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OMAN TAKES ON EGYPT IN ARAB CUP OPENER



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IBRI INDUSTRIAL CITY ATTRACTS 23 PROJECTS WORTH RO 9 MILLION



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VISITING VENICE? MAKE A RESERVATION AND BE READY TO PAY



MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$104.63 A BARREL

Oman oil price for September delivery on Wednesday reached \$104.63, comprising a drop by 28 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$104.91. The average price of Oman oil for July delivery has stabilised at \$107.22, thus \$4.82 per barrel higher than June delivery. Meanwhile, following a volatile session on Tuesday, oil prices were lower after data from the Energy Information Administration showed US crude stocks and distillate inventories fell while gasoline inventories rose. US crude recently fell 1.79 per cent to \$102.35 per barrel and Brent was at \$105.79, down 1.45 per cent on the day.

KIEV

RUSSIA EXPANDS UKRAINE WAR GOALS

Moscow's military "tasks" in Ukraine now go beyond the eastern Donbas region, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday, as the Kremlin's forces shelled eastern and southern Ukraine. Lavrov also told state news agency RIA Novosti that Russia's objectives will expand still further if the West keeps supplying Kyiv with long-range weapons such as the US-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems. His comments, the clearest acknowledgment yet that Russia's war goals have expanded over the five months of war, came after Washington said it saw signs Moscow was preparing to formally annex territory it has seized in its neighbour.

DETAILS ON P7



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UN RECORDS RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY TALIBAN

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HOW TO ORGANISE AID FOR UKRAINE

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Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit's website launched

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit launched its website www.oman2040.om, an integrative, flexible and interactive platform designed to enable specialists, researches and interested individuals to access the final

version of the vision's document, learn about the national programmes, and the unit's work methodologies for monitoring and evaluating performance. The website consists of a number of sections, the first of which is a dedicated section for the unique

history, civilisation, culture and geographical location of the Sultanate of Oman. Another section is designed to represent Oman Vision 2040's pillars, national priorities, indicators and national programmes, as well as a section dedicated for the

unit, including the speech of its chairman, an overview about the establishment of the unit, its roles and responsibilities, vision, mission and values, its work methodologies to follow-up and support the efforts exerted towards achieving Oman Vision 2040, the approved

framework to develop the vision's programmes, and the sectors development platforms. Moreover, the website has a publications section, including Oman Vision 2040 document, annual reports, and booklets.

DETAILS ON P13

ONE KILLED, 5 HURT ON ADAM-THAMRAIT ROAD

KHAREEF VISITORS TOLD TO FOLLOW TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

One person died, and five others of Asian nationality were injured after the tyres of their vehicle burst on Adam-Thamrait road, which is the main route to Dhofar Governorate during the khareef season.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Police Aviation department said it has transported the injured people to hospital in Nizwa.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has warned motorists that damaged tyres and faulty brakes can lead to accidents during long drives.

In view of heavy rush to Dhofar Governorate from all over the region, authorities have started imposing tougher measures to regulate movement of tourists on all roads leading to the governorate.

It may be noted that Dhofar Governorate did not receive tourists during the khareef season in 2020 and 2021 due to travel restrictions imposed by the



authorities to limit the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

The ROP has deployed special checkpoints and patrol teams on the roads leading to Dhofar Governorate.

Meanwhile, Oman Meteorology has been updating motorists on climate conditions on Adam-Thamrait road, especially the chances of low visibility due to

rising sands. The Directorate General of Police Aviation will also support ROP's efforts by providing flying ambulances in emergency cases such as road accidents where urgent transportation of the injured is needed.

The ROP has advised all visitors to Dhofar to abide by traffic laws and regulations and follow speed limit to ensure their safety and

that of others, and to pay attention to the presence of stray animals, especially at night, and sands that may accumulate on roads near desert areas.

Citizens and tourists heading to Dhofar can request service and assistance by calling the emergency phone number (9999) or directly contacting the police personnel at checkpoints.

Tender for Al Batinah Coastal Road stage 1

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Secretariat-General of the Tender Board announced tender for the design, execution and completion of the First Phase of Al Batinah Coastal Road — a stretch of 21 km — from the Wilayat of Barka to Al Suwaiq Port.

The project, a component of the ministry's strategic plan, comprises construction of dual links leading to the centres of the two wilayats (Barka, Al Suwaiq), a flyover for Al Suwaiq roundabout and a set of roundabouts, junctions, intersections and exits connecting the adjoining villages and residential complexes.

Once completed, the first phase of Al Batinah Coastal Road will maximise benefits from the logistic scheme of the area and provide various opportunities for economic development and tourism. It will also bolster commercial activity at the ports of Barka and Al Suwaiq, since it collects the centres of the two wilayats with the two hubs. — ONA

New Sri Lanka leader says will not bow to violence

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's president-elect vowed on Wednesday to take tough action against anyone resorting to what he called the undemocratic means that led to his predecessor's ouster.

Six-time prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he will not bow to violence after winning a parliamentary vote to succeed Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country and resigned last week.

"If you try to topple the government, occupy the

president's office and the prime minister's office, that is not democracy, it is against the law," Wickremesinghe said after praying at a Buddhist temple in capital Colombo.

"We will deal with them firmly according to the law. We will not allow a minority of protesters to suppress the aspirations of the silent majority."

Shortly after his election, he met elite police and army units guarding the parliament to thank them for defending state symbols, his office said. SEE ALSO P6



HONEY BADGER MAKES RARE APPEARANCE

An Omani citizen from the Wilayat of Mahout, Governorate of Al Wusta, spotted a honey badger, a rare appearance for this species in the area. A honey badger (also known as ratel) measures 10 to 30 cm in length and weighs 5 to 15 kg. It gets its food (honey) with the help of a bird called 'honeyguide'. It can live about 7-8 years in the wild and up to 20 years in captivity. A honey badger, which inhabits meadows and dry lands alike, exists in the Governorate of Dhofar and parts of Al Wusta, as well as countries in Africa and South and West Asia. — ONA





Child Protection Committee studies drowning incidents



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development, represented by the Child Protection Committee in Muscat studied children's drowning incidents and noted the rising rate of their occurrence in the Sultanate of Oman during climatic conditions.

This was the topic of the second meeting of the committee,

chaired by Sayyidah Ma'ani bint Abdullah al Busaidiyah, Director General of Family Development at the ministry, who heads the committee.

Citing the provisions of Royal Decree No 22/2014, the meeting discussed the legal implications of such incidents and the accountability of the parties that

endanger the life of children during climatic conditions.

Sub-committees have been formed in the governorates of Oman, with representatives from the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Public Prosecution

Department, the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, private sector establishments and civil society institutions.

The panels are tasked with receiving claims and reports of incidents involving the violation of children's rights, violence against children and cases of abuse. — ONA

Staff and Command College celebrates 35th batch graduation

MUSCAT: The Staff and Command College (at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies) celebrated the passing out of its 35th batch.

The ceremony, held at Bait Al Falaj Garrison, was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The batch comprised officers from the Ministry of Defence, the headquarters of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Royal

Guards of Oman (RGO), SAF wings and other military and security departments. The batch also included students from GCC states and other Arab countries.

The curricula of the course covered refresher drills, lectures by undersecretaries and ambassadors and concluded with a practical demo code-named Al Hazm (firmness), which culminates the course's series of training exercises.

— ONA



TRA warns of risks due to sharing of Internet

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has warned there are several risks when creating wireless networks for the purpose of sharing Internet services with neighbours.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the TRA said that such activities can cause technical glitches.

"There is a possibility of interference in wireless networks and the impact on the speed and quality of service for the rest of the subscribers in the same area."

It warned that creating Internet services without a license can make the user liable to legal liability, apart from the fact that all data is vulnerable to hacking and misuse of the service for fraud and hacking.

TRA clarified that, however, the safety of using the devices has not been confirmed.

Meanwhile, many Internet subscribers reacted to the warning by saying that one of the main reasons is the high price involved with the subscription of services."

"People resort to sharing services to reduce costs as the Internet is an essential utility and service and an absolute necessity at all times."

Omani families spend about 24% of household budget on food

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

In an updated report, the World Bank confirmed that the Omani families spend about 24 per cent of the household budget on food, which is the highest percentage in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Living life in the present days has become expensive, due to the high prices of consumables, not to mention the electricity, water and telephone bills, which places a burden on households. The prices of commodities such as food, consumer products, energy and minerals have gone up as a result of the global events

such as the Russia-Ukraine war.

The World Bank stated that 19 per cent, the highest percentage of spending, of the Omani families goes to transport and communications compared to 15 per cent in the UAE, 8 per cent in Kuwait, 18 per cent in Bahrain, 10 per cent in Saudi Arabia and 15 per cent in Qatar.

The rising prices, especially of food, have made many families balance their spending in line with their financial situation.

The World Bank also stated on its website that, "Oman is expected to grow in 2022 to reach 5.6 per cent, supported by more than 8 per cent of the growth in the hydrocarbon

sector, while the non-oil economy continues to grow by more than 2 per cent."

Setting a family budget is very important to facilitate the management of money and benefit from it, and one of the most important ways is to spend in a wiser way; by spending money on necessities to live and stop spending thoughtlessly. Also, develop savings plans to buy what family members want other than the basic needs of living, allocate savings for emergency situations and reduce the family's concern about money by increasing control over it, by tracking expenses and setting priorities.

Mobile phone subscriptions up 13.9 per cent

MUSCAT: The total number of mobile phone subscriptions in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 13.9 per cent at the end of May 2022 to reach 6,187,816 compared to the same period in 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Post-paid mobile phone subscriptions rose by 24.3 per cent by the end of May 2022 to reach 1,411,312 compared to the same period in 2021, while the number of pre-paid mobile phone subscriptions declined by 1.4 per cent to reach 4,776,504. Among those subscriptions, 3,648,078 were through service



providers and 1,128,426 through reselling.

Moreover, the number of active mobile broadband subscriptions increased by 6.2 per cent at the end of May 2022 compared to May 2021. Subscriptions to the fixed Internet service registered a rise at the end of May 2022 by 1.9 per cent to reach 524,916, compared to the same period in 2021. — ONA

Wadi Tanuf draws tourists with its natural beauty

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Currently, Wadi Tanuf in the Wilayat of Nizwa is one of the most important and beautiful natural sites that attract tourists. The flow of the valleys, the flow of the waters of the canals and the water springs form an aesthetic painting that we rarely see at this time of the year.

The Tanuf Falaj is one of the most famous and oldest falajs in the Wilayat of Nizwa, as its name is associated with a long history, as it passes through the middle of Tanuf fortress and the Imam Salim bin Rashid al Kharousi Mosque. This falaj was previously known as Falaj (Al Hayqi), and it was built before the Ya'ariba era.

This falaj descends from the slope of the mountain and consists of three arms: the main arm in which the water coming from the source of the falaj flows and passes in the middle of the "Al Hijri" valley east of the "Al Nathd" cave. The mountain, and the third arm is called "Al Suwayr", and it feeds the falaj

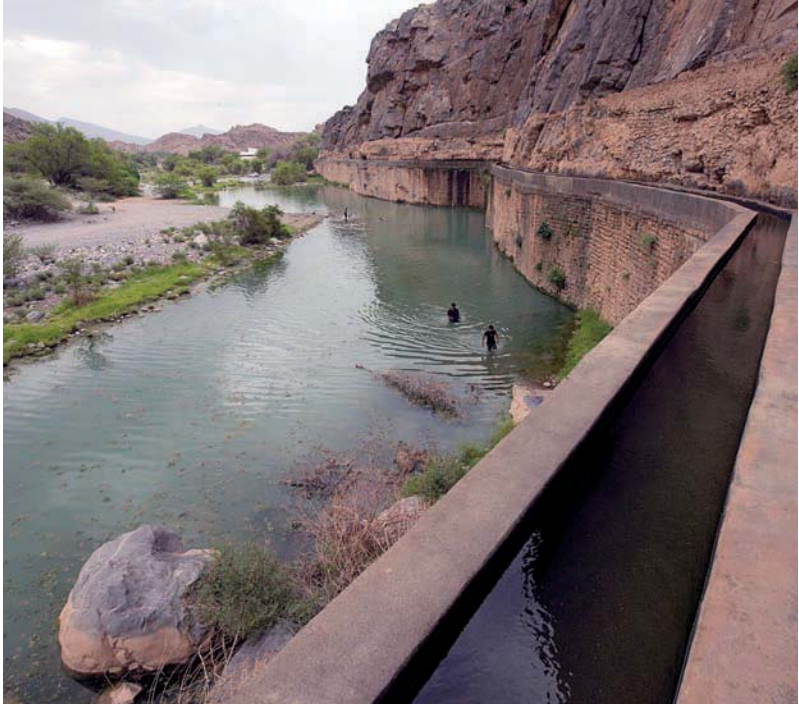
when the wadi flow.

The Tanuf Falaj covers an area estimated at more than half a square kilometre. The Falaj, like other aflaj, has received attention from the government in its maintenance in several stages, the most important of which is the conversion of the previous waterwheel and the construction of a new water wheel with a depth of about 40 feet next to the Wadi Tanuf Dam.

After the continuation of the seasonal rains, the trees of the valley grew and became green, pleasing the onlookers, and these trees now provide a good haven for tourists to spend a whole day under the shade of these trees and near fresh water.

Among the most important trees: Sidr and Ghaf trees, which shelter dozens of species of birds, butterflies and wild animals.

"These trees represent a safe haven for the elements of biodiversity, and thus many of these species shelter in these trees, in addition to providing a good climate for reproduction throughout the year", locals told



the Observer.

"Some people still benefit from the plant diversity in this valley for medicinal uses, as many diseases such as skin allergies, fractures and rheumatism can be treated using natural herbs that people extract from wild plants that grow automatically in this fertile area", they added.

During the recent periods,

the land was covered with water, which led to the acceleration of the growth of trees and plants and the return of life to wild animals and birds, and the groups that depend on agriculture feel joy and rejoicing because the abundance of water makes it easier for them to plant their seeds and ensure a large harvest of their local products.

"We expect an abundant agricultural crop during this year and next. It is a matter of thanks and rejoicing. We are looking forward to more diversity of agricultural products, and local markets will witness greater activity during the coming period", farmers explained.

Children and youth practice swimming and walking between the corridors of the valley and exploring the depths of the caves and heights of the mountains that surround it. The mountainous heights that surround the valley provide an opportunity to take panoramic photos to get rare and distinct shots.

"The location after the availability of water is very beautiful. We spend our day here without getting bored. We practice some hobbies and sports and cooperate in preparing some traditional dishes. We met many people. Wadi Tanuf provides us with valuable opportunities to exchange conversations and ideas with those we meet in this distinguished tourist site", said an Omani tourist.



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THURSDAY | JULY 21 | 2022

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SALALAH'S SCENIC SPOT



Ayn Razat, located about 15 km from the centre of Salalah, is the one of the most popular spot for picnic with natural springs and caves. -- ONA

Omanis can travel visa-free to 81 countries

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The Sultanate of Oman has been tied up with Saudi Arabia in the GCC rankings for the Henley Passport Index Q3, 2022 Global Ranking.

Oman and Saudi Arabia are ranked 68th with a visa-free score of 81, while UAE topped the list in the GCC with a ranking of 15 and a visa-free score of 176.

Qatar is ranked 55 with a visa-free score of 99, Kuwait (ranked 59 with a visa-free score of 96), and Bahrain (ranked 66 with a visa-free score of 86). According to the latest results from the Henley Passport Index, based on exclusive and official data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Japan holds the number one spot on the index with a record-high visa-free or visa-on-arrival score of 193, while Singapore and South Korea come in joint-2nd place, with a score of 192.

EU member states dominate the remaining top 10 spots on the latest ranking, with Germany and Spain in joint-third place, with access to 190 destinations visa-free.

Finland, Italy, and Luxembourg follow closely behind in joint-4th place with 189 destinations, and Denmark, Netherlands, and Sweden share

Oman and Saudi Arabia are ranked 68th with a visa-free score of 81, while UAE topped the list in the GCC with a ranking of 15 and a visa-free score of 176

5th place with their passport holders able to travel to 188 destinations worldwide without a visa.

Both the UK and the US have dropped down a rank, to 6th and 7th place, respectively, and Afghanistan remains at the bottom of the index, with its nationals only able to access 27 destinations worldwide visa-free.

The global mobility gap between the world's most and least powerful passports now sits at an unprecedented 166 destinations.

Several countries around the world have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 40 or fewer countries. These include North Korea, Nepal, Palestinian territory, Somalia, and Yemen.

The Henley Passport Index ranks 199 passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa. It is updated in real-time throughout the year, as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

Pact signed for development in Jabal Akhdhar

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The office of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN).

The MoC aims to achieve sustainable development in infrastructure, government services and public utilities in the tourism sector, as well as to create an investment-attractive milieu in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.



The MoC was signed by Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah and Eng Mohammed Abu Bakar al Ghassani, OMRAN's Vice- Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The MoC stipulates setting up a joint vision between the governorate and OMRAN to create innovative incubators that support the development and establishment of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). — ONA

AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION EXPLORES ACADEMIC COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Dr Said bin Hamad al Ruba'ie, Chairman of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), received Dr David Templeman, Minister for Culture and the Arts, Sport and Recreation, International Education and Heritage of the Government of Western Australia, and his accompanying delegation.

The two sides explored areas of cooperation in academic exchange, mutual student visits between universities in Western Australia and UTAS and the mechanism of exchanging expertise in technical education.

The two parties agreed to activate several initiatives in the fields of education, research, consultations, student exchange



and the mutual teaching of some courses.

UTAS partnered with Edith Cowan University by mutually teaching a course (online) on renewable and alternative energy. Meanwhile, work is under way to offer more courses through the same mechanism by cooperating with other Australian universities.

— ONA

International agencies reporters visit Doka Nature Reserve



SALALAH: The media delegation comprising reporters from Arab and foreign news agencies on Wednesday visited Al Bashayer Meet Company in the Wilayat of Thamrait, Governorate of Dhofar.

At Al Bashayer, the reporters listened to a briefing by Eng Abdullah bin Musallam

al Rowas, Maintenance Manager. They later went on tour of the firm's facilities.

Al Bashayer is a comprehensive red meat production unit, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman. It was established to serve as a sustainable resource that contributes to self-sufficiency in food security. It focuses on cattle meat and

poultry that are marketed locally and abroad.

The reporters also visited the Wadi Doka Nature Reserve, 40 km away from the Wilayat of Salalah. It is a large park housing luban (frankincense) trees and registered in the World Natural Heritage list of luban sites. — ONA



الهيئة العامة للصيد البحري
Oman Fisheries SAOG

An invitation to attend an ordinary general meeting to fill two vacant seats on the board of directors

The Board of Directors of the Oman Fisheries Company SAOG is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend an ordinary general meeting to fill two vacant seats on the Board of Directors, held on Tuesday, corresponding to 2/8/2022 at 3 pm through Muscat Clearing & Depository's electronic platform (www.mcd.gov.om) or by attendance in **Hormouz Grand Hotel** – Airport Heights – Al Seeb. In the event that a quorum is not achieved, the planned will take place on Wednesday 3rd August at 3 pm through Muscat Clearing & Depository's electronic platform (www.mcd.gov.om) or by attendance in **Hormouz Grand Hotel** – Airport Heights – Al Seeb.

The Agenda:

1. Electing the board of directors to fill the vacant seats.

Those who wish to run for membership in the Board of Directors must fill out the nomination form prepared for this and submit it to the company at least five (5) days before the date of the general assembly meeting, no later than the end of work on Monday 25/07/2022.

In accordance with the company's articles of association and regulations for Annual General Meetings using electronic platforms, we would like to bring to your attentions the following:-

- A. Each shareholder is entitled to give a written proxy to another person, who need not be a shareholder, to attend the meetings and vote on his/her behalf at the Annual General Meeting provided they have an investor number issued from Muscat Clearing & Depository.
- B. Voting will commence on any of the items in the agenda before the General Meeting by three days and will continue until the process is completed on the day of the meeting. In the event that there is a change in the investors shareholdings, the vote shall be cancelled and they are responsible for voting again on the day of the meeting.

Kindly ensure attendance 30 minutes prior to the scheduled meeting.

For further information on the above, you may contact **Khalil Ali Al Amri** on 99317115 or via email on khalil@omanfisheries.net

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Auditor

Legal Counsel



OMAN FISHERIES



KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Digital transactions have grown leaps and bounds over the past two years and it has been the buzzword of trading and will remain so for some time from now, according to the Central bank of Oman.

In its financial report for last year, it is shown that a whopping 40.6 per cent growth has been reported in online transactions in 2021 alone against 19.2 per cent growth rate in 2020, thanks to the ever-increasing usage of smartphones and newer applications aiding better, hassle-free living.

Thus, e-commerce has become an inevitable part and parcel of modern life marking a 78.7 per cent growth in 2021 against 47.9 per cent rise of 2020, literally earmarking a digital business revolution across all spectrum of business.

There has been an increasing trend in using plastic money instead of liquid cash in all retail sectors including FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods), hotels

and restaurants, café, retail sector, gold as these sectors were asked to initiate e-payment system by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

The bi-product of such a surge in online trade is apparently the diminishing use of bank cheques which were of great demand in trade, commerce and businesses till recently.

The CBO report further says that as many as 4 million cheque transactions were there in 2020 whereas the same was 4.7 million in 2019 and in 2021, it went down again to touch 3.8 million, an unprecedented phenomenon during the influx of online business.

However, although such transactions ensure timely payment compared to cheques and lesser dishonour of cheques, such a burgeoning online trade and wider acceptance of e-commerce is not without challenges, according to experts in digital transactions.

Oman reported 2,894 locally committed cyber crimes in 2021 which is nearly 10 per cent of the total crimes committed in the

same year.

“The number of cybercrimes in the country rose to nearly 10 per cent which is an alarming rate especially when our children are studying online,” said Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa’ee, Oman’s Attorney General.

He added that crimes involving information technology and electronic transactions were next to commercial crimes and this shows how criminals in the cyber world are targeting the vulnerable lot. Proper campaigning against cybercrimes needs to be in place, according to cyber experts.

A recent report from the Oman Lawyers Association (OLA) says that there has been an increasing number of financial crimes committed online during the Covid-19 period at a time when digital transactions were at their peak.

“We received a large number of financial cases mostly committed online where the plaintiff was behind bars or was about to be arrested and we managed to secure the release of 1,035 people comprising both citizens and expatriates from all the

governorates,” said Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Lawyers Association.

“This Surging number of cybercrimes is due to the increased usage of IT services and heavy dependence on the virtual world, thanks to the pandemic,” attributes Tariq al Barwani, Knowledge Oman founder and Oman’s Well-known IT enthusiast.

The previous year, Oman reported a 25 per cent rise in cybercrimes last year in comparison with previous year and bullying, harassments, blackmailing, extortion, data breach, and identity theft ranked the top six crimes.

“Electronic fraud and extortion have become the most serious cybercrimes these days especially when most of the children are online,” said Brigadier Jamal bin Habib al Quraishi, Director General of Criminal Inquiries and Investigations, Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The way forward, people need to be vigilant in their digital transactions, dealings on social media and be watchful of their

children online and be aware of their activities in the virtual world.

To start with, an advanced anti-malware programme should be in use and one should make sure that he or she is using a secured connection and a strong and complex password and check out for security vulnerabilities in the PC in use.

One needs to make sure that he or she is dealing with reputed websites only while avoiding public computers and public Wi-Fi for any sensitive use such as sharing valuable information.

It is advised that only credit cards need to be used for online shopping and one can opt for OTP option for any online transaction while avoiding purchasing from untrustworthy portals.

Additionally, make sure that you log out from e-commerce websites as soon as the deal is done.

“Catch them young and our children need to be educated on the risks of using social media inappropriately and not send personal data or pictures to a stranger or an online friend new friend as this might take them to dangers,” he adds.



Renowned cardiologist displays artworks made during the pandemic

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Art from the Heart, a collection of paintings by Dr Benny Panakkal, renowned cardiologist was inaugurated by Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday evening.

Bhavalaya, a global platform for promotion of art and culture is presenting the ten-day event at Hotel City Seasons this week. The guests of honour were Maryam al Zadjali, renowned artist and Tahira al Maawali, Director of Omani Society for Arts. The exhibition is open to the public from July 21st to July

30th, from 10 am to 7 pm. "Nature is what inspires me. I enjoy watercolour the most. Many of the watercolour paintings are works inspired by photos taken by friends and some from the digital space. Some of the acrylic paintings that are being presented at this exhibition are of natural settings

and sceneries. Particularly of interest are city landscapes from the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. Some of the abstract oil paintings pertain to Covid -- uncertainty of life and later the rays of new hope," explained Dr Benny. The cardiologist who takes a break with paintbrush and

canvas, Dr Benny Panakkal has been working as a senior Consultant Interventional Cardiologist and Head of Cardiology at Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi, since the last 19 years (from March 2003). Dr Panakkal's professional interests are mainly in coronary angioplasty and interventions

through the wrist; as well as in advanced echocardiography. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Cardiology at Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi, India. The Chairman and founder of Bhavalaya, Dr J Retnakumar said he was pleasantly surprised when he discovered the cardiologist's passion for art.

Currency rates hit all time low but remittances less



The Indian rupee fell to more than 80 per US dollar for the first time on record on July 19.

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Asian currencies hit an all-time low this week giving hopes to expatriates to convert their savings into their home currency but money exchanges reported a lukewarm response owing to many reasons.

Indian rupee hit 208 against 1 Omani Rial, for the first time in the history but the takers of this were very less, as witnessed by the exchange houses.

Liju John, Country Manager of Modern Exchange said remittance flow is not high these days as it is feared that many of the HNI's (High Networth Individuals) may be waiting for better rates.

"Although the rates didn't go above INR 208 against one Rial, it is expected to go above 210 in the coming days and by the time people get salaries and return from their holidays, better remittances can be expected," he added.

While INR traded at 79.87 to 80.02 against dollar Pakistan Rupee continued to depreciate and touched 223.10 against dollar this week. Sri Lankan rupee too hit an all-time low of 362.17 against USD, Philippine Peso touched 56.13, and Nepal rupee at 127.53.

"Response from the potential remitters was not as bad as expected as it is the festival month hence sufficient transactions are happening. However, remittances have been little slow because the low rates happened immediately after the Eid holidays," said Binoy Simon of Purushotham Khanji Exchange.

According to experts, the key factor driving the rupee lower has been a surge in the US dollar globally. Crude prices elevating to around \$110per barrel added further pressure on the rupee. In addition to this, a forecast of 10 per cent inflation by the Bank of England and a tightening lockdown in Shanghai has also had Asian currencies depreciate against the dollar.

"Technically it was not tradable at 80 plus and I guess the previous crossing of 80 was on July 14 or 15, and is due to many reasons including the Ukraine scenario and other socio economic conditions," Avinash Kumar, General Manager, Al Jadeed Exchange.

"Although the USD-INR has hit 80 for the first time, we have not received many inquiry calls, as anticipated in the wake of the sudden depreciation of many Asian currencies. We believe that the customer may be waiting for a higher rate," admits Amit Talukder, GM, Global money Exchange.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No. (23/2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/071	2022/MM/HQ-6	Maintenance of Roads in Bousher and A' Seeb 2022 (E- Tender)	Rial 190	31/07/2022	11/08/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/073	2022/MM/HQ-7	Maintenance of Roads in AL-Amirat and Quriyat 2022 (E- Tender)	Rial 300	31/07/2022	11/08/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/040	2022/MM/QS-34	Rehabilitation of Rainwater Drainage at Burj AL-Sahwa (E- Tender)	Rial 25	11/08/2022	28/08/2022	First
PRE/22/052	2022/MM/QS-35	Chain link Fence & Gate at AL-Amirat (E- Tender)	Rial 25	11/08/2022	28/08/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/057	2022/MM/QS-36	Cleaning & Grading of Wadis in Muscat Governorate (E- Tender)	Rial 25	11/08/2022	28/08/2022	First
PRE/22/076	2022/MM/QS-37	Construction of Proposed Solution to Resolve Water Stagnation at Bousher in Al Khuwair Area (E- Tender)	Rial 25	11/08/2022	28/08/2022	First

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).

Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
105/2022	Cleaning Service for National Autism Center Building at Al-Khoud	Companies specialized in the field of cleaning, washing and pest control, which are registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Excellent or First Class	Thursday 4-8-2022 02:00 PM	Thursday 18-8-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Thursday 21/7/2022.

❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces their desire to sell used furniture and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction stores and receive the bidding on Monday and Tuesday 25-26/07/2022 from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on, Wednesday and Thursday 27-28/07/2022 from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm.
- The used furniture are sold in their current condition, and SQUH is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale, and (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 02/08/2022.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No. (2).
- For more information, please contact 99469639 - 99337363.

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Tenders committee of Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
383/2022/ MAFWR/ HQ-47	Cleaning and Servicing the Fish Markets Buildings in Sultanate of Oman for 2022	25/-	Specialized	Monday 8/8/2022	Tuesday 30/8/2022
384/2022/ MAFWR/ HQ-48	Supply of Veterinary Medicines and Equipments for the year 2022	35/-	Specialized	Monday 8/8/2022	Tuesday 30/8/2022
385/2022/ MAFWR/ HQ-49	Maintenance and Renovation Works for Fish Auction Hall at Mirbat Fishery Harbour	25/-	Second	Monday 8/8/2022	Tuesday 30/8/2022
386/2022/ MAFWR/ HQ-50	Maintenance of Protection Wall at Sabt, AL-Kamel in South Sharqia Governorate	25/-	Second	Monday 8/8/2022	Tuesday 30/8/2022

• Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.

• The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

• The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.

• All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

• All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Six-time PM Wickremesinghe elected Sri Lanka president

COLOMBO: Six-time prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected as crisis-wracked Sri Lanka's new president in a parliamentary vote on Wednesday, with the backing of the disgraced former leader's party.

Official results gave the veteran politician 134 votes, an absolute majority in the 225-member parliament, after Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country and resigned in the wake of protesters overrunning his palace.

"Our divisions are now over," Wickremesinghe said in a brief acceptance speech in parliament, urging his defeated rivals "to join me and work together to bring the country out of the crisis we are facing".

Wickremesinghe takes charge of a bankrupt nation that is in bailout talks with the IMF, with its 22 million people enduring severe shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

But he was backed by the Rajapaksa's SLPP party — still the largest in parliament — and is despised as a proxy for the former leader by the protesters who forced him from his palace after months of demonstrations over the unprecedented economic crisis. They have also been demanding the departure of Wickremesinghe, who has pledged to crack down hard if protesters take to the streets.

Hundreds of heavily armed troops and police stood guard outside the parliament, but there were no signs of demonstrators.

Outside the presidential secretariat, where protesters camped for months to demand Rajapaksa step down, actress Damitha Abeyrathne, 45, said:



Supporters of newly elected President Ranil Wikeramasinghe celebrate in Colombo on Wednesday. — AFP

"We lost. The whole country lost."

The struggle would continue, she said.

"The politicians are fighting for their power. They are not fighting for the people. They have no feeling for people who are suffering."

LAW AND ORDER

One by one, the legislators entered ballot booths set up on the floor of the chamber to choose between the three candidates.

Previous elections have been marred by allegations of corruption and vote-buying, and mobile phones were banned to prevent anyone taking photos of the ballots.

Wickremesinghe is elected for the balance of Rajapaksa's term, which runs until November 2024,

Sri Lanka's Ranil Wickremesinghe



- Sworn in as prime minister on May 12, to replace Mahinda Rajapaksa
- His private residence in Colombo was burned down on July 9
- His office declared a state of emergency on July 13
- Sworn in as acting president July 15, in place of Gotabaya Rajapaksa who resigned from Singapore on July 14
- Elected as president in a parliamentary vote on July 20



and the speaker's office said he would be sworn in on Thursday. According to analysts he is likely

to appoint his school-mate Dinesh Gunawardena, a strong ally of the once-powerful Rajapaksa clan, as prime minister.

Wickremesinghe appears to be indebted to the Rajapaksa, a clan of four brothers who have dominated Sri Lankan politics for much of the last two decades, for his victory. Gotabaya's departure wounded the group after two of his brothers also quit their posts as premier and finance minister earlier this year.

But former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, the deposed Gotabaya's elder brother and the head of the family, remained in the country, and party sources said he had pressed SLPP legislators to support the veteran operator.

— AFP

Iran says nuclear policy unchanged after 'bomb' remark

TEHRAN: Tehran gave assurances on Wednesday that its nuclear policy was unchanged and that it still adhered to a fatwa banning weapons of mass destruction, after an Iranian official said the country was able to make atomic bombs.

It is the second time in the past 18 months that Iran has reiterated its opposition to nuclear weapons following comments by an official.

"In regard to the topic of weapons of mass destruction, we have the fatwa", or religious edict, by Iran's supreme leader that prohibits the manufacture of such weapons, said foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani.

The fatwa declares the use of atomic bombs and other weapons of mass destruction to be "haram", or forbidden by Islam, and it is often cited by Iranian authorities as a guarantee of Tehran's good intentions.

"It seems that there has been no change in the view and position of the Islamic Republic of Iran" regarding the nuclear policy, Kanani told a news conference. His comments came in response to a question about remarks made by Kamal Kharazi, head of Iran's strategic council of foreign relations to Al Jazeera on Sunday about Iran's capability to manufacture nuclear weapons.

"It is no secret to anyone that we have the technical capability to make atomic bombs, but we have not made a decision in this regard," Kharazi said, before reiterating Iran's position that it



does not want to make a nuclear bomb.

Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Kanani said: "Iran's nuclear capacities are great, but, as it has mentioned many times, Iran's nuclear technology is completely peaceful and under continued monitoring of the (UN's) International Atomic Energy Agency."

The remarks came amid heightened tensions between Iran and Western powers as talks in Vienna to revive a 2015 nuclear deal have been stalled since March.

VIENNA TALKS

Qatar hosted indirect talks last month between the United States and Iran in a bid to get the process back on track, but those discussions broke up after two days without any breakthrough.

The Vienna talks, which began in April last year, aim to return the US to the nuclear deal, including through the lifting of sanctions on Iran, and to return Tehran to full compliance with its commitments. — AFP

UN records hundreds of killings, rights violations by Taliban

KABUL: The Taliban have carried out hundreds of human rights violations in Afghanistan since seizing power last year, the United Nations said on Wednesday, including extrajudicial killings and torture.

"There's no denying that the findings of our report are extremely serious," Markus Potzel, acting head of the United Nations mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), told a news conference in Kabul.

The Taliban have routinely denied accusations of rights abuses since overthrowing the previous Western-backed government,

but a UNAMA report released on Wednesday listed multiple accounts.

It documented 160 allegations of extrajudicial killings, 56 incidents of torture and ill-treatment, and more than 170 arbitrary arrests and detentions against former government officials and national security force members since August.

The most common methods of torture included kicking, punching and slapping, beatings with cables and pipes, and the use of electric shock devices.

It documented more than 200 instances of cruel, inhumane



Markus Potzel acting head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, speaks during a press conference in Kabul on Wednesday. — AFP

or degrading punishments — including beating shopkeepers

for not attending mosque — and more than 100 cases of excessive

use of force.

Since the end of the war, security has vastly improved across the country with a huge drop in civilian casualties.

But the Taliban — notorious for their brutal reign of terror between 1996 and 2001 — have sharply restricted the freedoms of Afghans, particularly women and girls.

UNAMA had 87 reports of violence against women and girls including murder, rape, suicide, forced marriages including child marriage, assault and battery, as well as two cases of honour killings — none of which have

been registered with the formal justice system.

Among the cases documented were a couple who were publicly stoned to death after being accused of having an affair.

Fiona Frazer, head of the UN's human rights mission in Afghanistan, said "impunity prevails" in Afghanistan, and acknowledged there may be an under-reporting of allegations.

She said UNAMA was "particularly concerned" about the involvement of the Taliban's religious police and intelligence service in abuses.

—AFP

SHORT TAKES

KHARTOUM

Death toll from Sudan clashes rises to 105

Ethnic clashes in Sudan's Blue Nile state in a deadly land dispute killed 105 people and wounded 291, the state's health minister said, providing a new toll on Wednesday.

Fighting broke out in the southern state on the borders with Ethiopia and South Sudan on July 11 between members of the Berti and Hausa ethnic groups.

"The situation is now calm," state health minister Jamal Nasser said by telephone from



the state capital Al-Damazin, some 460 kilometres south of Khartoum.

The deployment of the army had eased the fighting since Saturday, he said.

BANGKOK

Thailand admits to using phone spyware

A Thai minister has admitted the country uses surveillance software to track individuals in cases involving national security or drugs, amid revelations that government critics' phones had been hacked using the Israeli-made Pegasus spyware.

Minister of Digital Economy and Society, Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn, said in parliament that he is aware of Thai authorities using spyware in "limited" cases but did not specify which government agency used



such software, which program was used or which individuals targeted. Rights groups have accused Thai governments of using national security as a pretext to suppress rivals.

LAHORE

Wedding boat accident deaths cross 50

The death toll from a boat that capsized while carrying a wedding party in Pakistan earlier this week is presumed to have surpassed 50 after officials said on Wednesday there was no hope of finding more survivors.

The overcrowded vessel was carrying around 100 passengers when it capsized on Monday on the storm-swollen Indus River in Sadiqabad, central Punjab province. Twenty-six bodies — mostly women and children — have been recovered so far, but



a similar number of people are missing and presumed dead. "It's been more than 48 hours since the incident so there's no chance of finding survivors," Kashif Nisar Gill, a spokesman, said.



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In brief

■ LONDON



PM RACE DOWN TO FINAL TWO: RISHI SUNAK AND LIZ TRUSS

Former finance minister Rishi Sunak and foreign secretary Liz Truss will battle it out to become Britain's next prime minister after they won the final lawmaker vote, setting up the last stage of the contest to replace Boris Johnson. Sunak has led in all rounds of the voting among Conservative lawmakers, but it is Truss who seems to have gained the advantage so far among the 200,000 members of the governing party who will ultimately choose the winner. The final stretch of a weeks-long contest will pit Sunak, a former Goldman Sachs banker, against Truss, a convert to Brexit who has pledged to cut taxes.

■ ROME



ITALIAN PM DRAGHI'S FATE HANGS IN BALANCE AS PARTIES SQUABBLE

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi on Wednesday demanded unity from his coalition partners as his price for staying in office but his call appeared to widen cracks in the government, leaving his fate in the balance. Draghi set out a series of issues facing Italy ranging from the war in Ukraine to social inequality and rising prices, and said political parties needed to get behind him if he was to steer the country to elections due in the first half of 2023. "The only way, if we want to stay together, is to rebuild this pact, with courage, altruism and credibility," Draghi said in a speech to the upper house.

■ NEW DELHI



AFRICAN CHEETAHS TO BE SPOTTED SOON IN INDIA

India and Namibia signed a deal on Wednesday to bring cheetahs into the South Asian country, with the first batch of eight wild cats set to arrive next month, officials said. India has been working to relocate the animals since 2020, when the Supreme Court announced that African cheetahs could be introduced in a "carefully chosen location" on an experimental basis. India in the past had Asiatic cheetahs, but the species was officially declared extinct within the country by 1952. The deal inked on Wednesday will see African cheetahs flown in to a wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.

Russia expands Ukraine war goals

UNCERTAINTY SWIRLS OVER GAS PIPELINE RESTART

KYIV: Moscow's military "tasks" in Ukraine now go beyond the eastern Donbas region, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday, as the Kremlin's forces shelled eastern and southern Ukraine.

Lavrov also told state news agency RIA Novosti that Russia's objectives will expand still further if the West keeps supplying Kyiv with long-range weapons such as the US-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).

His comments, the clearest acknowledgment yet that Russia's war goals have expanded over the five months of war, came after Washington said it saw signs Moscow was preparing to formally annex territory it has seized in its neighbour.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meanwhile accused Russia of "blackmailing" the European Union over energy, as she unveiled a plan to slash gas demand in the bloc ahead of a feared cut-off of deliveries by Russia as winter approaches.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had earlier warned that gas supplies sent to Europe via the huge Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which has been closed for 10 days for maintenance, were at risk of being reduced further.

Lavrov is the most senior figure to speak openly of Russia's war goals in territorial terms, nearly five months after Putin launched his February 24 attack with a denial that Russia intended to occupy its neighbour.

Then, Putin said his aim was to demilitarise and "denazify"



Ukrainian soldiers ride a tank on a road in the Donetsk region on Wednesday, near the front line between Russian and Ukrainian forces. — AFP

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen accused Russia of "blackmailing" the European Union over energy

Ukraine - a statement dismissed by Kyiv and the West as a pretext for an imperial-style war of expansion.

Lavrov told RIA Novosti geographical realities had changed since Russian and Ukrainian negotiators held peace talks in Turkey in late March that failed to produce any breakthrough.

At that time, he said, the focus was on the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR), self-styled Russian-backed breakaway entities in eastern Ukraine from which Moscow has said it aims to drive out Ukrainian government forces.

"Now the geography is different, it's far from being just the DPR and LPR, it's also Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and a number of other territories," he said, referring to territories well beyond the Donbas that Russian forces have wholly or partly seized.

"This process is continuing logically and persistently," Lavrov said, adding that Russia might need to push even deeper.

After being beaten back in

an initial attempt to take the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Russia's defence ministry said on March 25 that the first phase of its "special military operation" was complete and it would now focus on "achieving the main goal, the liberation of Donbas".

Nearly four months later, it has taken Luhansk, one of two regions that make up the Donbas, but remains far from capturing all of the other, Donetsk. In the past few weeks it has ramped up missile strikes on cities across Ukraine.

On Wednesday, the Ukrainian military and politicians reported heavy and sometimes fatal Russian shelling amid what they said were largely unsuccessful attempts by Russian ground forces to advance.

— Reuters

Syria says Turkey did not achieve 'goals' in summit

TEHRAN: Damascus said on Wednesday that the Turkish president did not achieve his "goals" during yesterday's summit with Iran and Russia, referring to Ankara's efforts to rally support for a military operation in northern Syria.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi hosted his Russian and Turkish counterparts, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on Tuesday as part of the "Astana Peace Process" ostensibly aimed at ending Syria's 11-year conflict.

Turkey is deeply opposed to a semi-autonomous Kurdish administration in Syria's oil-rich northeast, and Erdogan has lately repeatedly vowed to launch an offensive against Kurdish fighters, on the back of a 2019 onslaught.

Erdogan said at the summit Turkey "will continue" its fight against "terrorist organisations", demanding Russia and Iran's backing. Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad was received in Tehran by his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Erdogan "had many goals and policies that he wanted to impose on the meeting," Mekdad said in a joint press conference. Those goals "were not achieved thanks to the serious discussions and opinions put forward by Iranian and Russian friends."

On Tuesday, the Turkish president earned a rebuke for his push for the offensive from Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a bilateral meeting. — AFP

Judge warns against 'political circus' in Trump ex-adviser Bannon's trial

WASHINGTON: The judge in the criminal trial of Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's prominent former presidential adviser, told defence lawyers on Wednesday not to turn the case into a "political circus" as they prepared to cross-examine a lawyer for the US congressional panel whose subpoena he defied last year.

Bannon, 68, has pleaded not guilty to two misdemeanor counts of contempt of Congress. Opening statements and testimony from the prosecution's first witness in the trial came on Tuesday.

Federal prosecutors on Wednesday resumed their questioning of Kristin Amerling, chief counsel of the Democratic-led House of Representatives select committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol by Trump supporters.

Amerling told the jury on Tuesday that Bannon missed two key deadlines in October 2021 to provide documents and testimony sought in a subpoena issued by the committee the prior month.

Prosecutor Amanda Vaughn on Tuesday told jurors that Bannon believes he is "above the law" and that he wilfully failed to comply with the committee's



Steve Bannon holds up a copy of the Financial Times while speaking to the media outside US District Court House as his trial for contempt of Congress continues, in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. — AFP

subpoena as it investigates the attack. Bannon's attorney Evan Corcoran told the jury in his opening statement that his client is innocent of the charges.

Before testimony resumed on Wednesday, Vaughn told US District Judge Carl Nichols that she was concerned over comments that Corcoran made in his opening statement on Tuesday suggesting that the case against Bannon was motivated by political bias.

In those comments, Corcoran urged jurors to consider if statements by prosecution witnesses are "affected by politics." — Reuters

Wildfires rage across Europe as climate alarm sounded

ATHENS / LONDON : Emergency services battled wildfires across swathes of southern Europe amid mass evacuations on Wednesday, as warnings sounded in London after Britain's hottest day that the fight against climate change needed to be stepped up.

Hundreds fled in central Italy as gas tanks exploded in a forest fire near the Tuscan town of Lucca, while similar numbers fled in Greece as a blaze fuelled by gale-force winds raged in mountains north of Athens.

A brutal heat-wave with spikes well above 40 Celsius (104F) settled over southern Europe last week, part of a global pattern of rising temperatures, widely attributed by scientists and climatologists to human activity. It is forecast to dump searing heat on much of China into late August.

It is also expected to expose around 100 million Americans to temperatures above 38C on Wednesday and set records in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Power consumption is predicted to hit new peaks in Central US states - adding to greenhouse gas emissions - as homes and businesses crank up air conditioners to combat a heat-wave forecast to last into



Firefighters try to put out a fire near the city of Massarosa, central Italy, on Wednesday. — AFP

next week. While the record heat last week around parts of the Mediterranean has eased, mercury readings have begun heading up again in Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Portugal's northern region's Civil Protection commander Armando Silva said rising temperatures and strong winds would make it harder to fight the country's largest wildfire centred on the municipality of Murça.

It has burned 10,000-12,000 hectares since Sunday and around 800 firefighters and six water planes have been deployed to tackle it. In Spain, where

emergency crews were tackling fires in five regions, national weather service AEMET also forecast higher temperatures.

Wildfires burned in several areas of Italy, including one that threatened to leave part of the northeastern city of Trieste without power and water, and 14 metropolitan areas including Rome, Milan and Florence were due to be put on the country's highest heat-wave alert on Thursday.

Forecasters there said that temperatures were expected to hit 40C across a swathe of the north and centre this week. — Reuters

How can one increase his or her metabolism



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is general physician, content creator

Putting on extra kilos on yourself has been a major spin-off that the pandemic has left on all of us.

As soon as we actualise this and embark on our weight loss journeys, an addition to this self-realisation is that this ‘decline is not linear’.

There are good days when you are jumping with joy on shedding off some and there are bad days too when your progress is stuck. Here, comes into play, the metabolism game.

We all have that one friend who can eat whatever he or she likes and still doesn’t put on any weight. Many of us also struggle hard to get rid of the extra weight despite eating a little. Majorly it’s about your body’s metabolism. Essentially, metabolism refers to the body’s energy rate (also known

as BMR; Basal Metabolic Rate) that is needed to spend energy or burn calories.

This energy expenditure can be in the form of maintaining the essential life activities at rest such as breathing, circulation, or nutrient transport; or through daily activities and exercise.

Some of us have a good metabolism rate which means that their bodies burn calories more actively and despite eating significantly they can maintain a steady weight.

On the other hand, those of us who have slow metabolism find it difficult to decrease or maintain a healthy weight. Now, the next question that would be resonating in your head should be how one can increase his or her metabolism? But before moving to that, let me

METABOLISM PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ASCERTAINING ONE’S WEIGHT LOSS GRAPH DECLINE WHICH IN TURN IS DETERMINED BY THE LIFESTYLE HABITS THAT ONE FOLLOWS

state that fast or active metabolism is not the only key to creating a profound weight plummet.

By and large, metabolism plays a significant role in ascertaining one’s weight loss graph decline which in turn is determined by the lifestyle habits that one follows. If one is

eating a lot with little or no exercise, metabolism cannot be labelled as the only culprit. The factors which influence metabolism can be genetic, age-related, hormonal, or due to any disease.

Metabolic rate declines after the age of 40 so it is advisable to consume fewer calories combined with exercise; get a good sleep of 7-8 hours and avoid stress at all costs.

Stress is a massive roadblock that prevents you from exercising and seeing no progress in weight loss you are sure to crash on your healthy eating and give up. After a certain pattern of weight loss through any healthy meal plan that you have been following, the body adapts to the decreased weight and refuses to decrease further after a certain point and we call this a

‘plateau’.

To break this plateau on your weight loss journey, it is paramount to stay consistent with the High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) exercise. HIIT is performing an intense workout for 30 seconds to 3 minutes and then resting or going slow for the same set of the time frame and repeating this for several rounds. It is advisable to start HIIT under the supervision of a trainer or a physician depending on your body’s health status.

Finally; yet importantly, intermittent fasting for 16-18 hours coupled with quality night sleep can be a power booster to your metabolism. If you too are stuck in this ‘not losing weight’ loop consider reviving your metabolism and get amazed with the results that follow.

World’s first bioplastic vinyl record launched in the UK

ERIC RANDOLPH

A British firm says it has produced the world’s first bioplastic vinyl record, which it hopes will reduce the need for highly toxic PVC.

Bioplastics are derived from sources such as sugars and starches -- rather than oil or gas -- and do not create any toxic waste in their production.

The new bioplastic vinyl by UK firm Evolution has been endorsed by NGO Music Declares Emergency, a climate change campaign group set up in 2019 by artists and music industry professionals.

“If Evolution can deliver an alternative guilt-free vinyl, it could get rid of one of the key polluting elements of the music industry completely,” the NGO’s co-founder Lewis Jamieson said.

Currently, all vinyl records are made from Polyvinyl chloride, or PVC -- described by Greenpeace as “the most environmentally damaging plastic”, whose production releases toxic, chlorine-based chemicals that are “building up in the water, air and food chain”.

The issue has come to the fore thanks to the recent boom in vinyl sales - which surpassed \$1 billion last year in the United States alone (a first since the mid-1980s).

Few anticipated the vinyl revival that began in the mid-2000s, so record companies found themselves scrambling to secure PVC -- often relying on foreign firms with poor safety records.

Kyle Devine, who wrote a book on the environmental impact of the music industry, “Decomposed”, said the PVC for 90 per cent of US vinyls in 2015 came from a Thai company that was “pouring pollution into the Bangkok river”.

“PVC is an especially nasty plastic to make. It’s a difficult one to dispose of, to recycle or decompose,” he said. He added that it would be wrong to see the current dominance of streaming and digital music as an answer to the industry’s climate impact.

“Digital data still takes up space and uses energy. In fact, given the current size and spread of the music industry, it’s likely more environmentally-taxing than ever before,” Devine said.

Evolution released the first 20 records made with the bioplastic via a prize draw -- a compilation of young artists including electro duo Bicep and US singer Angel Olsen.

It has taken almost five years of testing due to delays caused by the Covid pandemic, but the firm says they are close to matching regular records.

—AFP

Out of cash and out of fuel, Sri Lanka runs on patience

MUJIB MASHAL, EMILY SCHMALL AND SKANDHA GUNASEKARA

The queues are ubiquitous — and orderly. To get 5 litres of gasoline, auto-rickshaw drivers wait calmly in line for as long as five days. People have been queuing up for cooking gas, milk powder, and meals at soup kitchens, without fights or friction. Each day, essential workers, in hospitals, sanitation, post offices and banks, tolerate cramming into buses, one of the only means of transport with an assured supply of fuel.

“Without hanging? It’s 110 people,” bus driver M P L K Saman, 32, said about the number of passengers he packs in for the 15-mile journey between Colombo and Dompe in the east. “With hanging? 150 people.”

The country is running on patience, even as the political and economic crisis intensifies.

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa went into hiding after protesters stormed his residence and office last week, and then he fled the country on a military plane. The Parliament voted for a successor on Wednesday, and the country is closely watching whether the politicians can put aside their bickering to find a path to

economic relief. A fuel shortage, rising global food prices and the shock of erratic climate patterns, compounded by crushing policy mistakes and the coronavirus pandemic, have created a crisis with no easy solution.

“Look no further than Sri Lanka as a warning sign,” said Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund. “Countries with high debt levels and limited policy space will face additional strains.” But Sri Lanka might be unique in one thing: The rage at the failure and corruption of a ruling elite has been matched by generosity and ingenuity to prevent complete collapse and anarchy.

Hospitals are still functioning. Sanitation trucks still roam the city’s neat streets, even if less often. The three-hour power cuts are announced in detailed schedules a day ahead.

At the peak of the anger last week, thousands stormed the president’s mansion and several other top government buildings. But soon after, Sri Lankans went back to queues, patiently waiting outside the palaces for their turn to get a peek.

The country is increasingly dependent on the goodness of others, donors, lenders — really any person or institution with the funds to help.

To bridge the gap in medical supplies, hospital administrators often put out lists of needed supplies and mobilise donations. At the Lady Ridgeway Hospital, where the country’s sickest children come for open-heart surgeries, kidney transplants and other complicated procedures, 40 per cent of their essential medicine and surgical equipment are from donors abroad.

Every week, the hospital posts a list of needed items on its website and a link to its charity account. Dr G Wijesuriya, the hospital’s top administrator, said that the hospital had not lost any patients in the 1,600-bed facility because of the country’s shortages.

“But if the donors were not here, we would have to compromise our services,” he said. The government itself is scrounging for what it needs. Sumila Wanaguru, an economist at Sri Lanka’s central bank, analyses cash flow each day to determine what can be spared. Tourism and remittances — Sri Lanka’s main sources of foreign currency — have largely evaporated. When the government ran out of money to import the essentials last spring, it tapped the central bank’s reserves, which in recent months have hovered around zero.

—The New York Times



People board a crowded bus in Colombo.

Tap your feet...
Life is better
when you dance



Sonia Ambrosio

The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies but we do not engage with the art of dancing, and its multiple benefits.

For me, dance is about storytelling. It is the most basic form of expression.

The movements become the medium for sensing, understanding, and communicating ideas, feelings, and experiences. Across time, people have danced to tell stories, in celebration, to mourn, to educate, or to show sadness.

Think about military marches — they are descendent of the tribal war and hunting dances that have been an integral part of many cultures. Community gatherings, family moments, war and peace, the seasons of the year, all these events have been commemorated with dance. It also means social cohesion. National dances are used to promote a strong sense of identity: belonging, value, and commitment.

Together, music and dance open the mind to fresh and unique creativity, as well as provide exposure to different cultures and expression styles. The early signs of dance date back between 5,000 and 9,000 years. Body language, facial expression, and rhythmic motions all sync together to unfold a message, to tell a story. It gives an understanding of the importance of gesture, and how to better interpret a person's body language – a skill that will be useful throughout our lives.

Many types of dancing for various age groups are available in Oman, particularly in Muscat, ranging from the most traditional Indian folk dances to Bachata, ballet, belly dancing, and tango. One can fill the entire weekdays with dancing – a great mental and physical exercise. The best evening is when I have a tango class.

Dance can improve people's wellness and develop efficient preventative healthcare strategies. Think about policymakers and the impacts on economic health, social, and cultural aspects, then, compare it to life quality. It is cheaper and more productive than spending money on treatment for alcohol or drug addictions say studies on the beneficial outcomes of dance.

In the article titled Why Do you dance? Development of the Dance Motivation Inventory, the authors found that from a sample of 447 salsa and ballroom dancers, dancing can reduce anxiety, and boost self-esteem. Dance and music therapy (DMT) is recommended for the treatment of arthritis, chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. People with physical or mental disabilities can greatly benefit from dancing exercises. The literature is vast.

Throughout history, dance and music have been used consistently since the Greek civilisation; the treatment with music among Turks can be traced back 6,000 years; again, it was used during the ancient Islamic civilisations; also, the shamanic dance healing was used in Siberia and parts of European and American countries. The Greek scholar Pythagoras used music to soothe distressed organs. The book titled 'Music in Health and Diseases' edited by Amit Agrawal, Roshan Sutar, and Anvesh Jallapally is highly informative.

The field of dance has attracted academic interest. There are inspiring topics and research done on everything from the aesthetic meanings of choreography to the sociological role of dance in society and culture to the use of technology and education. Reputed journals indicated that DMT can be used as a treatment for children with autism, it can also directly improve memory in people with dementia. According to scholarly articles, dance, like other art forms and sports, should be included in both formal and non-formal education systems.

Dance is a broad subject. It has more than meets the eyes. Let's go dancing. It will certainly boost your mood.



UP SIDE DOWN

French athlete and Parkour champion Charles Poujade performs Parkour on a roof top in the center of Paris, on Wednesday. – AFP

How to organise reconstruction aid for post-war Ukraine

YURIY GORODNICHENKO, ANASTASSIA FEDYK AND ILONA SOLOGOUB

BEFORE SIGNIFICANT FUNDS ARE COMMITTED TO UKRAINE'S RECONSTRUCTION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO DETERMINE WHO WILL CONTROL AND DIRECT THE MONEY AND HOW THE RECOVERY WILL BE STRUCTURED. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TRANSPARENCY WILL BE CRUCIAL, AS WELL AS PLANNING FOR A PROJECT THAT COULD TAKE YEARS

Earlier this month, high-level representatives from over 40 countries gathered in Lugano, Switzerland, and pledged support for ambitious plans to reconstruct Ukraine.

The Ukraine Recovery Conference was an important milestone in preparing for the reconstruction of Ukraine, indicating that significant resources may be invested in the country after the war. But the conference did not shed much light on key issues. How will reconstruction be organised – and who will control and direct the money?

These are difficult questions that require thorough consideration, and they should be addressed before significant funds are committed to Ukraine's recovery.

An optimal design would reflect the importance of several factors.

For starters, it is necessary to determine how centralised or decentralised the reconstruction will be.

One extreme is Gosplan, the Soviet agency that dictated the minutest details of production.

Although the Soviet Union's centrally planned economy failed in the long run, central planning can mobilise resources in the short run.

But this short-term gain comes at a high cost – the Soviet economy was plagued with inefficiencies.

At the other extreme is complete decentralisation with individual commitments.

For example, Hamburg recently committed to provide Kyiv with humanitarian aid. This approach can be instrumental in increasing Ukraine's local "ownership" of the reconstruction: because Kyiv requested aid, it will be more likely to take good care of it.

On the other hand, decentralisation can lead to duplication of effort and lack of coordination.

A related approach is to centre reconstruction on projects akin to those that development banks undertake in emerging economies.

This is a useful model for addressing targeted needs – for example, a lack of electricity in a particular region. But it is less well-suited for the reconstruction of countries.

The failed reconstruction programmes in Afghanistan and Iraq after 2003 suggest that it is absolutely imperative for donors and recipients to coordinate on projects.

The horizon for recovery should also be identified. This process can take years, so multiyear planning is critical.

The Marshall Plan for Europe after

World War II, which was designed this way and lasted four years, is often credited with creating the foundations for Europe's rapid growth during the post-war period. But it did not begin until three years after the war ended.

At the same time, the newly created United Nations also provided significant assistance to Europe. Unlike the Marshall Plan, however, UN programmes were so plagued by uncertainty regarding their anticipated duration that European governments could not rely on them to continue from one year to the next.

Ukraine's experience as a recipient of financial aid to support the current war effort illustrates the risks.

And once the immediate pressure to deal with Russia is relieved, politicians in Ukraine and the West may change their priorities.

To insulate reconstruction from such vagaries, it should be organised by a stable, technocratic organisation that can oversee its planning and execution and stay relatively immune from the hurly-burly of political life.

Ukraine's new status as a European Union candidate country should help here.

We believe that reconstruction and accession should be joint processes. Ukraine's reconstruction is not only about rebuilding physical infrastructure, but also about deep modernisation of institutions and social infrastructure.

Its aspiration to join the EU is a powerful catalyst and should help to overcome vested interests.

This is important, given the country's checkered history of reforms: Since independence in 1991, Ukraine has completed only one International Monetary Fund programme.

The other ten or so were stopped after Ukraine failed to deliver on its promises. A large share of Ukraine's future economic growth will come from foreign direct

investment, and inflows will depend on adherence to the rule of law and other EU standards.

Internal and external transparency will be crucial to the success of the reconstruction process.

Since much of the funding will come from the EU, European taxpayers have every right to know how their money is spent. This will have to be a joint project:

As much as Ukraine must own the reconstruction, the EU must co-own it. Again, the experience of Afghanistan and Iraq suggests that when donors have little ownership in the reconstruction process – through joint decision-making, local sourcing, and community input – their lack of commitment can lead to disastrous consequences.

The EU's most valuable role for Ukraine will be to provide an institutional anchor. Vast budgets will have to be carefully and transparently planned, administered, reported, and audited.

While Ukraine has made huge progress in rooting out corruption since the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, much work remains to be done. For example, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office have been headless for 18 months and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau has not had a chief since April 2022, limiting the effectiveness of these bodies.

Through its institutional capacity and conditionality of aid, the EU can help Ukraine ensure that reconstruction will not be another giveaway to the "right people," as was the case during the privatisations of the 1990s.

The Economic Cooperation Administration, the US agency created to oversee the Marshall Plan, comes closest to satisfying these criteria. The ECA was a largely technocratic institution with a multiyear planning horizon.

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The Ukraine Recovery Conference was an important milestone in preparing for the reconstruction of the country.

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Oman takes on Egypt in its Arab Cup opener



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

Oman under-19 football team will take on Egypt in the opener clash of 2022 Arab Cup U-20 Championship at Dhamak Club Stadium in Abha city, Saudi Arabia, on Thursday. The match will start at 22:00 (Oman time). The junior Red Warriors will look to begin their campaign on a positive note that will encourage the team members to give their top performance in the

forthcoming game fixture against Somalia on Sunday. Coach David Gordo's junior stars are all set for the crucial match as the team arrived in Abha city recently, and had few training sessions besides a series of preparatory camps in Muscat. Oman team played two international preparatory games against Palestine in Muscat during the last warm up camp. Both warm up fixtures ended for Oman on a victorious note. The second preparatory game concluded for



Oman team by 2-1 where Khalid al Sulaimi and Salim al Abdali netted the winning goals. The first match ended at 1-0 and the only goal in the match was scored by Salim al Abri. FULL READINESS Head coach David Gordo voiced confidence during the press meet on Tuesday, and said that the tournament features tough teams and the assignment will not be easy. "We have prepared the national team well during the

previous months. I assure that our team will meet with the tough ones and this will not be easy for all the participating teams," he added. The Spanish coach said: "I respect all the participating teams in the championship. The team will show their level best to get positive results. We have our own style and tactics to be followed and the players are trained on these during the past camps". The 52-year-old said though Egypt team is the favourite for

the title, Oman team has capable players who can show the best on the field. Oman has been placed in Group D along with Somalia and Egypt. The tournament began on Wednesday and concludes on August 6. As many as 18 teams distributed into six groups will compete in the Arab Cup to clinch the prestigious title. The topper from each group will advance to the quarterfinal beside two teams from the best second placed teams will progress to the same round.

OOC unveil Oman's participation at Islamic Solidarity Games in Konya



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) unveiled on Wednesday the latest preparations of Oman's delegation which will represent the country in the Fifth Islamic Solidarity Games which will take place in Konya city, Turkey from to August 9 until 18, 2022. The press meet which was held at the headquarters of OOC attended by Khalifa bin Saif al Esai, Executive Director, Hisham al Adwani, Chief De mission, heads of sporting teams in the tournament including Mohammed al Balushi from athletics teams, Said al Matroushi from swimming team, the cycling coach Ali al Anquodi, Mohammed al Hattali from shooting team and weightlifting coach Mazin al Badri. Oman sporting teams will participate in five games including athletics game which will feature participation of 478 players representing 49 countries, cycling



competitions will be represented by 105 from 16 countries, shooting game by 117 players from 21 countries while 220 players will participate in swimming from 35 countries and weightlifting by 209 players from 29 countries. After the decision of the organisers to postpone the date of the tournament scheduled in

Konya, from 20-29 August 2021 and pushed to 10-19 September 2021, due to the Corona pandemic. Finally the tournament finalised to be launched from August 9 to 18, 2022, under the supervision of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation, with participant of 55 countries, in 24 games and attendance of 5,000 athletes.

Lacking motivation, Carlsen not to defend title at 2023 World Chess Championship

OSLO: Citing a lack of motivation, chess world number one Magnus Carlsen on Wednesday announced that he would not defend his world championship title in 2023, but stressed that he was not retiring from chess. "I am not motivated to play another match... I simply feel that I don't have a lot to gain. I don't particularly like it," Carlsen said in the first episode of his podcast "The Magnus Effect". Carlsen has repeatedly hinted that, bored with a title he has held for nearly 10 years, he may give up his throne without a fight. The 31-year-old crushed Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi 7.5-3.5 in his fifth straight victorious title match last December. "Although I'm sure a match would be interesting for historical reasons and all of that, I don't have any inclination to play and I will simply not play the match," Carlsen told the podcast released on Wednesday. Carlsen said he had met with representatives from The International Chess Federation (FIDE) to inform them of his decision in Madrid in connection to the Candidates Tournament — which decides who gets a chance to challenge the world champion. "We had a small discussion. They had some suggestions, some of them I liked, some of them I did



not, but ultimately the conclusion stands," he added. VOID Carlsen added that he had thought about the decision for over a year, "since long before the last match".

"His decision not to defend his title is undoubtedly a disappointment for the fans, and bad news for the spectacle. It leaves a big void," FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich said in a statement commenting on Carlsen's announcement. — AFP



Oman concludes participation in FISU World University Championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

Oman national university futsal team concluded their participation at 2022 FISU World University Championship Futsal which is under way at Gualtar Sports Complex in the University of Minho, in Braga, and the Multiusos in Guimaraes, Portugal.

Oman team, coached by Sami al Yousefi, grouped in a tough Group B which comprises teams from Brazil, Slovakia and Ukraine, while Group A comprises of Argentina, New Zealand and the hosts Portugal. Czech Republic clubbed in Group C alongside Poland and Saudi Arabia teams.

The Sultanate of Oman university futsal team began their campaigns on a positive note on Monday but they faced strong rival which was Brazil and the match ended for the latter by



9-0. Later, Oman team suffered the second straight defeat from Slovakia as the fixture finished at 4-2. Later on Wednesday, Oman concluded their group matches by an encounter with Ukraine and the match ended for Ukraine at 9-0. For the same group, Ukraine beat Slovakia 4-1 in their opener, while Brazil managed to register their second victory over Slovakia 6-3 on Tuesday. With the

triumphs, Brazil (world champion in 2016) and Ukraine sealed their spots to the next round of the championships.

Oman national university futsal team was established in 2008. This is the fourth attendance of the team in the FISU World University Championship after Serbia in 2008, Portugal in 2010, Spain in 2016. This edition was supposed to be played in 2020

in China, but was postponed to 2022 and hosted again by Portugal as China failed to hold it due to Covid outbreak impact. Oman university futsal team had positioned as runner up of Asian university futsal championship in 2019 and also as runner in the Arabian championship in Abu Dhabi the same year.

The team began their warm up sessions towards preparing for 2022 FISU World University Championship since last April under the watchful eyes of the national coach Sami al Yousefi. The head coach affirmed in a previous statement that the purpose of attending at the World University futsal Championship is not to lift the title, but to gain more experience. The team has featured many young faces who need to attend such global events and acquire required experience," he added.

Briton Wightman takes surprise 1,500m gold with dad commentating

EUGENE, Ore: Briton Jake Wightman took a superb world championship 1,500m gold as he out-kicked Olympic champion and hot favourite Jakob Ingebrigtsen on the final lap on Tuesday, with his proud father Geoff calling him home as the stadium announcer.

Wightman's father and coach, used to the combination by now but never previously seeing such a victory, somehow kept his emotion in check as he called his son home, though he did allow himself a moment to announce to the Hayward Field fans: "That's my son and he's world champion".

On an emotional night all-round, Wightman celebrated the first World Championship gold in the event for former middle-distance powerhouse Britain since Steve Cram - also in the stadium commentating for the BBC - in the first event in 1983. He then received his gold medal from double Olympic 1,500m champion and World Athletics President Sebastian Coe.

"I have given up so much to



get to this point and it makes everything worth it," he said.

"I never gave up in my confidence to get to this point. I am so glad that I have been able to do what I have dreamed of since I was a kid."

Wightman's winning time of 3 minutes, 29.23 was the fastest in the world this year and underlined his pedigree. Ingebrigtsen took silver, with Spain's Mohamed Katir finishing strongly for bronze just ahead of compatriot Mario Garcia.

"Today the stars just aligned," said Wightman.

Kenyan duo Timothy Cheruiyot and Abel Kipsang set the early pace but when Ingebrigtsen eased to the front with two laps to go there looked to be only one winner. — Reuters

Brazil's dos Santos wins 400m hurdles world final, Warholm denied

EUGENE, Ore: Brazilian Alison dos Santos denied record-holder Karsten Warholm a third successive World Championship title on Tuesday, winning the 400-metre hurdles in a blazing-fast 46.29 seconds.

While the hype heading into the final had largely focused on a showdown between Norwegian Olympic champion Warholm and his American rival Rai Benjamin, the Tokyo bronze medallist had the victory in hand down the final straight in a championship record.

Dos Santos exploded off the blocks and stretched his arms out wide as he glided through the finish with ease and held his hand to his ear, urging on cheers from the crowd after the remarkable upset.

"The energy of the crowd was amazing. I felt their love, people hugging me," he said. "When you win, you start being everyone's favourite. That's pretty awesome to win the world title on this track."

Benjamin had a fighting



chance until the ninth hurdle, when he slowed dramatically before finishing more than half a second slower for his second consecutive world silver.

He told reporters that he drew strength from the home crowd at Hayward Field to keep himself on the podium.

"I am grateful for silver. I got it done. I chopped a few hurdles and my race plan went out the window, but when I hear 'USA', 'USA', I ran as fast as I could to keep my second place," he said.

Warholm had twice broken the world record in 2021 but walked into Eugene, Oregon, with a question mark over his head after suffering a hamstring tear in June, having not completed a race in 10 months. — Reuters

Dybala joins AS Roma on free transfer

ROMA: Argentina international forward Paulo Dybala has joined Italian side AS Roma on a free transfer following his departure from Juventus, the Europa Conference League champions said on Wednesday.

Dybala, who was linked with a transfer to Serie A side Inter Milan after his deal with Juventus expired, has signed a three-year contract with Roma.

The deal is worth 6 million euros (\$6.14 million), Italian news

agency ANSA said.

"The days that have led up to me signing this contract have been filled with so many emotions," Dybala said in a statement.

"I am joining a team that is on the up, a club that continues to put in place strong foundations for the future, and a coach, Jose Mourinho, that it will be a privilege to work with."

The 28-year-old won five league titles and four Coppa Italia trophies with Juventus after joining them

from Palermo in 2015, scoring 115 goals in 293 appearances across all competitions.

However, his last two seasons with the Turin-based club were hampered by a string of injuries.

Dybala, who has earned 34 caps for Argentina since his senior debut in 2015, will become Roma's fourth signing of the transfer window after the arrivals of midfielder Nemanja Matic, goalkeeper Mile Svilar and defender Zeki Celik.



"He has already joined up with his new teammates at the training camp in Portugal and will begin preparations for the new season this week," Roma said.

"Dybala has opted to wear the No. 21 shirt for the club."

Roma finished sixth in Serie A last season and won the Europa Conference League under Mourinho.

They kick off their league campaign with a trip to Salernitana on Aug. — Reuters

Australia, New Zealand mark one-year countdown to Women’s World Cup

SYDNEY: Colourful ceremonies in Australia and New Zealand marked the one-year countdown to the ninth Women’s World Cup on Wednesday, culminating in the lighting up of landmarks across the nine host cities.

The 32-team tournament, the first Women’s World Cup in the southern hemisphere, will kick off in Sydney and Auckland on July 20 next year when Australia’s Matildas and New Zealand’s Football Ferns play their opening matches.

A cultural lighting ceremony started the day at dawn in Hamilton, New Zealand, while Fifa Secretary-General Fatma Samoura was later on hand to unveil a “Unity Pitch” beside Sydney harbour.

“Today the gap between the men’s game and the women’s game is going to get smaller and smaller,” she told reporters.



“We’ve seen after each World Cup that the number of people who register in the host country, but also in the countries that were a part of the game, is immediately multiplied by three.” Samoura said football’s global

governing body was discussing raising the prize pool even further to \$100 million.

The prize pool for the 2019 tournament in France, won by the United States, was \$30 million and Fifa have already committed

to a \$60 million pot for next year.

BOOMING PROFILE

The 2019 tournament attracted record crowds and TV audiences, sparking an explosion in the profile of the women’s game that

organisers hope next year’s World Cup will further accelerate.

While the powerhouse United States team will be favourites to lift the trophy for the third tournament in a row at Sydney’s Olympic Stadium on Aug. 20

next year, there was some good news for co-hosts Australia on Wednesday.

Matilda Ellie Carpenter was at the Sydney celebration and confirmed she was on schedule to be fit to play in the tournament after sustaining a serious knee injury on club duty in France in May.

The defensive mainstay said she was thrilled at the prospect of playing in the showpiece of the women’s game in her own country.

“I think this is going to be one of the biggest events,” she said. “So I’m very happy to be a part of it ... and here on home soil, there’s nothing better.”

The Unity Pitch will tour each of the host cities over the next year, while Samoura will later turn on a light display featuring the tournament logo on Sydney’s Harbour Bridge. — Reuters



European clubs launch post-pandemic push

LOS ANGELES: Barcelona and Real Madrid will play the fourth Clasico ever held outside of Spain on Saturday as powerhouse European football clubs return to the United States aiming to fan the flames of US fandom.

The match at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, home of the NFL’s Las Vegas Raiders, highlights the five-club, five-fixtures Soccer Champions Tour organised by sports and entertainment giant AEG — which also owns Major League Soccer’s Los Angeles Galaxy.

The inaugural edition of the event features just some of the pre-season matches European clubs have scheduled Stateside after a pandemic-induced hiatus.

Real Madrid, coming off Champions League and LaLiga titles, and Barcelona are joined in the series by Italy’s Juventus and Mexican clubs America and Chivas Guadalajara.

Meanwhile, English Premier League champions Manchester City and Premiership rivals Chelsea, Arsenal and Everton and Germany’s Bayern Munich are touring the United States simultaneously, all eager to rekindle the ardour of their US fans and strengthen and expand ties with North American corporate partners.

“Right now I think largely a lot of people are really excited to see some of the teams that they typically see in the summer,” said Tom Braun

“It’s been such a long time since they’ve seen them that the absence has got people excited to come back and see the teams perform and see the players.”

Tickets for the Barca-Real Madrid match have nearly sold out, Ticketmaster showing prices ranging from around \$250 to \$900 for seats at pitch level.

— AFP

Shafique stars as Pakistan break Galle record to beat Sri Lanka

GALLE: Abdullah Shafique hit an epic 160 to anchor Pakistan’s record chase of 342 at Galle as the tourists won a thrilling opening Test against Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

The opener capped his marathon display with the winning runs in the final session on day five, jumping for joy and pumping his fist as Pakistan triumphed by four wickets for a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took a match haul of nine wickets but his efforts were in vain as the visitors battled past the previous best chase in Galle of 268 by Sri Lanka against New Zealand in 2019.

The 22-year-old Shafique excelled with his second Test ton. He built crucial partnerships including a 101-run third-wicket stand with skipper Babar Azam, who made 55 after his 119 in the first innings on a tricky pitch to bat on.

“We know how to play spin so we believed,” Azam said after the tense win. “When I was batting with Abdullah Shafique we were just trying to build a partnership. He has shown his class.”

Shafique, who was named man of the match, said: “It was difficult but with time it was easier. Babar is one of the best in the world. We have learnt so much from him. I enjoyed batting with him in the middle.”

The unbeaten Shafique finally combined with Mohammad Nawaz, 19 not out, to take the visitors home after a brief rain interruption halted their charge. The teams had taken early tea before returning for the third



Pakistan Abdullah Shafique (R) celebrates after Pakistan won by 4 wickets at the end of the final day of play of the first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle on Wednesday. — AFP

session of play.

Shafique survived three dropped catches, on 70, 135 and 151, but deserved his luck and played the anchor’s role to perfection as he surpassed his previous Test best of 136 not out.

Pakistan had a few anxious moments after Jayasuriya, who sent back talisman Azam before the close on day four, struck at the stroke of lunch to get debutant Salman Ali Agha out for 12.

Hasan Ali fell for five in the second over of the second session after being promoted up the order to hit out the remaining runs.

LONE MAN JAYASURIYA

Jayasuriya, who took 12 wickets on debut in a series-levelling Test win

over Australia last week at the same venue, six in each innings, kept up the pressure but Shafique stood firm.

Pakistan resumed the day on 222-3 and Sri Lanka soon used up their remaining two umpire reviews, with Jayasuriya involved in both calls.

Mohammad Rizwan opened his day’s account with a boundary off Ramesh Mendis and kept up his positive intent by taking singles and twos, before he fell lbw to Jayasuriya for 40.

“With the ball we could not support Prabath from the other end. We had to give him more support,” skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said of his lead spinner, who toiled for 95.2 overs in the two innings combined.

A review did not save Rizwan, a wicketkeeper-batsman who has come into the two-match series after a successful stint with English county Sussex.

Dinesh Chandimal kept up his blazing form in an unbeaten 94 — his second successive half-century — when he ran out of partners in Sri Lanka’s second-innings total of 337.

In a match of tail-end fightbacks, Azam hit a defiant century in Pakistan’s first innings and batted patiently with the lower order after the visitors slipped to 85-7 on day two.

The second Test starts on Sunday, also in Galle, after it was moved from Colombo due to the political unrest in Sri Lanka.

— AFP

Defending Tour de France champion Pogacar loses key teammate

SAINT-GAUDENS : Defending Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar lost a third UAE Emirates teammate when his lieutenant Rafal Majka pulled out injured ahead of Wednesday’s mountain stage 17 climb to Peyragudes.

Slovenian Pogacar needs to overturn a two minute and 22-second deficit to overall leader Jonas Vingegaard of Jumbo as their cat-and mouse struggle for

the yellow jersey enters its end game.

The 2020 and 2021 champion Pogacar has already lost climber George Bennett and flat plains specialist Vegard Stake Laengen, while Vingegaard has also lost two teammates.

“Unfortunately Rafal Majka will not start stage 17... after sustaining a strain injury to his thigh after mechanical trouble on



UAE Team Emirates team’s Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the best young rider’s white jersey (L) fist bumps Jumbo-Visma team’s Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard wearing the overall leader’s yellow jersey (R) as they await the start of the 17th stage of the 109th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 129.7 km between Saint-Gaudens and Peyragudes, in southwestern France, on Wednesday. — AFP

stage 16 when his chain broke,” UAE Team Emirates doctor Adrian Rotunno said.

Pogacar was leading the race by 39sec from Vingegaard before losing Bennett and Laengen to positive Covid tests last week and then struggling in the Alps on the Col du Granon on stage 11 in intense heat.

But on stage 15 Denmark’s Vingegaard lost two teammates to

injury, levelling the playing field as Primoz Roglic pulled out and Steven Kruijswijk fell heavily and was taken away by ambulance.

“If I hadn’t lost my teammates I wouldn’t be behind now,” Pogacar said at the time, and looked confident and strong on stage 16.

Just ahead of the Tour, Matteo Trentin, a key member of Pogacar’s team, also withdrew from the race with Covid. — AFP



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Squid fishing season to resume on Aug 1 for six months

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

The annual squid fishing season will begin on August 1, 2022 and run for a period of six months until January 31, 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced.

To ensure the success of this crucially important season for artisanal fishermen's livelihoods, the Ministry, represented by its directorates in the coastal governorates, has finished its preparations in terms of direction, awareness, control, and statistics.

In groups, artisanal fishermen hunt for squid in its aggregation areas in the coastal governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

For artisanal fishermen, a number of educational and awareness-raising events have been planned, and fisheries control teams will step up their efforts across the country's coastal governorates.

In the same vein, a number of studies and

scientific research on the abundance of squid in Omani waters were conducted by the Marine Science and Fisheries Center and the Aquaculture Centre at the Directorate General of Fisheries Research of the Ministry.

A key study focused on appropriate fishing tools and equipment, as well as methods and techniques for cultivating and propagating squid wealth in Omani waters.

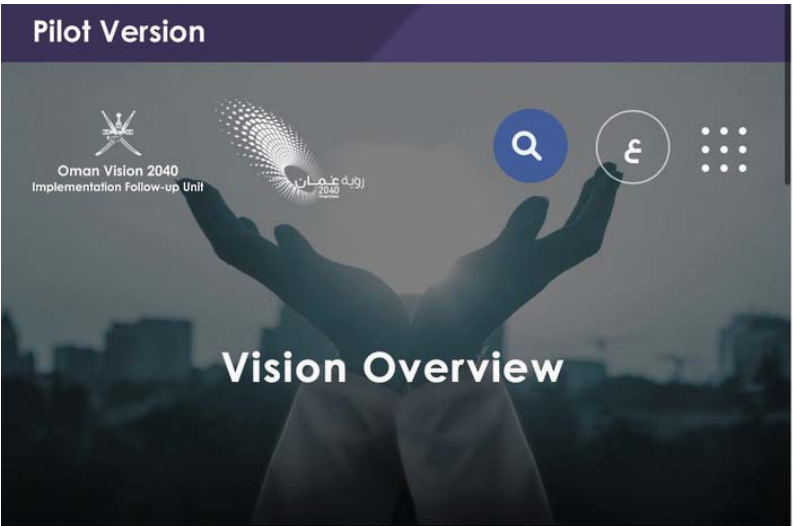
The squid, which is known locally as "Al Gatro", belongs to the mollusk family and thrives in many different marine environments. Some species of squid live on coral reefs, seagrass flats, sandy, muddy and rocky environments, while others are semi-benthic or superficial.

Squid is a vital protein source that also has a low-fat content and offers protection from a number of ailments. Squid gets its name from the inky substance it secretes when it is in peril and defending itself against other marine organisms.

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit launches website

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit launched its website (www.oman2040.om), an integrative, flexible and interactive platform that is designed to enable the specialists, researches and interested individuals to access the final version of the vision's document, learn about the national programmes, and the Unit's work methodologies for monitoring and evaluating performance.

The website consists of a number of sections, the first of which is a dedicated section for the unique history, civilisation, culture and geographical location of the Sultanate of Oman. Another section is designed to represent Oman Vision 2040's pillars, national priorities, indicators and national programmes, as well as a section dedicated for the Unit, including the speech of its chairman, an overview about the establishment of the unit, its roles and responsibilities, vision, mission and values, its work methodologies to follow-up and support the efforts exerted towards achieving Oman Vision



Oman Vision 2040



2040, the approved framework to develop the vision's programmes, and the sectors development platforms.

Moreover, the website has a publications section, including Oman Vision 2040 document, annual reports, and booklets. There is also a section dedicated for the community participation platform, which will be launched later this year, as well as the Media Center for News and Events of the Unit, and a special section for communication and providing suggestions.

The unit's website also includes icons for the Unit's accounts on social media platforms, to enable browsers in having direct access to the posts of the unit in all of its accounts.

The design of the website is adaptable to various devices such as desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. Later on, the unit will include the website voice reader feature in both Arabic and English, in addition to sign language for those with audio-visual disabilities, to enable them to learn about the Vision and the unit and follow its news. — ONA

Ibri Industrial City attracts 23 projects worth RO 9m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 20

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is currently implementing the construction project of Ibri Industrial City, where the completion rate of the infrastructure project in Phase One has surpassed 27 per cent.

Phase One of the project is being developed on an area of 3 million sqm and incorporates road works, services network such as sewage, rain and telecom networks, and wadi protection walls.



The number of localised projects in Ibri Industrial City in Al Dhahirah Governorate has reached 23 projects on a total area of 250,000 sqm and an investment value exceeding RO 9 million, informed Eng Nasser al Mabsali,

Director General of Ibri Industrial City.

These projects represent several sectors including building materials, oil and gas services, foodstuff and warehouses.

Al Mabsali pointed out that

Ibri Industrial City is located on an area spanning 10 million sqm, and aims at localising a variety of industrial, commercial and service activities such as light and medium industries, commercial projects, administrative offices, industrial workshops, warehouses, and workforce township.

Madayn floated a tender earlier this year as an investment opportunity to establish a one-stop shop comprising a petrol station, rest area, and service station for trucks and vehicles passing through the road to Saudi Arabia.

10 industrial zones earmarked for Omani SMEs

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 20

The SME Development Authority (Riyada) has unveiled procedures and guidelines under which Omani small and medium sized entrepreneurs can register for land on a usufruct basis in any of 10 new industrial schemes established in five different governorates around the Sultanate of Oman.

The new industrial schemes in question are as follows: (1) Al Dakhiliyah Governorate –

Khameleh scheme in the Wilayat of Bahla and Al Dusr scheme in the Wilayat of Samail; (2) Al Dhahirah Governorate – Yanqul scheme in Wilayat of Yanqul and Al Busaili scheme in Wilayat of Dhank; (3) North Al Batinah Governorate - Hamiliya scheme in Wilayat of Shinas, Liwa scheme in the Wilayat of Liwa, Saham scheme in Wilayat of Saham, and Al Sarhat scheme in Wilayat of Al Khabourah; (4) Al Wusta Governorate – Al Hajj scheme in the Wilayat of Mahout; and (5)



North Al Sharqiyah Governorate - Samad Al Sha'an scheme in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

On Wednesday, the Authority launched the registration process for entrepreneurs to secure plots in the schemes of their choice – for a small annual fee. Upon registration, the SMEs are given a fixed amount of time, extendable by a grace period, to complete their project as per a clear work plan.

They will also be prioritised in their requests for facilities from

the Authority related to finance, marketing, training and upskilling.

To be eligible for registration, the SME's project proposal must be economically feasible. The applicant should be the holder of a Riyada card. Furthermore, the applicant should commit to implementing the project in the allocated land in not less than one year. Additionally, the entrepreneur should commit to bearing all the fees and costs towards preparing the site and installing all the requisite utilities.

bp Oman launches ‘People at bp Oman’ book

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 20

bp Oman launched a book during a recent event to celebrate its staff achievements and development journeys titled ‘People at bp Oman’. During the event, bp Oman hosted a panel discussion to discuss the capability development’s opportunities and challenges. The panel was moderated by bp and panelists included external guests from both public and private sector.

The people-focused book highlights bp’s commitment to strengthen the skills and capabilities of people in Oman through various developments.

Yousuf al Ojaili, bp Oman president said: “bp Oman’s



talented workforce have been one of the constant drivers towards reaching our milestones, from supporting energy security to implementing sustainable initiatives that support the

economic development of Oman. Today’s event celebrates each staff member’s achievements and hard work. This achievement would not have been possible without the support we received

from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.”

Shaikh Khalid al Hinai, Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Minerals on Human Resources, and Chairman of Block 61

human resource sub-committee commented “bp has established itself as an organisation capable of aligning with Oman’s 2040 objectives of developing a favourable environment to

generate employment and attract talents. I am delighted to see bp continue on delivering a bright future for its people.”

bp’s training and development opportunities deliver on Oman’s 2040 Vision of enriching the local labour market. This includes the challenger development programme for fresh graduate and the technician development programme dedicated to developing young Omanis.

bp also offers Omanis the opportunity to work and gain experience abroad. This includes short-term and long-term international assignments outside of Oman. Several of bp’s staff also work in global roles, serving other regions across the world.

BankDhofar signs agreement with Trust FinTech

MUSCAT: Within its ongoing efforts to support innovative FinTech initiatives, BankDhofar has recently signed an agreement with Trust Fintech Company. As per the agreement, BankDhofar will provide banking solutions to Trust Fintech.

The agreement was mutually signed by Dr Tariq Taha, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar, and Ahmed al Rahbi, CEO of Trust Fintech.

Commenting on the agreement, Dr Tariq Taha, Chief Information Officer at BankDhofar, said: “We are glad to sign this agreement with Trust Fintech, as it goes hand-in-hand with our strategy to support initiatives aiming to redefine the payment methods through transforming into digital payments. The banking solutions which will be provided to Trust FinTech will contribute to improving the convenience and efficiency of online transactions,



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which is the direction supported by the Central Bank of Oman to encourage the adoption of FinTech services in the Sultanate.”

“As FinTech is shaping the future of our finance, we at BankDhofar realise the importance of integrating new technologies into our business. Thus, we have been at the forefront to support FinTech initiatives through collaborating with companies

that are delivering innovative business models,” he added.

Ahmed al Rahbi, CEO of Trust Fintech, stated: “Trust Fintech was established in September 2019 to contribute to Oman’s Digital economy. Trust Fintech is built on CBO’s vision of having a dynamic digital financial ecosystem that fosters financial innovation and development, and we look forward to spurring

economic growth with the unique offering that we are bringing to the market. Through the partnership with BankDhofar we aim to make use of the core banking functionalities offered by BankDhofar to bring an instant transfer facility for any user in any bank in the Sultanate, 24x7.

With this partnership, anyone with any bank’s valid debit card issued in Oman can register and transfer with a few clicks. Teller App is one of the few PCI DSS certified Applications and comply with banking regulations and guidelines and hosted end to end in Oman.”

To learn more, check-out BankDhofar pages on social media; Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter (@BankDhofar), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar), or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or call 24791111 for inquiries.

Own a Kia Seltos, get a chance to win fully paid trip to Qatar Fifa World Cup

MUSCAT: Own a Kia Seltos and get a chance to win a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup event in Qatar.

Kia customers owning a brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, live in action.

Apart from Fifa Qatar match tickets, customers will also get Comprehensive Service up to 50,000 kms and 1 Year Insurance. The campaign will end on November 4, 2022.

The Kia Seltos SUV is compact and exciting to drive. The Seltos combines advanced technical features, class-leading space and a suite of world-class safety features for memorable journeys. It offers distinctive exterior design details, such as its long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork.

Seltos is equipped with intricate and sharply designed full LED headlights and taillights, providing the car with a commanding and confident presence on the road. For daytime driving, the car also has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps, and 3D multi-layer



indicators to make it clear exactly where the Seltos is heading. For driving in foggy conditions, the car is also equipped with LED fog lights.

The interior of the Seltos contributes to making every drive amazing. The cabin is characterised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

Powering the Seltos is a 1.6-liter gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT). To further elevate the driving experience,

the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from ‘Normal’, ‘Eco’ and ‘Sport’ mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximise vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximise the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos is a technologically advanced and refined compact SUV equipped with a range of advanced features. They include a Smart Key with Button Start,

Auto Cruise Control, Terrain Mode System (Snow, Mud, Sand) & Electronic Stability Programme (ESP).

The Seltos is fitted with dual airbags, as well as a suite of electronic vehicle safety systems. These include Kia’s Vehicle Stability Management system as standard, incorporating traction control and electronic stability programme. It also includes Anti-lock Braking System, a Traction Control System as well as front and rear parking sensors, for assistance when parking. 17” Alloy Wheels are standard.

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.

Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.

Bank Muscat extends special home, personal finance offer till Sept 30

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric strategy of developing and offering the best services and facilities possible for its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced an extension of its discounted offers on Baituna and Personal Finance till September 30, 2022. Available to employees of government and quasi-government institutions as well as select Tier 1 companies, the special offer features highly-competitive interest rates starting at just 4.5 per cent for Baituna Home Finance and 4.75 per cent on Personal Finance.

Customers can also enjoy lower interest rates on short-term personal financing that starts at just 4 per cent for a tenor of up to 12 months.

On this occasion, Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: “We are delighted to see rising demand for various financing products from our valued customers, especially at present, as they can take advantage of various special offers with reduced interest rates. The current offer was developed and launched as part of the bank’s ongoing efforts to enhance financial inclusion in the Sultanate of Oman, and to suit the needs of the largest number of customers. Bank Muscat is keen to provide the latest products and services to our customers as part of our customer-centric vision and we are thankful for all their strong support as well as confidence in the bank.”

To apply for Baituna home finance, customers may visit the Bank’s Baituna sales centres in Qurm, Maabela, Barka, Suhar, Saham, Sur, Ibra, Nizwa, Ibri, Al Buraimi and Salalah or any Bank Muscat branch



across different governorates in Oman.

Financing up to RO 500,000 and for a period up to 25 years is available to customers to construct or purchase new homes as well as to buy land for residential construction. Fast processing, documentation and prompt disbursement of financing make Baituna the best home finance option in Oman.

At the same time, customers who require personal finance can visit their nearest Bank Muscat branch with the required documents including a salary transfer letter from their employer and their ID cards, which will ensure speedy processing of their applications. Financing up to RO 200,000 is available to customers based on fulfilment of the eligibility criteria.

As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 146 retail banking branches and over 800 ATMs, CDMs and FFMs. Its range of digital banking channels including Internet Banking and Mobile Banking are helping customers meet the vast majority of their financial needs 24/7.

The bank offers various financing options aligned to customer needs and its aim of facilitating a high standard of living for people in Oman.

South Africa’s power cuts take a toll on mental health

LINDA GIVETASH

You can’t do your work because there’s no power. You eat late and bolt your food before the lights fail. And then to be at home, in the utter dark, gives you the creeps. As blackouts unfurl across South Africa, triggered by problems that have overwhelmed its energy provider, stress is taking a mounting toll on mental health, experts say.

“People are frustrated, some (are) angry, some are experiencing symptoms” of post-traumatic stress disorder, said Sinqobile Aderinoye, a psychologist in Johannesburg. “The consistent on-and-off of the electric grid is creating an air of disillusionment.”

South Africa has struggled for years with power cuts, known here as load-shedding, as as its monopoly utility Eskom failed to keep pace with demand.

But ageing infrastructure and labour disputes have added to the crisis -- and in recent weeks, the country has been hit by rolling blackouts that can last up to nine hours a day.

“There was a time ... I felt like I was going to scream,” said Blessed Dlamini, a 25-year-old father living in downtown Johannesburg.

For five hours, he recalled, he had no power as he struggled to work and at the same time deal with a hungry two-year-old.

“It was very, very hectic,” said Dlamini who works for a health centre.

Blackouts eased this week, with cuts reduced to about two hours a day. But the schedule of cuts provided by Eskom is not always followed, giving rise to an unpredictability that leaves many people on edge. The crisis “is leading to feelings of hopelessness, which is associated with depression,” said Claire Lownie, a psychiatrist in Johannesburg’s financial centre, Sandton.

Plunged into darkness with a sense of unmet basic needs, the human brain can be triggered into survival mode, leading to a fight-or-flight response, explained Aderinoye.

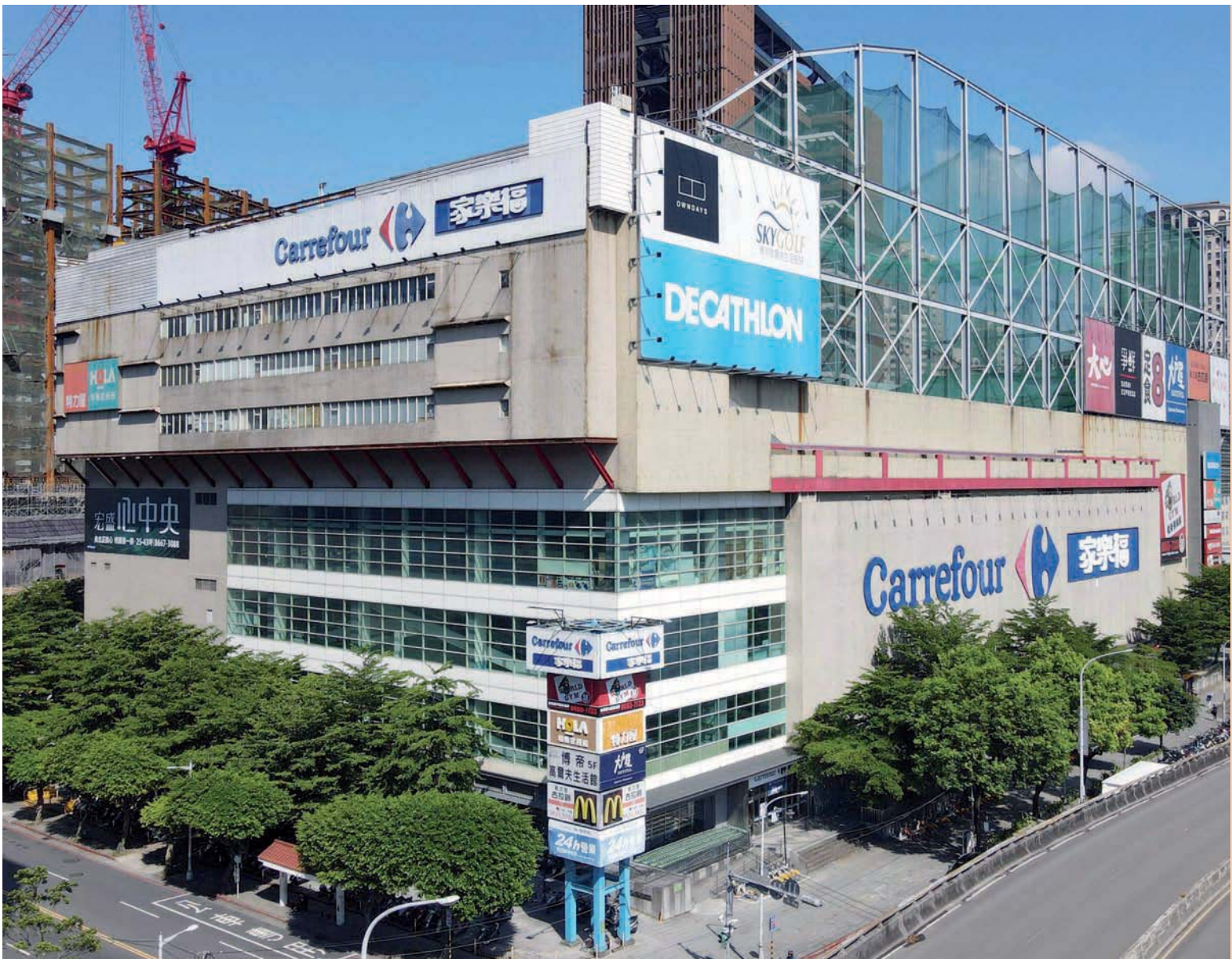
“The brain starts to think we are under attack. The body is then notified that we are in danger and we create an anxiety response,” she said.

At work, on the streets or around the dinner table, swapping tips on how to cope with blackouts has become a national pastime.— AFP

“The crisis is leading to feelings of hopelessness, which is associated with depression”

CLAIRE LOWNIE

A psychiatrist in Sandton



EXITING FROM ASIA

An aerial view shows the Taiwan flagship store of French supermarket chain Carrefour in New Taipei City's Xindian district. French supermarket chain Carrefour said July 19 it had agreed to sell its Taiwanese shops to its partner in the country, Uni-President, thus completing its exit from Asia.— AFP

What’s the new OCCI Law all about?



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

The issuance of the latest Royal Decree regarding the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) aims to enhance the functions and responsibilities of the Chamber.

OCCI mainly represents the interests of the Omani private sector and seeks to support the growth of businesses across various economic sectors, which can flourish only with an experienced board and efficient management at the helm – goals that are part of the framework of Oman’s 2040 Vision. The decree requires the Chamber’s Chairman to issue the executive regulations within one year and it cancels the previous regulatory system governing the Chamber issued in 2017.

According to the decree, the Chamber will have its elected board of directors, in addition to the existence of another elected council to manage each branch of the Chamber in each Omani governorate. But what is new in the decree is the need for the Council to offer its feedback on the draft legislation regulating private sector activities and other economic legislation and laws before issuing them.

This means that no law or legislation related to the private sector and its institutions and companies can be issued

NO LAW OR LEGISLATION RELATED TO PRIVATE SECTOR AND ITS INSTITUTIONS AND COMPANIES CAN BE ISSUED WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE CHAMBER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

without the approval of the Chamber’s Board of Directors.

This move will contribute to mitigating the difficulties faced by Omani business owners in organising their business. The decree also gives an opportunity to the Chamber’s Board of Directors to submit proposals related to the development of economic sectors to the concerned authorities directly. It exempts registration for membership in the Chamber for individuals who engage in small businesses or simple crafts with low expenses, such as street vendors, or those who carry out small transportation businesses.

This gives the operators of such activities to practice their business according to their

financial capabilities. The decree also calls for meetings of the Chamber’s general assembly and for a vote on its decisions using appropriate means of audio-visual communication between members without the need for their presence. This will require the adoption of technological modes before and during the convening of the general assembly. As for the Chamber’s Board of Directors, it will consist of five members elected by secret ballot from the Governorate of Muscat, in addition to the heads of the branches’ boards of directors, plus five members of public shareholding companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, besides a member representing foreign investors holding an investor’s residence. These new articles will apply to the work of the next council in its next session. In all cases, the board may not interfere in any work that falls within the competencies of the executive management of the chamber. There are many other conditions that must be resolved in selecting the chairman of the board of directors, the tenure of the members, how to practice volunteer work in the chamber, how to monitor the accounts of the chamber and its branches in the governorates, and the management of the chamber’s funds.

Boris Johnson leaves behind a sterling mess



BARRY EICHENGREEN

The writer is an American economist and economic historian who holds the title of George C Pardee and Helen N Pardee Professor of Economics and Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s chaotic government, and its equally chaotic collapse, are not the only source of panic in the United Kingdom nowadays. There is growing anxiety about the exchange rate of the British pound as well. Since peaking in the spring of last year, the pound has depreciated by about 10 per cent against the dollar. “Britain’s currency is getting slaughtered on international markets,” we are told. Of the five currencies underlying the International Monetary Fund’s reserve asset, special drawing rights, only the Japanese yen has done worse than the pound. Traders appear to view sterling more like the currency of a troubled emerging market than of a stable advanced economy. And now, with Johnson’s resignation and the

attendant political uncertainty, sterling is poised to sink further. Admittedly, such views are subject to exaggeration. Sterling is not alone in weakening against the dollar. A 10 per cent fall against the greenback is no catastrophe. But sterling’s decline is almost surely not over. Moreover, the pound is often an indicator of Britain’s economic problems. Four times in the last century, sterling crises have exposed the economy’s fault lines. The 1931 crisis took place against the backdrop of a crushing 21 per cent unemployment rate. There was much discussion then of whether high unemployment reflected Britain’s poor productivity performance or the global depression. In fact, it reflected both. The crux of the matter was that, with unemployment at stratospheric levels, the Bank of England couldn’t

INVESTORS APPEAR TO VIEW THE BRITISH POUND MORE LIKE THE CURRENCY OF A TROUBLED EMERGING MARKET THAN OF A STABLE ADVANCED ECONOMY. WITH PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON’S RESIGNATION AND THE ATTENDANT POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY, STERLING IS POISED TO SINK FURTHER

countenance higher interest rates to support sterling when chronic budget deficits and reports of a mutiny in the Atlantic Fleet created a crisis of confidence. Currency

speculators knew it, so they pounced, driving the pound off the gold standard. The crisis that erupted in 1949 embarrassed a British government that was seeking to restore sterling’s role as an international currency. The financial tripwire was the monumental overhang of sterling debt held by the country’s World War II allies, which the UK had sought to bottle up, unsuccessfully, with capital and exchange controls. The sterling these countries used to pay for Britain’s exports couldn’t be used to purchase goods from the United States, where British motor cars and other manufactured exports were uncompetitive. Moreover, Britain was short of dollars. Once the possibility of devaluation was mooted, the BOE experienced an uncontrollable run on its reserves. The 1967 crisis was embarrassing

to Prime Minister Harold Wilson personally. Wilson worried that higher import prices would undermine his supporters’ living standards. Still, he couldn’t prevent it. This crisis, too, had multiple causes, from the Six-Day War to a UK dock strike. But the fundamental problem, once again, was weak productivity growth, which was reflected in uncompetitive exports, a trade deficit, and unemployment. To stimulate demand and growth, Wilson’s Labour government cut interest rates and relaxed restrictions on borrowing for automobile purchases. This led, predictably, to further deterioration of the trade balance and another run on the central bank. Wilson sought to reassure the public that “the pound in your pocket” was as solid as ever. @ Project Syndicate 2021

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#Living_with_COVID19

What it's like to raise a child with brittle bones in Oman

Hajar, 28, is a mother of two. While raising a normal child is already a challenge on its own, she was thrust into an even more challenging role when her second daughter, Thuraya, was diagnosed with Osteogenesis imperfecta – a rare genetic disorder that causes increased bone fragility.. **P20**

Leonor Espinosa: Celebrated Colombian chef with a taste for social change

FROM ITS JUNGLES to its deserts: the world's newly-minted best female chef, Leonor Espinosa, draws her inspiration from Colombia's vast biodiversity, painful history and oft-neglected traditional communities.

She is not only a cook but also an activist, having travelled to all corners of her motherland to study indigenous cuisine and give a voice to people who feel abandoned in areas blighted by poverty and decades of violence.

"My cuisine tastes of relegated cultures, of forgotten regions, it tastes of ancestral techniques, of smoke... of pain," the 59-year-old said in Bogota after she was voted World's Best Female

Chef 2022 by the panel that elects The World's 50 Best Restaurants.

"It also tastes of joy, of plantain, of cassava, of the soil after it rains, of a desert ecosystem. There is a lot of poetry in my kitchen."

In naming Espinosa its winner, the 50 Best panel described her as a "multi-talented Colombian chef marrying art, politics and gastronomy."

At her restaurant Leo in central Bogota, it added, "she has forged a unique, cerebral and profound cooking style that sets her apart from her contemporaries, at the same time as she seeks to use gastronomy as a tool of socio-economic development."



SELF-TAUGHT

Born in Cartago in the country's southwest, Espinosa grew up in Cartagena on the Caribbean coast and taught herself to cook.

She studied economics and arts and worked in advertising before making the leap to the kitchen at the age of 35.

In 2017, she was anointed Latin America's best female chef.

To give her restaurant its trademark native- and peasant-infused menu, she has criss-crossed Colombia to document its culinary history.

She has incorporated many traditional ingredients into her repertoire – everything from exotic fruits and Andean tubers to ants and larvae, traditions taken from the bush and served to five-star palates in the city.

Espinosa's exploration and upliftment agenda has often taken her to parts of the country deep-

ly marred by Colombia's nearly 60-year civil conflict.

Much of this work is done with her Funleo foundation, created in 2008 and awarded the Basque Culinary World Prize nine years later for promoting the gastronomic traditions of indigenous and afro-Colombian communities.

"The award shines a light on those communities that for years have struggled to be recognised for their ancestral value and contribution to national cultural identity," Espinosa said at the time.

"It is a way of mitigating the silence generated by the armed conflict, injustice and exclusion."

With her nose rings and shy smile, Espinosa said that any cook worth their salt is also an anthropologist, political scientist and artist.

If the chef is a woman, they must also be thick-skinned and tenacious.

While women have traditionally been in charge of food in Colombia, the world of haute cuisine has always been a male dominion, said Espinosa of the hurdles she experienced.

But she was not easily put off.

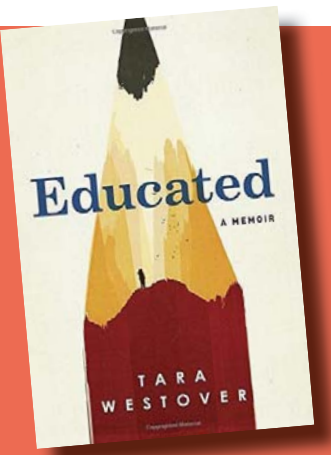
"I was quite clear from childhood that I will not be what other people want me to be," she said.

"I am who I am... I am rebellious, irreverent, curious." — **AFP**

READ

EDUCATED BY TARA WESTOVER

The daughter of survivalists, who is kept out of school, educates herself enough to leave home for university.



MIGRANTS

Youth migrants travelling without adults, including seventeen year old Myra of Honduras, take cover on a sandbar in the midst of Rio Bravo del Norte, also known as the Rio Grande river, before they are smuggled into Roma, Texas from Ciudad Miguel Aleman, Mexico. — **Reuters**



THE MAASAI DEBACLE

Maasai children pose for a portrait as their cattle graze at the Msomera village in Handeni, Tanzania. Tanzania began relocating Maasai pastoralists from the famed Ngorongoro conservation area to Handeni, a district 600 kilometres (370 miles) south, in a move that rights campaigners described as unlawful evictions. The indigenous community has lived in the reserve, a Unesco World Heritage site in northern Tanzania, for over a century. But they now face the threat of eviction, as the authorities contend that their growing population is encroaching on wildlife habitat. Officials insist the relocation is voluntary. — **AFP**





Visiting Venice? Make a Reservation and Be Ready to Pay

TRAVELLING TO VENICE? Get ready to pay for the privilege of visiting the city, one of the most beautiful on Earth. Oh, and be sure to reserve your spot.

Beginning in January, visitors must make a reservation through a new digital system and many will have to pay a daily fee — from 3 to 10 euros depending on how crowded Venice is at the time — as part of a plan to better control the masses of tourists that can overwhelm the fragile city.

The system will allow city officials to know ahead of time how many visitors they can expect on any particular day, and can then deploy staff and services accordingly. Those making early reservations will be charged at lower rates.

The reservation system and entry fee is part of a “revolution” when it comes to visiting Venice and its islands, Simone Venturini, the city councillor in charge of tourism and economic development, told reporters on Friday. He said it aims to balance “the needs of residents, the needs of tourists who sleep in the city and those of the day-trippers, whose rhythms are different.”

Before the pandemic curbed tourism, hordes of day visitors and cruise-ship passengers had transformed Venice into a prime example of “overtourism,” its narrow streets so crowded that on some days, police instituted one-way flows. Annual estimates for the numbers of tourists fluctuate wildly, with some as high as 30 million and others at a more modest 12 million.

In a city with a population of just over 50,000, those numbers were overwhelming at times.

Just about everyone visiting the city will have to register their presence, but not everyone will have to pay a fee, including children younger than 6, guests of Venetian residents and visiting relatives of people held in city jails. The city’s residents, people who work in Venice, students enrolled in city schools and property owners (as long as they’ve paid their taxes) are among those who won’t have to register or pay at all.

But even those who are exempt will have to show proof that they



have a right to be in the city. Officials said the verification could come by way of a QR code that reveals whether someone deserves an exemption.

Tourists sleeping in the city won’t pay the daily fee directly because a fee is already tacked onto their hotel stay.

People will be stopped on the streets to make sure that they’ve paid up or have a right to an exemption. Ten to 15 “controllers” will be deployed daily to enforce the rules, said Michele Zuin, the city councillor responsible for the budget and taxes.

“Naturally, their attitude won’t be that of a police state — they will be cordial, polite,” Zuin said. “But there will be controls, just as there will be sanctions for those caught without having made the payment.”

Violators will face hefty fines, ranging from 50 to 300 euros, plus an entry fee of 10 euros. And if someone is found to have lied — claiming, say, they were visiting a resident in order to avoid a fee — they could face criminal penalties, Venturini said.

City officials are still fine-tuning some details, such as daily



pricing and the daily cap on the number of people. They hope that higher costs during high season will encourage people to come at slower times. “But the city of Venice will remain open,” Zuin said.

The city’s costs for implementing and managing the system are expected to be considerable, so the city doesn’t foresee that the fees will do much more than recover its investment. Should anything be left over, it would be used to offset taxes and service fees for residents.

Venturini said the new reservation system complements a

monitoring system that the Venice City Council introduced last year to track people via phone location data, a system some critics have likened to Big Brother.

Venturini claimed Venice would be the first city in the world to use such a complex monitoring system. Bumps in the road could be expected, he said.

“It would be foolish, ambitious, arrogant to think that everything will work perfectly, with a snap of our fingers,” he said, adding, “It won’t. It will be a course that can certainly be improved and we will work constantly.” — **NYT**

ENTERTAINMENT

‘Thrones’ and ‘Rings’ fans ready for battle as Comic-Con returns



COMIC-CON FINALLY returns to San Diego this week, where new “Lord of the Rings” and “Game of Thrones” TV series will compete before tens of thousands of cosplaying geeks and nerds at the world’s most famous pop culture gathering.

Disney and its Marvel superheroes will also preview their upcoming films and shows to adoring fans at the sprawling convention, which has not taken place in full for three years due to the pandemic.

“I think it’ll look like Comic-Con from 2019,” said the event’s communications chief David Glanzer, even if guests — whether dressed as hobbits, dragons or princesses — will be required to wear face masks.

“We weathered it. And now coming back, maybe we’re gonna have tears of joy... it’s very emotional,” he said.

In addition to 135,000 screaming fans, the comic

cavernous Hall H, where fans who line up for hours or even days anticipate seeing the first detailed look at the series.

- RINGS V THRONES -

The following day, “House of the Dragon” — the first spin-off to “Game of Thrones” set in George RR Martin’s fictional world of Westeros, out August 21 — will be unveiled by HBO.

Martin has played down talk of a rivalry between the two mega-franchises, insisting, “I want both shows to find an appreciative audience, and give them great television. Great fantasy.”

“The more fantasy hits we have, the more great fantasy we are likely to get,” he wrote in a blog post.

But HBO hopes its prequel can match the wild popularity of the original “Thrones,” which over eight seasons became appointment viewing,



book, science fiction and fantasy extravaganza draws Hollywood’s biggest studios and their A-list stars to show off upcoming titles — kicking off this year with Paramount’s “Dungeons and Dragons: Honor Among Thieves.”

Marking the first time the world’s most popular role-playing game has received a mega-budget silver-screen adaptation, the movie out next March stars Chris Pine, Hugh Grant and former “Bridgerton” heartthrob Regé-Jean Page.

But the week’s headlines are set to be dominated by two huge fantasy series coming to television screens soon: Amazon Prime’s “Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power” and HBO’s “House of the Dragon.”

“The Rings of Power” is Amazon’s enormously ambitious saga taking place in the world of J R R Tolkien’s books, set long before the events of Peter Jackson’s Oscar-winning trilogy of films.

The series — playing out across five seasons, the first of which launches September 2 — is reported to have cost Amazon well over \$1 billion, and is said to be a personal obsession of founder Jeff Bezos. Much of that cost went into buying the Tolkien universe rights and on lavish production values, with a healthy sum set aside for “activations,” or immersive fan experiences, at Comic-Con. Amazon on Friday will bring its cast of hobbits, elves and dwarves to the venue’s

spawned countless imitations and delivered 59 Emmys — a record for a drama at television’s equivalent of the Oscars.

Starring Matt Smith, Rhys Ifans and Emma D’Arcy, “House of the Dragon” tells the story of the murderous, dragon-breeding Targaryen family, some 300 years before the events of “Thrones.”

Its stars will appear in Hall H immediately after a movie presentation from HBO’s sister company Warner Bros Pictures, which is set to feature Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, who is promoting his upcoming superhero flick “Black Adam.”

Elsewhere, Disney is keeping its own Hall H presentation under wraps, but rumours abound that it will finally show off its much-anticipated “Black Panther 2” sequel. The week will also feature a send-off for AMC’s “The Walking Dead,” as the juggernaut zombie TV series bows out with its final season — and launches a new spin-off, the anthology-style “Tales of the Walking Dead.” But for Glanzer, the blockbuster studio showcases are secondary to what Comic-Con is all about: a community for its fans.

“To be able to see people have a good time, enjoying comics and popular art is a gift that I look forward to. I really, really do... We get to come home,” he said. “What better thing to be able to do than that — and share it with your friends.” — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

RECIPE

Summer's Best No-Sweat Dessert? Make this Chocolate Mousse



EACH MOUTHFUL of this dessert is a marvel: as light as a meringue pie topping, but with the eggy silkiness of a creamy chocolate custard. This mousse has a particularly airy texture, but it is still a little rich from the bittersweet chocolate, which makes it the ideal not-too-sweet dessert. Because the mousse develops an even deeper flavour over time, it is perfect for parties. You can make it up to five days ahead of time and serve it straight from the refrigerator.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings
Total time: 20 minutes, plus overnight chilling
1/2 cup/120 grams heavy cream, plus more if needed and for serving if you'd like
12 ounces/340 grams bittersweet chocolate, coarsely broken or chopped (see Tip)
8 large egg whites (265 grammes/1 cup)
1/4 cup/50 grams granulated sugar
4 large egg yolks (56 grammes)
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Bring an inch of water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Combine the cream and chocolate in a large heatproof bowl. When the water boils, turn the heat to low so the water is barely simmering or just steaming. Set the bowl over the saucepan and melt the chocolate, gently stirring with a whisk now and then.
2. While the chocolate melts, whisk the egg whites in a clean bowl using a stand mixer or electric hand mixer on medium speed. When the whites are foamy, add the sugar in a slow stream while whisking. Continue whisking until stiff peaks form. The whites should look glossy but not dry, and, when you lift the whisk from the mixture, a peak should form in the bowl and hold.
3. Once the chocolate has melted completely, turn off the heat but leave the bowl over the saucepan. Holding the bowl with a kitchen towel, add the egg yolks one at a time, whisking after each addition. If the mixture looks broken, remove the bowl from the saucepan, cool for a minute, then add 1 tablespoon cream and whisk just until shiny and smooth. Whisk in the vanilla. (Don't worry if it still doesn't look completely smooth. It will come together in the next step.)
4. Add a quarter of the beaten whites to the chocolate mixture and stir gently with a flexible rubber spatula until incorporated but still a little streaky. This will make it easier to fold in the remaining whites to create an airy mousse by gradually lowering the temperature of the chocolate (tempering) and making the mixture loose.
5. Add the rest of the whites and fold them in by running the spatula from 12 o'clock on the bowl to 6 o'clock, then scooping up the chocolate on the bottom and gently folding it over the whites as you move toward 9 o'clock. Rotate the bowl 90 degrees and repeat. Continue folding just until the last streak of white disappears. It is OK if there are a few lumps of whites left. It is better to not deflate the batter by folding too much.
6. Scoop into a pretty bowl or into individual cups or bowls for serving if you would like. Otherwise, keep it in the mixing bowl. Refrigerate the mousse uncovered until cool, then cover and refrigerate for at least four more hours and preferably 24. The covered mousse can be refrigerated for up to five days.
7. If you would like to serve the mousse with whipped cream, not baking chocolate, which has a higher proportion of cacao solids and results in a dense and possibly gritty mousse. Chocolate with 70 per cent to 74 per cent cacao is ideal, but choose your favourite. This will taste best with whichever bar of chocolate you enjoy eating on its own.

DINING

Danish 'Geranium' restaurant crowned world's best



DANISH ESTABLISHMENT "Geranium" has been crowned number one in the coveted list of the World's 50 Best Restaurants this year, which left a bad taste for shunned French chefs.

The ceremony was due to be held in Moscow this year but was moved to London after Russia's attack on Ukraine in February, and there were no Russian restaurants ranked.

"Geranium" is run by chef Rasmus Kofoed in Copenhagen and is the second Danish restaurant to win in a row, taking over from Noma last year.

Peruvian restaurant "Central" in Lima came runner-up in the coveted list of the best, established by British trade magazine *Restaurant* in 2002.

Spanish restaurants "Disfrutar" in Barcelona and "Diverxo" in Madrid came third and fourth.

Inspired by nature, Kofoed's restaurant received the first three Michelin stars for Denmark in 2016.

The awards named Colombian Leonor Espinosa as the "world's best female chef" and her restaurant Leo was ranked 48th in the list.

Despite France's famed cuisine, only three French restaurants — all in Paris — featured in the top 50: "Septime" in 22nd, "Le Clarence" in 28th and "Arpege" in 31st.

The list is selected by



1,080 independent culinary experts including chefs, specialist journalists and restaurant owners who

note their experiences in the past 18 months under the aegis of the magazine.

The experts are divided up into 27 regions with 40 voters each and they can each vote for 10 restaurants including at least three outside their region. The list, sponsored by several brands, often comes under fire, especially by French chefs who accuse it of complacency and a lack of transparency.

French critics, as well as those from Japan and the United States, established their own "La Liste" in 2015, ranking 1,000 restaurants worldwide. — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Conscious patient in the era of Corona!

WE ALL HAD been in this scenario. While sitting in an office or any other public place with people all around you not wearing a mask, someone who's coughing will definitely take your attention. If this coughing becomes deeper, you would start to feel queasy.

Most likely no one would say anything. But for the person who just coughed, in today's era of Covid-19, they would have to make a declaration: "Don't worry, it's not Corona Covid-19!"

Such declaration is being conscious and from a perspective, is a way of being polite rather than wantonly showering anyone with a deadly virus. It has recently become clear that a negative corona test (you do not carry the virus), especially in the early days of symptomatic illness, does not guarantee that you will not be infected.

On the other hand, if you got a fever and a cold for example and just because you do not suffer from Corona, this does not mean that you throw the face mask and go on a plane or to a gathering and next to other people, as this is undoubtedly harmful and may carry a lot of rudeness because you — If I can say — may ruin someone's vacation and maybe one of those is going to see his parents, causing death or hospitalisation of one of them. So, let's not destroy the lives and plans of others.

Especially over the past two years, our community has undergone an intensive and indirect training course through various means to prevent the transmission of the coronavirus.

We have learned the importance of medical testing, physical distancing, isolation and ventilation. Thus, these lessons also apply to more common pathogens such as influenza, coronaviruses and their various strains

that have truly reshaped our lives. The obvious thing is that we now understand better than ever how sick you can be and here we will see if anyone uses this knowledge to apply it in practice!

This leads me to believe that the first and most important rule when you are feeling sick is to stay home. And I assert here that this directive is the easiest and the most difficult at the same time. Easy because it's so simple: stay home! No technical experience is required. On other hand is difficult because following it involves major disruptions in anyone's daily life.

In addition, it is also a good practice to notify people with whom you may have been in contact — even if it seems embarrassing — just when we have been encouraged to do so with Corona. If, for instance, you have a fever, isolate yourself as much as possible until at least 24 hours after it's gone. Also if you don't have a fever, you should be clear to get back to those around you after your symptoms are gone. On the other hand, if you are still showing symptoms after the isolation period, or if you must get out before it ends, due to your work and the difficulty of getting sick leave, you must wear a high-quality mask.

In the end, there is no one-size-fits-all formula that gives us the right answer in every case and for every type of infection and possible isolation. Even for the most responsible people among us, this ambiguity can lead to some embarrassing calculus. Can you afford to miss out on family lunches and family gatherings and would it be difficult to cancel those travel plans... should you?!

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



art & life

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THURSDAY | JULY 21 | 2022



What it's like to raise a child with brittle bones in Oman

By Lama al Rajhi

Raising a child takes a village. This is one of the popular quotes many mothers can relate with. When that child is afflicted with a rare condition, then the challenges doubles nothing of which can make a mother surrender.

Hajar, 28, is a mother of two. But while one of the kids is physically normal, her second child, Thuraya, has Osteogenesis imperfecta. The said condition is a rare genetic disorder that causes increased bone fragility and it is something that is not common especially in Oman.

In May 2021, after two months of giving birth to her child, Hajar started her page on Instagram on a mission to find

people who share the same journey with her and to spread awareness in the community on life as a brittle bone disease parent raising her newborn Thuraya.

"I've never heard about this disease before and felt devastated hearing the news," she said.

Hajar's stage of pregnancy was normal until her 18 weeks pregnancy ultrasound appointment. She went to her doctor full of excitement to discover the gender of her baby. But that excitement was replaced with fear when after taking the ultrasound, she was told that her baby might struggle with a rare condition she never even heard about — "achondroplasia". Three days later she was told she is having a girl with brittle bone disease.

"I was shocked and still in denial, we

didn't have any family history with this disease from my side nor my husband's side of the family," she said.

As soon as Hajar went home she started searching on YouTube about the disease, and the shortage of information and proper representation in Arabic concerned her. She expanded her search and read everything she could possibly read online even in different languages until she ends up finding a private community for brittle bone disease parents in Facebook it made her feel safe and well prepared to welcome her baby.

"Getting accepted into the group wasn't easy but once I get in, I felt safe and confident even for the worst-case scenario, I had full understanding even with the medical terms," she said.

"Knowing that you could lose your child over un-special trained medical staff was the most devastating feeling," she lamented

When Thuraya was born, she had her Femur broken because babies' bones heal faster without splinting. Although it was written in her file that the baby requires minimal handling, it didn't specify she had fragile bones, which the nurses weren't prepared for.

She said, "I had faith and trust with the nurse believing they must know better as I've been told, and if I knew the situation, I would've handled her from the beginning, I wanted that"

Every parent instinctively wants to protect their children. That's why when Hajar's daughter was born, Hajar made sure her mother was around to check on her newborn in the nursery.

She recalled, "Few seconds left, and my mother sends me a video concerned about whether it's normal for the baby to cry like that, I then noticed how wrong the nurse was moving her recklessly and didn't even know how to change the diaper".

Through grief and helplessness, as well as deeply committed love, what happened made her learn how to be more than just a mother to be a nurse for her baby too.

"Entering hospitals became a horror to me," she shared.

The incidents made Hajar take care of her baby on her own even when she enters any clinic or hospital, she asks them not to carry her baby and how willing she is to do anything they want. She didn't always get a welcoming response from them.

"At first I couldn't handle the doctor's response to me but now I care less about them and make sure they follow my instruction," she said.

Recalling an incident when she went to a private clinic to see its potential.

She said, "I saw the physician take my daughter's hand and wanted to twist it, the most serious part of taking care of a brittle bone patient is knowing how to move them and he was doing it all wrong."

She added in a moment of weakness, "I couldn't control myself and screamed at him. If he wants to observe what she capable of doing, he should've asked me because he knows it's a special case and his unprofessional move could've ended

her life."

She said, "I'm fully willing to train the entire nurse's staff of maternity department on how to deal with brittle bone disease newborns."

"The more I read the more I realise the gaps of knowledge"

After she got birth to her child a doctor made her join a WhatsApp group for rare disease parents the mothers in the group were helpful and welcoming, but Hajar sensed how the information they share get lost in the group and how mothers forget mentioning so many details as their kids get older. It inspired her to start her own page on Instagram documenting her experience as a brittle bone disease parent in Oman raising her newborn Thuraya.

She said, "I wanted to document everything, I never want a mother to feel lost and to find a comfort way to cope."

A few months after starting to post on Instagram she gained three thousand followers Mothers from not only Oman, but UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq were showing support and interest in the content she posts.

"Families with brittle bone disease newborns keep expressing their gratitude to me and how they benefited from my posts" she shared

"I had old parents who are illiterate coming to me asking for details and I always try to be very open answering them or help them search for an answer" Hajar added.

Hajar sending a message to new brittle bone diseases parents "Parenting a rare disease child in our shoes comes with rewards that only we can see, each child with this condition has his own special thing, they are smart."

"The beginning always takes a toll, but you have to be open, and search everywhere don't listen to the advice of one doctor or a page on the Internet because each condition varies from another, and you are the only one noticing those differences better than anyone," she added.

Currently, Oman has the best internationally recognised treatments for brittle bone disease. Bisphosphonate acid that is added to the vein and the bone absorbs minerals in the blood, so it thickens and delays fractures with Zoledronic Acid. It is given to the patient every 3 months.