Advisory Committee, followed by a leadership panel discussion

Corrosion Conference 2022 Oman Edition

themed “Integrating Corrosion Decisions into an Organisational Management System.”

The sessions will be presented by esteemed technical experts and high-level industry leaders from OQ, BP Oman, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Schlumberger, Intertek Production & Integrity Assurance, Cortec Middle East, Petronas Research Sdn Bhd, Aqoza Technologies, Cokebusters, Canchuks Corrosion

Inc, Bureau Veritas, and master student experts from the College of Engineering of the Sultan Qaboos University.

Day two of the conference, on Wednesday, August 31, will be opened by Amjad al Kharousi, General Manager, AMPP Oman Chapter. The conference commences with a leadership panel discussion: Proactive Approach-Corrosion, which

focuses on mitigation or shutdown

inspection techniques, followed by the sessions on Surface Preparation and Coatings, Failure Analysis, Remote Inspections: Use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. It will culminate in case studies on steam service in a low environment, online and offline restoring of aging assets, integrated and multi-disciplinary wells materials process and an assessment of reboilers in the South Pars Gas Complex, Iran.

The sessions and panel discussions will be presented by representatives from OQ, BP Oman, PDO, Schlumberger, Hempel, Sohar Port & Free Zone, Charter Coating Service, Precision Ice Blast Corporation, ZingaMetall, Aries Marine, ABS-Middle East and Africa, IAU and IZZ Oman Engineering.

Amjad al Kharousi, GM, AMPP remarks “We are inviting the corrosion community across

all sectors to register for the conference and gain enriching technical knowledge about presented solutions from both a scientific and economical perspective.

This knowledge will help us better understand the impact of corrosion and how critical it is to the sector's advancement. Oman Corrosion Conference stimulates and encourages continuous discourse, learning and innovation within the industry and opens up an avenue for an effective collaborative environment.”

Oman Corrosion Conference & Exhibition is jointly organised by Al Nimr Expo, Raya Services and Innovative Concepts in partnership with AMPP Oman and hosted by PDO. To register for the conference, visit www.corrosionconferences.com/ delegate-registration or call 91249138 for more information.

China steps up easing, cuts lending benchmarks to revive economy



A man walks in front of headquarters of the People's Bank of China in Beijing. – Reuters

SHANGHAI: China cut its benchmark lending rate and lowered the mortgage reference by a bigger margin on Monday, adding to last week's easing measures, as Beijing boosts efforts to revive an economy hobbled by a property crisis and a resurgence of Covid cases.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) is walking a tight rope in its efforts to revive growth. Offering too much of stimulus could add to inflation pressures and risk capital flight as the Federal Reserve and other economies raise interest rates aggressively.

However, weak credit demand is forcing the PBOC's hand as it tries to keep China's economy on an even keel. The one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was lowered by 5 basis points to 3.65 per cent at the central bank's monthly fixing on Monday, while the five-year LPR was slashed by 15 basis points to 4.30 per cent.

The one-year LPR was last reduced in January. The five-year tenor, which was last lowered in May, influences the pricing of home mortgages. “All told, the impression we get from all the PBOC's recent announcements is that policy is being eased but not dramatically,” said Sheana Yue, China economist at Capital Economics.

“We anticipate two more 10 bps cuts to the PBOC policy rates over the remainder of this year and continue to forecast a reserve requirement ratio (RRR) cut next quarter.” The LPR cuts come after the PBOC surprised markets last week by lowering the medium term lending facility (MLF) rate and another short-term liquidity tool, as a string of recent data showed the economy was losing momentum amid slowing global growth and rising borrowing costs in many developed countries.

Shares of Chinese developers listed in Hong Kong rose 1.7 per cent, while China-listed property stocks were relatively stable in morning deals. But worries over widening policy divergence with other major economies dragged the Chinese yuan, to near two-year lows. The onshore yuan last traded at 6.8258 per dollar.

In a Reuters poll conducted last week, 25 out of 30 respondents predicted a 10-basis-point reduction to the one-year LPR. All of those in the poll also projected a cut to the five-year tenor, including 90 per cent of them forecasting a reduction larger than 10 bps.

— Reuters

Oil slumps on fears over economic slowdown, stronger dollar



A pump attendant refuelled a car at a gas station in Beijing. – AFP

LONDON: Oil prices slumped on Monday as investors were concerned that aggressive US interest rate hikes might weaken the global economy and fuel demand while a stronger dollar also weighed. Brent crude futures for October settlement fell \$1.60, or 1.6 per cent, to \$96.99 a barrel by 09:00 GMT.

US West Texas Intermediate crude futures for September delivery, due to expire on Monday, were down \$1.56, or 1.7 per cent, at \$90.76 a barrel.

The more active October contract was at \$88.92, down \$1.52, or 1.7 per cent. On Friday both Brent and WTI climbed for a third straight day, but fell about 1.5 per cent on the week on a stronger dollar and demand concerns. “Growing fears over a global economic slowdown are behind the fall in oil markets,” said Tatsufumi Okoshi, senior economist at Nomura Securities. “A higher US dollar also prompted fresh selling,” he said. A stronger dollar makes oil more expensive for buyers in other currencies.

The dollar index rose to a five-week high on Monday after Richmond Fed President Thomas Barkin said central bankers were inclined towards faster, front-loaded interest rate increases.

Investors will be paying close attention to comments by Fed Chair Jerome Powell when he addresses an annual global central banking conference on Friday. — Reuters

Airline pilot shortages loom in Middle East

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

In a newly released update on pilot shortages in the aviation sector, global management consultancy Oliver Wyman found that, as air travel demand continues to recover this year, demand for airline pilots will outstrip supply in most regions globally between 2022 and 2024 – with the Middle East feeling the effects first.

According to André Martins, Partner – Head of IMEA Transportation and Services at Oliver Wyman, “We expect the Middle East to be the region affected soonest by the shortage outside of North America, driven by a projected sharp increase in air travel demand over the next few years, new players entering the market and big tourism developments



happening in the region.”

The new figures from Oliver Wyman show that this spike in demand for air travel coincides with flat then declining supply of pilots in the region, due to a combination of lay-offs during the Covid-19 pandemic, a falling number of newly-certified pilots, and retirements eventually outstripping new

pilots.

The regional shortage could start as early as the end of this year, reaching an estimated 3,000 pilots by 2023 and 18,000 by 2032 if no accelerated mitigation actions are taken.

“If demand for air travel continues to grow, airlines need to accelerate recruiting efforts from other regions where we anticipate less acute shortages, particularly Latin America and Asia Pacific, to fill gaps. Failing that, we may see adjustment of schedules into and out of the region, impacting the Middle East's carriers and airport operators,” added Martins.

Oliver Wyman forecasted in early 2021 that an impending pilot shortage was on the horizon, contrary to reality at the time, as Covid-19 was decimating the airline industry and any recovery appeared years away.

ESO President receives prestigious award for environmental work

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 22

The Harmony Foundation, an Indian-based NGO, has presented Her Highness Sayyidah Tania bint Shabib al Said, President of the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), with the prestigious Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice 2021 on the theme of Environmental Sustainability.

HH Sayyidah Tania was cited for her “astounding and remarkable efforts to protect and conserve Oman's natural heritage through the phenomenal environmental work of the Environment Society of Oman”.

The felicitation ceremony took place in the office of the Environment Society of Oman in Muscat. Each year, the Harmony Foundation identifies a theme for the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards and the Harmony International Conference that aligns with the needs of the hour affecting humanity worldwide.

In its 17th year, the Harmony Foundation felicitated selfless



individuals, organisations, and leaders who work relentlessly in the realm of augmenting environmental sustainability.

A statement issued by the Foundation noted: “We are truly proud of Her Highness and her sheer dedication to addressing the dire issues of Oman's environment.

Her Highness is a true change-maker who founded the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) in 2004 on the pillars of conserving marine life, protecting

land ecology and educating the public about the environment

Her academic expertise in Marine and Freshwater Biology has immensely contributed to the organisation which continues to flourish in Oman with excellent ventures working to protect Oman's environment and its wildlife.

As a founding member of ESO, Her Highness is also the President of the board of directors of ESO since its establishment.

In addition to representing ESO in the media, Her Highness also leads ESO's advocacy efforts with the government as well as the organisation's fundraising initiatives, including the annual fundraising ball and other corporate fundraising events.

Her stupendous environmental endeavours include the ESO's Say No to Plastic Bags campaign to reduce the single-use of plastics in Oman, which continues to play a pivotal role in ESO's Say No to Plastic agenda. The Harmony Foundation wishes Her Highness the very best in all of her environmental endeavours, where she and the Environment Society of Oman continue to leave a lasting legacy.”

In its 18th edition, Harmony Foundation will be hosting the prestigious Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice 2022 on the theme of “Compassion for the Refugee Children” in the last quarter of this year to felicitate all those stupendous people, organisations and heads of state who have carried out monumental work for refugee children.

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#Living_with_COVID19



Getting into the heart of solo travelling

'Solo travelling' has become a buzz phrase, especially in a world post-pandemic with many travellers realising that it's actually doable thanks to the aid of social media, latest gadgets and apps and including people's renewed confidence in going alone. *Oman Observer* talked to four travel fans to get into the heart of solo travelling.. **P18**

Bad guys turn good in China 'Minions' movie ending

WHAT'S SMALL, YELLOW, loves bananas and promotes the rule of law? A Minion, at least according to an edited version of the latest animated film featuring supervillain Gru and his army of tiny sidekicks being screened in China.

The fifth instalment of the lucrative "Despicable Me" franchise, "Minions: The Rise of Gru", premiered in China this month, several weeks after the film

opened in United States cinemas.

But while the international version of the kung fu-filled family-friendly romp set in 1970s San Francisco tells the story of how the dastardly Gru cut his teeth as a tween criminal, filmgoers in China are treated to an alternative ending in which the good guys win.

A series of subtitled still images inserted into the credits sequence on mainland



Chinese screens reassures audiences that police catch Gru's law-breaking mentor Wild Knuckles and lock him up for 20 years after a failed heist.

International viewers simply see Knuckles give police the slip by faking his death earlier in the film's concluding scenes, but in the Chinese version he puts his con artist skills to positive use in prison, where he follows his "love of acting" and sets up a theatrical troupe.

As for Gru, he "eventually became one of the good guys", devoted to raising his family, the Chinese ending says.

It is not the first time a popular foreign film has been altered for cinemas in China, where the entertainment industry faces some of the world's strictest censorship rules and is tasked with promoting "healthy" values.

David Fincher's 1999 cult classic "Fight Club" starring Brad Pitt and Edward

Norton was given similar treatment when Chinese streaming platform Tencent Video in January uploaded a version where police shut down the protagonist's plan to bring down modern civilisation.

And the highly anticipated return of US sitcom "Friends" to Chinese streaming platforms in February prompted fury among fans after viewers noticed a LGBTQ plotline was cut.

It is unclear if the "Minions" ending was altered due to censors' demands or if producers considered it a more palatable conclusion for the Chinese market.

Universal did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

Social media reaction to the Chinese "Minions" ending was mixed, with one person on the Twitter-like Weibo social media platform saying they had gone to the cinema specifically to see the new ending but was disappointed that it was "just subtitles".

Other fans were upset by the discontinuity between young Gru's virtuous transformation in the new film, a prequel, and his continued villainous behaviour in the other films, set in the present day.

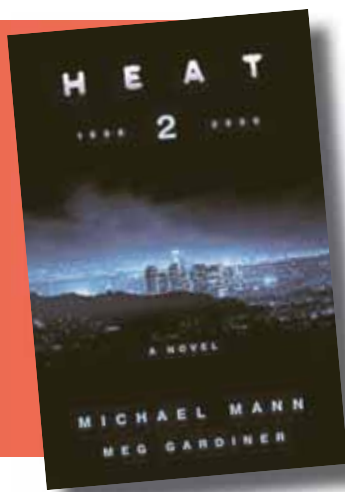
"We can only say that the Gru of the main films lives in another parallel Minion universe," one Weibo user complained. — **AFP**

READ

HEAT 2

BY MICHAEL MANN AND MEG GARDINER

New adversaries confront returning characters in situations set before and after the events of the film "Heat".



ENTERTAINMENT

US actor Brad Pitt speaks during a promotional event at Koyasan Tokyo Betsuin Temple for his film "Bullet Train" in Tokyo. — **AFP**



BOLLYWOOD TRENDS

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar performs during the trailer launch of his upcoming psychological crime thriller Hindi-language film "Cuttpulli" in Mumbai. — **AFP**





Getting into the heart of solo travelling



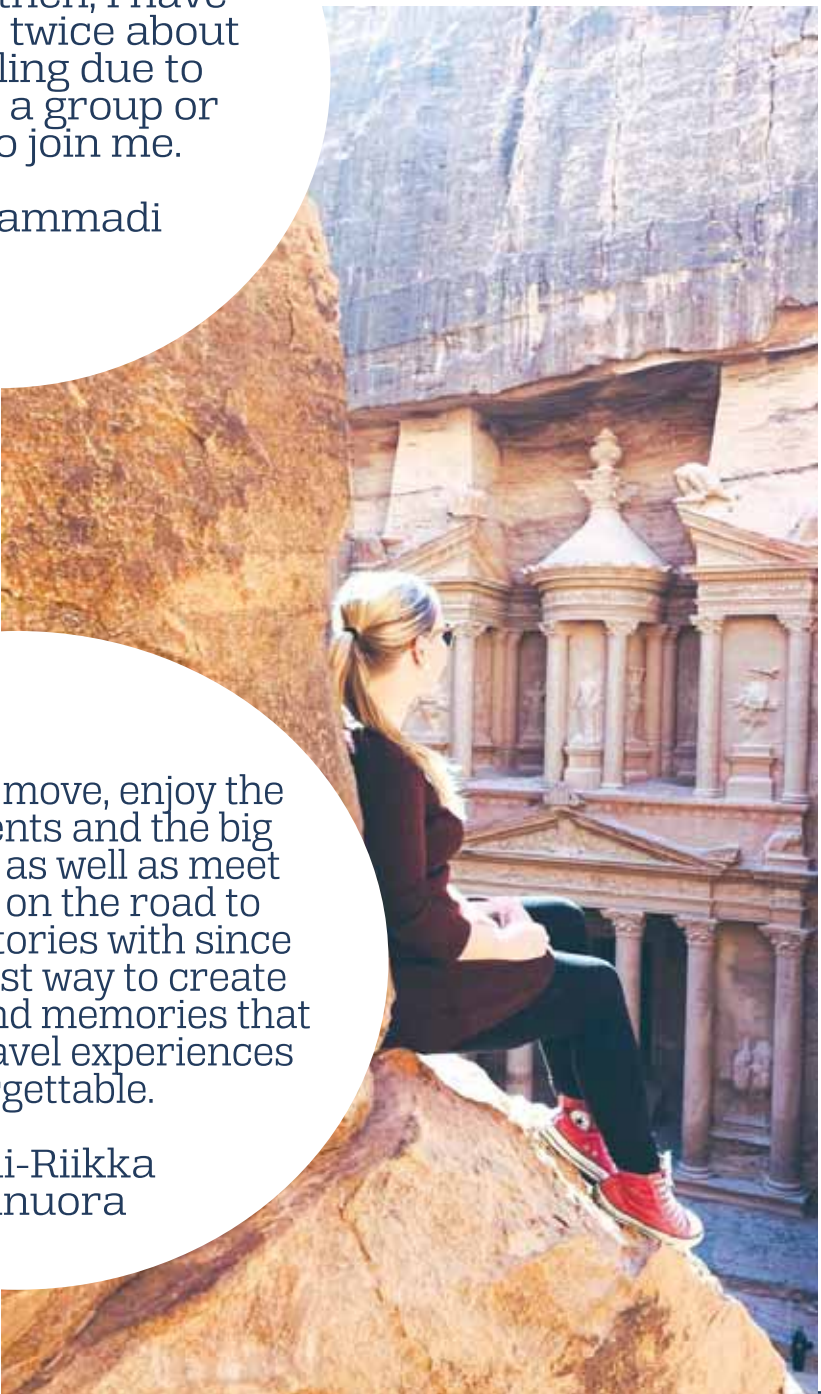
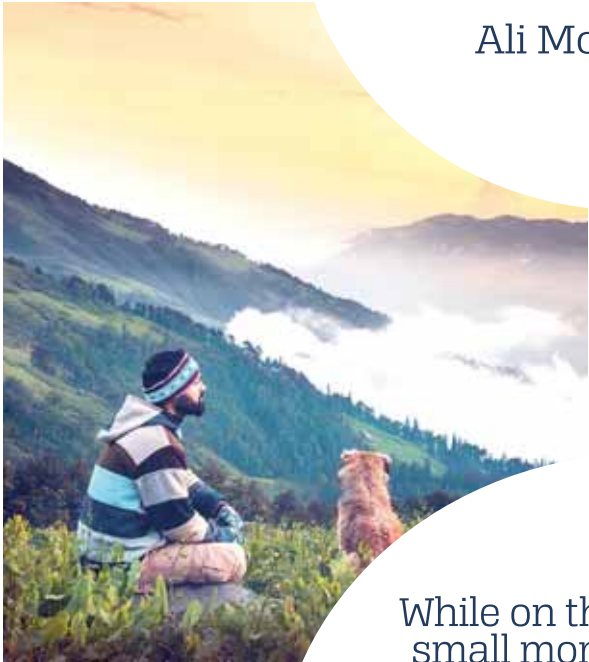
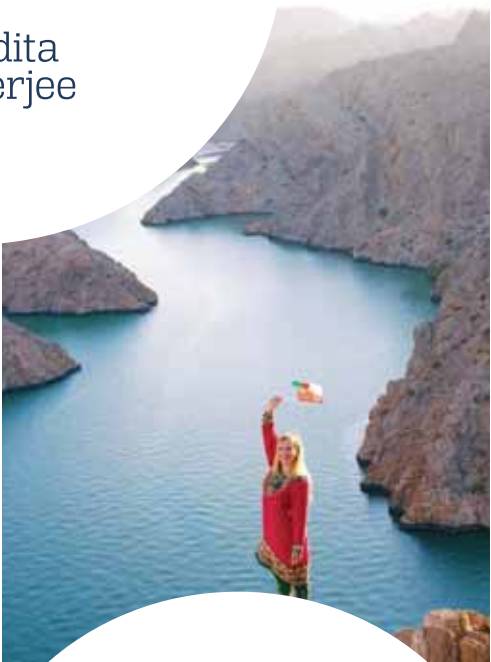
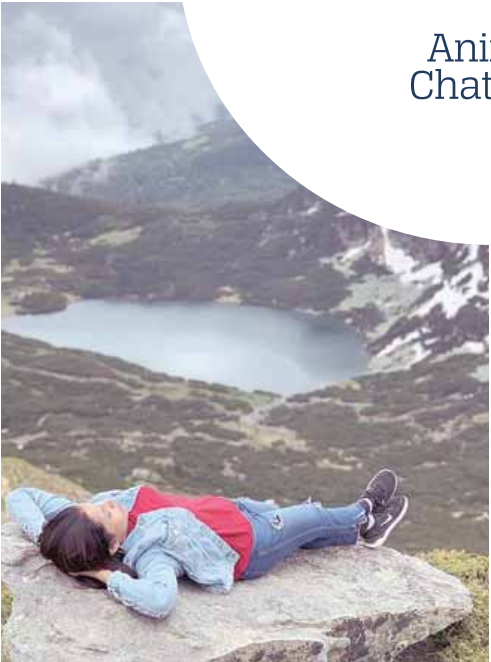
You learn so much more about yourself when you go solo. It's like meeting this whole new person every time.

Anindita Chatterjee



This was a very liberating feeling, and ever since then, I have not thought twice about not travelling due to not having a group or friends to join me.

Ali Mohammadi



While on the move, enjoy the small moments and the big experiences as well as meet new people on the road to share your stories with since that is the best way to create new stories and memories that make solo travel experiences unforgettable.

Helmi-Riikka Olkinuora



Travelling has made me a calm person and helped me understand that I can face even the most challenging situations.

Isa Khan





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By Rumpa Mitra
Instagram: @rumpa_mitra

For a lot of people, travelling is best spent with friends and family creating memories together. In a post-Covid world, solo travelling became an even bigger trend with people finding meaning in their lonesome journey. These solo travellers are not afraid to go out in the big, wild world navigating the complexities of travel relying solely on their skills and street smarts. *Oman Daily Observer* talked to a few jet-setters to understand better what the trend is all about and why they do it.

Isa Khan
Instagram: @khan.isa

Isa is a travel content creator from India who has been exploring the Himalayas for the last five years.



Being a travel content creator, my passion which turned into a profession demands as much travel as possible. I started as a solo traveller and had been to quite a few places.

In my opinion, solo travel can be considered one of the tools through which one can learn about life experiences. This isn't the only tool though. Depending upon the situation and requirement, I prefer to travel solo or in a small group and of course with my loved ones.

Travelling has made me a calm person and helped me understand that I can face even the most challenging situations. Compared to when I was younger, I have become much more focused and organised (I give solo travelling partial credit to that). One has to be a meticulous planner and be better prepared before any solo travel.

It's always advisable to learn/read about the place in detail. Being safe should be the first and foremost priority. Life itself is a journey but to prove yourself as an adventure lover, one must calculate the risk involved in it beforehand. One may easily get attracted to solo travelling after seeing the pictures on social media platforms, but being a content creator I can vouch reality is far from those fairy tale pictures. As I always prefer and suggest exploring unexplored places, here one needs to remember solo travel is comparatively pricy which is a big disadvantage unless one is open to hitchhiking options.



Anindita Chatterjee
Instagram: @travel.chatter

Anindita has already travelled to 76

countries. She left a secured leadership job to pursue her dream as a travel blogger. Recently, she has been travelling with her 9-month baby.

I believe that people have evolved and have become more focused on keeping themselves happy — a happy you is a happy family and a happy workplace.

I was genetically programmed to travel from birth. I started travelling at a fairly young age as both my parents were travel lovers. In present times, social media to an extent have so much information out there that it's a lot easier to travel solo now than it was 15 years ago.

You learn so much more about yourself when you go solo. It's like meeting this whole new person every time. Travelling solo made me enjoy my own company like I never have before. It's very freeing and soulful. I get so much time to introspect about so many things.

Whenever I travel solo, I am filled with gratitude and it helps me to feel alive like never before. I come back home totally charged up ready to take on any challenge head-on.

I completely disagree that those who travel solo are loners. I believe they are those who love themselves enough to be able to take the extra step to make their dream come true.

As a female solo traveller, planning is important. You should also travel light and learn a few common words of the local languages. I usually go travel solo to places that I know my friends and family won't enjoy as much. When I'm on my own, I also learn to value my friends/family a lot more.

Ali Mohammadi
Instagram: @omantripper

Omani blogger Ali Mohammadi has established himself as the go-to for memorable travel experiences in Oman. Known on social media as OmanTripper, his adventures and his blog offer some of the most authentic travel experiences when visiting Oman.



Over the past 10 years or so, I found that most of my travels have been done as a 'solo traveller', definitely more often than any group trips I would have done. This makes me think that perhaps "solo traveller" is an apt phrase to describe me.

I got my first experience travelling solo probably back in 2006 when I travelled to Japan alone, and gained an experience that I probably did not fully appreciate or realise until years later: that you don't actually need to wait on or rely on anyone but yourself to make a trip or a long-held dream of a travel destination happen — and visiting Japan had been a dream of mine ever since I was a kid.

This was a very liberating feeling, and ever since then, I have not thought twice about not travelling due to not having a group or friends to join me — and have used this experience to travel to destinations ranging from the Great Ocean Road in Australia to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and Pripjat in Ukraine, and the stunningly gorgeous Caucasus mountains of Tusheti in Georgia. Despite all of these, I definitely do not consider myself a 'loner', on the contrary, I believe I am a sociable person who enjoys meeting people. To me, solo travelling allows me to have the freedom in making (as well as adjusting, and readjusting)

plans and destinations, while also being able to meet some wonderfully fascinating people whether they are locals or fellow travellers in the destinations I visit.

I do not think it is very uncommon to see more and more people travelling solo, as I believe the trend is rising worldwide. I believe the biggest factor in this is the rise of Smart Phones which had a tremendous amount of information, tools and apps accessible in the palm of your hand. I should also not discount the impact of social media, especially Instagram.

For those who are considering a trip, my advice is 'have a plan' — a good plan doesn't have to be detailed and should be flexible to adjust or fill details as you travel — but have a big goal or thing you want to do (i.e. to visit a certain national park or visit a monument or museum) and fill the details around that. Plan a portion of your solo travel trip in a group activity — this could be visiting family/friends or booking a group activity such as a hike or group tour, for a first timer this will help make you more at ease and hey you combined a great experience with meeting your family or friends. Buy a local SIM card with data wherever you go. Have an open mind and don't stress if you don't make a plan or target!



Helmi-Riikka Olkinuora
Instagram: @1001teacher:tales

Helmi is an avid traveller and internationally-minded educator who loves documenting her adventures, preferably with a cup of coffee on hand, and sharing them on social media.

For me, solo travel can mean a variety of things. You can start with as little as a weekend adventure on a hiking path you have not explored before, a weekend trip to a new city in Europe, or backpacking for months in Southeast Asia to starting a whole new life as an expat in a new country. To me, it all started with the last one. I have moved to three different countries by myself, starting with moving to the United States as an 18-year-old and ending in Oman, where I have found my second home.

Solo travelling is not the cheapest option as you have no one to share a hotel or rental car expenses with. Luckily these days there are many options, from staying in a hostel or Couchsurfing to using a rail pass or other public transport or hitchhiking, all of which I have great experiences.

As a female solo traveller, my advice is to buy a prepaid phone plan from the airport and carry a power bank to make sure you can always reach out to someone if needed. Also, make sure to keep family or friends updated on your travel itinerary. On the other hand, try to disconnect too as much as possible from your everyday life. The photos and travel stories can always be posted later. The less time you spend connected to Wi-Fi, the more time you have to connect with other travellers and locals. Who knows, you might even end up getting a ride on the back of a pick-up truck to the top of a volcano in Indonesia.

While on the move, enjoy the small moments and the big experiences as well as meet new people on the road to share your stories with since that is the best way to create new stories and memories that make solo travel experiences unforgettable. As for myself, I am always happy to relive my memories of driving cross-country from San Francisco to New York, interrailing through seven countries with 19 train rides, backpacking through six countries from Thailand to Malaysia to hitchhiking the ring road in Iceland!

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Cherishing Past Memories

THE FOLLOWING is continuation of an excerpt published last week from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani.

One of my good memories of that period was a famous cook by the name of Bijjar. We would drink tea early in the morning with a type of bread known as puri. (We used to put bread in an aluminium pot, known as des). At nine we would eat dahl with Chapatis. At one o'clock for lunch we would have either salted or fresh fish or mutton with rice. I should mention that it was something of a natural scene for us in that period to see flies hovering on our plate of dahl, a staple meal in all the army camps.

We would always be on standby when the copper whistle blew. In the evening we would have tea once again. After evening exercises, we would, if we had a chance, head towards a hot spring in Ghala where we swam and washed our clothes. (The spring is still there).

The Arabic curriculum, Palestinian in origin as I was later told, was named "moruj". It was open to those military men who wanted to pursue their studies. I was, thank God, one of them. I also remember Major Sheridan and all the other English supervisors. In the field of accounting, I remember Maqbool bin Homaid al Lawati. Amongst the platoon soldiers I remember Mohammed bin Said al Busaidy, Soleman bin Salim al Hosni, Saif bin Homud al Qayyidhi (Major) Salim bin Khalifa al Kalbani, Marhoon bin Soleman Al Kalbani, Salim bin Homed al Kalbani and Rashid bin Abdullah al Khamisi. The latter competed with me in shooting practice. While he outdid me in machine gun firing, I beat him in rifle firing.

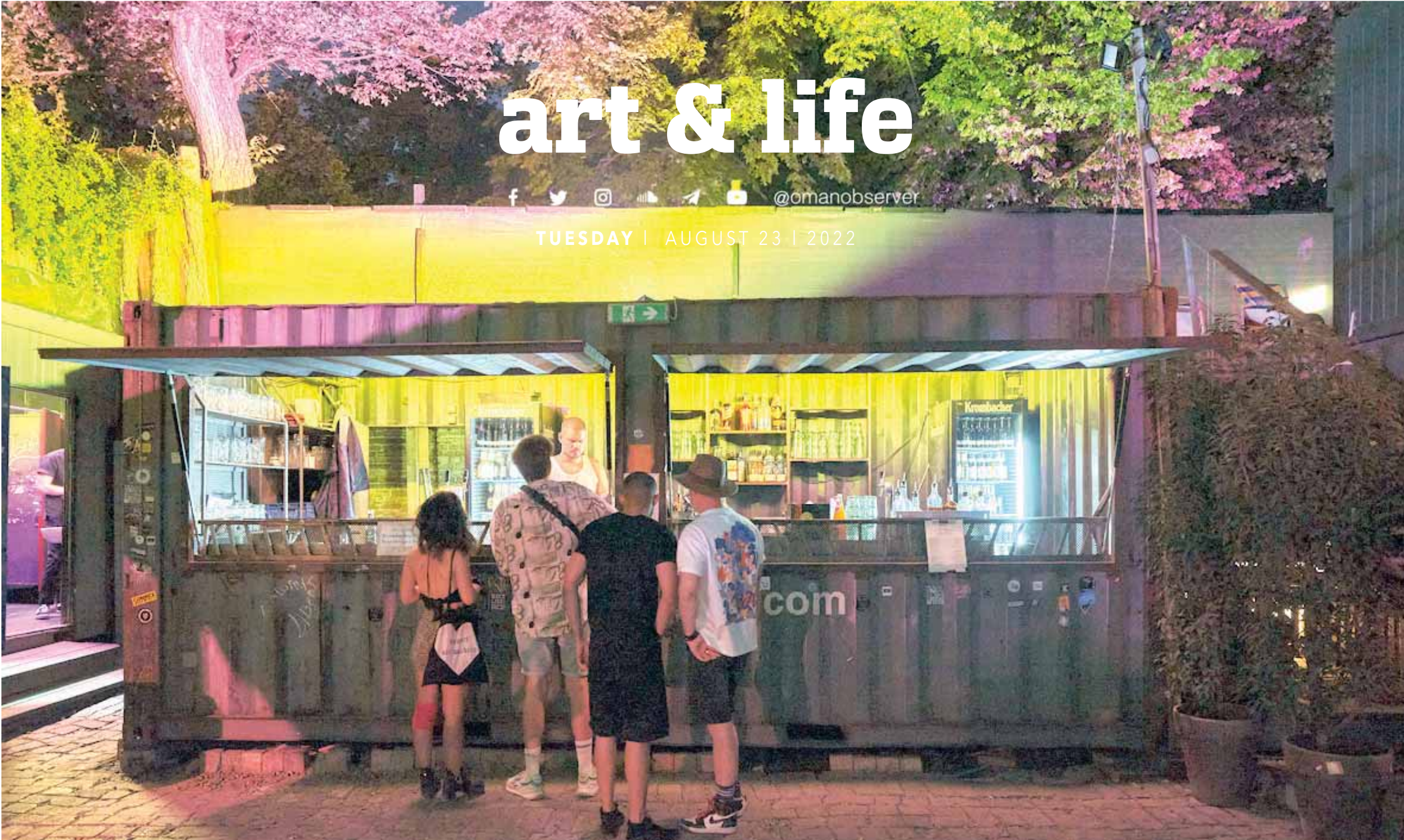
After completing all the pri-

mary and shooting exercises, we moved to tactical exercises held at the end of each course in Wadi Ansab. We would attack a mock enemy in all sorts of envisaged scenarios. The trainers were Omanis, but the supervisor was English. The number of our squad was 61. It was the oldest squad, and it represented the army in facing our mock enemy, platoon no 62. In a day long training, we would be engaged in skirmishes with our "enemy".

We would go by a compass and a map till we reached the highlands of Boshar in the evening. We would stay up two nights on the hill where Sultani Hospital is now located. Our fighting with the mock enemy continued in night skirmishes. We also patrolled the area and set ambushes, so the "enemy" wouldn't be able to find us. Half of the squad would be engaged in carrying out patrols and ambushes, while the other half would guard the camp. They would exchange roles for efficiency.

Night exercises would be held in the tree covered areas of Al Athaiba and Ghoubra. Our guide was the Northern Polar Star. In daylight we had our exercises in the Bausher hills and the sands of Qurum Beach. We learnt how to use a compass and maps. Once we were attacked at dawn, at 2 o'clock, by the other platoon (Platoon 62). But we were alert and managed to repel the "enemy", using hand grenades. I remember that the squad leader broke into our trench and seized my rifle. After fighting for a long time, I hit his knee with a stone and released myself from him; he then backed away with his squad.

This incident was a source of both pride and joy for me. It enhanced my feeling that I was on the right track. Whenever I meet the squad leader, we cherish the memories of those days.



Berlin, Back in Full Swing

NO CITY WAS FUN in the darkest days of the pandemic, but there may be nowhere that could compete with Berlin for sheer gloom during that first Covid winter. Even in good times, the city's funereal grayness, its scant daylight and collective penchant for gallows humour and blunt negativity, known as the Berliner Schnauze (literally: Berlin snout), is only barely compensated for in the colder months by its abundant cultural offerings, thriving cafe and restaurant scene, and what is arguably the best nightlife in the world. Berlin in lockdown was not pretty.

But this summer, the city is back in full swing. Berlin's 178 museums, seven symphony orchestras and three opera houses are once again up and running. Bars, clubs and restaurants are operating at full capacity, and, with the exception of a mask mandate on public transportation and in medical facilities, virtually all Covid restrictions have been lifted since March 20. Germany's entry restrictions were also dropped — at least until the fall, when there has been talk of renewed requirements if case numbers creep upward.

A FEW FRAUGHT OPENINGS AND AN EXTRAORDINARY MUSEUM

Perhaps the biggest opening in town was the new airport, Berlin-Brandenburg Willy Brandt Airport, a blunder-riddled, 30-year project that opened at the end of 2020 after at least six missed opening dates and a budget that ran billions of dollars in the red. And now that it's finally here? Of course, everyone seems to hate it. The design is outdated. Logistics are dismal, food options grim. Clunky buses run between plane and terminal. At least there seem to be more trans-Atlantic flight options and the airport is somewhat better connected with the city centre. But overall? Not a huge win.

Another fraught, long-awaited opening was that of

the Humboldt Forum, the neo-Baroque reconstruction of Berlin's long-dead City Palace conceived as Germany's answer to the Louvre or British Museum. The museum, which opened virtually at the end of 2020 and began its phased physical opening in 2021, has elicited criticism from the beginning for everything from its tacky design to its insufficiently investigated links to the country's colonial past. Still, there are worthwhile exhibits to explore. In addition to covering the site's history and contemporary topics such as climate change, exhibits include the German state's extensive collection of non-European art, including impressive holdings from the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art, much of which was acquired through imperialist plunder.

Visitors may be better advised to check out the extraordinary Neue Nationalgalerie, the iconic modern art museum designed by Bauhaus pioneer Ludwig Mies van der Rohe that reopened last summer after a six-year, \$164 million refurbishment by David Chipperfield. Dedicated to art of the 20th century, the museum is particularly strong on early German modernism, from the expressionist Berlin street scenes of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner to Hannah Höch's political photomontage and the glitter and doom of new objectivity portraiture masters Otto Dix, George Grosz and Max Beckmann. Current exhibitions include works by Sascha Wiederhold, whose graphic, psychedelic abstractions were suppressed by the Nazis, almost into obscurity.

A FLOURISHING FOOD SCENE

While the pandemic was inarguably rough on local businesses, particularly as rents in the city continued to spike, extensive government support helped stave off much of the damage — part of Germany's 130-billion-

euro (\$155 billion) stimulus package. Covid certainly didn't stop the ascent of the city's food scene, which is flourishing like never before as new restaurants and pop-ups by innovative chefs make it increasingly hard to remember that only a decade ago, it was legitimately hard to find a great meal in Berlin.

Much of the recent action is concentrated in Prenzlauer Berg, the former East Berlin workers' district turned bougie family enclave. Opened in July 2021 by Samina Raza and Ben Zvi, the duo behind the Berlin stalwart Robinson's, Frieda is an all-day restaurant that takes a similarly locavore, nose-to-tail approach to accessible fine dining, with a daily changing menu featuring faultless dishes like line-caught tuna "chateaubriand" in a black pepper reduction with triple-cooked fries, or heirloom tomatoes from a regenerative farm in Brandenburg served with AAA Cantabrian anchovies drizzled in olive oil. Above all, Frieda is vibey, with its cinematic open kitchen, on-tap natural wines and custom hi-fi sound system pumping vintage house and jazz vinyl (dinner for two with drinks, from 140 euros, or about \$144).



The past year has also brought a handful of exciting pop-ups and roving culinary concepts, like Gaia, a women-run, farm-to-table project based in Berlin and Brandenburg (lunch for two from 70 euros), and Ember, a project founded by young German chef and Noma alum Tobias Beck that serves inventive multicourse wood-fired cuisine in interesting locations throughout the city (dinner is 110 euros per person without wine pairing).

NEW AND COMING HOTELS

The city's hotel scene has not been nearly as fertile as its gastronomic counterpart. The hotel group Amanó opened a new location in Friedrichshain (doubles in August start at 121 euros), and the architectural team behind the Former Jewish Girls School project in Mitte opened a boutique hotel called Wilmina in the Charlottenburg district that might have been appealing were it not housed in a former Nazi prison where women dissidents were jailed and interrogated by the Gestapo.

But anticipation is high for two hotels by local culinary institutions opening later this year in Mitte: Chateau Royale, a

93-room interpretation of the classic grand hotel by the team behind Grill Royale (doubles in September start at 195 euros), and Telegraphenamt, a hotel and members club by the owners of the 150-year-old Gendarmenmarkt dining establishment, Borchardt (rooms from 200 euros).

NIGHT LIFE RETURNS

Then there's the club scene, perhaps Berlin's biggest tourism draw. Even before Covid, concern that rising rents and rampant property development were threatening the city's landscape of clubs rooted in its queer techno underground had led to a new term: Clubsterben, or club death. These worries heightened as the pandemic forced all of the city's clubs to close, remaining shuttered even when shops, museums and galleries began to open with restrictions. Some clubs were repurposed as Covid testing centres or vaccination hubs. Berghain, the techno temple itself, reopened as an art exhibition that saw the former power plant filled with works by local artists from the private Boros Collection.

In the end, not a single Berlin club closed for good because of the pandemic, thanks in large part to government grants and advocacy by the Berlin Club Commission, a trade organisation. Newer venues, like open-air clubs Oxi Garten and Æeden, and especially the culturally adventurous Trauma Bar und Kino, are breathing fresh energy (and much-needed diversity) into the city's nightlife.

And the forest raves that spread through the Brandenburg countryside during that first locked-down summer? They seem to be one Covid-era development with staying power. There's no telling what the fall might bring, but at least in the summer of 2022, there's more dancing in Berlin than ever before. — **NYT**