

Real estate deals value at RO 213m

A report issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning indicated that the value of real estate transactions in Oman during July, reached RO 213.1 million. Of those, RO 136 million are as mortgages, RO 74 million as sales and RO 2.1 million as swap contracts. Fee collected for legal transactions stood at RO 4.2 million. **SEE P3**



P10

'UNTOUCHABLE' VERSTAPPEN CRUISES IN BELGIUM



P15

LABOUR SHORTAGES HAMPER RECOVERY OF ME AVIATION



P19

NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL GEARS UP FOR RETURN



MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$100.46 A BARREL

Oman oil price October delivery on Monday reached \$100.46, comprising a rise by 94 cents from the price of last Friday, which was \$99.52. The average price of Oman oil for August delivery has stabilised at \$112.93 per barrel, thus \$5.71 per barrel higher than July delivery. Brent crude futures rose \$1.65 to settle at \$100.99 a barrel.

LONDON

TRUSS TIPPED TO PREVAIL IN RACE

The race to become Britain's next prime minister is in its final week, with Liz Truss appeared poised to secure the top job, along with daunting challenges. Foreign Secretary Truss, 47, has consistently outrun former finance minister Rishi Sunak by wide margins in polls of Conservative party members who will decide the contest. **DETAILS ON P7**



OMAN EXERTING CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL WARMING

New law to combat climate change effects

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has accorded great attention to address the phenomenon of climate change, which poses challenges to the whole world. The departments concerned in Oman shoulder their part of the responsibility to manage global warming.

Oman is currently updating climate affairs management regulations to keep pace with local and international developments. The regulation aims to monitor the performance of companies and establishments tasked with climate affairs, either by moderating or adapting to climate change.

Steps are under way to devise a climate change legislation in cooperation with the departments concerned, so that this statute could serve as a regulatory code for drafting general provisions about climate affairs in all sectors of development in Oman.

Preliminary steps include drafting the national strategy for alleviation and adaptation to climate change. This serves as a springboard for action plans and projects across all sectors.

The preparation of a database



A file photo of the flood-hit area in Oman.

to follow up the realisation of nationally-determined contributions has been among measures undertaken by Oman towards compliance with the proportion of emissions as of 2030 by a 7 per cent reduction in emissions. A database has

also been formed to enumerate all projects on adapting with climate change in Oman. This is in addition to the preparation of a greenhouse gases database for basic sectors — which facilitates the annual emission control process.

Among efficient endeavours, a technical team of specialists has been formed, comprising representatives from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), public sector establishments and private sector firms. The team operates under the purview of

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the Ministerial Committee for Climate Change and Ozone Layer Protection. The panel proposes and executes policies and plans of action to alleviate greenhouse gas emissions and contain their negative impacts in line with Oman Vision 2040. **TURN TO P2**

Royal support to benefit over 59,000 students

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 29

More than 59,000 students belonging to low-income groups across the Sultanate of Oman will benefit from the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide school supplies and daily nutrition from this academic year.

The programme will be implemented by the the Ministry of Finance in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development. The beneficiaries include 59,030 boys and

girls; 24,665 from the social security category and 34,365 from the low-income groups.

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, on Monday chaired a meeting of officials to discuss the Royal Orders. She praised His Majesty the Sultan's initiative, which focuses on the importance of building capabilities and eases parents' burden on educational requirements.

Dr Madeeha said the ministry will cooperate with the Ministry of Social Development in determining the beneficiaries. **TURN TO P3**

Nasa delays moon mission

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER: Nasa called off a test flight on Monday of its largest-ever rocket in a setback to the ambitious programme to send humans back to the Moon and eventually to Mars.

"We don't launch until it's right," Nasa administrator Bill Nelson said after an engine temperature issue forced liftoff from Kennedy Space Center to be scrubbed.

"This is a very complicated machine," Nelson said. "You don't want to light the candle until it's ready to go."

Alternative dates for launch of

the US space agency's uncrewed Artemis 1 mission are Friday and next Monday.

Blastoff had been planned for 8:33 am (1233 GMT) but was cancelled because of a temperature problem with one of the four RS-25 engines on the 322-foot Space Launch System (SLS) rocket.

Nasa said a test to get one of the engines to the proper temperature range for liftoff was not successful.

It said the SLS rocket and Orion crew capsule which sits on top "remain in a safe and stable configuration." **SEE ALSO P7**





This fertilizer makes saline-sodic soil fit for farming

MUSCAT: A project to make saline-sodic soil fit for cultivation was successful in the Governorate of South Al Batinah after special fertilizers were used. It was conducted by Oman Shell, Shell Agriculture and Forestry and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Oman Shell in collaboration with SQU, carried out a research between 2020 and 2022, to study how effective Special-S (a sulphur fertilizer produced using Shell Thiogro technology) is in reclaiming saline-sodic soils through soil acidification.

In Phase 1 of the research, incubation trials and column experiments were performed with Special-S on low pH (measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the soil), and salt leaching was carried out on five different types of soil collected from different Omani farms. Special-S showed significant acidification of the soil, and was effective in salt leaching, doubling salts leached as compared to control.

Field trials were carried out to evaluate the response of plants to this amendment. With the application of Special-S, there was a 13 per cent increase in yield of Rhodes grass and 59 per cent increase in yield of wheat. The calcium and phosphorous uptake by Rhodes grass plants were 75 per cent and 14 per cent higher

“Special-S alleviates soil salinity and increases productivity in farms. This helps address Oman’s food security concerns while empowering Omani farmers to raise their income with more arable land and higher yields

ZAIN HAK
Shell, Global Vice President

respectively as compared to the control category.

In Phase 2 of this research, a socioeconomic survey was conducted to understand Omani farmers’ perception of the soil salinity issue and its management, as well as their willingness to apply new technologies to alleviate soil salinity. Though 62 per cent were not currently using any specific techniques to alleviate salinity, 82 per cent of farmers indicated a willingness to purchase soil amendment to manage soil salinity.

Additionally, improving the active management of soil salinity would increase the sustainability of these farms, and mitigate a myriad



of social and economic problems associated with the decay of soil quality and productivity.

Further studies in Phase 2 testified to Special-S effectiveness in leaching salts compared to agricultural gypsum and control, with Special S being 31 – 37 per cent more effective in leaching. Compared with agricultural gypsum, Special-S enables the replacement of Na+ ions without the addition of external Ca2+ ions that are already abundant in Oman’s soils.

With the conclusion of Phase 1 and Phase 2, SQU recommends

1 tonne per hectare per year Special-S application on soils with electrical conductivity between 4 and 20 dS/m that experience poor irrigation. Referencing to Oman Salinity Strategy 2012, about 30 - 40 per cent of farms in South Al Batinah meet these conditions.

Walid Hadi, Oman Shell’s Country Chairman, commented on the research saying, “Soil salinity is an increasing concern for South Al Batinah. We have worked together with SQU to conduct critical research which has been a big contributor to a productive and sustainable agricultural sector.

It has been a privilege to work with the brilliant minds at SQU to meet this real-life challenge facing the industry head-on.”

Zain Hak, Shell’s Global Vice President of Agriculture and Forestry (A&F), said, “Soil salinity puts pressure on existing agricultural communities. As the research with SQU validates, Special-S alleviates soil salinity and increases productivity in farms. This helps address Oman’s food security concerns while empowering Omani farmers to raise their income with more arable land and higher yields.”

He also added, “This research collaboration with SQU is a great example of how Shell A&F continues to look for opportunities to offer sustainable and integrated solutions to meet productivity and emissions related challenges across the agriculture and forestry value chains.”

Dr Daniel Blackburn, Project Leader from the Department of Soils, Water and Agricultural Engineering of Sultan Qaboos University, said, “The salt contamination of agriculture soils in South Al Batinah has been a real agricultural challenge, reducing farm yields and profitability, and in extreme cases, forcing farmers to abandon their lands.”

He further said that, “Our collaboration with Oman Shell represents a fantastic public-private partnership directed at community well-being, as we believe that the use of Special-S will provide continuous Sulphur and nitrogen nutrition to crops. This product will aid in the reclamation of salt affected soils, helping in leaching excess sodium salts, whilst decreasing soil alkalinity and improving plant nutrition. With this technology and data from the research results, we hope to make a substantial contribution to the sustainable management of Oman’s soil and to Oman’s food security.” — ONA

■ BOOK ON OMAN-SRI LANKA RELATIONS LAUNCHED



The Foreign Ministry today organised the inaugural ceremony for a book titled “Sri Lanka-Oman Relations: The Past, Present and Future”. The book launch marks the 40th anniversary of establishment of relations between the two countries. Authored by Omar Lebbe at the end of his term as Ambassador of the Republic of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, the book explores the history of bilateral relations and includes inputs from the ambassador’s own memories in Oman. The ceremony was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Foreign Ministry’s Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, as well as ambassadors of Arab and friendly countries accredited to Oman. — ONA

New law to combat climate change effects

FROM PAGE 1

The ministerial committee also contributes in determining the Sultanate of Oman’s stand on issues discussed as part of negotiations and meetings of countries that are party to climate affairs agreements and protocols. It follows up the implementation of recommendations that stem from the meetings. The committee also ensures Oman’s commitment to the said agreements and the country’s preparation of national studies on climate change and ozone layer protection, besides reviewing other studies and reports in accordance with the agreements’ dictates.

The national committee

strives to spread awareness about climate change and its impacts on different sectors. It trains national personnel and builds capacities in the field of climate change and ozone layer protection. It drafts progress reports and proposes ways to enhance coordination among the departments concerned to remove obstacles that might impede progress.

The orientation panel is an offshoot of the ministerial committee and it supervises the progress of work of technical teams, which include the Climate Change Alleviation Team, the Climate Change Adaptation Team, the Funding, Technology and Capacity Building Team,

the Media Team, the Ozone Layer Protection Team and the Technical Negotiation Team.

Oman participated in many international conferences and events related to climate change. These included the COP Operating Entity of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This coincided with Kyoto Protocol and the Conference of the Parties to the Paris Agreement on Change.

Oman will also take part in the Twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to climate change pacts (COP27), scheduled to be held in Egypt from November 6 to 18, 2022. This reflects the positive role of Oman at a global level. — ONA

e-scooters popular among youths for cheaper transport

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With the rising concerns that global warming is contributing to extreme weather conditions and rising fuel and vehicle operation costs, more and more people are resorting to e-scooters, albeit with little encouragement from local authorities.

Even in the GCC, including the Sultanate of Oman, e-scooters are increasingly used by a section of expatriates and citizens as they are easy to use, store, and purchase and have comparatively fewer regulatory requirements.

An electric scooter is a plug-in electric vehicle powered by electric power or a combination of batteries.

According to reports, they are eco-friendly, reduce greenhouse gas emissions offer additional advantages such as agility, flexibility, versatility, and eco-friendly.

In commercial districts, including in Dubai and slowly in Muscat, many office goers are using e-scooters for home-to-work transportation.

Apart from being privately owned, in several cities across the world, e-scooters are also available for rent as part of the local government’s smart mobility initiatives to restrict the use of fossil-powered vehicles on short distances.

Speaking to the Observer, Mike, a Filipino expatriate, said he uses the e-scooter to move from his home to his workplace at a leading mall in the city.

He said at least six of his friends in the Sultanate of Oman were using the e-scooter for local mobility.

“These e-scooters are good because I don’t have to bother about getting a license, and it is better to use them than walk in the extreme summer conditions here.”

According to sources in the



Users should be careful not to be reckless and put themselves and others on the road at risk.

ROP, e-scooters are not allowed on roads at all times, but they can be used on pavements and sidewalks

without causing inconvenience or risks to pedestrians.

Mike added that the Sultanate

of Oman is an easy place to operate because of the low population density and pedestrian traffic.

“People can easily carry them in a public bus and then travel on it to the workplace from the bus stop.”

According to retailers, the e-scooter market is picking up among youngsters and some expatriates. But they should be careful not to be reckless and put themselves and others on the road at risk.

In the Sultanate of Oman, e-scooters are available online in the price range of RO 150 and RO 250.

The global electric scooter market size was estimated at \$20.78 billion in 2021, and the market is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.8 per cent from 2022 to 2030.

The increasing demand for fuel-efficient vehicles, coupled with growing concerns over greenhouse gas and carbon emissions, is anticipated to drive the adoption of electric scooters (e-scooters) during the forecast period.



In brief

MUSCAT

Oman chairs ARABOSAI meeting



The Sultanate of Oman is chairing the 20th meeting of the Institutional Capacity Building Committee affiliated to the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI). The three-day meeting, held via video-conferencing, discusses a variety of issues, including the outcome of this year's training programmes of ARABOSAI committees' action plan (2022), an assessment report on the committee's meetings between 2019 and 2021 and a briefing about a consultation meeting held to draft ARABOSAI strategic plan through 2023-2028. The meeting reviews ARABOSAI training project and the organisation's capacity building project on communicating with stakeholders.

Follow-up Unit inks pact with Ooredoo



MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Omani-Qatari Telecommunications Company (Ooredoo) to enhance joint action mechanisms on exchanging expertise in the fields of information and communication technology (ICT), as well as support for programmes serving society. The MoC was signed by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, and Noor al Sulaiti, CEO of Ooredoo.

GCC meeting discusses fake certificates



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, took part in the 20th meeting of heads of higher education standardisation committees in the GCC states. The meeting, held via video conferencing and organised by the GCC Secretariat-General, discussed the findings of a technical team tasked with studying distance education and e-learning criteria. The GCC undersecretaries of higher education ministries approved determinants for acknowledging distance education and e-learning with the purpose of devising a uniform guide for this domain. The meeting reviewed efforts to combat fake certificates.

Real estate deals top RO 213 million in July

MUSCAT: A report issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning indicated that the value of real estate transactions in the Sultanate of Oman during July 2022, reached RO 213.1 million. Of those, RO 136 million are as mortgages, RO 74 million as sales and RO 2.1 million as swap contracts.

Fees collected for completed legal transactions amounted to RO 4.2 million, of which RO 996,400 were collected for mortgages, RO 43,500 for swap contracts and RO 1.6 million for sale contracts.

Total legal transactions amounted to 8,295, including 4,136 sale contracts, 82 swap contracts, 1,349 mortgage contracts, 1,155 grant contracts, 265 inheritance contracts, 615 mortgage release contracts and 693 dividing contracts.

The number of title deeds issued during July 2022 reached 15,087 titles in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman; 3,075 titles in Muscat, 944 in Dhofar, 129 in Musandam, 337 in Al Buraimi, 2,061 in Al Dakhiliyah, 2,720 in North Al Batinah, 2,399 in South Al Batinah, 899 in South Al Sharqiyah, 1,090 in North Al Sharqiyah, 1,297 in Al Dhahirah and 136 in Al Wusta.

As many as 39 titles were issued for citizens of GCC countries, of which the highest percentage concentrated in the Governorate of Muscat, followed by North Al Batinah and South Al Batinah. As for land registered for the first time, the total number amounted to 3,216 plots and the number of applications for proof and registration of ownerships reached 1,483. — ONA



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Digital empowerment for entrepreneurs focus of forum



SALALAH: Digital empowerment of working women and women entrepreneurs took centre stage at the conclusion of the Working Women's Second Arab Forum in Salalah on Monday.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), the forum was attended by 170 participants from Oman and abroad.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni.

The recommendations laid



emphasis on achieving equality between men and women in terms of 'digital inclusion' of the fair sex. This entails drafting a legal

framework that secures the rights of entrepreneurs (and working women) within the context of digital economy.

The forum also recommended the 're-qualification' of the Arab workforce, with special attention to working women, to help address the challenges imposed by artificial intelligence (AI) and technological revolution. This is in addition to developing the system of statistics and social-type-oriented indices with a view to evaluating policies and programmes to enhance women's presence in the digital economy sector. — ONA

Royal support to benefit over 59,000 students

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting discussed proposals for implementing the meal provision for students and touched on the experiences of private schools.

The Royal Orders drew praise from Walis, officials, teachers and parents. Shaikh Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Al Amerat, Chairman of the Parents Council in the wilayat, said that the scheme will alleviate the burdens and obligations of families, and will contribute to providing an appropriate environment for students from low income groups to start the new academic year with hard work and dedication.

Shaikh Dr Saif bin Muhanna al Hinaï, Wali of Suhar, Chairman of the Parents Council, said the decision will help these families to a great extent.

Shaikh Saif bin Abdullah al Maamari, Wali of Yanqul, said the plan reflects His Majesty's interest and keenness to provide a decent living for students from social security families and those with limited income. It will encourage them to continue their education and exert more effort and diligence to achieve their goals and fulfil ambitions.

Shaikh Salem bin Suhail Shammās, Wali of Salalah, Chairman of the Parents Council of the wilayat, said the Royal directives address the needs of the citizens in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Walid bin Talib al Hashimi, Director-General of Education in North Al Batinah Governorate, explained that school supplies and nutrition are important for the student to complete the educational journey

Asma bint Salem al Nahdiyah, Principal of Salalah Al Gharbia School in the Governorate of Dhofar, said this generous gesture is evidence of His Majesty the Sultan's interest in enabling these children to continue their education without hindrance and contribute to the development of this nation.

Ishaq bin Yousef al Harthy, Chairman of the Parents Council, and Mohammed bin Amer bin Masoud al Shukaili, a social worker at Rashid bin Al Nadr School in the Wilayat of Muscat, said these directives are an incentive for students to work harder and achieve their dreams.

Khalsa bint Khalfan al Hasaniyah, a member of the Mothers Council at Hail Al Awamer School in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in the Governorate of Muscat, said the humanitarian gesture of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will remain firmly rooted in the hearts of students and parents forever.

Hajar bint Khamis al Balushiyah, a social worker at Umm Iyas School for Basic Education in the Wilayat of Barka in the South Al Batinah Governorate, said: "The Royal orders ensure decent life for the needy. This step will provide psychological support to the students and parents."

Ihsaan brings joy and smiles to elderly in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

AMAL AL RIYAMI

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR, AUGUST 29

Awareness and entertainment programmes were organised for the elderly in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar recently. It was organised by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate branch of Ihsaan Association in cooperation with the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the Department of Social Development, and the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Hospital

The aim was to bring better care for the senior citizens. The Ihsaan Association members visited the elders at their homes and understood their needs in cooperation with community health centre nurses at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Hospital.



The visits aimed to study the health, social and psychological status and provide the necessary needs of the elderly. The team members interacted with family members on taking care of older people's health.

They discussed the most important diseases that affect the elderly, the methods of dealing with them and their treatment.

The programme also included many awareness and educational lectures to strengthen the



community partnership that aim to care for the elderly. It provided them with care and awareness of the importance of honouring the aged parents.

The branch members involved the elderly in recreational

activities. Ihsaan Association played a key role in the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Tourism Festival, which was organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, to make the elderly and their families happy through many competitions.



EAT SAFE

COMMON SYMPTOMS
OF FOOD POISONING

VOMITING



DIARRHOEA



NAUSEA



ABDOMINAL
PAIN



LOSS OF APPETITE



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Food poisoning, a foodborne illness, is caused by eating contaminated food. Infectious germs, including bacteria, viruses, parasites, and toxins caused by them, cause food poisoning.

Infectious germs and toxins can contaminate food at any stage of processing or production. Contamination can also occur in the home if food is prepared or cooked incorrectly.

Symptoms of food poisoning can begin within hours of eating the contaminated food. The symptoms often include nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea. Often, food poisoning is mild and goes away without treatment, but sometimes it becomes severe, and patients suffering from it need to go to the hospital.

Safe food is essential to human health. Safe food is one of the most important elements that guarantee good health. Conversely, unsafe food is the cause of many diseases and contributes to other forms of poor health, such as poor growth

and development, micronutrient deficiencies, non-communicable or infectious diseases and mental illness. Globally, foodborne diseases affect one in 10 people. In most cases, they are preventable.

Dr Abdulmajeed bin Saleh al Qutaiti, an emergency physician at the Oman Medical Speciality Board, stated: "Food poisoning is a group of intestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach cramps, abdominal pain, loss of appetite and sometimes fever that occurs as a result of consuming food contaminated with germs, and with unsuitable substances. Human consumption's main symptoms begin a few hours or days after eating or drinking contaminated food, and food poisoning may cause complications such as colon irritation.

The hot and damp atmosphere is a perfect environment for reproducing germs and parasites, so cases of food poisoning rise in the summer, and hygiene is recommended during food preparation.

In addition, food poisoning

may cause dehydration, one of the most serious complications of food poisoning, and results in a loss of water, salts and essential minerals.

Infants, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems or chronic diseases become severely dehydrated when they lose more fluids than they can compensate for as a result. In this case, they may need to be hospitalised and receive intravenous fluids. Children are more likely to become dehydrated from vomiting, especially if it is accompanied by diarrhoea.

The General Directorate of Muscat Municipality always alerts for a healthy environment and calls for awareness to enhance the concept of hygiene and the prevention of public health. Furthermore, to ascertain the extent to which food stores, restaurants and cafes comply with safety and health requirements in preparing food. Any carelessness may risk human health and safety.

The civic body's projects proactively implement precautionary measures to avoid

food poisoning cases as much as possible.

Laboratory samples or 'swabs' are taken from the hands of workers, surfaces, tools and food samples to ensure they have been heat-treated. The samples are sent to the central laboratory of Muscat Municipality. The project also aspires to detect pesticide residues in vegetables and fruits and the pickles used in restaurants to ensure that they do not exceed the permissible limits according to specifications and standards.

World Food Safety Day, which takes place on June 7, also aims to draw attention and motivate action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, as well as contribute to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development.

The International Day is an opportunity to step up efforts to ensure that our food is safe, popularise food safety and reduce the global burden of foodborne diseases.

UNSAFE FOOD
CAUSES MANY
DISEASES AND
CONTRIBUTES TO
POOR HEALTH,
SUCH AS POOR
GROWTH AND
DEVELOPMENT,
MICRONUTRIENT
DEFICIENCIES,
NON-
COMMUNICABLE
OR INFECTIOUS
DISEASES AND
ALSO MENTAL
ILLNESS



N-deal meaningless without end to IAEA's probe: Iran

TEHRAN: The Iranian president said on Monday that reviving a 2015 atomic deal with world powers would be pointless unless the UN nuclear watchdog put an end to its probe of undeclared sites in the country.

Ebrahim Raisi's comments came as Tehran reviews the US response to its suggestions on a "final" text put forward by the EU to salvage the landmark deal.

The United States had been adamant that Tehran cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to clear up suspicions about earlier work at three undeclared sites.

"In the negotiations, safeguard issues are one of the fundamental

Iran has repeatedly urged the agency to end the issue before any revived deal

ones. All of the safeguard issues must be resolved," Raisi told reporters at a news conference in the capital Tehran.

"Without resolving the safeguard issues, talking about the agreement is meaningless," he added.

The IAEA has referred to the traces of nuclear materials as a "safeguards" issue.

Iran has repeatedly urged the agency to end the issue before any revived deal is implemented, but



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during a press conference in Tehran. — AFP

US State Department spokesman Vedant Patel on Thursday said "we do not believe there should be any

conditionality" between the deal and undeclared sites.

In June, the IAEA's board of

governors adopted a resolution censuring Iran for failing to adequately explain the previous discovery of traces of enriched uranium at three sites not declared by Tehran as having hosted nuclear activities.

Last week, amid rising hopes of a revived deal, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi, in an interview with CNN, rejected the idea of the agency closing its probe without receiving answers.

"This idea that politically we are going to stop doing our job is unacceptable for us," he said. "So far Iran has not given us the technically credible explanations we need."

The agreement between Iran

and six world powers — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — gave the Islamic republic sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

NO PLAN TO MEET BIDEN

Since taking office in 2021, President Joe Biden has sought to return the US to the deal unilaterally abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump in 2018. The Vienna talks, which began in April last year, aim to return the US to the nuclear pact, including through the lifting of sanctions on Iran, and to return Tehran to full compliance with its commitments. — AFP

Black Sea dolphins casualties of war

PRYMORSKE: Pacing up and down a beach of fine white sand on the Black Sea coast, 63-year-old Ukrainian scientist Ivan Rusev breathes a sigh of relief: he did not find any dead dolphins today.

A few moments earlier he had rushed towards what he thought was a stranded dolphin. Mercifully it turned out only to be "tangled fishing gear".

Rusev spoke from the Tuzly Estuaries National Nature Park, a protected area of 280 square kilometres in the Bessarabia region of south-west Ukraine.

Rusev, whose weather-beaten face is shaded by a hat he brought during adventures in central Asia, is the scientific director of the park.

Now his job entails walking every morning along beaches bordered by anti-tank mines in search of the dolphins that have been washing up here since the beginning of the war.

"We only found three dolphins over our entire 44 kilometres coastline last year," he said. "This year, over the five kilometres that we can still access, we already found 35 of them."

Much of the coastline has been off-limits to employees of the park since Ukrainian troops took up positions there to prevent



Each morning, Rusev walks the beaches in search of any dolphins that have washed up there. — AFP

any possible Russian sea assault. This means Rusev and his team cannot say exactly how many dolphins have been stranded in the park or survey the full extent of the damage.

DANGEROUS SONARS

In any case, the death toll is "terrifying," says Rusev, who has been keeping an online diary — now widely followed on Facebook — about the impact of the war on wildlife.

When dolphins started washing up on the coast in March, Rusev and his team had to get to work quickly to spot dead animals before the many jackals roaming the area got to them.

"Then, we reached out to our colleagues in Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania. Everyone witnessed the same thing: a huge number of dolphins have died since the beginning of the war," Rusev said. — AFP

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
483/2022/MAFWR/HQ-56	The Intermediate Distribution Frame Rooms Renovation in the HQ Building of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 15/9/2022	Wednesday 5/10/2022

- 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

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY Advertisement No. (27/2022)

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/22/075	2022/MM/ QS-39	RFP for Renewing IBM FILENET & CMS Licenses for Record and Document Management System (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/081	2022/MM/ QS-40	Technical Support Services for Oracle SUN Solaris Servers (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/088	2022/MM/ QS-41	Renewal of Licenses & Technical Support Services for Security Appliances (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/097	2022/MM/ QS-42	RFP for Renewal Licenses of Network Management System (NMS) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/069	2022/MM/ QS-43	Site preparation for Street Vendors in Wilayat AL Amarat (Almahaj) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	First
PRE/22/093	2022/MM/ QS-44	Site preparation for Street vendors in Wilayat Muttrah (Wadi Al Kabir) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	First
PRE/22/061	2022/MM/ QS-31 Re-Call-01	Faced Clock System Replacement at Muscat Municipality Building, Darsait (Re-Tender-1) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Specialist

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).

Lion mauls man to death in zoo



A female warden guards the entrance of the Accra Zoo. — Reuters

ACCRA: A lion at Ghana's Accra Zoo mauled a man to death after he entered its enclosure over the weekend, the government said in a statement.

The security guards on patrol noticed that the middle-aged victim had climbed over a tall mesh fence and entered the enclosure of a lion, a lioness and two cubs. His motivation has yet to be determined.

"The intruder was attacked and injured by one of the lions," the state Forestry Commission said, adding that the man had died from wounds he sustained in the attack. Authorities are investigating the incident.

None of the animals escaped during the incident and the enclosure remains secure, the statement said.

Lions are a top attraction at Accra Zoo, where reinforced mesh fencing allows visitors to view the predators up close. — Reuters

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
146/2022	General Maintenance Work for Al Aman Center in the General Directorate of Persons with Disabilities at Al-Khoud	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Second Degree	Sunday 18-9-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 9-10-2022 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 Tuesday 30/8/2022.
- 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



Two dead in Baghdad clashes

BAGHDAD: Two protesters were killed and Iraq declared a nationwide curfew after supporters of Moqtada Sadr stormed the government palace in Baghdad's Green Zone on Monday following the leader's declaration that he was quitting politics.

Shots were fired in the fortified area which houses government buildings as well as diplomatic missions, a correspondent said, as tensions soared amid an escalating political crisis that has left Iraq without a new government, prime minister or president for months.

The army announced a nationwide curfew from 7 pm, after earlier declaring a Baghdad curfew that demonstrators ignored.

Medics said that two Sadr supporters were killed and 22 others wounded after clashes broke out in the Green Zone.

The army has announced a Baghdad-wide curfew to start from 3:30 pm. "A full curfew in the capital Baghdad affects all vehicles and citizens," the Joint Operations Command said in a statement.

Hours earlier, Sadr announced he was quitting politics, after a nearly year-long political stalemate that has left the country without a new government.

"I've decided not to meddle in political affairs.

I therefore announce now my definitive retirement," said Sadr, a longtime player in the war-



A supporter of Moqtada Sadr blocks a road with burning tyres during a demonstration in Iraq's southern city of Basra. — AFP

Since legislative elections in Oct last year, political deadlock has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president, due to disagreement between factions over forming a coalition

torn country's political scene, though he himself has never held a government post.

He made the announcement on Twitter, where he added that "all the institutions" linked to his Sadrist movement will be closed, except the mausoleum of his

father, assassinated in 1999, and other heritage facilities.

His latest statement came two days after he said "all parties" including his own should give up government positions in order to help resolve the months-long political impasse.

Since legislative elections in October last year, political deadlock has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president, due to disagreement between factions over forming a coalition.

His bloc emerged from last year's election as the biggest, with 73 seats, but short of a majority.

In June, his lawmakers quit in a bid to break the logjam, which led to a rival bloc, the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, becoming the largest in the legislature. — AFP

Ex-ambassador launches bid for Lebanon presidency

BEIRUT: Tracy Chamoun, an ex-ambassador and granddaughter of late president Camille Chamoun, announced on Monday she will run for the presidency of crisis-hit Lebanon, in a rare such bid by a woman in the Arab state.

"I announce to the Lebanese people, and their lawmakers... my candidacy in Lebanon's upcoming presidential elections," Chamoun told a news conference marking the launch of her campaign for the post, which is reserved for Lebanon's Maronite Christians.

"I have a new vision for the republic, one that can offer solutions to the economic, political and social problems," plaguing the state, she added, styling herself as a bulwark against the incumbent ruling class.

Elections are expected to be held before Michel Aoun's six-year presidential mandate expires in October, but many expect delays in light of deep political divisions.

Chamoun's candidacy is a rare move in a country that saw its first female presidential candidate in 2014, when little-known lawyer Nadine Moussa decided to run.

It took Lebanon's bitterly divided political class more than two years to elect Aoun in 2016



Tracy Chamoun, Lebanese ex-ambassador, holds a press conference in Beirut. — AFP

— a delay the country can ill afford this time around in light of an unprecedented economic crisis. Despite mounting woes, parliament has rarely met since it was elected in May.

Chamoun served as Lebanon's ambassador to Jordan for three years before stepping down in August 2020 in the wake of a monster explosion at Beirut's port that she and many others blamed on government ineptitude.

She is the founder of the Liberal Democrats Party of Lebanon — one of the first in the country to be established by a woman but which has little political sway. The former ambassador is a granddaughter of Camille Chamoun, who was Lebanon's president till 1958.

Her father Dany Chamoun was assassinated in 1990, a murder blamed on rival Christian leader Samir Geagea. — AFP

Tens of millions battle Pakistan floods as death toll rises

SUKKUR: Tens of millions of people across swathes of Pakistan were on Monday battling the worst monsoon floods in a decade, with countless homes washed away, vital farmland destroyed, and the country's main river threatening to burst its banks.

Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman said a third of the country was under water, creating a "crisis of unimaginable proportions".

Officials say 1,061 people have died since June when the seasonal rains began, but the final toll could be higher as hundreds of villages in the mountainous north have been cut off after flood-swollen rivers washed away roads and bridges.

The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but it can also bring destruction.

This year's flooding has affected



Residents gather beside a road damaged by flood waters following heavy monsoon rains in Charsadda district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. — AFP

more than 33 million people — one in seven Pakistanis — said the National Disaster Management Authority. "It's all one big ocean, there's no dry land to pump the

water out," Rehman said, adding the economic cost would also be devastating.

This year's floods are comparable to those of 2010 — the

worst on record — when more than 2,000 people died. Flood victims have taken refuge in makeshift camps that have sprung up across the country, where

desperation is setting in. "Living here is miserable. Our self-respect is at stake," said Fazal e Malik, sheltering in the grounds of a school now home to around 2,500 people in the town of Nowshera in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"I stink but there is no place to take a shower. There are no fans."

Near Sukkur, a city in southern Sindh province and home to an ageing colonial-era barrage on the Indus River that is vital to preventing further catastrophe, one farmer lamented the devastation wrought on his rice fields.

Millions of acres of rich farmland have been flooded by weeks of non-stop rain, but now the Indus is threatening to burst its banks as torrents of water course downstream from tributaries in the north.

"Our crop spanned over 5,000 acres on which the best quality rice was sown and is eaten by you

and us," Khalil Ahmed, 70, said.

"All that is finished." Much of Sindh is now an endless landscape of water, hampering a massive military-led relief operation.

"There are no landing strips or approaches available... our pilots find it difficult to land," one senior officer said.

The army's helicopters were also struggling to pluck people to safety in the north, where soaring mountains and deep valleys make for treacherous flying conditions.

Many rivers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province — which boasts some of Pakistan's best tourist spots — have burst their banks, demolishing scores of buildings including a 150-room hotel that crumbled into a raging torrent. The government has declared an emergency and appealed for international help, and on Sunday the first aid flights began arriving — from Turkey and the UAE. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DUBAI

10 Yemen soldiers killed in 'dangerous escalation'

Ten Yemeni soldiers were killed in an overnight attack near the blockaded city of Taz, Yemen's government said on Monday, calling it a "dangerous escalation" after a months-long ceasefire.

The assault, which also left several soldiers wounded, was aimed at cutting off a key route to the southwestern city of about two million, government said.

The Ansar Allah fighters have blocked main roads into Taz since 2015, the same year that a coalition intervened in



the conflict. Yemen's warring parties have been observing a ceasefire since April, bringing a drastic reduction in hostilities although small-scale fighting has continued. — AFP

MUMBAI

Ambani commits \$25 bn to launch 5G in India

Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani announced an investment of \$25 billion to launch 5G networks in India, aiming to strengthen his grip on one of the world's fastest-growing smartphone markets.

In his annual speech delivered virtually to shareholders of Reliance Industries — India's most valuable company — Asia's second-richest person said he believes "digital freedom is the birthright of every Indian". Ambani's multi-billion-dollar



empire was built on oil and petrochemicals, but he has diversified into new areas including telecoms, retail and renewable energy in recent years. — AFP

VIENNA

Austrian of Iranian origin gets release from prison

A 75-year-old Austrian citizen of Iranian origin, jailed in Iran on charges of espionage, has been given a five-day release from prison, his daughter said.

"He was freed for medical reasons after three and a half years' detention," said Fanak Mani, the daughter of Massud Mossaheb.

Mossaheb is being held at Evin prison, near the capital Tehran. A photo posted on the Free Massud Twitter account shows him smiling, supporting himself on a



crutch, with his wife by his side. Mossaheb was the general secretary of the Austro-Iranian Society, an organisation set up to encourage exchanges between the two countries. — AFP



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In brief

■ BERLIN



HUNDREDS OF SUBSTANCES CAUSED ODER RIVER FISH DEATHS

A group of German and Polish experts plans to present results by September 30 on the cause of the massive fish kill in the Oder river that forms the border between their two countries. The announcement was made by German Environment Minister Steffi Lemke and her Polish counterpart Anna Moskwa in the town of Bad Saarow which lies between Berlin and the border in the state of Brandenburg. At a German-Polish environmental council in the town, the fish kill was at the top of the agenda. “Heat, low water levels and man-made discharges” were the causes of the fish kill, according to Lemke. — **dpa**

■ FREETOWN



EIGHT DEAD IN S LEONE LANDSLIDE, FLOODS

Eight people have been killed and more than 800 displaced by torrential rain and a landslide in Sierra Leone’s capital Freetown, authorities said on Monday, warning of further damage as rains continue. The downpours hit the city over the weekend, causing a landslide on Sunday in Looking Town area. Four men, one woman and a seven-year-old girl died in the landslide, according to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). Two men were also killed in the Mount Aureol and Blackhall Road neighbourhoods when fences collapsed onto buildings, the agency said. In the Colbert community, more than 800 people were displaced by flash flooding. — **AFP**

■ STOCKHOLM



FIRE EXTINGUISHED ON FERRY OFF SWEDEN

A fire that broke out on a car ferry carrying 300 people off Sweden’s coast on Monday has been extinguished and the ship will be towed to port, Swedish maritime authorities said. The blaze appeared to have started on a refrigeration lorry on the car deck of the Stena Scandica, which was sailing from Sweden to Latvia. “The fire is out,” Swedish Maritime Administration spokeswoman Lisa Mjorning said. “The ferry will be towed to port in the next three to four hours”, she said, adding that it would be towed to south of Stockholm. “There are no injuries on board and there has been no evacuation,” she said. — **AFP**

Truss tipped to prevail as UK leadership race nears end

LONDON: The race to become Britain’s next prime minister is in its final week, with Liz Truss appeared poised to secure the top job, along with daunting challenges.

Foreign Secretary Truss, 47, has consistently outrun 42-year-old former finance minister Rishi Sunak by wide margins in polls of Conservative party members who will decide the contest, which started in early July.

An estimated 200,000 Tory grassroots have been able to vote since earlier this month for their preferred candidate, before postal and online ballots close on Friday.

The winner will be announced next Monday and replaces outgoing leader Boris Johnson in Downing Street the following day — only to face immediate crises over the spiralling cost of living.

The unenviable job of leading Britain through its highest inflation in 40 years and warnings of an imminent recession arose after Johnson announced in early July that he would be standing down.

It followed months of scandals that eventually triggered Sunak and dozens of other ministers to resign from government, forcing

Final candidates for UK Prime minister

Last week of campaigning for Conservative party member votes before a successor to Boris Johnson is announced on September 5



AFP Photos/Pool



AFP

his departure. However, some ministers and MPs — including Truss — remained loyal to the end, arguing Johnson deserved more time to turn around his controversy-tarred three-year tenure.

Nearly 10,000 Tory members are reportedly so angry at his enforced resignation they are pushing the ruling party to allow a vote over whether to accept it.

The Tory hierarchy is resisting the move while Downing Street has distanced itself from the campaign, insisting Johnson will back the winner of the leadership

fight.

Whoever that is may struggle to reunite the Conservatives, with the splits worsened by the bitter battle between Truss and Sunak.

Eight Conservative MPs initially qualified to run in the race, before the party’s MPs whittled that number down in five ballots.

Sunak was the early frontrunner, topping all those votes of Conservative MPs while Truss repeatedly finished third.

She scraped into the final pairing on July 20 by just eight votes.

The winner will be announced next Monday and replaces Johnson in Downing Street the following day — only to face immediate crises over the spiralling cost of living

However, once the run-off began she quickly became the frontrunner, winning the endorsements of big hitters in Johnson’s outgoing cabinet and stealing the support of several MPs from her rival’s camp.

Sunak, who has faced a backlash from some Tory members over his part in ousting Johnson, has been relegated to long-shot contender.

The two candidates have sparred over their policies and records in several television debates as well as a dozen hustings in front of members — the last of which will be held in London on Wednesday evening. — **AFP**

Nasa Moon rocket launch postponed after engine issue

KENNEDY SPACE CENTRE: Nasa called off a test flight on Monday of its largest-ever rocket in a setback to the ambitious programme to send humans back to the Moon and eventually to Mars.

“We don’t launch until it’s right,” Nasa administrator Bill Nelson said after an engine temperature issue forced liftoff from Kennedy Space Center to be scrubbed.

“This is a very complicated machine,” Nelson said. “You don’t want to light the candle until it’s ready to go.”

Alternative dates for launch of the US space agency’s uncrewed Artemis 1 mission are Friday and next Monday.

Blastoff had been planned for 8:33 am but was cancelled because of a temperature problem with one of the four RS-25 engines on the 322-foot Space Launch System (SLS) rocket.

Nasa said a test to get one of the engines to the proper temperature range for liftoff was not successful.

It said the SLS rocket and

Orion crew capsule which sits on top “remain in a safe and stable configuration.”

Nelson said delays were “just part of the space business” and expressed confidence that Nasa engineers will “get it fixed and then we’ll fly.”

Tens of thousands of people — including US Vice President Kamala Harris — had gathered near the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to watch the launch, which comes 50 years after Apollo 17 astronauts last set foot on the Moon.

The goal of the flight is to test the SLS and Orion crew capsule. Mannequins equipped with sensors are standing in for a crew for the mission.

Overnight operations to fill the orange-and-white rocket with more than three million litres of ultra-cold liquid hydrogen and oxygen were briefly delayed by a high risk of lightning.

Around 3:00 am, another hiccup emerged: a potential leak was detected during the filling of the main stage with hydrogen, causing a pause. After tests, the

flow resumed.

Nasa engineers later detected the engine temperature problem and put a hold on the countdown before eventually scrubbing the launch.

The rocket’s Orion capsule is to orbit the Moon to see if the vessel is safe for people in the near future.

At some point, Artemis aims to put a woman and a person of colour on the Moon for the first time.

During the 42-day trip, the Orion capsule will orbit the Moon, coming within 100 kilometres at its closest approach, and then fire its engines to shoot out 40,000 miles — a record for a spacecraft rated to carry humans.

One of the mission’s primary objectives is to test the capsule’s heat shield, which at 16 feet in diameter is the largest ever built.

On its return to Earth’s atmosphere, the heat shield will have to withstand speeds of 25,000 miles per hour and a temperature of 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit — roughly half as hot as the Sun. — **AFP**



US astronaut Stanley Glen Love speaks to members of the media after the launch of the Artemis I unmanned lunar rocket was postponed at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. — **AFP**

IAEA team to inspect Ukraine nuclear plant

KYIV: International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said on Monday he was en route to inspect Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, as Kyiv’s forces launched a counteroffensive to retake the occupied southern region of Kherson.

The coastal region of Kherson and its capital city of the same name have been contested by Russian troops since the war broke out six months ago. “Today there was a powerful artillery attack on enemy positions in... the occupied Kherson region,” government official Sergey Khlan told a TV channel.

“This is what we have been waiting for since the spring — it is the beginning of the de-occupation of Kherson region.”

Kherson city lies some 200 kilometres southwest of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant which has also been occupied by Russian troops since early March. The plant was targeted over the weekend by fresh shelling, its operator said, with Moscow and Kyiv trading blame for attacks around the complex of six nuclear reactors in Enerгодar. — **AFP**



German Chancellor eyes EU membership for Ukraine

PRAGUE: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz pledged emphatic backing for Ukraine and other hopefuls to join the European Union, underlining however that enlarging the bloc to “30 or 36” would require reforms.

Scholz said he was “committed to” having the six nations of the western Balkans, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine accede to the EU.

But as the bloc widened, each member’s veto right would have to go, said Scholz, with a transition to a “majority voting” system so as not to slow EU decision-making down.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was already putting the system of unanimity to the test, at a time when swift action was all the more necessary. “Let’s seek compromises together.

I could imagine for example, starting with majority voting in areas in which it is particularly important that we speak with one voice — in sanctions policy for example, or on issues relating to human rights,” he said.

Scholz added that member states are not faced with only two options of voting yes or no, but can also adopt “constructive abstention”.

In the speech on his vision for the bloc at Charles University in Prague, Scholz also underlined

that the Ukraine war has laid bare the “uncoordinated shrinkage of European armed forces and defence budgets” which has to be rectified with “coordinated growth”.

This meant greater cooperation between European businesses on armaments projects, joint manufacturing and procurement.

Germany, he said, will be ramping up “very significantly” on its air defence system, and also design it in a way that it could also be a shield for European neighbours from the Baltics to Scandinavia.

Scholz did not give details about the system but he had in March revealed plans to purchase an Israeli anti-missile shield system that could also offer protective cover for neighbouring EU states.

While that will be a long-term project, Berlin was already coordinating with the Netherlands on a “division of labour” on arming Ukraine, said Scholz as he urged other allies to join in the coordination.

“I can, for example, imagine that Germany will assume special responsibility in terms of building up Ukraine’s artillery and air defence capacities,” he said, vowing support for Kyiv for “as long as it takes”. — **AFP**

Towards creating effective collaboration skills



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

The old saying ‘two is a company and three is a crowd’ is not relevant these days when collaboration is a by word at every level of education and across professions. Not only does collaboration benefit a target project, it develops various life skills which will help across the spectrum of one’s public and personal life. Broadly, collaboration is working with others in a small or large group for a common goal: it could be to complete a project or to prepare for an exam. Either way, the purpose is to get a job done with maximum efficiency while keeping one’s individual strengths intact. Collaboration helps an institution because it plays to the

stronger elements of individuals in a group so that the outcome is the best possible one. For individuals, collaboration brings out the best in us: speaking and listening to others effectively, respecting others’ opinions and ways of work, and learning from a diverse group of people. Collaboration does not come easily to many. Most of us tend to be introverted at work or study, and many others do not want to share their work for a common goal. We tend to think that our time and energy should go towards goals which we have set for ourselves and not for other, more general ones where we may not get credit. But collaboration ensures that different points of view are

CHALLENGES IN COLLABORATIVE WORK USUALLY INCLUDE INDIVIDUALS NOT BEING ABLE TO TAKE CRITICISM WELL, AND WANTING INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION considered, that the best ideas of a team have been activated, and that potential challenges have been addressed. No single individual can anticipate all this. How can one fine tune their collaboration skills? Common pointers include to set this down as a clear goal to be achieved within a time frame: actively tell yourself that you will

be engaged in a few collaborative projects in the next six months. Telling somebody of this plan will ensure accountability – somebody else will remind you of this goal from time to time. Being open minded is the next step: recognise that everybody does not act or think like you, but that is precisely the point. Learning from others’ strengths or limitations is the fastest way of recognising qualities within yourself. Institutions must make collaboration possible and preferable. This can be done by actively creating collaborative projects suitable for every level. Communication within groups must be encouraged and time given for such conversations.

Individuals within a group must be recognised for their contributions, both as an incentive to them, and as encouragement to others. Challenges in collaborative work usually include individuals not being able to take criticism well, and wanting individual attention. This can be addressed by team leaders who can encourage dialogue and built short conflict resolution exercises from time to time. Today’s world is very much a village tied together by a digital network. While our unique personalities must be reflected in our social and professional lives, we must accept that working together for a common good will add value to shared goals.

Tech-savvy youth map Mali’s capital

Under a blazing sun in Mali’s capital, Amadou Menta leant over to measure a gutter then jotted down the results on a mapping app on his smartphone. “We’re collecting data,” said the 27-year-old geography student, helping to chart the roadside drains of central Bamako with two friends. Until recently Mali’s capital was largely uncharted on the web. With street names or fixed public transport routes often missing in the city of some two million, people tend to ask for directions to find their way. But the lack of maps is a major obstacle to developing its infrastructure — whether to prevent traffic jams, collect wastewater and rubbish, or prevent flooding. Tech-savvy young Malians are striving to change this, cataloguing the city’s features in the hope it will improve the lives of its residents. Armed with smartphones, dozens of volunteers have been collecting data for the local branch of OpenStreetMap, a free, online geographic database — which is then used by sites including Google Maps. Menta and fellow mappers have been charting the channels collecting waste and rainwater in Daoudabougou, a central district often hit by floods. The gutter project is receiving financial support from the World Bank, and has been welcomed by the authorities.

But it’s just one of the avenues the group is exploring — and there is plenty more work to do. Founder Nathalie Sidibe said there was previously “no freely available data in Mali”. “We saw mapping as a concrete way to contribute to developing the area,” she said. “We need to change habits here — and to do that, we need to encourage people to use digital tools.” Mobile data access is still poor in Mali. Countrywide, only one in 10 women is connected to mobile broadband, compared to one in five men, a World Bank report found last year. But the OpenStreetMap Mali team has been busy. So far, its volunteers have drawn up a map of Bamako’s public minibus routes, household waste collection points, and basic social services. Adama Konate, deputy mayor in charge of sanitation, said the group’s efforts had helped Bamako. “We only had basic knowledge before this project,” Konate said. “Now we know that this place needs drainage, and that place needs a rubbish dump.” Mahamadou Wadidie, director of the Regional Development Agency in Bamako, said the youth mapping project had made his job much easier. On the agency’s website, he showed off a regularly updated map of all the health centres and schools in Bamako drawn up from OpenStreetMap data.

— AFP

Cloud wars: Rivalries among nations rise along a new front



Alissa J Rubin

The writer is a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist

Iranian officials have worried for years that other nations have been depriving them of one of their vital water sources. But it was not an upstream dam that they were worrying about or an aquifer being bled dry. In 2018, amid a searing drought and rising temperatures, some senior officials concluded that someone was stealing their water from the clouds. “Both Israel and another country are working to make Iranian clouds not rain,” Brig Gen Gholam Reza Jalali, a senior official in the country’s powerful Revolutionary Guard, said in a 2018 speech. As the Middle East and North Africa dry up, countries in the region have embarked on a race to develop the chemicals and techniques that they hope will enable them to squeeze rain drops out of clouds that would otherwise float fruitlessly overhead. With 12 of the 19 regional countries averaging less than 10 inches of rainfall a year, a decline of 20 per cent over the past 30 years, their governments are desperate for any increment of fresh water, and cloud seeding is seen by many as a quick way to tackle the problem. And as wealthy countries like the UAE pump hundreds of millions of dollars into the effort, other nations are joining the race, trying to ensure that they do not miss out on their fair

THE LIFE SPAN OF A CLOUD, IN PARTICULAR THE TYPE OF CUMULUS CLOUDS MOST LIKELY TO PRODUCE RAIN, IS RARELY MORE THAN A COUPLE OF HOURS, ATMOSPHERIC SCIENTISTS SAY

share of rainfall before others drain the heavens dry — despite serious questions about whether the technique generates enough rainfall to be worth the effort and expense. Morocco and Ethiopia have cloud-seeding programmes, as does Iran. Saudi Arabia just started a large-scale programme, and a half-dozen other Middle Eastern and North African countries are considering it. China has the most ambitious programme worldwide, with the aim of either stimulating rain or halting hail across half the country. It is trying to force clouds to rain over the Yangtze River, which is running dry in some spots. While cloud seeding has been around for

75 years, experts say the science has yet to be proven. And they are especially dismissive of worries about one country draining clouds dry at the expense of others downwind. The life span of a cloud, in particular the type of cumulus clouds most likely to produce rain, is rarely more than a couple of hours, atmospheric scientists say. Occasionally, clouds can last longer but rarely long enough to reach another country, even in the Arabian Gulf, where seven countries are jammed close together. But several Middle Eastern countries have brushed aside the experts’ doubts and are pushing ahead with plans to wring any moisture they can from otherwise stingy clouds. Today, the unquestioned regional leader is the UAE. As early as the 1990s, the country’s ruling family recognised that maintaining a plentiful supply of water would be as important as the nation’s huge oil and gas reserves in sustaining its status as the financial and business capital of the Arabian Gulf. While there had been enough water to sustain the country’s population in 1960, when there were fewer than 100,000 people, by 2020 the population had ballooned to nearly 10 million.

— New York Times



A staff member at the National Center of Meteorology and Seismology monitors current and historical radar data on cloud movements in Abu Dhabi.

Lessons from a teen up in the mountains



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

nonchalantly at midday waiting for the horse riders!

It was 12 clock and we were trying to find out were the horse riders were when suddenly in the air we could smell the horses.

And that had us running in two different directions trying to figure out from which side they could be coming from.

That’s when we realised we were not complaining about the summer heat.

And then we could hear the sounds of horses galloping. While shooting the horse riders, right at the end was a young teenager riding a donkey.

The donkey was well trained and followed all his directions.

The best part was the other professional horse riders were ensuring he was part of the team.

Each day teaches us a new lesson.

News reporting also teaches amazing stories.

EACH DAY TEACHES US A NEW LESSON. NEWS REPORTING ALSO TEACHES AMAZING STORIES. ONE CAN BE PREPARED AS MUCH AS THEY WANT BUT IF WE ARE NOT OPEN MINDED WE WILL MISS OUT ON SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL STORIES

Something about Mundar urged me to go to him to find out more.

The organiser Saif al Rawahi explained how the young rider had approached the day before the event, at their camp, and expressed his desire to participate in the event with his donkey.

The important part is the organisers accepted the participation and there he was with the team.

There are many lessons to learn from Mundar. He is quiet and determined and it took him a while to smile, but the fact is he achieved what he wanted.

He is a teen yet he was focused through out, neither did he complain of boredom, nor was he tired. He did not need a mobile phone to keep him busy, Mundar observed keenly the happenings.

He was not interested in the selfies, but the fact that here he was with his donkey.

He had an interesting saddle too. The most interesting part was he is the trainer also.

He befriended the wild donkey four years ago and the bond grew so strong that he was able to ride it.

So we can learn from Mundar to be bold to dream to befriend an animal in the wilderness.

Have perseverance to train it and be responsible to care for it, have the confidence to approach the organisers and be committed to the cause and have the endurance to complete the event.

What he may not realise is that he has given importance to something so traditional which could be easily forgotten.

Before the arrival of oil, donkeys were commonly used as means of transportation.

They had a special place but Mundar has also mastered the art of descending and ascending the Green Mountain on his donkey.

The donkey trails of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar are well-known, and now you can also see the tourism potential of the mountain for Mundar.

We ought to wait and watch this youngster to continue to come with further more original ideas in the near future.

Rushing up to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the Green Mountain, to catch up with the Tourism Festival held from August 23 to 27, made one realise once again that weather can make all the difference. Then what about the terrain?

How wonderful it is to drive for three hours and climb a mountain to reach the top that is 3,000 metres above sea level and walk around



A RISKY JOB!

Workers stand on a billboard scaffolding in Mumbai, India, on Monday.

— AFP

What next for Boris Johnson?

JAMES PHEBY

Following a spectacular fall from grace and power, speculation is rife about what outgoing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will do next.

Will he plot a comeback from the backbenches in parliament or cash in and wreak revenge as a political pundit?

Johnson, 58, famously signed off his final performance as prime minister in the House of Commons by telling MPs: “Hasta la vista, baby”.

He may as well have used another line from the “Terminator” films — “I’ll be back” — as it only fuelled speculation that he has unfinished political business.

Allies said he wants to lead the Conservative party at the next general election, due in two years time, even though a new leader will be crowned on September 5.

“I suspect he’s not totally given up on the idea of a comeback,” politics professor Tim Bale, from Queen Mary University of London, said.

“I suspect friends of Boris Johnson... will be talking to journalists off the record all the time and criticising, albeit not openly, his successor.”

Despite being ousted by his own MPs following a string of scandals, Johnson remains popular with many party members.

According to Daniel Bowman, a political researcher at the University of Liverpool, he could leverage that power to settle some scores.

“Boris Johnson is a well-known agitator. I think revenge may be on his mind,” he said.

DESPITE BEING OUSTED BY HIS OWN MPS FOLLOWING A STRING OF SCANDALS, JOHNSON REMAINS POPULAR WITH MANY PARTY MEMBERS

This could be as a member of the cabinet, he said, pointing out that Liz Truss, the favourite to succeed him, had not ruled out giving Johnson a ministerial role.

“He could also be an agitator on the backbenches,” said Bowman.

Whoever takes over will immediately face the task of tackling the soaring cost of living and rampant inflation and is likely to hear calls for a general election to legitimise their power.

Should he stay on as a rank-and-file MP, Johnson could make mischief for his successor, as his predecessor Theresa May did for him.



In this file photo taken on August 9, Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson during a reception in the garden of 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

It would also be the ideal position for him to lie in wait in case his replacement is felled.

But that choice may not be entirely in his own hands.

Parliament’s Privileges Committee is due to report on whether he committed “contempt of the House of Commons” by saying that he believed no lockdown rules were broken in his Downing Street office.

Johnson, wife Carrie and leadership candidate Rishi Sunak, whose resignation as finance minister triggered his eventual demise, received fines for attending a birthday celebration in June 2020.

He risks losing his seat if the committee rules that he should be suspended from parliament, triggering a by-election at a time when the ruling Conservatives trail dismally in the polls.

Even if he survives the investigation, Bowman said Johnson may quit parliament anyway, if Labour look set to take the next election and he loses his seat.

“So maybe he might acknowledge that actually his political career, his time is running out, and he will be better on the sidelines, using the power of the media” to realise his ambitions, said Bowman.

Having reportedly complained that he was struggling to make ends meet on his £164,000 (\$193,000) prime ministerial salary, Johnson could accept lucrative offers to become a columnist or a pundit.

His former employer *The Daily Telegraph* and the popular conservative newspaper the *Daily Mail* are both likely suitors.

According to the parliamentary register of members’ interests in 2018, Johnson was paid £275,000 a year to write a weekly column in the *Telegraph*.

As a former prime minister, he would likely command even more money.

“I think Boris Johnson will inevitably go to the highest bidder,” said Bowman.

His predecessor May, not known for her rhetorical flair, earned more than £1 million in speaking fees in the year after she left office in 2019.

Otherwise, he could become a multi-millionaire by writing his memoirs and joining the international lecture circuit, with the ability to command around \$100,000 per speech in the United States, Mark Cowne, CEO of the Kruger Cowne agency, said.

A newspaper job would give Johnson a platform to attack those he blames for his downfall and make a case to become leader again.

“I really think he’ll pull all the levers he possibly can and really try to talk to his base,” said Bowman.

“Outside of parliament, he really has the ability to construct his own narrative and his own attack line.”

Either way, he is likely to cause his successor “a lot of trouble”, he predicted.

— AFP

sport

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‘UNTOUCHABLE’ VERSTAPPEN CRUISES IN BELGIUM

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, BELGIUM: World champion Max Verstappen blew away his rivals with a commanding performance at the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday to take a significant step towards a second successive drivers’ title as Red Bull celebrated a 1-2 with Sergio Perez finishing a remote runner-up.

The 24-year-old Dutchman, who started from 14th on the grid, scorched through the field with devastating pace and elan to deliver crushing proof of his and Red Bull’s superiority.

“It’s been a weekend that I couldn’t have imagined before,” said Verstappen, who pulled 93 points clear of Perez in the drivers’ standings.

Among those blown away by Verstappen’s stunning show of superiority was his teammate.

“Max was flying — he was on another planet. He was untouchable,” said Perez.

Verstappen has now won nine of this season’s 14 races — this was the 29th of his career and completed a hat-trick of summer victories in Europe.

In front of a packed crowd at the spectacular Spa-Francorchamps circuit, including many fans from the nearby Netherlands, Verstappen came home 17.841 seconds clear of the pack with race pole-sitter Carlos Sainz finishing third for Ferrari.

Charles Leclerc, Verstappen’s nearest challenger going into the race, struggled in the other Ferrari after starting 15th.

He was handed a five-second penalty for speeding in the pitlane and had to battle past Alpine’s Fernando Alonso on the last lap to snatch sixth behind the Mercedes of George Russell and Fernando Alonso.

Lewis Hamilton retired on the opening lap after his Mercedes collided with Alonso’s car.

FLYING VERSTAPPEN

Verstappen was one of eight drivers to be relegated down the grid after taking new power-unit or gearbox components.

In spite of being quickest in qualifying he started 14th but quickly carved his way through the field to install himself in the easy chair up front.



Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates his victory during the podium ceremony of the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa-Francorchamps racetrack at Spa. — AFP

The race began in bright and dry conditions following official confirmation that Belgium’s place on the calendar was secure for next year at least with a one-year contract extension.

When the lights went out, Sainz made an excellent start, while Perez was slow to move and passed by Alonso, Hamilton and Russell. Verstappen rose smoothly from 14th on the grid to eighth.

As the field climbed through Les Combes,

Hamilton collided with Alonso as he attempted to complete an impetuous pass, the Mercedes rising over the Alpine and falling violently. Both men continued, but Hamilton’s race was done.

Alonso called Hamilton an “idiot” over the radio and the Briton later took full responsibility.

“He was in my blind spot, I didn’t give him enough space. It is my fault,” Hamilton said.

This unscripted exit left the seven-time champion still searching for a first win of the season.

Shortly after, Nicholas Latifi went wide in his Williams and spun, taking out Valtteri Bottas’s Alfa Romeo.

A safety car was deployed and the field settled with Sainz leading Perez, Russell and Alonso.

Soon after the resumption, Verstappen cut his way through to reach third and a podium finish by lap eight.

The impatient Dutchman surged past Perez on lap 12 as Alonso pitted, leaving the two Red Bulls leading ahead of Russell and Vettel, a near-perfect scenario for the Milton Keynes-based team that made light of Verstappen’s grid penalty.

Perez pitted after 14 laps, re-joining third in front of Leclerc as Verstappen came in from the lead on lap 15. He came out ahead of Perez.

The defending champion was in imperious mood and on lap 18, after following Sainz uphill from Eau Rouge, swept past to lead on the Kemmel straight.

Remarkably, to the delight of the orange-clad hordes packed into the circuit, Verstappen had demolished the field before half-distance.

Three laps later, Perez passed Sainz for second.

Further pit-stops shuffled the pack briefly, but Red Bull reigned supreme.

“It was quite a hectic first lap to stay out of trouble,” said a composed Verstappen. “But once we settled in after the safety car, the car was really on rails.”

He added that he knew his car was ‘super-competitive’ from the start of the weekend. “I could tell from the ‘get-go’ that we could get an amazing result.

“Now, of course, I am enjoying the moment, having a good time, but even with this amazing weekend, we are still focused on what we can achieve and we want more.”

He will be counting on another big points pay day next weekend when the F1 circus pitches up at Zandvoort for his home Dutch Grand Prix. — AFP

‘Brilliant’ Pandya helps India edge Pakistan

DUBAI: Skipper Rohit Sharma on Sunday lauded Hardik Pandya’s brilliance with bat and ball after the all-rounder guided India to a thrilling five-wicket win over Pakistan in the Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament.

Chasing 148 for victory, Ravindra Jadeja, who hit 35, and Pandya, unbeaten on 33, put on a key fifth-wicket stand of 52 as India achieved the target with two balls to spare in Dubai.

Pace bowlers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Pandya shared seven wickets to set up victory for India in their opening match as they bowled out Pakistan for 147.

Pandya, who returned figures of 3-25 with his medium-pace bowling, then stood calm to hit the winning six in a tense chase in the six-nation tournament which acts as a tune-up for the T20 World Cup in October-November in Australia.

India, who lost their previous match with Pakistan by 10 wickets in last year’s T20 World Cup at the same venue, improved their win-loss record to 8-2 against the arch-rivals in Virat Kohli’s 100th T20 international.

Pandya, who earlier this year made a comeback into the national team after recovering from a career-threatening back injury, made the match his own.

“Since the time he has made his comeback, he’s been brilliant,” Rohit said of the champion all-rounder, who led IPL debutants Gujarat Titans to the title in May.

“He is a lot calmer now and more confident about what he wants to do, whether it’s with the bat or with the ball. He can bowl really quick, we saw that today with those short balls.

“It was always about just understanding his game and he’s doing that well now. In a high-pressure chase with 10 runs per over needed, you can panic, but he never showed any of that.”

NASEEM EFFECT

Debutant pace bowler Naseem Shah stood out for Pakistan with figures of 2-27 but a foot injury in the last few overs had him limping as India took control with the right-left batting pair of Pandya and Jadeja.

Pakistan kept chipping away with wickets as Naseem bowled Suryakumar Yadav for 18 and Mohammad Nawaz rattled the stumps of Jadeja in the final over.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam said Naseem suffered from cramps.

Kohli scored 35 before falling to Nawaz’s left-arm spin that also claimed Rohit for 12.

Naseem struck early with the wicket of KL Rahul for nought



India's Hardik Pandya hits a boundary to win the Asia Cup Twenty20 international Group A match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. — AFP

as the opener dragged an express delivery on to his stumps.

The 19-year old Naseem nearly got Kohli out two balls later only for Fakhar Zaman to drop a catch at second slip.

“Naseem bowled well at the start, he took crucial wickets and bowled well in the death as well,” Azam said of his young bowler.

“We missed Shaheen (Shah

Afridi, who is injured) but he never let us feel his absence. It was his confidence that made him bowl like that.”

Kohli, who has endured a prolonged lean patch and recently spoke of his mental health struggles, overcame initial jitters and seemed to find his flow with a few convincing boundaries including a wristy drive over mid-

on before getting out.

Earlier, Kumar set the tone for India’s dominance as he dismissed Azam for 10 in the second over and returned figures of 4-26.

Pandya rattled Pakistan’s middle-order with his three wickets including the dangerous wicketkeeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan, who had hit 43 off 42 balls.

SCOREBOARD

Pakistan	
M Rizwan c Avesh b Pandya	43
B Azam c Arshdeep b Kumar	10
F Zaman c Karthik b Avesh	10
I Ahmed c Karthik b Pandya	28
K Shah c Jadeja b Pandya	2
S Khan lbw Kumar	10
A Ali c Yadav b Kumar	9
M Nawaz c Karthik b Arshdeep	1
H Rauf not out	13
N Shah lbw Kumar	0
S Dahani b Arshdeep	16
Extras (b1, w4)	5
Total (all out, 19.5 overs)	147
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-42, 3-87, 4-96, 5-97, 6-112, 7-114, 8-128, 9-128	
Bowling: Kumar 4-0-26-4, Arshdeep 3.5-0-33-2, Pandya 4-0-25-3, Avesh 2-0-19-1, Chahal 4-0-32-0, Jadeja 2-0-11-0	
India (target 148)	
R Sharma c Iftikhar b Nawaz	12
KL Rahul b Naseem	0
V Kohli c Iftikhar b Nawaz	35
R Jadeja b Nawaz	35
S Yadav b Naseem	18
H Pandya not out	33
D Karthik not out	1
Extras (lb5, w9)	14
Total (5 wickets, 19.4 overs)	148
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-50, 3-53, 4-89, 5-141	
Bowling: Naseem 4-0-27-2, Dahani 4-0-29-0, Rauf 4-0-35-0, Shadab 4-0-19-0, Nawaz 3.4-0-33-3	

Kumar returned to take two wickets in two balls in the penultimate over but was denied a hat-trick by number 11 Shahnawaz Dahani.

Dahani smashed two sixes in his six-ball 16 before being bowled by left-arm medium-pace bowler Arshdeep Singh, who took two wickets as Pakistan’s innings folded in 19.5 overs. — AFP

OTA completes arrangements for Arab veterans tennis



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

The Oman Tennis Association (OTA) is gearing up for the 10th Arab Veterans tennis championship to be held in Salalah from September 4 to 9.

The organising committee for the Arab tennis event held its third meeting under the chairmanship of Dr Ahmed al Saidi in presence of tournament director Salman al Balushi.

Abdul Rahim al Balushi, general supervisor of the tournament, stated that all preparations have been completed.

“The stadiums, transportation and the schedule of the tournament have been prepared, where two tourist trips are being made for the participants and for the first time the photo exhibition from the first championship to the ninth championship will be



Salman al Balushi

held on the sidelines of the championship.”

Salem Abu Bakr will be director of the tournament, while Saudi international referee Youssef al Turaif will the chief referee.

20 OMANI PLAYERS

Twenty Omani players will compete in the 145-strong player registration for the event.

“A reception for the participating delegations will be held on 8 pm and the number of participants so far has reached 145 participants



Chief referee Youssef al Turaif

from the participating countries and with the participation of 20 Omani players for the first time.”

The official reception for the participating delegations will be organised in Odeh Al-Madhi Square at Al Haffa Beach under the patronage of Shaikh Badr bin Ali al Rawas, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs.

“Accommodation and the main hotel in Al Fanar Hotel in Salalah. The tournament will be on the tennis courts of Sultan Qaboos Sports

Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.”

“Delegations will arrive on September 2 and leave on September 10. The closing ceremony will be on September 9 at 5 o’clock in the tennis courts,” Salman added.

On September 3, an exhibition match between Omani tennis star Fatma al Nabhani and Kuwait player Mohammed Abdul Ridha Ghareeb will be held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex.

On September 4, the official opening ceremony of the championship will be conducted at 11 am.

The matches will begin from 8 am and continue till 8 pm.

On the second day, another exhibition match between the ambassadors of the Arab Veterans Championship will be held under the patronage of Shaikh Amer bin Ali al Shanfari, President of Al Nasr Club.

Shotokan karate centre holds black belt grading ceremony



MUSCAT: The Shotokan Karate Centre organised a black belt grading ceremony for a group of male and female players from Pioneers Karate Academy hall in Al Khuwair on August 27. The ceremony was held under the supervision of Shihan Ahmed bin Saeed al Zakwani, president of the academy and the representative of JSKA Organisation in Oman.

The players of the first black belt (Dan 1) who were promoted to the second black belt (Dan 2) include Hilal bin Ali al Kindi, Ahmed bin Murad al Balushi, Ashbind Peruli, Alawi bin Tariq Ba Omar, Al Hajjaj bin Youssef al Siyabi, Al Yaqdhan bin Hilal al Abdali and Shaima bint Tariq Ba Omar and Bayan bint Hilal al Abdali after they passed the prescribed exams for the second Dan.

Rimas bint Ahmed al Wahaibi, Oman bint Youssef al Siyabi and Majan bint Youssef al Siyabi passed the black belt tests (Dan 1). Black belt certificates were delivered to the

previous batch from the Pioneers Karate Academy and the Shotokan Karate Centre.

Certificates were given to instructor Youssef bin Musallam al Siyabi (Dan 5), Tariq bin Juma al Raisi (Dan 2), Khalifa bin Hamad al Rasbi (Dan 2), Khalid bin Muhammad al Jabri (Dan 2), Ahmed bin Muhammad al Jabri (Dan 1), Muhammad Ibrahim al Shinawi (Dan 1), Habiba Ibrahim El Shinawy (Dan 1), Solaf Ibrahim El Shinawy (Dan 1), Luke Tirimacco (Dan1) and Omar bin Adil al Maimani (Dan 1).

The Pioneers karate Academy and the Shotokan Karate Centre cooperate to conduct such courses and tests are held to upgrade, refine and raise the level of the players and exchange experiences between instructors. The instructors of the Pioneers Karate Academy and the Shotokan Karate Centre congratulated all the promoted male and female players in the previous and current batches.

Holiday CC claim second BCL title

MUSCAT: The Holiday Cricket Club (HCC) won their second consecutive BCL Knockout cricket tournament title in as many editions recently in Barka.

The matches of the tournament were played across three grounds where the grand finale of the tournament was played at Riders Barka Ground on August 19. Sixteen teams participated in the tournament and HCC proved to be champions by defeating Sharadi Sixers with a close margin.

In an exciting last-ball finish, final match was played of 1 over a side due to low light, Sharadi Sixers won the toss and decided to bat first. They could manage to muster 4 runs in an over, hence setting a target of 5 runs. Chasing the target, HCC comprehensively won the match with 2 balls to spare to lift their second BCL trophy.

Somu of HCC was declared as the best batsmen of the tournament, while Munna of Bangla Avengers was adjudged best bowler. Safer from Sharadi Sixers was awarded with man of the series for his all-



round performance throughout.

The champions and runner-ups of the tournament were crowned with attractive trophies and cash prize. Also third and fourth position teams were felicitated with trophies, whereas cinema tickets were given as the token of man of the match for each match sponsored by Wow Cinemas, Oman.

Ahmed Shariff, manager of Sarooj Water, was chief guest in the grand finale and prize distribution ceremony. Raja of Wow Cinemas served as the guest of honour for the evening. The BCL committee thanked their sponsors, organisers, participating teams, support staff and volunteers for making the event a success.



BENZEMA STRIKES LATE FOR REAL

LEWANDOWSKI BAGS DOUBLE FOR BARCA

MADRID: Veteran star strikers Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema both hit doubles on Sunday in contrasting victories for Barcelona and La Liga leaders Real Madrid.

Lewandowski scored twice for the second game in a row as Jules Kounde made his debut in Barcelona's 4-0 cruise past Valladolid.

Later, Real Madrid struggled for 88 minutes at Espanyol. With the scores tied and time running out, Benzema put Real ahead before sealing a 3-1 victory after 10 eventful added minutes.

Real saved their perfect start to the season and climbed back to the top of the table on nine points after three games, ahead of Real Betis on goal difference.

Barcelona rose to third, two points further back.

"To have Lewandowski in your team is a blessing," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez.

"He's an extraordinary player. Spectacular. A natural leader. It's a blessing to have him with us, it's marvellous.

"He's a model, a born worker. He's humble, he works for the team, he helps the coaching staff, he makes the difference."

At the Camp Nou, Xavi handed Kounde his first start after the club was finally able to register the France defender they signed from Sevilla last month for a reported 50 million euros (\$49.8m).

Lewandowski hit the post with an early header.

Pedri then spotted the run of Raphinha in behind but the Brazilian was thwarted by goalkeeper Jordi Masip, who was

well beaten moments later when Ousmane Dembele's venomous shot clipped the crossbar.

Barca's pressure told after 24 minutes as Raphinha whipped in a teasing cross which a gambling Lewandowski stabbed home.

A marauding Dembele tested Masip from range, and then created the second for Pedri by rolling a perfectly weighted ball for the midfielder to bury on the stroke of half-time.

Lewandowski all but put the game beyond reach on 64 minutes, running onto a pass from Dembele and cleverly backheeling past Masip with the help of a deflection off Joaquin Fernandez.

Valladolid nearly pulled one back but Marc-Andre ter Stegen saved well from Oscar Plano and Kounde stuck out a leg on the line to keep out the follow-up effort

from Roque Mesa.

Barca grabbed a fourth in stoppage time as Roberto volleyed home after Lewandowski was denied a hat-trick after Masip, a former Barcelona player, tipped his shot onto the bar.

'WE WERE QUITE SLOW'

In the late game, Vinicius Junior ran on to a sharp diagonal pass in the 12th minute to slide the ball into the far corner and give Real Madrid the lead.

Espanyol fought back. Joselu levelled after 43 minutes. He burst through and when Thibaut Courtois saved his first thump at goal and the ball bounced off Eder Militao, the Espanyol striker beat both Real players to the ball and scuffed it in.

Both teams had chances in the second half before Benzema, as so often in the last year, decided the game. After a quiet game, he found space at the far post with two minutes left, met Rodrygo's cross and volleyed home from cose range.

Deep into frantic added time, Espanyol goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte, charged out of his box to stop a Real attack and received a red card for a foul on Dani Ceballos.

Benzema fired home the free-kick.

"We were quite slow," said Real coach Carlo Ancelotti. "We had difficulty managing the intensity of the match."

Villarreal dropped their first points of the season in a 0-0 draw at Getafe as Unai Emery's side saw the award of a penalty overturned following a VAR review in the dying stages. — AFP

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Getafe 0 Villarreal 0
Barcelona 4 (Lewandowski 24, 65, Pedri 43, Roberto 90+2) Valladolid 0
Espanyol 1 (Joselu 43)
Real Madrid 3 (Vinicius 12, Benzema 88 90+10)

ON SATURDAY

Elche 0 Real Sociedad 1 (Mendez 20)
Rayo Vallecano 0 Real Mallorca 2 (Muriqi 13, Lee 64)
Almeria 2 (Ramzani 42, Sadiq 55) Sevilla 1 (Oliver 30)

ON FRIDAY

Girona 0 Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 49)
Real Betis 1 (Iglesias 34) Osasuna 0

Al Harthy's podium bid ends in Barcelona

BARCELONA: Mid-race contact during round four of the European Le Mans Series at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya on Sunday ruined realistic hopes of an LMGTE podium return for Ahmad al Harthy and Oman Racing – the team having to ultimately settle for a frustrating 10th position.

With hopes high for a competitive challenge at the front after Al Harthy qualified the No 69 Aston Martin Vantage LMGTE on pole position with a superb performance on Saturday, the damage sustained in hour two of the race – and the resulting pit-stop – ended the podium bid.

Al Harthy took the start of the race but the action fell under safety car conditions very quickly following an incident involving an LMGTE Ferrari and two LMP3 prototypes. After having to avoid the troubles, Al Harthy was shuffled back to second behind the No 77 Porsche of Christian Ried. Racing got back underway on lap six, with 15 minutes elapsed, and Al Harthy made his intent clear immediately by piling pressure

Frustration for Ahmad with Rd4 podium hopes in ELMS dashed

Oman Racing's Al Harthy, De Haan and Sorensen salvage P10 finish

Mid-race contact from errant rival has major impact on 2022 title hopes

onto his rival. Swarming all over the Porsche, the Oman Racing driver pushed hard to try and regain the lead and into lap 10 he positioned himself for an attack.

Further around the lap, Al Harthy went for the move on the brakes into Turn 10 but unfortunately ran a bit deep. Although able to avoid entering the gravel trap, he did slip to third behind the No 93 Porsche of Michael Fassbender.



As the end of the opening hour neared Al Harthy was queued up behind Fassbender but the Omani had to contend with high tyre degradation. This gave Giacomo Petrobelli a chance to pass the Aston Martin, which he did in the No 66 Ferrari – although not without some contact.

Al Harthy, now fourth of course, aimed to hit back but a couple of laps later Petrobelli tagged Fassbender and Al Harthy

was able to sweep through into second place. Into hour two of his double-stint, Al Harthy remained ahead of Petrobelli and the Omani then made his first pit-stop of the race a few moments later to take fresh tyres.

When the race order settled again Al Harthy was third in LMGTE and swarming all over the No 57 Ferrari with improved pace. Although able to get through, subsequent contact led to big

damage for the Aston Martin.

Making an unscheduled second pit-stop around one hour and 20 minutes into the race, the TF Sport mechanics who look after the Oman Racing car did a great job to facilitate a repair to the front-right and fit fresh tyres before Al Harthy rejoined the race – albeit in 10th position and three laps down. He went on to conclude his eventful double stint around mid-distance, with De Haan climbing

behind the wheel for hour three. De Haan did all he could before Sorensen took over the car for the final hour and the run to the chequered flag – taking the finish in 10th place in LMGTE.

"It's unfortunate how things played out", reflected Al Harthy, "We had to avoid the first corner troubles, and then I was behind the Porsche [Christian Ried]. It was always going to be difficult with the high deg on the tyres but things opened up when we were able to regain second position, after the incident between Petrobelli and Fassbender. But that's when we had real traction issues."

Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps, which this weekend hosted the FIA Formula One World Championship, will be the venue for round five of the European Le Mans Series over the weekend September 24/25.

2022 European Le Mans Series – LMGTE Driver Standings (Rd4)
7th Ahmad Al Harthy/Marco Sorensen/Sam De Haan, 30pts
2022 European Le Mans Series – LMGTE Team Standings (Rd4)
7th Oman Racing 30pts

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3-months-long shrimp fishing season begins on September 1



HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

The shrimp fishing season will begin on Thursday, September 1, in the Sultanate of Oman and will continue for three months, until the end of November.

The shrimp fishing season marks the end of species-based seasonal closures that are enforced during the calendar year — the first being the lobster fishing season which begins in March, followed by the squid fishing season in August. Seasonal bans are key to conserving Oman's marine resources.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed preparations for the shrimp fishing season by carrying out a number of guidance and awareness activities for artisanal fishermen.

The Department of Fisheries Control and Licensing at the Directorate General of Fish Resources Development will also intensify the work of fish control teams along the coasts of the governorates during the season.

Oil & Gas divestments to generate half of \$5bn proceeds from OIA's 5-year exit plan



Key sector: 'The main sector to be privatised is Oil & Gas due to its maturity, with total expected proceeds exceeding \$2.5 billion'

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

A divestment programme unveiled recently by Oman Investment Authority — the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman — is anticipated to garner around \$5 billion in proceeds, around half of which is expected to come from Oil & Gas assets slated for privatisation over the next five years.

An overview of the Authority's five-year exit plan — spanning the 2021 – 2025 timeframe — was shared by Omani officials taking part in a key investment forum held in London, UK recently.

"The main sector to be privatised is Oil & Gas due to its maturity, with total expected

proceeds exceeding \$2.5 billion; the total proceeds of privatisation are estimated above \$5 billion in the next five years," it was revealed at the event.

Earlier, in June this year, OIA disclosed that its privatisation plan envisions divestments from over 30 assets over the five-year timeframe. The plan begins with exits from six investments in the sectors of energy, manufacturing, tourism, and logistics.

Three of these assets will be considered for initial public offerings in MSX; a manufacturing project owned by OIA directly and two OQ projects. Additionally, OIA will partially and fully exit two Asyad Group projects and fully exit several OMRAN hotels and resorts.

OIA's 5-Year Privatisation Plan focuses on privatising government-owned entities affiliated to sectors contributing to economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040. "As an owner, the Authority

endeavours to promote liquidity and enhance capitalisation of the market; hence, privatisation of government entities through IPOs at MSX is prioritised over other exit methods," it noted.

Of the roughly \$5 billion estimated in proceeds from OIA privatisations, the contribution of Oil & Gas is pegged at \$2.555 billion.

This is followed by Electricity & Water with a share of \$1.186 billion, Logistics (\$702 million), Technology (\$397 million), Food (\$156 million) and Fisheries (\$96 million).

Significantly, the pipeline of planned divestments is expected to yield \$2.592 billion in proceeds during 2022, followed by \$841 million in 2023.

It rises again to \$1.427 billion in 2024, with a modest \$223 million generated at the tail-end of the programme in 2025.

Earlier this week, Omani oilfield services firm Abraj Energy Services — a subsidiary of OQ Group — announced that it is "currently reviewing the possibility of gaining a listing on the MSX, the timing and size of the potential transaction are under consideration and subject to necessary regulatory approvals".



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Sohar Aluminium and GE sign 10-year power services contract

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Sohar Aluminium signed a services contract for GE Gas Power to provide repairs, maintenance, and parts for ten years for four GT13E2 gas turbines and four generators installed at their site in the Sultanate of Oman. GE Digital will also provide its Asset Performance Management (APM) software for the term of the contract.

The four units have a generation capacity of up to 696 megawatts (MW) and the electricity produced is used to power Sohar Aluminium's smelter. The solutions provided by GE are expected to enhance the reliability of the units, increase the availability of each gas turbine,



GE Digital will also provide its Asset Performance Management (APM) software for the term of the contract

decrease costs, and reduce operational risks, ultimately improving productivity at the smelter.

Said al Masoudi, Chief Executive Officer at Sohar

Aluminium said, "Stable electricity supply is a key input for our manufacturing processes and essential for continuous operations at Sohar Aluminium.

The GT13E2 units at our site have provided critical power output since they were first installed in 2009, supporting our growth and enabling us to keep meeting customer commitments.

TURN TO PAGE 15



تenders

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Tender Announcement

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Number	T-30-2022
Tender Name	Call off Agreement for the provision of Cleaning Services for MWASALAT Vehicles in Salalah.
Project Summary	Within the Framework of this tender, MWASALAT would like to have a qualified Contractor to provide Cleaning Services for Mwasalat Vehicles in Salalah.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/-
Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field

Start date for tender document distribution	Last date for tender document distribution	Last date for submission
Tuesday, 30 August 2022	Tuesday, 06 September 2022	Monday, 19th September 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00 A.M - 2:00 P.M.

Tenders are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.

The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.

Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C. "MWASALAT" at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

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For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om

Al Mouj Muscat’s tour operators win Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Award

MUSCAT: Two of Al Mouj Muscat’s sea tour operators have earned Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Award status for the second and third years running, demonstrating their consistently high standards and the leisure destination’s ongoing success as a base for international marine tourism.

MolaMola Diving Center and Daymaniat Shells have each been awarded the accolades which place them in the top 10 per cent of attractions worldwide, MolaMola for the third consecutive year and for Daymaniat Shells it is the second year it has achieved recognition. They are among 15 sea tour enterprises to be based at Al Mouj Marina, a 400-berth facility surrounded by luxury homes, from which residents, visitors and tourists can enjoy ocean-based adventures.

MolaMola offers daily snorkelling and diving trips to the nature reserves of the Daymaniat and Fahal islands, and this year they also received the PADI 5



Star Dive Center Award for the courses they run for novice and experienced divers.

Daymaniat Shell’s experiences include dolphin and whale shark watching, snorkelling trips and sunset cruises as well as overnight camping and private charters.

The Sea of Oman is rich with an abundance of underwater life and all of Al Mouj’s marine tour operators (SMEs) provide safe and environmentally responsible trips matched by high standards

of customer service. It is an ethos shared by Al Mouj Marina which is one of only four in the Gulf to have earned Five Gold Anchors which is a benchmark for quality of service, and it is the first to earn International Marine Cleanliness status.

Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006 as Oman’s first integrated tourism complex and today it attracts around 4 million people a year, with marine leisure opportunities integral to the appeal and the sea tour SMEs able

to capitalise on high daily footfall all year round.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, says: “I would like to congratulate both Daymaniat Shells and MolaMola for once again earning these important accolades, demonstrating the consistency of their service and presenting them and Al Mouj so positively to global audiences.

Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Awards come from the people who matter most, the customers, so

others may book with confidence, safe in the knowledge that they can expect a high-quality experience all of which helps to grow marine tourism in the Sultanate of Oman. Creating a place where SMEs can thrive is central to our philosophy that supports the growth and diversification of Oman’s economy and where tourism is a key priority.

“Whilst our country has the most incredible natural resources, it is the people with local knowledge and sea-going expertise who make our beautiful environment accessible to others. We are proud to be part of their ongoing success and delighted to have helped establish marine tourism as a new area of growth and employment within the local economy.

“What is also rewarding is that our commitment to sustainable eco-friendly tourism supports wider conservation efforts whilst making it possible for people from all over the world to enjoy our ocean.”

Motoring comfort unleashed with the new 2022 Chevrolet Traverse RS



MUSCAT: Spacious, stylish and feature-rich, the 2022 Chevrolet Traverse RS is rapidly gaining a reputation for itself as the mid-size SUV of choice of a niche segment of customers: predominantly large families for whom every journey is a celebration of togetherness while on the move.

Capable of comfortably seating a total of seven passengers, the RS offers an unbeatable combination of roominess and motoring pleasure – an attribute that also makes it the favourite of adventure-minded customers.

After all, this popular model of the 2022 Chevrolet Traverse range resonates with those who see in the RS an invitation to explore, experience and challenge themselves on or off-road. With its full-size seats, everyone travels together as a family in utmost comfort and safety, thanks also to the variant’s an array of segment-leading technology and infotainment features.

This imposing and roomy family SUV is now available in the Sultanate of Oman with an EMI starting at RO 235, which includes VAT, registration for the first year, service for three years / 50,000 kilometres (whichever comes first) and extended warranty for six years.

The product of a refreshed styling enhanced wireless connectivity and a range of active and passive safety technologies, the 2022 RS radiates robustness, albeit with a sporty edge. This aura is reflected in the model’s all-new front fascia and grille design.

As an all-wheel-drive model ideally suited for Oman road conditions, the RS is powered by a naturally aspirated 3.6L V6 engine rated at 310 horsepower with 351 NM of torque. It’s a considerable amount of power channelled to the front or all four wheels through a nine-speed shiftable automatic transmission. These capabilities enable the RS to perform commendably well even with a full passenger and cargo load.

A standout feature of the 2022 Chevrolet Traverse RS is its cabin capacity. Stretching 5230mm in length, the RS is technically a full-size SUV although it competes in the mid-size segment. The length attests to the expansiveness of the cabin, laid out in three rows with ample legroom.

The RS, along with the rest of the Chevrolet Traverse range, is marketed exclusively by OTE Group in the Sultanate of Oman. Check out the RS is a diverse selection of colours at OTE showrooms distributed across the country.

Bank Nizwa supports ‘Sahim’ Programme

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the Sultanate of Oman’s most trusted and leading Islamic Bank, participated in providing an induction session on Islamic finance for newly employed individuals through the Ministry of Labour’s ‘Sahim’ programme. This programme aims to provide temporary placements in the public and private sectors to more than 2000 job-seekers. The bank has pledged a comprehensive set of shari’ah-compliant banking services to the programme’s beneficiaries from various Wilayats, including Sur, Sohar, Salalah and Muscat.



For job seekers and recent graduates entering the competitive labour market through ‘Sahim’, Bank Nizwa will offer timely and pertinent Islamic finance solutions. These include financing facilities and services, savings and Mudaraba investment accounts, credit cards and many more banking products.

“Boosting employability is one of the main priorities of Oman’s Vision 2040, and therefore, it positions job seekers at the heart of its consideration, strategy and action. Technical skills like financial literacy are crucial for integrating young people into the workforce.

As a result, Bank Nizwa collaborated with the Ministry of Labour’s Sahim Programme to mentor and assist young people in achieving financial literacy. For young job seekers searching for a point of guidance in a complicated economic environment where they need to comprehend finances, this particular soft skill becomes an essential addition,” said Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

Sohar International awarded Best Wealth Management Bank in Oman

MUSCAT: With a passion to serve customers bringing the best of the world to Oman and taking the best of Oman to the world, Sohar International has carved a niche for itself by offering unparalleled wealth management advisory services for customers. In recognition of its ongoing achievements, the World Economic Magazine recently awarded Sohar International the coveted title of ‘Best Wealth Management Bank in Oman 2022’.

Following a selection process that is based on core competencies, the World Economic Magazine awards provide a benchmark for excellence across different domains. It recognises organisations that are driven by values of innovation, progression, and dynamism and who also reserve the capacity to effectively drive sustainable impact in society.

Commenting on the award, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi,



Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International said, “This award comes as a testament to Sohar International’s inherent culture to provide clients a comprehensive suite of financial services that are tailored to suit their dynamic needs and help them navigate their investments in the right direction.

Our wealth management advisory services delivered by a highly capable team reflect the same organisational values of excellence, transparency, and efficiency that our clients have grown increasingly familiar with. At Sohar International

we continue to deliver with the sole purpose of enabling people to win, each in their own respective way.”

Going beyond just offering astute financial advisory services, Sohar International’s Wealth Management offers highly customised financial and related products and services, covering customer saving, borrowing, insurance, investing and day-today banking needs with a complete ecosystem of supporting tools and benefits; all delivered with commitment and personalised attention.

With a team of certified wealth management advisors who possess the needed industry insights on international market trends, Sohar International also provides its clients with access to investment options in global markets in a risk-controlled environment through strategic long-term tie-ups with well renowned international entities.

BankDhofar celebrates new academic year with ‘Back to School’ campaign

MUSCAT: Coinciding with the new academic year, BankDhofar launched its “Back to School” Campaign. The campaign translates BankDhofar’s interest and support to school students who represent one of the important segments in the society, as well as the teachers.

Aziz bin Sulaiman al Harrasi, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at BankDhofar, noted: “We would like to congratulate all the teachers and students and we wish them all the best.



With the new academic year, we opted to engage with the community through the “Back to School” Instagram competition. Additionally, we encourage our customers to make a difference for the students who are need of support by donating through our Mobile Banking App.”

As part of the campaign, BankDhofar encourages the community to make a difference for the students by donating through BankDhofar’s Mobile Banking App. Additionally, the Bank launched a competition

through its Instagram page, providing the participants a chance to win valuable cash prizes. The competition, which was launched on 26 August, runs through August 31, 2022.

All the participants need to do is to follow BankDhofar’s Instagram page (<https://www.instagram.com/bankdhofar/>), mention 3 accounts on the competition post, and get the chance to win valuable cash prizes. At the end of the competition, 10 winners will be selected randomly to win RO 50 each.

Labour shortages, inflation hamper recovery of ME aviation

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Oliver Wyman's recent Airline Economic Analysis 2021-22 found that labour shortages and inflation were the two biggest issues facing the aviation sector as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, making it difficult for airlines to satisfy growing demand and pushing up operational expenses. As summer school holidays begin in the Middle East and airlines get busier, the report looks at what the findings mean from a regional perspective.

According to André Martins, Partner – Head of IMEA Transportation and Services at Oliver Wyman, "Airlines have been at the receiving end with the fuel price hikes and personnel shortage impacting their bottom-line".

Key insights for the Middle East include:

- Labour shortages are across the board, from pilot, to baggage handler, to ticket agent, to flight attendant, to aircraft mechanic.
 - The rise in the price of fuel is the main factor in rising costs.
 - The conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated existing stress on commodity markets and supply chains, and meant flight restrictions due to closures of airspace and sanctions.
- In January 2022, just before the conflict began, Middle East countries represented the



Every downturn in the global economy has proven to be the time for new market entrants in the airline industry. This time around, it has been no different – we have seen multiple airline start-ups just launch or prepare for an upcoming launch such as Akasa Air in India, the proposed new airline in Saudi Arabia, and Avelo in the US, among many others

second largest destination for air travellers from Russia, at 28 per cent measured by scheduled seats (behind Europe with 42 per cent).

In the other direction, the UAE represented 9 per cent of the share of international seats headed to Russia at the same point in time, second only to Turkey.

- Compared to the spike in demand for leisure travel, business travel is recovering slowly.
- Sustainable aviation is still a way off, with battery-operated and hydrogen-propelled

commercial airliners facing technological and regulatory hurdles, and sustainable aviation fuel too expensive and too scarce to be a viable option.

In fact, the aviation sector is likely to see an increase in emissions before they fall. Qatar Airways and Dubai Airports have both signed a pledge to work towards 10 per cent sustainable aviation fuel by 2030, reflecting regional momentum.

- Air cargo is a bright spot, driven by a growth in e-commerce

during the pandemic, and shortage of truckers.

On a more positive note: "Every downturn in the global economy has proven to be the time for new market entrants in the airline industry.

This time around, it has been no different – we have seen multiple airline start-ups just launch or prepare for an upcoming launch such as Akasa Air in India, the proposed new airline in Saudi Arabia, and Avelo in the US, among many others," according to Martins.

The Airline Economic Analysis is produced by Oliver Wyman on an annual basis, and is aimed at providing the aviation industry with data and commentary to help it address evolving industry challenges. It looks at global and regional demand and capacity trends in major world markets.

India's Marg Hotels and Resorts forays into Oman



KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

India's 45-year-old Marg Hotels and Resorts is making a foray into the Sultanate of Oman by taking over the operations of Golden Tulip Headington Ruwi, vowing better hospitality to the yearning visitors.

An event to announce the entry was held at the hotel premises attended by top-notch corporates where Vijay Cherian, Managing Director for Marg Hotels and Resorts said visitors to the Sultanate of Oman as well as domestic travellers in the country can look forward to an elevated experience with the takeover.

"We are making an entry into

Oman by taking over Golden Tulip Headington Ruwi, our first overseas project. And with our nearly 5 decades-long experience in the hospitality sector, we aim to elevate the hotel to the most sought-after 'home away from home' among the four-star living and fine dining in Muscat for its food, accommodation and business activities. We have a strong team to realise our goals in the sector," said Cherian.

Golden Tulip Headington Ruwi, a four-star property in downtown Ruwi was opened in 2017 with 118 rooms, a café, restaurant, boardroom, spa, health club, rooftop swimming pool, banquet halls and other facilities, a property considered

to be a great value addition to the buzzing Ruwi.

Marg Hospitality Private Ltd is a professional hospitality industry consultants in India and is pioneers in providing hospitality management services which aims to continuously innovate and set trends in the sector.

"There will be four categories of rooms, namely, standard, deluxe, plaza suite and Headington Suite which are all equipped with modern facilities required by any kind of traveller, be it leisure or business. We have always had positive reviews from guests, who share their stay experience on TripAdvisor," said Ullas Verghese, General Manager.

Sohar Aluminium and GE sign 10-year power services contract

FROM PAGE 13

Now, we are delighted to continue our collaboration with GE to maintain the sustained, reliable performance of these essential assets to support our business in the decade ahead."

Sohar Aluminium's state-of-the-art 1,000 MW power plant excels by achieving highest levels of efficiency ensuring low emissions, operating costs, and environmental impact meeting the stringent requirements set out by the local authorities. The plant also includes a seawater pumping station for delivering cooling water as well as a desalination station to supply water to the smelter and other facilities.

Joseph Anis, President & CEO of GE Gas Power Europe, Middle East, and Africa said, "Diversification efforts through the expansion of non-oil and gas sectors are an important component of Oman Vision 2040.

Sohar Aluminium is one of the key industrial contributors in the country to realising the aspirational goals of this plan. At GE, we are honoured to work closely with them on their growth journey and remain committed to bringing our industry-leading solutions to Sohar Aluminium and the Sultanate of Oman to further support the national development agenda."

GE has made strong contributions to strengthening Oman's energy infrastructure over the decades. This includes the delivery of the country's first gas turbine at Al Ghubra, nine high efficiency F-class gas turbines, various power generation solutions to support Oman's oil and gas exploration and production sectors, and more.

What to do with ESG?



Karl Jackson



Luis Piacenza

Who cares about ESG? Some years ago, in the business world, nobody cared about the social issues, the environment and, perhaps somehow, a few recognised that governance quality might improve business performance.

Now we clearly are at a transition point. Although there are doubters, all of us are at least concerned about how ESG could have a meaningful impact on how we do business and how it may affect our capacity to get financing and retain the license to operate, either legal or moral.

Cut-throat competition

A sudden change in the scenario from what nobody cares about, to what everybody is talking about, means that standard setters on ESG - a conundrum of organisations that have existed for many years, started a race to become the global standard setter.

Sometimes to ludicrous boundaries, these lobbies, through their public announcements, created an open, cut-throat competition where NGOs representing different constituencies in business created more confusion than clarity — paradoxically, what anyone can expect from standardisation.

However, thankfully, these paths are converging to a few central standards, with the IFRS Foundation and the European Union leading the way on corporate reporting standards and the TCFD is paving the way in the financial sector to better understand the climate impact aspect.

Greening the stuff

But at the end of the day, the physics of climate change and social dynamics have their roots quite far from accounting standards. So, financial and non-financial undertakings may divert attention to more relevant actions to cope with the challenge. The major challenge being to simply reverse the climate crisis, so more ink will not make the difference.

Only making it green will help, so the main point is to analyse operations, understand how we impact climate, how climate will impact us and take immediate action. Whilst 2030 still seems like a futuristic movie, it is just around the corner.

On social aspects, the same. Maybe not as visible as the climate crisis – it depends heavily on the region on the planet – but most concerning because of the interdependence with the impact on the on

But at the end of the day, the physics of climate change and social dynamics have their roots quite far from accounting standards. So, financial and non-financial undertakings may divert attention to more relevant actions to cope with the challenge. The major challenge being to simply reverse the climate crisis, so more ink will not make the difference

climate. Migrations, social crises, and, a general lack of social cohesion added to internal political conflict and water and food shortages are all today's social issues.

One may ask why corporates should care about this - because it is convenient and necessary, there is no business, market or consumer in a world without social cohesion and a sense of justice. Environment meets social very quickly in this new global world painted by complexity.

The real thing

To tackle it and make a difference, corporates and governments may consider the importance of differentiating between soft and complex trends. I mean, trends like B Corps (companies that voluntarily meet the highest standards for social and environmental performance), ESG corporate reporting, green bonds and carbon taxes can and must change.

Although these are things that are happening now, they are unlikely to shape our realities in ten years.

On the flip side, decarbonisation of operations and mitigating or adapting to a changing climate are crucial. It also may be accompanied by understanding and coping with global social events such as the great resignation (massive withdrawals from the workforce after the Covid pandemic), shifts in the workforce with new generations taking over, and overlooked themes such as biodiversity and water scarcity.

Also, failure in governance due to poor anticipation of the real ESG impacts is essential to bear in mind. Nobody will care in ten years of your sustainability report this year, but the lack of strategy and direction is your fiduciary duty if you are in charge of matters related to the corporate world.

So, the advice is to keep an eye on your ESG approach and strategy, find your competitive advantage in this volatile context, plan to execute with excellence, remain flexible to trial-and-error. Your corporate reporting need not be an issue if you grip firm on the rudder in these turbulent ESG waters.

[This article was co-written by Karl Jackson, an Audit and Assurance Partner with Crowe Oman karl.jackson@crowe.om and Luis Piacenza the ESG Partner from Crowe Spain]

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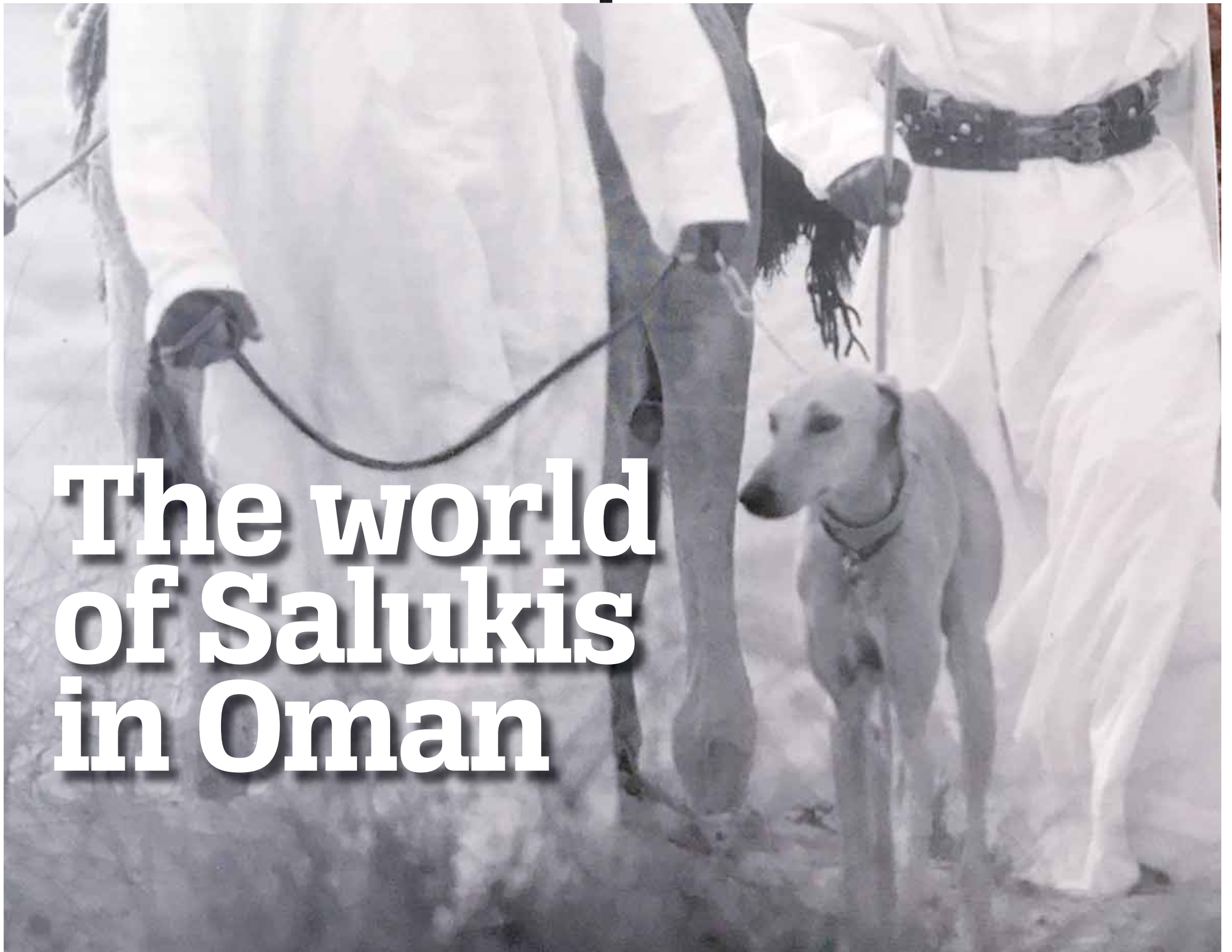
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#Living_with_COVID19



The world of Salukis in Oman

By Kabeer Yousuf

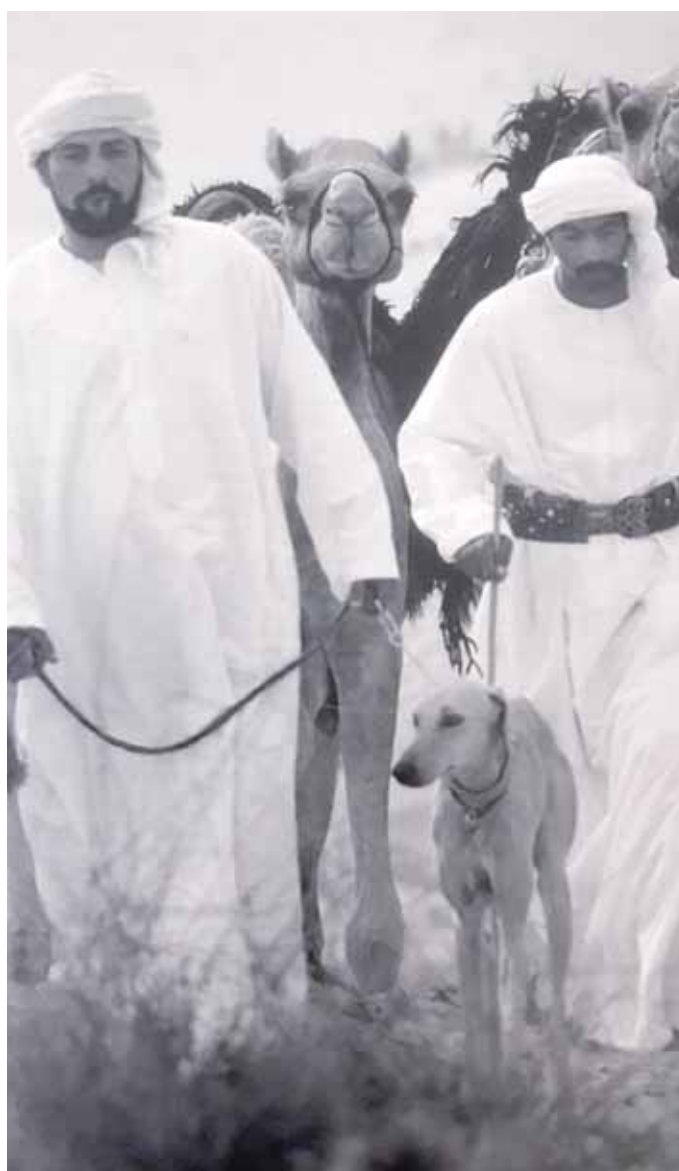
Saluki, deep-chested and long-legged, also known as the Persian Greyhound, are simply 'an owner's pride' and they are not very common in the canine world. They are developed from dogs called sighthounds and are a standardised breed.

Salukis are said to have once used by nomadic tribes in Arabia to catch their game animals as they hunt not by scent but by sight. The ancestors of the modern Saluki breed were used for hunting by nomadic tribes and the typical quarry included the gazelle, hare, fox and jackal. History says that Bedouin hunters would sometimes ride close to their quarry on a camel holding such a dog while hunting hares, which would be thrown towards the prey while at speed to give the dog a running start.

In Muscat, a rare litter of 10 pedigree Saluki puppies was born on April 23, 2022 coinciding with International Puppy Day.

The sire (father) is Tayyar who belongs to Maggie Jeans, an AOS member. The dam (mother) is Farah who is owned by Australian Rebecca Elferson, former Wardrobe Mistress at the Royal Opera House and owner of My Inner Muse Boutique.

Former UK Ambassador to



Oman, Sir Terry Clark, is the AOS expert on the breed & author of the book 'Salukis of Arabia'. The breed are less common in Oman than in the rest of the Gulf because of the rocky terrain and the ban on hunting in the Sultanate of Oman.

"The Saluki is the oldest breed of dog. There are 4 males and 6 females in the litter. They are all thriving and are now 5 months old & five of the litter are still seeking good homes," said Maggie Jeans.

Salukis are credited as being the fastest dog breed up to distances of around 800 metres (2,600 ft) which make them faster over longer distances. The Guinness Book of Records listed a Saluki as being the fastest dog, capable of reaching a speed of 68.8 km/h (42.8 mph) in 1996. The Saluki has commendable stamina when running thanks to its heavily padded feet absorbing the impact on its body.

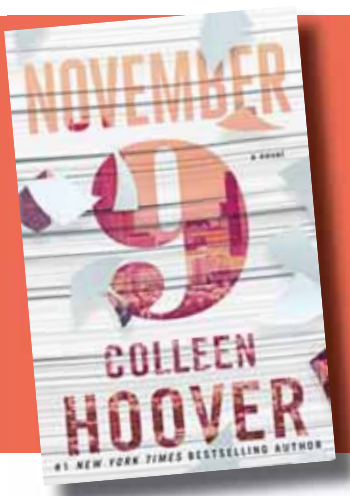
Salukis have a winning streak and they crown at dog shows. A saluki from Bahrain recently won the Best in Breed at the annual World Dog show held this year in Madrid. These gentle, intelligent and elegant dogs are ideal companions too. They need plenty of exercise and running on sand with their webbed feet, which are also perfect for swimming.

READ

NOVEMBER 9

BY COLLEEN HOOVER

Ben and Fallon meet on the same day each year but a possible untruth might spoil their relationship.



SPREADING AWARENESS

Models wear Ukrainian designed wedding gowns during a fashion show during the Ukrainian Festival and Independence Day in Boston, Massachusetts. The event's goal is to spread awareness of the war in Ukraine and showcase the culture of the Ukrainian people. — AFP



FASHION SNIPPETS

Models present creations by designer Kriti Tula during an event for launch of the Mercedes AMG EQS 53 4MATIC+ sedan electric vehicle in Mumbai. — AFP





Only Connect: Finding a Way Into Kinetic Light’s ‘Wired’

“AM I MISSING something here?” is a question prompted by many dance performances. In my mind, the thought often has an anxious tone, since I consider it my job as a critic to try to miss as little as possible. When I attended the New York premiere of Kinetic Light’s “Wired” at The Shed on Thursday, the question was especially loud in my head. But even more unusual was the unequivocal clarity of the answer: I was missing something. By design.

That’s because Kinetic Light, a disability arts ensemble whose work is made by and for disabled people, has an ethic and aesthetic of access that is exceptionally thoughtful and thorough. It ensures that no one way of experiencing the work is prioritised. No one person can experience it in every aspect.

One I knew I was missing was an audio description of the performance. Kinetic Light uses an application called Audimance, and in keeping with the ensemble’s emphasis on increasing choice and control, users can pick among no fewer than seven different tracks of audio description for “Wired,” switching from one to another and mixing them at will.

Audimance is not intended for fully sighted people like me, but before the show, I asked if I could try it. The company generously allowed me to sample the audio description for one section, with the warning that “it was created for people whose primary experience of art is through sound, and may be challenging for people without cultivated listening practices.”

Actually, I found it familiar, since trying to put dance into words is what I do all the time. One track sounded like the phrases I scrawl in my notebook in the dark: “hard to see at first,” “one dancer emerges,” “reminds me of X.” Others were closer to the polished product of a review, combining physical description with stabs at interpretation. One — accurately marked as sexually explicit — was a pungent, poetic monologue (by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha), more an evocation of a dancer’s thoughts and feelings than of a dancer’s motions: “I’ll eroticise the shocks.”

Listening to these descriptions of a dance I hadn’t yet seen, I was

reminded of how much information each moment of a dance can contain, how many points of entry. (One track focused exclusively on the lighting, which I tend to treat parenthetically.) The variety of tracks addressing the same section brought into greater relief the inherent subjectivity of audience experience, especially when it comes to emotion and meaning. Mixing them together felt like listening to a dinner companion’s voice while paying attention to the conversation at the next table. I do that all the time.

When finally I was watching “Wired,” I sometimes missed these voices or wondered what they might be saying. For — here comes a big

tions from an already squeezed-out idea, with exits and endings that are arbitrary or baffling. Within each section, the strongest moments are spaced out, separated, like barbs without the connecting wire.

“Wired” was inspired by the barbed-wire sculptures of Melvin Edwards, and it emulates their balance between abstraction and social or political resonance: Barbed wire is line, as in a drawing, but it also draws blood. Yet, sustaining that balance is trickier in choreography — because of time, because of bodies — and “Wired” wobbles.

It begins arrestingly with Sheppard and Lawson airborne in their wheelchairs, floating and spin-

ning like astronauts in low gravity. The wires that hold them and that they hold cross aesthetically, but if the performers grab onto each other and let go, the wires (along with gravity) also pull them apart: abstraction, human drama.

Two sections later, Sheppard and Lawson have another duet, in which Lawson, who is white, keeps tugging at the hair of Sheppard, who is multi-racial and Black. Lawson appears to be pulling Sheppard down, and after Lawson disappears, Sheppard flies more freely, but also flails, falling in beautiful slow-motion arcs. Is this escape?

The image is richly ambiguous, since Sheppard isn’t fully in control. Her ascents and descents depend on the people operating the rigging (who sit at a table visible to the audience).

That tension returns later in a Sisyphean solo during which Sheppard keeps crawling towards a corner only to be dragged back to the centre.

But many other sections just spin in the air. And some of the most effective bits aren’t aerial at all. At the end of the first act, the three performers kneel in boxes of projected light (by Michael Maag), hooded, festooned with barbed wire, sinking and rising as if praying. The meaning here is clear enough, as it is later when Herman uses barbed wire to whip an image of the American flag projected onto the floor. But the connections aren’t.

For me, there’s too much content,

CHANGING WORLD

‘Quiet quitting’ raising a din in stressful US workplaces



THEY ARE DRAWING a line at the 40-hour work week, limiting after-hours calls and emails and generally, if softly, saying “no” more often — some American workers are embracing the concept of “quiet quitting” as they push back against what some see as the stifling trap of constant connectivity.

Maggie Perkins — who lives in Athens, Georgia — was racking up 60-hour weeks as a matter of course in her job as a teacher, but the 30-year-old realised after her first child was born that something was wrong.

“There’s pictures of me grading papers on an airplane on the way to vacation. I did not have a work-life balance,” Perkins explains in a TikTok video about how she chose — though she did not have a name for it back then — to begin “quiet quitting.”

Perkins told AFP she eventually left her job to pursue a PhD, but remains an advocate for her former colleagues — producing videos and podcasts with practical tips on making their workload fit inside their workday.

“Adopting this ‘quiet quitting’ mindset really just means that you are establishing a boundary that helps you to do your job when you are paid to do it — and then you can leave that, and go home and be a human with your family,” she says.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OR SLACKING?

The buzzword seems to have first surfaced in a July TikTok post.

In the words of user @zaidleppelin, “You’re not outright quitting your job but you’re quitting the idea of going above and beyond. You’re still performing your duties but you’re no longer subscribing to the hustle culture mentality that work has to be your life.”

That post went viral, drawing nearly a half-million likes. Responses bubbled over with a sense of shared resentment — and newspaper columnists spilled ink all summer trying to decipher the phenomenon.

For the debate soon erupted: Are “quiet quitters” merely trying to draw boundaries in pursuit of a reasonable work-life balance, more associated with a European lifestyle than with always-on US work culture?

Are they slackers with a trendy new name? Or are they people at genuine risk of burnout — who would do best to quit outright?

Data suggests the need for greater balance is real. On-the-job stress rose from 38 per cent of those polled in 2019 to 43 per cent the following year as Covid-19 upended the world of work, Gallup found, with women in the United States and Canada facing the most pressure.

Similar dynamics helped fuel the “Great Resignation” — the surge in employees leaving or switching jobs amid pandemic-related pressures.

Many “quiet quitters” say they are perfectly willing to work hard, but only for the hours the job is meant to entail. Their motto: “act your wage.”

Some observers are sceptical, of course, contending that offices have always had their share of clock-watchers and prickly workers claiming certain tasks are not their responsibility.

Going further, Arianna Huffington, founder of the Huffington Post, panned the phenomenon as “a step towards quitting on life.”

But former US labour secretary Robert Reich summed up the — forceful — counterargument, saying “Workers aren’t ‘quiet quitting.’ They’re refusing to be exploited for their labour.”

‘SIX MONTHS OF DREAD’

A case in point: the experience of Bess, who asked not to be identified by her real name, illustrates how Covid allowed some jobs to spill far outside their normal boundaries.

She was hired shortly before the pandemic in a job originally meant to involve regular trips to Germany.

But, she told AFP, Covid left her stuck in her New York apartment, having to take phone calls as early as 3:00 am due to the time difference.

Out of self-preservation, she began to dial back her efforts — which her American friends had trouble understanding. “There is that stigma — you put your blood, sweat and tears into your job in the US, and if you don’t work, you don’t deserve to be here,” she said.

“After six months of dread,” Bess explains, she simply stopped answering emails for several weeks — and ultimately parted ways with her company.

Philip Oreopoulos, a labour economist at the University of Toronto, said one solution is better communications to clarify employer expectations before accepting a job.

“If you need to be on call at home, then they should clearly state that,” he said.

And if things do get out of hand — and quiet quitting won’t fix the problem — aggrieved workers do have one asset to fall back on: a historically low unemployment rate.

“Come to an employer and say, ‘I have an opportunity with another firm and I’m thinking of taking it,’” Oreopoulos said. “It’s a good time in general to be asking for a raise.” — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Virtual reality revives Iraq's war-ravaged heritage



AN IRAQI MUSEUM is using computer technology and virtual reality headsets to turn back time, so visitors can explore heritage sites destroyed by jihadist fighters and in battles to defeat them. IS group fighters captured a third of Iraq in a lightning offensive in 2014, seizing the northern city of Mosul as their stronghold and vandalising or destroying a swathe of cultural sites across the country. Now, using thousands of photographs, a group of local engineers have given a virtual rebirth to five historic sites in Mosul and the broader Nineveh province, including a mosque and its leaning minaret. "It takes you to another world," said Mahiya Youssef, pulling the VR goggles off her rose-covered hijab at the Mosul Heritage House museum, after exploring the 3D images of damaged buildings. "I really wish it was the real Mosul, not just a virtual version", added Youssef, 50, who works in a food factory in the northern city. "The return to reality is painful." The IS group's then chief, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, made his only confirmed public appearance at Mosul's Al-Nuri mosque, where he declared the establishment of a "caliphate". Mosul's Old City was reduced to rubble during the battle to retake the city, including the mosque and its adjacent leaning minaret, nicknamed Al-Hadba or the "hunchback". Iraqi authorities have accused IS of planting explosives at the site before their withdrawal. Only the minaret's base survived.

RETRIEVE MEMORIES

VR technology has been used before to recreate the heritage destroyed by the IS group, including a UNESCO-backed exhibit in the United States. But this museum brings sites back to life for the people who live in Mosul. "Many children have never seen the Al-Nuri mosque and its Al-Hadba minaret," 29-year-old Ayoub Younes, the museum's founder. "We try, through virtual reality, to let the person experience visiting those sites and retrieve those memories." Five years after Iraqi forces and an international coalition routed the jihadists in mid-2017, historic sites, mosques and churches in Mosul are still being restored. But large parts of the Old City remain oceans of debris. While some residents have returned to other districts, much of the city remains a patchwork of buildings either ruined or under construction. The private museum with a marble facade, sitting along the Tigris river, opened in mid-June and saw more than 4,000 visitors in its first month, Younes said. In a sombre room, curious visitors wait to use the museum's sole VR headset, a pair of large black goggles. Other sites on the virtual visit are the historic Al-Tahera church, tucked among the once meandering alleyways of the Old City, and the more than 2,000 year old Hatra archaeological site in the desert south of Mosul. The jihadists took guns and pickaxes to the once extensive remains of the ancient city, releasing video footage in 2015 of their orgy of destruction. — AFP

MUSIC

London's Notting Hill carnival gears up for return amid surging cost of living



NESTLED IN a railway arch in Brixton, south London, a large studio hosts a colourful array of elaborate costumes and flamboyant feathers, all designed to bring to life a Mas Band parade at London's Notting Hill Carnival. Billed as Europe's biggest street party, carnival returns over Britain's August Bank Holiday weekend after a two-year absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This year the challenges facing organisers and participants are not nationwide lockdowns but soaring prices amid inflationary pressures blighting the country. Ray Mahabir, 58, the artistic director at Sunshine International Arts (SIA) who runs the Mas Band studio, said the return of carnival was "bittersweet" given the economic situation. "Not knowing what we're going to meet is one of the main concerns for us," he said. "Now, everyone doesn't have money or don't want to spend money because they're not sure what they're going to meet." Notting Hill Carnival CEO Matthew Phillips told Reuters a few bands were not going to be able to participate this year. "Everyone is going through this cost-of-living crisis at the moment which ultimately means not as many people are able to buy costumes, which has a knock-on effect ... a lot of costume designers are not doing it to make a profit," Phillips said. Mahabir said this year prices of everything had doubled, with a full costume set costing almost 1,000 pounds (\$1,185).

These costs are also noticed by other members of the studio. Costume manager Natalie Russell, 35, said the price of feathers, which is often used on a lot of the costumes the studio designs, had tripled. "Over a pound for a single peacock feather. Which is insane considering how many

These traditions have continued, evolving into modern Caribbean carnival as a fusion of African and European culture. The Notting Hill carnival attracts more than a million visitors and is seen as symbol of London's diversity and rich multicultural history. Artist and Notting Hill



and how much we use," Russell said. **THE RESILIENCE OF CARNIVAL** Mas Bands provide the costumes for the Notting Hill Carnival, where members of the public can buy a costume and join a band on the parade route. The name derives from the word "masquerade", and has its roots in the emancipation of enslaved people in the Caribbean during the nineteenth century. Prior to emancipation, they would ridicule and mimic the elaborate gowns worn by their masters at celebration balls, incorporating elements of their African traditions including costumes made of natural materials.

Carnival board director, Linett Kamala, 52, said the effects of Covid and funding challenges faced by organisers had been an "extra tough challenge" this year but, after patient preparations, there was a lot of excitement for the return of carnival. "It couldn't come soon enough," Kamala said. The carnival began as an indoor event in 1959 in response to the poor state of race relations in Britain and as a celebration for the Afro-Caribbean community, growing over the years into the colourful outdoor celebration it is today. "Carnival and carnival arts are resilient, it will always find a way," carnival boss Phillips said. "It was how it was born in the first place." — Reuters

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Mountain Men Forbear

The following is my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani

Perhaps it was the mountainous nature of the area we grew in that provided us with the stamina necessary to stand the tough military exercises and duties. Indeed, since our childhood we led a life akin to military exercises: we ate leaves from the trees, hunted to eat, walked under the sun, drank lukewarm water and got injuries from thorns and bites from mosquitoes and all sorts of insects, both creeping and flying ones. Our military training continued for six months. I remember when on leave we would set off in one of the Bedford vans on a perhaps three-day long journey towards Miskan. We would sometimes be confronted with heavy rains and overflowing valleys and stop off in a number of villages and towns such as Bidbid, Somail, Izki and Manah. Everyone would get off at their respective villages till we, in the end, reached the place we missed so much. Once in Miskan, we would provide camels to those dwelling in faraway villages. We also used Miskan as our point of departure on our return journey to Muscat.

BETWEEN GRADUATION AND ARMY COMPANIES

Graduation ceremony back then wasn't different from today's; the sheer exhilaration the graduates experience hasn't changed. I remember with what tender affection we prepared our clothes for graduation, the day we awaited so long, the day that would serve as a confirmation that we deserved to be our country's guards: we would sprinkle starch on our clothes to make them all the neater, all the more elegant.

After graduation, we were sent to the Muscat Regiment in Bidbid, and

thence distributed to three companies named in the following manner: A Company (in Al Rustaq) B Company (in Izki) C Company (in Bidbid, with the HQ commanded by the British national Maj. Revend*)

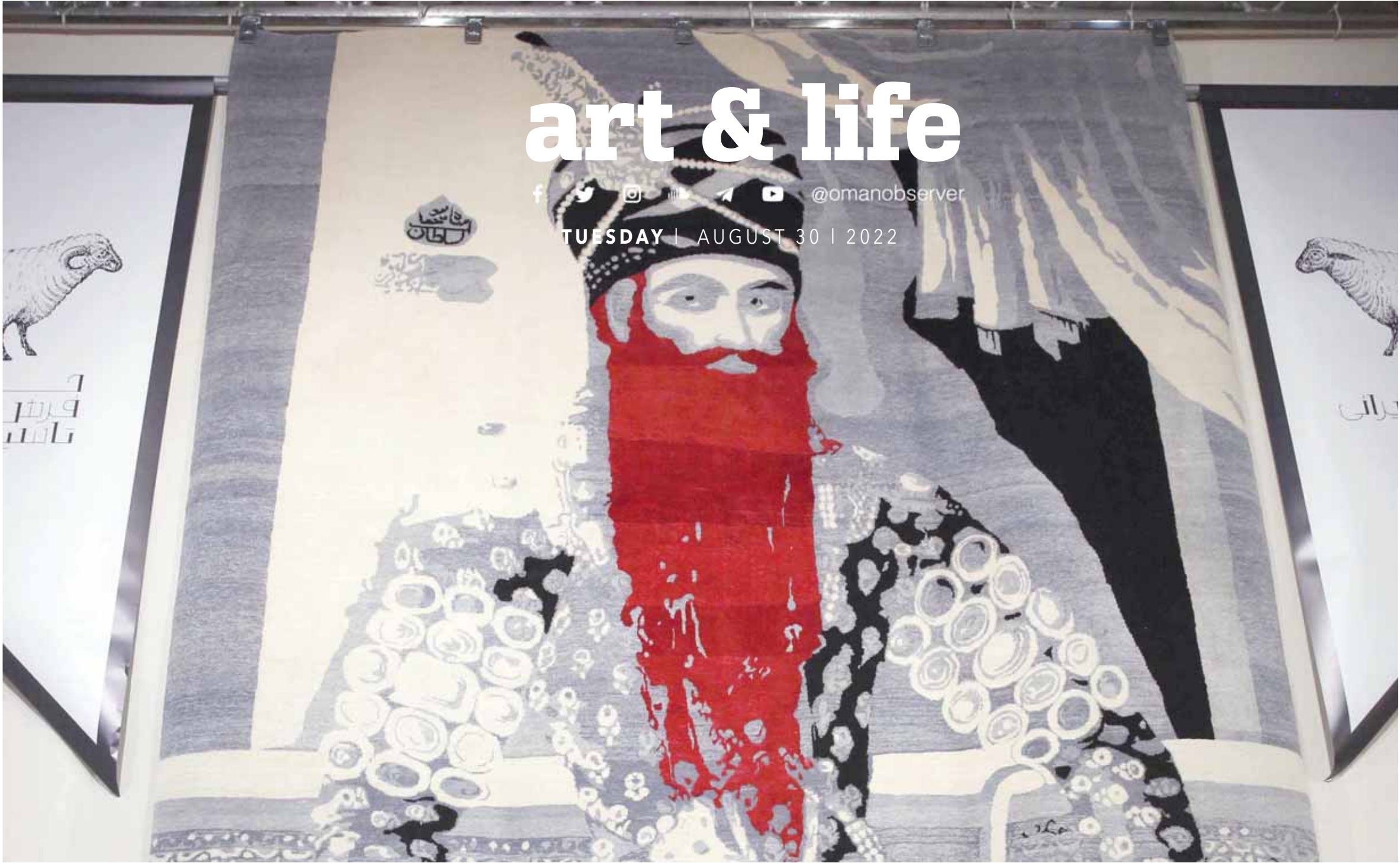
I was to be in Bidbid, specifically in platoon 9, led by Sgt. Jan Mohammed al Balushi, Corp. Saif bin Hamad al Rahbi, the Deputy Corp. Khamis bin Abdullah al Hosni and Private Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hosni (Abu Shihab).

I remember the competition between the platoons of the Bidbid Regiment in the firing range. On the second day of our arrival, I was selected for the firing team of our platoon, although I wasn't then competent enough. I remember how Corp. Saif al Rahbi, who knew me while training in Ghala, became angry with me when he noted that my firing ability was below par. Corp. Khamis al Hosni, who was with me in the firing team, responded that it was all due to the new firing range and the new rifle, and that in due course I would get used to them.

Amongst my best friends during that time were Saif and Khamis, whom I used to go out with to hunt ibex in Wadi Seq (in the Jawamed District).

* There were many British men serving in the Omani army both prior to and in the immediate aftermath of 1970.

For viewing the events from the perspective of one such men see Ian Gardiner's In the Service of the Sultan, a First Hand Account of the Dhofar Insurgency (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2006). The Omani writer and poet Hilal al Hajri examines the accounts of some British military men who served in Oman and of British travelers who came as tourists in his British Travel-Writing on Oman: Orientalism Reappraised (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2006) (the/translator).



art & life

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TUESDAY | AUGUST 30 | 2022

Ancient Iranian rug tradition gets makeover as sales sink

STRIKING GEOMETRIC shapes that recall 20th century abstract art are not what you would expect to see adorning a hand-made Iranian rug.

But changing tastes and increased competition from Asia have forced some in the trade to redesign and resize a tradition dating back more than 2,000 years.

"A revolution is underway," said Ahad Azimzadeh, 65, who calls himself "the biggest exporter of Persian carpets in the world".

Rugs traditionally woven in the Islamic republic are known for dense, curving floral designs in rich colours.

Their beauty and quality have long been recognised worldwide, yet sales have collapsed over the past 30 years.

"In 1994 the value of Iranian carpets sold abroad reached \$1.7 billion and represented 40 per cent of our non-petroleum exports," Ahmad Karimi, chief of the Handmade Carpet Manufacturers' and Exporters' Union, said.

By 2019-20 that figure had shrunk to \$70 million, he said.

By another measure, in 2000 Iran represented 32 per cent of global hand-made carpet exports. This fell to 7.9 per cent by 2019 as exports from China and India rose, Karimi said.

NEW GENERATIONS

There was "an impact" from international sanctions that targeted Iran over its nuclear programme, human rights and other issues, but he said other factors are more to blame.

"Especially by the big diversity of carpets on the market and the change in the mentality and tastes of the new generations," Karimi said.

Azimzadeh, the carpet exporter, said "the future is with modern hand-made rugs".

He spoke at last week's handmade carpet exhibi-

tion in Tehran. The annual event, suspended for two years because of the coronavirus pandemic, features about 400 exhibitors from across Iran.

"The patterns of Iranian carpets are ancient but today there is a strong demand for contemporary styles. They're more suitable for a modern house," said Azimzadeh, a big talker who started small – as a seven-year-old weaver. By 14, he had graduated to the commercial side of the trade.

Among the new styles on display at the exhibition which ended Sunday: a rug featuring small squares of hypnotic diagonal blue and white lines.

Another depicts diamond and other geometric patterns in gold silk on a black background. One wool rug looks as if an ink roller has left splashes of gold on it.

"The colours are clear and the sizes smaller," which is what modern tastes demand, Azimzadeh said.

As an extreme but less typical example of this "revolution", Azimzadeh stands in front of a woven rug three metres square (3.6 square yards) in size. It depicts global personalities including actor Charlie Chaplin, the physicist Albert Einstein and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

FROM ART TO DOORMAT

The new style is also cheaper.

Some sell for \$3,000 or \$4,000, whereas Azimzadeh has a 2,000 square metre traditional carpet from Tabriz priced at \$120 million.

His inventory also holds a 170-year-old piece from Kashan available for about \$160,000.

For now, modern designs are still a minority at his stand in the exhibition, but the traditional stock will be gradually withdrawn, he said.

"Next year, 70 per cent

of the rugs on display will be modern," Azimzadeh predicts.

Karimi, of the exporters' union, regrets that Iranian carpets are nowadays seen as "a consumer good to put in front of the door, whereas in the past it was an investment.

"It's lost its status as an object of art."

Another trader, Abbas Arsin, was perhaps ahead of his time when he created what he calls the "transitional carpet" 25 years ago.

He took traditional patterns and made the bright colours fade by rubbing them and leaving them in the sun.

"My father and my older brother didn't understand why I wore myself out making the old rugs fade," said Arsin, 40, the third generation of his family in the business.

But when he exhibited his first works and customers came, his family encouraged him to "only do that", he recalls with a smile.

Arsin said India, Pakistan, Turkey and China overtook Iran in the global market because "we Iranians had fewer relations with the rest of the world. We didn't see the changes that were happening."

Even now, not everyone is convinced.

"A year ago we began to make carpets in modern designs but they represent only five per cent of our production and I don't think we will go beyond that," said Mehdi Jamshidi, 42, director of sales for Iran Carpet company.

"Modern carpets will never replace the traditional ones, which are deep-rooted in our culture and regions."

Hamid Sayahfar, 54, a dealer who spends his time between Tehran and Toronto, said the new geometric styles might be suitable for an office, but not at home.

It's just a fashion, he said, "and like every fashion it will disappear." — AFP

