

New batches of police officers graduate

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) celebrated the graduation of the 49th and 50th batches of specialised university officers and a number of qualification courses for police officers, on Tuesday. **SEE P4**



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SUR GEARING UP FOR THE OMAN SAILING CHAMPIONSHIP 2022



P13

PACT SIGNED FOR RO 30 MN FINFISH PROJECT IN MUSCAT



P20

EMPOWERING KIDS TO CONQUER OUTDOOR ADVENTURES



MUSCAT

HM GREET'S COMOROS PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent greetings to President Azali Assoumani of the Union of the Comoros on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to President Assoumani, wishing him good health and happiness. His Majesty also wished the people of Comoros further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREET'S MALAWI PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Lazarus Chakwera of the Republic of Malawi on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Chakwera and the people of his country. — ONA

Oman Daily Observer signs MoU with The Korea Times

The Ministry of Information, represented by *Oman Daily Observer*, and *The Korea Times* signed on Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in presence of Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili, Editor-in-Chief of *Oman Daily Observer*; Oh Young-Jin, *The Korea Times* President; and officials. **SEE P4**

HIS MAJESTY HEADS TO UK



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left Muscat on Tuesday for the United Kingdom in a private visit. May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan wherever he might be and grant him good health and well-being. — ONA

HM sends message to King Salman

RIYADH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a written message to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The message deals with the relations binding the two countries and their peoples. The message was handed over by HH Sayyid Faisal bin Tukri al Said, Ambassador of Oman to the KSA, when he met Waleed al Khuraiji, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister, in Riyadh on Tuesday. — ONA



Boost for hot air balloons

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To boost tourism and diversify sources of national income in the Sultanate of Oman, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) issued the first model certificate for hot air balloons in the country in line with the international standards and recommendations set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This step will attract more investors to the sector. The certification will also attract major global players and SMEs in Oman.

All over the world, governments and promoters are recognising the value of using hot air balloons as a tool for tourism. The Sultanate of Oman's stunning deserts, gorgeous beaches, majestic mountains

hold great potential for hot air balloon tours. It also boosts local economy and provides employment opportunities.

With more aggressive marketing of niche adventure tourism attractions like hot air balloon festivals, Oman could be well on its way to increasing the direct contribution of travel and tourism to its gross domestic product (GDP).

The National Tourism Strategy 2040 aims to attracting 11.7 million tourists by 2040, of whom 5 million would be international tourists.

In 2019, the Sultanate of Oman hosted GCC's first hot air balloon festival to mark the three-month tourist khareef season. It featured 15 hot air balloons that enabled riders to see beautiful Salalah from the sky for the first time.

INSIDE



SYDNEY FLOODS FORCE THOUSANDS TO FLEE

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FRENCH MATHEMATICIAN WINS FIELDS MEDAL

P9

4 rescued from drowning as rains continue

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Four were people rescued in Al Hamra by rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), when the vehicle was washed away in a wadi in the Wilayat of Al Hamra on Tuesday. The CDAA warned against crossing running wadis as heavy rains hit many wilayats. Rains are expected to continue on Wednesday and Thursday.

Satellite photos showed the cumulative rain clouds over the coasts of South Al Sharqiyah and Muscat governorates, and chances of scattered rain.

There has been flow of rain clouds over parts of the coasts of Al Wusta and Dhofar, with the presence of clouds of different heights on the Al Wusta and the Al Sharqiyah South.

Monsoon clouds activity on the coasts and mountains of Dhofar continued. Motorists have been warned not to cross wadis as flash floods are expected.

By Tuesday afternoon, the



activity of local cloud formations and rainfall of varying intensity was experienced, accompanied by active winds, on the central and western Hajar Mountains (the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and South Al Batinah) in conjunction with the incursion

of rain clouds over parts of the governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah and Muscat.

TURN TO P5

Markets and oil slump over recession fears

LONDON: Stock markets sank and oil prices plummeted on Tuesday as fears mounted that major economies will slide into recession as inflation soars, with the euro slumping towards parity with the dollar.

The main international crude oil contract, Brent North Sea, fell nearly 10 per cent, while the main US contract WTI, fell nearly nine per cent to under \$100 per barrel.

European stock markets fell nearly three per cent, while on Wall Street the Dow was down around two per cent in late morning trading.

The euro sank to a 20-year dollar low of \$1.0238 on recession fears and as investors eyed aggressive interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve in its fight against inflation, in contrast with the European Central Bank, seen as planning more modest increases. The pound also slumped to a two-year low near \$1.19. — AFP

Omantel to digitally empower major projects in Dhofar

Providing state-of-the-art ICT solutions for Dhofar Municipality, Dhofar University, Salalah Port and Dhofar Integrated Services



July 05, Muscat, 2022 - Omantel is boosting Oman's march towards a digitally enabled and flourishing society with its ICT offerings driving digital transformation in important sectors. Smart solutions riding on Omantel's expertise, experience and integrated ecosystem are enhancing the efficiency of operations in these vital cogs of the economy and leading to faster growth and amplified returns.

As the nation's digital transformation enabler, Omantel inked a number of agreements in Dhofar governorate with important national entities to implement customized smart solutions.

"It gives us immense pleasure to be chosen as the partner of choice in projects of national importance. Omantel has been the main enabler for the country's digital transformation. Over the years, it has consolidated its capabilities to deliver Smart City solutions through technological and infrastructural acquisitions. We have been the first in the market to make smart solutions accessible, and have proved their efficacy in different sectors," said Talal Said Al Mamari CEO of Omantel.

He further added, "These MoUs are a testament of the trust the nation puts in Omantel and further reiterate our solid established presence in the ICT sector. We are grateful and proud for being chosen as partners in growth."

Omantel's scalable smart solutions have been achieved through the establishment of mOmkin, a dedicated company for IoT solutions and acquisition of NXN to provide Smart City consultancy and solutions in the country and in the region. Omantel is the first operator to launch a nationwide IoT network with leading use cases.

Omantel believes in the importance of innovation and the provision of new products and services that meet the needs of its customers and is constantly investing in the latest technologies such as data centers, cloud services, IT solutions,

blockchain, IoT, SDWAN wide area network, big data, analytics, cybersecurity and participatory services. Omantel has been able to respond quickly to the requirements of new emerging markets and has



reduced the time it takes to innovate ICT solutions and put them into action for the usage of both, individuals and organizations.

Dhofar Municipality



As part of the MoU, Omantel will provide Dhofar Municipality with Smart City solutions and innovative digital services. Commenting on the cooperation, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said, "We are delighted to sign this Memorandum of Understanding with Omantel as part of our joint efforts to achieve objectives towards digital transformation and smart cities. Through this agreement, we seek to replace conventional processes with modern technologies to improve efficiency in several areas like traffic control, population density control at some locations. Together, we will adopt new systems and programs that will boost our push towards creating great experiences for people through digitization and humanization of cities."

Dhofar University

Under the MoU, Omantel will offer Dhofar University tailor-made ICT services that suit its requirements. Professor Dr. Amer bin Ali Al Rawas, President of Dhofar University, said,



"The fields of higher education, scientific research and innovation have greatly benefited from ICT technologies, and we at Dhofar University, are keen to keep pace with the latest development and adopt solutions that promote a knowledge-based society. The University, through this strategic partnership with Omantel, will implement innovative solutions, like smart libraries, that will significantly contribute to the advancement of higher education and scientific research, thus further enhancing the quality of education at Dhofar University."

Port of Salalah

Through its accumulated expertise in IoT and artificial intelligence, Omantel will enable Port of Salalah to utilize smart solutions in its upcoming projects; this will boost productivity and provide enhanced safety for the port's workers.



"Port of Salalah is Oman's largest and among the biggest in the Middle East. As a result of continued efforts, the port has been able to achieve the global recognition of being ranked second in the world in terms of productivity," said Mohammed Al Mashani, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Port of Salalah. He also added, "Our partnership today with Oman's leading telecommunications company, Omantel, will enhance our regional position and will enable us to use Omantel's 5G and AI technologies

in the port's day-to-day operations which will enhance productivity and improve safety."

Dhofar Integrated Services

Under the MoU, Omantel will provide Dhofar Integrated Services with smart digital solutions; enabling it to offer an unmatched experience in Dhofar Governorate.

Eng. Ali bin Issa Shammas, CEO of Dhofar Integrated Services, said: "Dhofar Integrated Services provides essential services to the people of Dhofar. We are keen to harness Fourth Industrial Revolution



technologies to further improve the services offered to our clients. This agreement will provide pioneering smart digital solutions to upgrade call center services through the integration of AI-powered Chat Bot, introducing smart meter application, drone surveillance of the company's stations and remote locations and smart helmets. All these will enhance the experience of our subscribers while improving safety in the work environment. To continue the growth and development of Dhofar Integrated Services, we are delighted to partner with Omantel, which, through its innovative solutions and services as well as network efficiency and wide coverage, has proven to be the right digital partner."

Omantel is Oman's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment. While striving to ensure optimum customer satisfaction, Omantel plays a key social role to provide the required support and subsidy to all sectors of the Omani society.



شركة ظفار للخدمات المدمجة
Dhofar Integrated Services Company
إحدى شركات مجموعة نماء
Member of Nama Group



Sayyid Shihab receives Japanese Ambassador



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides reviewed the relations between the two countries and exchanged views on various matters of common interest. — ONA

HIS MAJESTY SENDS WRITTEN MESSAGE TO SAUDI KING



RIYADH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The message was handed over by HH Sayyid Faisal bin Tukri al Said, Ambassador of Oman, when he met with Waleed al Khuraji, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister, on Tuesday. — ONA

Tender results of treasury bills

MUSCAT: A tender of government treasury bills, issue number 562, worth RO 111 million was issued this week. Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

Green Alliance discussed with private sector

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) on Tuesday held a meeting with a number of companies to discuss the Green Alliance Initiative which comes within the framework of the national initiative for planting 10 million trees.

The meeting, chaired by Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman of the EA, discussed the action plan of those companies which are



undertaking the initiative, whether those companies operate in Oman or have local investments. The Green Alliance Initiative

aims to strike agreements between private establishments in Oman and the EA, as well as partner with private establishments to provide

financial, technical or technological contributions to achieve the goals of the national initiative for planting 10 million trees. The initiative also seeks to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in a bid to transform to a green economy by maximising the utilisation of natural resources and contributing to limiting carbon emissions. — ONA

Notice

This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. Indar Kumar Menghani**, worked as the **Chief Financial Officer** holder of **Indian Passport No. P0046119** and **Resident Card No. 47188666**. He is **was not authorized to represent the M/s. Muscat Electronics and Associated companies in any way.**

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This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. Harshit Shimpley**, worked as the **Chief executive officer** holder of **Indian Passport No. L9735904** and **Resident Card No. 92559744**. He is **was not authorized to represent the M/s. Muscat Electronics and Associated companies in any way.**

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Al Mouj Muscat Drives Tourism Growth with Over 2,000 Hotel Rooms Upon Completion

Al Mouj Muscat's Impact Campaign highlights the positive contribution the oceanfront lifestyle & leisure destination is having on Oman's tourism sector



Muscat, 6th July 2022: Al Mouj Muscat welcomes 3.9 million visitors annually and through outstanding leisure experiences, Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) is delivering on its promise of developing tourism in the Sultanate, thus contributing to major economic growth. Al Mouj Muscat, a world-class destination, attracts local, regional and international tourists through its award-winning golf course, lively marina and an array of oceanfront culinary experiences. This comprehensive destination is home to leaders in the hospitality industry with international hotel names basing their properties in the heart of the mixed-use destination.

5 Time Accredited Gold Anchor Marina

Another jewel in Al Mouj's crown is its show-stopping Gold Anchor marina which surrounded by luxury residences, is also expanding and upon completion will accommodate 400 berths. It provides an unrivalled setting for yacht owners and boating enthusiasts, who have a superb team of experienced Marina staff and support services at their disposal. In addition to being able to welcome more vessels, Al Mouj Marina established the marine tourism industry and is currently home to 17 sea tour operators. These local independent enterprises benefit from the vibrant destination's footfall and overall support for them has been instrumental in growing the highly popular area of marine tourism. Sailing, diving and snorkelling enthusiasts are well-served by the accredited businesses that are strategically located in the vibrant destination. Al Mouj Muscat's supportive and pioneering approach has both created jobs and resulted in over 1,850 marine tour trips departing annually from the marina. Added to this is a calendar of unique and exciting events such as whale shark watching that have won international accolades including Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards and allow visitors to enjoy truly memorable experiences.

Oceanfront Culinary Experiences

The oceanfront destination is also a well-established and vibrant hub for shopping and dining out, boasting over 85 international and independent retail brands located in architecturally beautiful malls and open spaces close to its marina. From coffee shops and take-out food trucks, to high-end indoor restaurants and family-friendly waterfront cafes, Al Mouj Muscat's operators cater for a broad range of tastes and occasions with an array of international cuisines offered.

Sports Tourism

It is by creating opportunities for exceptional experiences that Al Mouj has played a major part in developing sports tourism, a growing and increasingly important feature of Oman's tourism sector. It has hosted several prestigious events including Al Mouj Muscat Marathon which attracts over 10,000 runners from over 100 countries, and stages of the America's Cup and the Extreme Sailing Series. The Tour of Oman, hosted the Final Stage of the professional road bicycle race in the Sultanate, which featured 102 riders from 29 nations and gained world-wide recognition and media coverage. Al Mouj Golf is ranked as one of the top two golf courses in the Middle East, thus attracting events such as the European Tour serving as an excellent showcase for the course's incomparable location helping to put Oman on the global sports tourism map. Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, adds: "Tourism is a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040 as it boosts job creation, in-country spend and creates new avenues for enterprise. Since inception, we have seen the development and growth of the sector through the attraction of world renowned hotel chains, championship golf course, award winning marina and exceptional culinary experiences, bringing in tourists from around the world. Al Mouj Muscat is a key destination, attracting international events such as the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series, which generated a total economic impact of 10 million Omani Rials. Through every Omani Rial that was spent during this prestigious event, there was a return of 11 Omani Rials and the event itself was broadcasted live to 140 territories. Since inception, we have delivered sustainable tourism, maintained our global presence, and implemented innovative ways to deliver lasting value to our community, our stakeholders, and the Sultanate of Oman." Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006 as a joint venture between Majid Al Futtaim Properties, OMRAN and Tanmia. It is home to 8,000 people from 85 nations and has delivered significant socio-economic benefits, including growth in job creation, development, foreign direct investment, and support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises as well as the tourism sector.

Leaders in Hospitality

Hotels are a key feature of Al Mouj's sophisticated tourism infrastructure, with two international hotels now operational, the Kempinski Hotel Muscat and Mysk by Shaza that together, offer 582 rooms. As well, the 5-star St. Regis Resort is in opening phase and set to offer 440 rooms, along with the Al Mouj Rayhaan by Rotana which will have 251 rooms. Three additional hotels are in planning phase and with a total of seven hotels on project completion, the total number of rooms and suites available will rise to over 2,000. Carsten Wiegandt is the General Manager of the Kempinski Hotel Muscat which opened its doors in 2018. Kempinski Hotels is Europe's oldest luxury hotel group and Carsten explains why Al Mouj was the right location for the brand: "Al Mouj Muscat has created the perfect balance of authentic Omani hospitality, memorable leisure experiences and lifestyle aspiration. Our travellers tell us that they appreciate the natural beauty of Oman, and that Al Mouj offers a true sense of community. This environment is unique, and I am confident that it will attract growing numbers of regional and international visitors." **Championship Golf Course** Al Mouj Golf is a travel and tourism success story in its own right, with the Greg Norman-designed course earning global recognition as a World 100 championship course and consistently being placed in the top two in the Middle East owing to its exceptional playing attributes and magnificent oceanside setting. As well, it is the nation's first PGA course and has hosted the Oman Open, a European Tour golf tournament, for three years and is on the European Tour. Building on its popularity with local golfers, across the Middle East and internationally, the club is investing in a series of major facility and building upgrades that will lift the playing experience even higher. Given the estimated total economic impact per annum of golf travel to Oman has the potential to exceed 1.7 million Omani Rials, Al Mouj is confident it will play a major part in driving interest, helping to develop the sector further.



New batches of police officers graduate



MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) celebrated the graduation of the 49th and 50th batches of specialised university officers and a number of qualification courses for police officers, on Tuesday.

The graduation ceremony was held at the Police College at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in Nizwa, under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, in the presence of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector-General of Police and Customs.

The event was attended by senior officials, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Oman Police and the other military and security forces and families of the graduates. — ONA



Oman Daily Observer signs MoU with The Korea Times

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The Ministry of Information, represented by *Oman Daily Observer*, and *The Korea Times* signed on Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in presence of Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili, Editor-in-Chief of *Oman Daily Observer*; Oh Young-Jin, President, officials from the External Media Department at the Ministry of Information as well as from the Embassy of Oman in Seoul.

The signing of the MoU comes as part of efforts of the Sultanate of Oman and South Korea, aiming at enhancing cooperation in the field of news and information based on mutual interest. The MoU deals with exchange of media materials and news, texts, photos and video clips of mutual interest between the two countries. It also

includes exchange of visits by representatives from both sides.

Abdullah al Shueili commented: "This cooperation with the Korean side in terms of exchanging news and media materials is vital because it allows people in the two countries to get acquainted with the most important events in Korea and Oman. It also allows people of one country to get informed of the culture and traditions of the other country and that, in turn, brings cultures and ties closer".

The signing of the MoU comes as part of efforts aimed at enhancing cooperation in the field of news and information

Oh Young-Jin expressed his pleasure over the cooperation with *Oman Daily Observer*, saying, "It is a great opportunity for us to cooperate with the prestigious *Oman Daily Observer* and share all informative stories with each other". Young-Jin added that both sides will benefit from each other's media materials and that constitutes an added value to all.

Follow health measures for slaughter

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With Eid al Adha round the corner, citizens and residents of the Sultanate of Oman are getting ready to buy the Eid sacrifice. The authorities concerned have called upon everyone to take precautions while buying the animal for slaughter and to ensure that they are free from diseases and external parasites, especially ticks.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) advised people to slaughter animals in the municipality's slaughterhouses to preserve public health. It also urged all to eat the meat suitable for human consumption, free of diseases and pathogens.

It confirmed that it works to take all preventive measures to check the spread of diseases common among humans and animals, including infection with the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus and work to combat it



because fatality among humans from this disease is approximately 40 per cent. The transmission cycle of infection goes through three mediums: Humans, animals and ticks. It usually goes unnoticed, except when human infections occur, as infection is usually not visible in live or slaughtered animals.

The ministry's efforts are focused on strengthening the procedures and systems

of quarantine for livestock to ensure that they are free of ticks and all other external parasites, taking the necessary samples and sending them to the specialised laboratories of the ministry, and not releasing the quarantined animals until after ensuring that they are safe and free of ticks or any other diseases.

It also collects samples from commercial companies, farms and breeders' barns and conducts

laboratory tests for them in case of suspected disease. It sprays animals and barns with safe insecticides within the plan to combat external parasites. Moreover, the MoAFWR conducts epidemiological investigations near the sites of human infection and continues awareness campaigns to urge citizens and residents to adhere to healthy practices in dealing with animals when slaughtering, especially during the Eid festival.

For its part, the Ministry of Health said that adhering to precautionary measures when dealing with the sacrifice will preserve your health and avoid infection with Crimean Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF). It cautioned against touching or squashing the tick if found on the sacrificial animal.

The ministry also advised to wear suitable and protective clothing, and to ensure proper waste management after slaughtering process to prevent the spread of CCHF.

OMRAN launches 4th edition of 'WithinOman'

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to boost the local tourism, Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) has launched the fourth edition of its 'WithinOman' tourism promotion campaign, which provides a wide array of special packages for all citizens and residents to enjoy leisure experiences across OMRAN Group's hotels and resorts.

The emphasis of this

year's edition is on inspiring individuals, families and groups of friends to enjoy and discover new places and things to do, as well as taking part in leisure and adventure activities at 21 hotels and resorts throughout Oman. The campaign's deals are available to visitors till the end of September, and there are four major packages with flexible accommodation options and hospitality services to choose from. — ONA





Oman, UK reviews economic relations

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received at the general diwan of the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday Lord Gerry Grimstone, British Minister of Investment.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them in various

areas. The two sides stressed their keenness to encourage and promote economic and investment partnership, following the investment agreement signed between the two countries last January.

The meeting was attended by several officials from both sides. — ONA

Two motorists held for crossing wadi

MUSCAT: The ROP arrested two motorists in Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates for deliberately crossing running wadis putting their life at risk.

The ROP has cautioned motorists not to cross overflowing wadis and to keep safety distance while driving during heavy rain, hazy conditions and dust storms.



Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and South Al Batinah.

Meanwhile, sky was overcast with rain clouds in some parts of the governorates of North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Muscat and Al Dakhiliyah.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the highest rainfall during the period between July 3 and 5 was reported in the Wilayat of Izki at 42 mm.

Four rescued from drowning as heavy rains continue



FROM PAGE 1

By 3 pm, Tuesday afternoon the activity of cumulus clouds continued with thunderstorms of varying intensity. As it has been accompanied by downward wind there are chances in a decrease in horizontal visibility due to rising of the dust.

The Met Office warned that this could be a challenge especially in the mountainous areas of Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Sharqiyah.

The weather forecast for Wednesday from Met Office stated there would be cloudy skies over Al Dhahirah, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Muscat, North Al Sharqiyah,

South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates with chances of isolated variable rain. Chances of convective clouds development and isolated rain occasionally thundershowers associated with downdraft and hail are expected over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon. Partly cloudy skies along

the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains with intermittent drizzle and chance of isolated rain.

There are chances of late night to early morning low level clouds over parts of Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman coasts as well as chance of blowing dust over desert and open areas.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 5

The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate General of Primary Health Care's Nutrition Department, in partnership with the World Health Organization office in Oman, held on Tuesday a meeting to discuss reformulation of sugar-sweetened beverages in the operational plan of the National Nutrition Strategy.

The meeting, presided over by MoH's Under-Secretary for Health Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, was attended by Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO representative in Oman and participants from various governmental authorities as well private sector concerned with juices and soft drinks production.

The importance of this meeting is that it acts as a preliminary stage of the implementation of sugar reduction programme with the aim of developing standards concerned with the sugar levels in sweetened beverages of the local companies.

The meeting was followed by a workshop targeting various sectors including producing companies. The workshop aimed at emphasising the importance of reformulating food products, setting targets for sugar levels in different food and beverage categories and agreeing on them with a specified timeline, in addition to reformulation of locally produced or packaged sugar-sweetened beverages, and development of a tax-related sugar reduction programme.

The WHO representative in Oman stressed the significance of this meeting as part of the National



Nutrition Strategy through engaging producing companies. Dr Jean Jabbour commended the Sultanate of Oman's success in reducing salt in bread by means of voluntary agreement with the major bakeries in the country to reduce salt in bread by 10 per cent for the first year and 20 per cent in the following years.

The Directorate General of Primary Care represented by the Department of Nutrition has implemented several strategies to improve nutrition at the national level, including food fortification, limiting the amount of salt in bread, imposing taxes on soft drinks and preventing the use of hydrogenated oils in foods and others.

To continue these efforts, the reformulation of food products to reduce sugar is urgently required to ensure the availability of healthy and sustainable diets for all.

According to the 2017 National

The importance of this meeting is that it acts as a preliminary stage of the implementation of sugar reduction programme with the aim of developing standards concerned with the sugar levels in sweetened beverages of the local companies

Nutrition Survey, 66.2 per cent of adults are overweight and obese. The prevalence of overweight or obesity in children under the age of five is increasing from 2.4 per cent to 4.2 per cent between 2009 and 2017. Also, 17 per cent of seventh and tenth graders are overweight and obese, according to the Annual Health Report 2020.

To address this issue, food

product reformulation has been considered to reduce the sugar content of food products, particularly sugar-sweetened beverages. Taxes were further imposed on soft drinks (50 per cent) and energy drinks (100 per cent) as of June 2019 to encourage reformulation of existing drinks to reduce the amount of sugar and help consumers adapt to lower sugar consumption.

Dr Salima al Maamari, Director of Nutrition, stated that the rates of sugar consumption in the community is currently high. The WHO recommends that the consumption should not exceed six spoons of sugar per day for an adult, while this amount or close to it is found in one can of sweetened drinks such as juices and soft drinks. Therefore, it is necessary to start reducing these amounts of sugar gradually over the years with the cooperation of beverages manufacturers.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (21/2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last date for inquires submission	Last date for obtaining Tender Docs.	Last date for Submission
27/2022/MM/PA-4-Recall-1	Supply of Gases	25/- OMR	25/07/2022	11/08/2022	14/08/2022
30/2022/MM/PA-7-Recall-1	Insurance of Muscat Municipality Properties	25/- OMR	13/07/2022	19/07/2022	21/07/2022
53/2022/MM/PA-15	Supply of Air Conditioners, Refrigerators and Water Coolers	25/- OMR	25/07/2022	11/08/2022	14/08/2022
54/2022/MM/PA-16	Supply of Sign Faces for Street Name, Way Number, House Number, Block Number and Flat Number with Accessories within Muscat Governorate	25/- OMR	25/07/2022	11/08/2022	14/08/2022

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond which is equivalent to (1%) of the total value of the tender to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.**
- Clarifications and support:**
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to (etenderhd@mtc.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
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Sudan civilians reject army offer, urge protests

KHARTOUM: Sudan’s main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change, on Tuesday rejected a proposal by the country’s coup leader to make way for civilian rule as a “transparent manoeuvre” and urged more protests.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan, whose power grab last October ousted the FFC, had vowed in a surprise move on Monday to “make room” for civilian groups to form a new transition government.

But the FFC on Tuesday called for “continued public pressure” on the streets after days of protests and dismissed Burhan’s move as a “tactical retreat and a transparent manoeuvre”.

“The coup leader’s speech is a giant ruse, even worse than the October 25 coup,” said FFC leader Taha Othman. “The crisis will end with the coup leaders resigning and the forces of the revolution forming a civil government.”

On the streets of Khartoum, protesters again defied security forces and held firm on their makeshift barricades.

“We don’t have confidence in Burhan,” said Muhammad Othman, perched on a pile of bricks. “We just want him to leave once and for all.”

The FFC has so far refused to take part in talks with military



People erect a make-shift barrier made of bricks as they gather for a protest sit-in outside the ‘Royal Care Hospital’ in the Barari area of Sudan’s capital Khartoum. – AFP

leaders, which were launched under international auspices in an effort to restore the transition to civilian rule.

Burhan said late on Monday the military would no longer participate in the talks facilitated by the United Nations, African Union and the regional IGAD bloc, wanting instead “to make room

for political and revolutionary forces and other national factions” to form a civilian government.

The announcement came eight months after the coup ousted civilians from a transitional administration, sparking widespread international condemnation and aid cuts to the northeast African nation.

Security forces — as they have done repeatedly during the long-running protests — sought to break up the crowds by firing barrages of stun grenades and tear gas, according to pro-democracy medics.

The latest coup not only worsened a political crisis but has pushed Sudan deeper into a dire

economic slump.

International actors have been pushing for civilian and military leaders to negotiate a return to the democratic transition they had started after the 2019 ouster of longtime ruler Omar al Bashir.

Hours after his surprise announcement, Burhan on Tuesday flew to Kenya for an

In Khartoum, protesters again defied security forces and held firm on their makeshift barricades

IGAD emergency summit of East African leaders.

Kholood Khair, of the Khartoum think-tank Insight Strategy Partners, said she believed Burhan’s announcement was made to put “the pressure on the civilians” but warned that it might change little on the ground.

“There’s no talk of accountability,” Khair said, noting that “core grievances remain.”

Burhan’s televised address came as hundreds of anti-coup demonstrators continued protests.

Pro-democracy medics said nine demonstrators lost their lives on Thursday, the deadliest violence so far this year, bringing to 114 the number killed in the crackdown against anti-coup protesters.

Protester Oumeima Hussein, speaking on Monday, said the army chief must be “judged for all those killed since the coup” and vowed to “topple him like we did to Bashir”.

— AFP

Libyan govt seeks calm after electricity protests

TRIPOLI: Libya’s Tripoli-based government sought on Monday to quell public anger over chronic power cuts, devoting its weekly meeting to the electricity sector and admitting it had underestimated the problem. The meeting followed a night of angry protests across the capital, where masked youths set car tyres alight and blocked roads.

A further demonstration had been planned for Monday afternoon to demand long-awaited elections, but organisers cancelled it, saying they did not want to be associated with possible acts of vandalism.

Despite their country sitting on Africa’s largest oil reserves, Libyans regularly experience 18-hour power cuts, fuelling public anger that has piled pressure on both the Tripoli-based government of Abdelhamid Dbeibah and an eastern-based rival administration.

On Friday night, protesters had stormed the seat of the House of Representatives, based

in the eastern city of Tobruk, ransacking its offices and torching part of the building.

In both Tripoli and the main eastern city of Benghazi, the cradle of the 2011 uprising, thousands took to the streets to chant “we want the lights to work”.

Some brandished the green flags of the regime of Gaddafi who was killed in a 2011 Nato-backed uprising that plunged the country into over a decade of violence and wrangling among what is now a deeply entrenched yet divided political elite.

“Nobody can deny the right of the people to go out and protest and to demand elections,” Dbeibah told his cabinet on Monday.

The government “didn’t take the electricity crisis seriously,” he said, adding that resolving it would take longer than expected.

He announced however that three power stations were to open in July, two in the west and one in the east. — AFP

Sydney floods force thousands to flee

SYDNEY: Rain-swollen rivers spilled mud-brown waters across swathes of Sydney on Tuesday, swamping homes and roads while forcing thousands to flee. The authorities have now instructed about 50,000 people to evacuate and another 28,000 to prepare to escape the rising waters in New South Wales, officials said.

Emergency workers carried out 142 flood rescues in New South Wales over 24 hours, they said, with the support of 100 army troops deployed to the state.

Australia has been at the sharp end of climate change, with droughts, deadly bushfires, bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef and floods becoming more common and intense as global weather patterns change.

Higher temperatures mean the atmosphere holds more moisture, unleashing more rain.

With much of the ground already sodden, the water rose rapidly in worst-hit areas and was soon lapping around the walls of some homes in the western Sydney suburbs. “All of a sudden it just



A resident drives through floodwaters along the overflowing Nepean River due to torrential rain in western Sydney. – AFP

came up so quick,” said resident Gordon Lee after parts of his western Sydney suburb of Shanes Park were engulfed overnight.

“We didn’t even have time to take anything, just got our pet dogs and went out to higher ground up the street there,” he said.

Lee said he had retired from farming about 15 years ago when

flooding was less frequent. “I see younger people move in trying to farm here but they are getting a hiding,” he said. “They are losing everything.”

Meteorologists predicted the weather front would move northwards along the east coast after dumping rain on Sydney for four days. “Sydney is not out

of danger, this is not a time to be complacent,” State Emergency Services commissioner Carlene York told a news conference.

“It’s risky out there.”

The federal government has declared a natural disaster in 23 flooded parts of New South Wales, unlocking relief payments to stricken residents. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

SEOUL

US, South Korea ramp up joint military drills

US Air Force F-35A stealth fighters arrived in South Korea on their first publicly announced visit since 2017 as the allies and nuclear-armed North Korean engage in an escalating cycle of displays of weapons.

Joint military drills had been publicly scaled back in recent years, first in 2018 because of efforts to engage diplomatically with North Korea and later because of the Covid-19 pandemic. South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, has



sought to increase public displays of allied military power, including exercises, to counter a record number of missile tests conducted by North Korea this year.

— Reuters

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka admits bankruptcy, warns of crisis

Sri Lanka is bankrupt and the acute pain of its unprecedented economic crisis will linger until at least the end of next year, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament.

The island nation’s 22 million people have endured months of galloping inflation and lengthy power cuts after the government ran out of foreign currency to import vital goods. Wickremesinghe said the once-prosperous country will go into deep recession this year and



acute shortages of food, fuel and medicine will continue. “We will have to face difficulties in 2023 as well,” the premier said.

“This is the truth. This is the reality.” — AFP

WASHINGTON

Blinken to hold talks with China FM on Bali trip

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will hold a rare meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of a regional conference in Bali this week, the State Department said. Wang and Blinken, who last met in October, will meet on the sidelines of a Group of 20 ministerial meeting on the Indonesian resort island, the State Department said, amid high tensions on a range of issues including Taiwan. The meeting comes as US President



Joe Biden voices hope for a new conversation in the coming weeks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has not travelled internationally since the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP



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In brief

■ COPENHAGEN



COPENHAGEN HOLDS MEMORIAL FOR MALL SHOOTING VICTIMS

With the city still reeling from a weekend mall shooting that left three dead, Copenhagen prepared to pay tribute to the victims with a memorial service. Following a call from the city's mayor, a large memorial is planned for Tuesday evening at 8 pm in front of Fields, a shopping complex located between the city centre and the capital's airport, where the attack occurred. The shooting shook the city which had just played hosted the opening stages of the Tour de France cycling competition and seen the return of the Roskilde music festival after cancellations for Covid-19.

■ CANAZEI



8 MISSING CLIMBERS LOCATED AFTER ITALIAN GLACIER COLLAPSE

Eight of the people missing after the deadly collapse of part of a mountain glacier have been safely located, Italian media reported, bringing some relief for rescue teams searching for survivors. At least seven people were killed in the avalanche on Sunday on the Marmolada, which at more than 3,300 metres is the highest peak in the Dolomites, a range in the eastern Italian Alps straddling the regions of Trento and Veneto.

"When we arrived we saw a disaster, we realised the dimensions of this enormous avalanche," said Stefano Cotter, head of the local alpine rescue team and one of the first people to reach the scene. "We found injured people in need of help and other people who were dead", he added. — AFP

■ ADDIS ABABA



ETHIOPIA PM MEETS SUDAN'S BURHAN, BOTH ENDORSE 'DIALOGUE'

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said he met Sudan's coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Nairobi and that both committed to "dialogue" to resolve any differences. Their talks follow a clash in a volatile border region last month in which Khartoum said that Ethiopian forces had captured and killed Sudanese troops — claims denied by Addis Ababa. "We have both agreed that our two countries have plenty of collaborative elements to work on peacefully", Abiy said in a Twitter post, accompanied by a picture of the two men. — AFP



A community member organises abandoned belongings the day after a mass shooting at a July 4 parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, Illinois. — Reuters

Shooter in Chicago attack to be charged

HIGHLAND PARK: Charges are expected to be filed on Tuesday against the suspected gunman in the shooting at a July 4 parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park where six people were killed and dozens more wounded, Mayor Nancy Rotering said.

In interviews with TV news outlets, Rotering said the community of 30,000 was still reeling from Monday's attack.

"This tragedy should have never arrived at our doorsteps," she told NBC News. "As a small town, everybody knows somebody who was effected by this directly and, of course, we are all still reeling."

Just a day prior, the streets were decked out in red, white and blue as families watched the annual Independence Day parade. Children waved American flags as parents and grandparents relaxed in folding chairs.

As the parade began rolling through downtown, police said the shooter climbed to the roof of a business using a ladder in an alley and then, without notice, opened fire with an assault rifle at the crowd below.

On Monday evening, police announced that they had a suspect, 22-year-old Robert E Crimo III, in custody after he surrendered to authorities. Police

Police announced they had a suspect in custody after he surrendered to authorities and did not know what the motive was for the shooting

said they did not know what the motive was for the shooting.

A retired four-star general, who wished not to be named, said he was in the crowd when the gunfire began and scooped up one of his granddaughters before sprinting for safety to the Sunset Foods grocery store across the street.

"They were scared to death, they didn't know what was going on", he said as he was brought to tears. "I had her up against my chest and she told my daughter later on 'Grandpa's heart was pounding.'"

The 72-year-old man said he was with his family, including his twin grandchildren, at the parade. He said he had served in the military for 30 years. "I thought I was done with this nonsense", he said. The wounded ranged in age from 8 to 85, including four or five children, police said.

Mass shootings have become recurrent in the United States.

Monday's attack came less than two months after a gunman murdered 19 schoolchildren and two teachers at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, just 10 days after a man shot dead 10 people at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York.

Rotering, the city's mayor, said she knew the suspect when he was a little boy and a Cub Scout and she was a Cub Scout leader.

"What happened? How did somebody become this angry, this hateful?" she said.

Social media and other online posts written by accounts that appeared to be associated with either Crimo or his rapper alias, Awake The Rapper, often depicted violent images or messages.

One music video posted to YouTube under Awake The Rapper, for example, showed drawings of a stick figure holding a rifle in front of another figure spread on the ground.

Rotering said on Tuesday that she did not know where the gun the gunman used came from, but added that it was legally obtained.

"Our nation needs to have a conversation about these weekly events involving the murder of dozens of people with legally obtained guns", she said.

— AFP

Russia shells Donetsk seeking new gains

SLOVIANSK/KYIV: Russian forces struck targets across Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region on Tuesday to prepare the way for an expected armoured thrust to try to take more territory as the five-month-old war entered a new phase.

The strikes, reported by regional officials and the Russian military, followed Moscow's capture of the Ukrainian city of Lysychansk on Sunday, a move that handed it total control of the Luhansk region, one of its main war aims.

Taking full control of Donetsk, the neighbouring region in Donbas, the industrialised eastern part of Ukraine that has become the stage of the biggest battle in Europe for generations, is another goal of what Moscow calls its "special military operation."

Ukrainian troops who retreated from Lysychansk at the weekend took up defensive lines in the Donetsk area on Tuesday, according to Serhiy Gaidai, the governor of the Luhansk region. Ukrainian forces were resisting Russian attempts to advance towards Sloviansk, a Ukrainian defence ministry spokesperson said.

In a foretaste of what is likely to keep happening in coming weeks, Pavlo Kyrylenko, Governor of the Donetsk region, said on TV that his region had been hit overnight.

"Sloviansk and Kramatorsk came under shelling. They are now also the main line of assault for the enemy", he said. "There is no safe place without shelling in the Donetsk region."

Police in Sloviansk said a woman had been killed and at least three other people wounded by a Russian strike on the market there. Reuters could not immediately independently verify the report.

A Reuters reporter on the scene saw yellow smoke billowing from an auto supplies shop, and flames engulfing rows of market stalls as firefighters tried to extinguish the blaze.

Vadym Lyakh, the city's mayor, wrote on Facebook that the centre and north of Sloviansk had been shelled.

"Everyone remain in shelters!", he wrote. — AFP



A man pushes a bicycle across a street in front of the market after shelling, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Sloviansk, Donetsk region. — Reuters

EU Parliament adopts 'historic' new rules for Internet

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament on Tuesday ratified landmark laws that will more closely regulate Big Tech and curb illegal content online, as the EU seeks to bring order to the Internet "Wild West".

MEPs approved the final versions of the Digital Markets Act, focused on ending monopolistic practices of tech giants and the Digital Services Act, which toughens scrutiny and the consequences for platforms when they host banned content.

"With the legislative package, the European Parliament has ushered in a new era of tech regulation", said German MEP Andreas Schwab, a key backer of the laws.

The DMA will have major consequences for Google, Meta and Apple and a handful of online "gate-keepers" that must now do business according to a list of do's and don'ts intended to ensure that



smaller rivals can thrive.

This should do away with the complicated court battles needed to enforce the EU's competition laws that drag on for decades and

fall short in challenging the giants.

The DMA passed with 588 votes in favour and only 11 against in a sign of the acute apprehension towards tech giants across the

political spectrum.

The DSA will target a wider range of Internet actors and aims to ensure real consequences for companies that fail to control hate

speech, disinformation and child sexual abuse images.

The digital world "has developed a bit like a western movie, there were no real rules of the game, but now there is a new sheriff in town", said Danish MEP Christel Schaldemose. "We have now taken back control of tech. We now have democratically determined rules for tech", she added.

The DSA also passed easily with 539 votes in favour, 54 against and 30 abstentions.

Both laws now require the final approval by the EU's 27 member states, which should be a formality. The legislation had faced lobbying from the tech companies and intense debate over the extent of freedom of speech. Now the big question is over enforcement with worries that the European Commission, the EU's executive arm in Brussels, lacks the means to give sharp teeth to its new powers.

— AFP

Let this summer be offline for kids



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a content creator and wellness adviser

The schools have shut down for summers and the core issue which haunts all the parents is how to keep the kids away from gluing to their screens all the time?

After tiring weeks of exams kids have their right to chill but in the name of watching screens is not a worthwhile choice at all.

Of course, the options are uncountable when it comes to hooking to devices but setting them free in the name of relaxation can be adding fuel to the fire of screen addiction.

Hot and humid weather outdoors also breaks the motivation of one and eventually one lands lying clumsily on the couch in the cool air-conditioning, doing nothing and watching OTT the entire day.

For the kids specifically, when they have no assigned tasks from school and no goals set for the day it is super easy to resort to online activities.

As parents too we are burnt out from work at times and couldn't figure out ways to engage them thereby we give up and let them be in their virtual worlds.

Dr Jennifer F Cross; attending paediatrician and a developmental and behavioural paediatrics expert at New York-Presbyterian Komansky Children's Hospital says "If young children spend most of their time engaging with an iPad, smartphone, or the television, all of which are highly entertaining, it can be hard to get them engaged in non-electronic activities, such as playing

GET THE KIDS TO BE ENGAGED IN NON-ELECTRONIC ACTIVITIES, LIKE PLAYING WITH TOYS TO FOSTER IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY, EXPLORING OUTDOORS AND PLAYING WITH OTHER CHILDREN

with toys to foster imagination and creativity, exploring outdoors, and playing with other children to develop appropriate social skills."

Thereupon it's empirical that we set some ground rules for everyone in the house regarding online time. Following tips come in handy to

practice:

☒ Don't let them wake up late and start their day from breakfast with their devices. Nothing can be as bad as starting the day this way. Instead, let them take a shower and encourage them to indulge in indulging their hobbies. Nevertheless, involve them with you in simple household chores or even out grocery shopping.

☒ Next expecting our kids to give up on their devices when we are watching will only cause backlash. So, set clear timings when watching and that should imply all family members.

☒ Going on a vacation is a full-proof plan to get significant time offline for kids. If that is not possible, make sure that

weekend activities revolve around swimming, camping, or hiking. Any activity that gets them closer to nature immensely helps with their overall development and productivity.

☒ Eating unhealthily is the major by-product of excessive watching that sets a negative loop going on and in turn makes kids lazy and lethargic. Decreasing or cancelling the screen time should be used as a punishment rather than permitting to watch as a reward. The former will bring impactful results.

☒ Last but not the least, when outdoors make a rule which says no devices allowed here so that their brains can unwind and they can cherish their presence in the real offline world.

Tunisia struggles to-grow more wheat as war bites

PAUL RAYMOND

Tunisian farmer Mondher Mathali surveys a sea of swaying golden wheat and revs his combine harvester, a rumbling beast from 1976 which he fears could break down at any moment. Since the Ukraine war sent global cereal prices soaring, import-dependent Tunisia has announced a push to grow all its own durum wheat, the basis for local staples like couscous and pasta.

The small North African country, like its neighbours, is desperate to prevent food shortages and social unrest — but for farmers on the sun-baked plains north of Tunis, even the basics are problematic.

"I'd love to buy a new combine harvester, but I could only do it with help from the government", said Mathali, 65.

He reckons his outdated machine wastes almost a third of the crop. With spare parts hard to find, he fears a breakdown could cost him his entire harvest. But even a second-hand replacement would cost him an unimaginable sum: \$150,000.

"Our production and even the quality would go up by maybe 50 per cent, even 90 per cent" with government help, he said. "But our situation is getting worse and the state isn't helping us."

Tunisia's wheat production has suffered from years of drought and a decade of political instability, with 10 governments since the country's 2011 revolution.

That has exacerbated its reliance on imports. Last year, it bought almost two-thirds of its cereal from overseas, much of it from the Black Sea region. Those supply chains have been rocked first by the coronavirus pandemic and then by the war in Ukraine, which last year provided around half of Tunisia's imports of the soft wheat used in bread.

While it still plans to import soft wheat, the country is pushing for self-sufficiency in durum wheat by the 2023 harvest.

That would be a valuable contribution to the national diet: The average Tunisian eats 17 kilograms of pasta per year, second only to Italians.

In April, the government unveiled a programme to help farmers access better seeds, technical assistance and state-backed loans. It also plans to devote 30 per cent more farmland to wheat, and has dramatically boosted the prices it pays growers.

But the agriculture ministry's chief of staff acknowledged Mathali's problems.

"Tunisia has about 3,000 combine harvesters, 80 per cent of which are old and very wasteful, which represents a major loss", said Faten Khamassi. She said the state plans to fund farmers' collectives to buy shared equipment.

Agricultural technician Saida Beldi, who has worked with farmers in the northern Ariana governorate for three decades, says political instability has gutted the sector. —AFP



Valerie Hopkins

The writer is 'NYT' correspondent currently in Ukraine

Investigators of war crimes in Ukraine face formidable challenges

Four men tugged at long strips of fabric to lift a coffin out of the gaping hole in the backyard of a small house. They flung the lid open to reveal the moldy corpse of Oleksiy Ketler, who had been killed instantly by shrapnel when a mortar fell on the road in Koropy, a village outside Khavkiv in northeastern Ukraine, in March.

Ketler, a father of two young children, would have celebrated his 33rd birthday on June 25, if he had not been outside his house at the wrong time.

Now, his body has become another exhibit in Ukraine's wide-ranging effort to collect evidence to prosecute Russia and its military for war crimes in the brutal killings of Ukrainian civilians.

Experts say the process is proceeding with extraordinary speed and may become the biggest effort in history to hold war criminals to account.

But it faces an array of formidable challenges.

For one, the investigations are being undertaken even as the war rages in the east. As the investigators examined Ketler's body, the booms of incoming and outgoing shelling thundered nearby.

Ukrainian helicopters, most likely bringing new troops to the front line, flew low overhead.

Also, although investigators from inside and outside Ukraine are all

UKRAINE'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS ALMOST WHOLLY DEVOTED TO INVESTIGATING WAR CRIMES, WITH MOST OF ITS PROSECUTORS FANNED OUT ACROSS THE COUNTRY COLLECTING EVIDENCE

collecting evidence, there is little coordination.

And despite the influx of experts, "there are really not enough people" to investigate, indict and judge the cases, said Andrey Kravchenko, the region's deputy prosecutor, who was sitting in his office in downtown Kharkiv as the sound of outgoing shelling seemed to grow closer.

One building that prosecutors had been using as an office was struck by missiles in what Kravchenko believed was an intentional attack, and now his team changes its headquarters often.

Demand for accountability is strong.

Ukraine's judicial system is now



Andriy Andriychuk, who joined the police force in the region west of Kyiv two years ago, looks through files documenting potential war crimes, at his office in Kharkiv, Ukraine, May 29, 2022. (Nicole Tung/The New York Times)

almost wholly devoted to investigating war crimes, with most of its 8,300 prosecutors fanned out across the country collecting evidence, said Yuriy Belousov, Ukraine's chief war crimes prosecutor.

Ukrainian courts have already handed down six guilty sentences to Russian soldiers.

Ukraine's top prosecutor said this past week that almost 20,000 more cases — involving accusations of torture, abuse, execution-style killings and the deportation of what Belousov said could be tens of thousands of Ukrainians to Russia — were being investigated.

At the same time, hundreds of international experts, investigators and prosecutors have descended on Ukraine from an alphabet soup of international agencies.

Early in the war, the top prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, arrived in Ukraine with several dozen investigators. But the court, which is based in the Netherlands, tries a limited number of cases, and usually seeks to prosecute only the upper echelon of political and military leaders.

It is also slow: Investigators working on the 2008 Russian-Georgian war did not apply for arrest warrants until this year.

There are a number of other initiatives, too. Amal Clooney, an international human rights lawyer, is part of a team advising the Ukrainian government on bringing international legal action against Russia.

The United Nations has started a commission to investigate human rights violations in Ukraine — with three human rights experts — but cannot establish a formal tribunal because Russia wields veto power on the UN Security Council.

Investigators in Poland are collecting testimonies from refugees who fled there to feed Ukrainian prosecutors. France has sent mobile DNA analysis teams to embed with Ukrainian authorities to collect evidence. Nongovernmental organisations based in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, are going to territories recently occupied by Russian soldiers to collect witness statements. — *New York Times*

Celebrate but be on guard!



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

Eid al Adha is around the corner and preparations are underway for the “greater festival” of the year. Unlike the previous two years, the celebrations this time will take place without any pandemic-related restrictions!

Eid al Adha, which translates to “festival of sacrifice”, is a four-day celebration that falls on

the 10th day of the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, known as Dhul Hijjah.

The festival symbolises the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) to sacrifice his son Ismail in obedience to the command of God.

Before Ibrahim would sacrifice his son, however, God provided him with a lamb that he was supposed to kill in his son’s place. In commemoration of this intervention, animals are ritually slaughtered. The sacrifice is a reminder of the prophet’s willingness to give up something precious to him for the sake of God, and reminds the believers to place their relationship with God before worldly concerns. One-third of the meat of the sacrificed animal is consumed by the family, while the rest of the meat is distributed to the poor and the needy. Sweets and gifts are given, and extended family members are visited and welcomed.

The celebrations recall the unconditional trust of Prophet Ibrahim and his full and total submission

to God, while it also is an opportunity for all believers to draw closer to the Almighty through acts of kindness and concerns to draw closer to humanity.

Welcoming the Eid, which is still overshadowed by the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic, we still must not be careless in carrying out health protocols. Even though Covid-19 cases have decreased significantly compared to Eid in the previous two years and the authorities have lifted

the pandemic-related restrictions, we need to be on our guard! Indeed the catastrophic Covid-19 era has been both difficult and challenging. The past two years have brought changes in how we celebrate Eid. Those who lost their family members to the Covid-19 virus have to celebrate it without their loved ones by their sides.

For many of those who recovered from the virus, many still find it extremely challenging to re-acclimate to “normal” life. The pandemic has had a severe impact on certain sectors of the economy, particularly the services sector.

In some cases, workers are reconsidering their career choices and work patterns, which may imply post-pandemic economies marked by more varied labour arrangements and altered urban environments. The human costs in terms of lives lost will permanently affect global economic growth in addition to the cost of elevated levels of poverty, lives upended, careers derailed and increased social unrest.

In addition to this is the fallout from the war in Ukraine which has aggravated the woes. The conflict has sent global food prices soaring. Because Russia and Ukraine supply much of the world’s wheat, the war has driven up the cost of the global food staple. The pandemic, which is again showing an upswing in some countries, is not completely gone. It is incumbent upon us all to continue to stay cautious while partaking of the blessings during this Eid. We should not ignore the fact that we are still in the midst of unusual circumstances. Eid invites us to become exemplary embodiments of the truth which we profess and reminds us of the virtue of sacrificing some of our own comforts for the benefit of others. After all responsibility is a fundamental virtue of Islam!

Though we are all excited to celebrate the festival, we must not forget that we are not yet fully free of the Covid-19 virus. It is essential that everyone continues to follow all those basic protocols and preventive measures to celebrate this Eid al Adha safely and joyfully. Happy Eid to all!



IN DIVINE SHADE

Pilgrims sleep on the Mount Al Noor, where Muslims believe the Prophet received the first words of the Quran through Gabriel in the Hira cave, near the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. – Reuters

A mathematician with ‘aesthetic vision’ wins prestigious Fields Medal

PIERRE CELERIER

Hugo Duminil-Copin, a French mathematician whose visual approach helped him win the world’s most prestigious mathematics prize the Fields Medal on Tuesday, said he “doesn’t really fit into the clichés of a genius”.

The 36-year-old, who has a messy head of hair and bright eyes beaming from behind glasses, said that he is a “very, very normal person” who loves sport, his family and quiet moments of reflection.

But for Duminil-Copin, who specialises in probability theory, those quiet moments can lead to discoveries that won him the Fields Medal, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for mathematics. He accepted the prize, which is awarded every four years to mathematicians under 40, at a ceremony in Finland’s capital Helsinki.

The other winners were Britain’s James Maynard of Oxford University, June Huh of Princeton in the United States and Ukraine’s Maryna Viazovska, who is only the second ever woman laureate.

Duminil-Copin described with unabashed enthusiasm the happiness he finds in working with others in the search for answers — whether or not they find one.

“It’s the best, especially since it’s a collective process, where all the beauty is in interacting with others,” he said in an interview a few days before the prize was announced.

Born on August 26, 1985, Duminil-Copin has collected a raft of mathematics awards over the last decade.

At the age of 31, he was appointed professor at France’s Institute of Advanced Scientific Studies in 2016. “It’s a place that seems made for me, for my creative part,” he said of the green campus outside Paris.

It gives the mathematician that most precious resource for deep thinkers: time.

“This slowness in everyday life is very fruitful because I need time for ideas to come, for them to settle quietly, for them to take shape,” he said.

At the campus, which is not far from where he grew up, Duminil-Copin uses his “very visual intuition” to take on the most complicated mathematical problems.

“There are very few formulas and many drawings” in his mind when he thinks about such problems, he said.

That “aesthetic vision” allows him to view mathematics with a “certain elegance,” he added.

The Paris institute allows researchers to free themselves of all other obligations, including teaching.

But Duminil-Copin teaches anyway, retaining a professorship at the University of Geneva, saying that “in the end it is perhaps the most important aspect of this profession”.

He may have inherited this passion from his father, a sports teacher, and mother, a dancer who became a teacher later in life.

When he was younger, Duminil-Copin envisioned becoming a teacher himself — of maths, of course — but his talent propelled him towards research.

Collaboration is at the heart of his outlook. If he provides mathematical

tools to physicists, their work in turn may allow someone else in the future to find new applications for them. “It’s the whole community that really produces scientific progress,” he said.

Duminil-Copin hailed the importance of two university professors to his career, Jean-Francois Le Gall, who also worked on probability theory, and fellow Fields Medal winner Wendelin Werner.

He said he fell in “love at first sight” with percolation theory during a class Werner taught on the subject, which falls under the branch of statistical physics.

It was in that class that Duminil-Copin first encountered Nienhuis’s conjecture — a “beautiful, elegant and completely mysterious” problem, he said.

“I solved it a few years later, almost without doing it on purpose.”

As a child, Duminil-Copin preferred astronomy to mathematics.

He said he was “not pushed at all” by his parents to focus solely on his studies — instead they were keen to “confront him with a variety of things” such as sport, music and friends. The lesson seems to have stuck.

“When we talk about preparing to become a researcher we think of intelligence, academic training, but there is also a mental balance which is very important,” he said.

New ideas can strike him “anytime, in the middle of the night or in the shower”, he said. But they will have to wait until he’s back at work. “My priority is on the personal side, to spend time with my daughter and my wife.” — AFP



Hugo Duminil-Copin presents his medal after receiving the 2022 Fields Prize for Mathematics during the International Congress of Mathematicians 2022 (ICM 2022) in Helsinki, Finland, on Tuesday. – AFP

sport

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PSG name Galtier as new manager



The new PSG coach Christophe Galtier is presented with the club jersey by PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi, during the press conference. – Reuters

PARIS: Paris St Germain announced Christophe Galtier as their new manager on Tuesday, shortly after the Ligue 1 champions parted ways with Mauricio Pochettino.

Galtier joins PSG on a two-year contract after leaving Nice last month, having guided them to a runners-up finish in the French

Cup and fifth place in Ligue 1 last season.

The 55-year-old Frenchman joined Nice in 2021 after leading Lille to their first Ligue 1 title since 2011 in the previous campaign. Before joining Lille, Galtier spent eight seasons at Saint Etienne, where he won the French Cup in 2012-2013.

“When you’re here (at the Parc des Princes) you feel the expectations”, said Galtier, who is PSG’s first French coach since Laurent Blanc in 2013-16.

“I appreciate the responsibility that I have so that PSG can have a great season. I have been getting ready for it. If I have accepted his job it is because I am capable of it.

But we have to do it all together.”

At PSG, Galtier will be re-united with Luis Campos, the club’s newly-appointed football advisor, with the pair having worked together at Lille.

Galtier’s appointment comes after PSG President Nasser al Khelaifi put an end to speculation surrounding France great Zinedine

Zidane, dismissing reports that PSG had been in talks with the 1998 World Cup winner about becoming their new boss.

“We never talked with Zidane. I love the player and the coach but we never talked with him. Christophe Galtier was always our first option”, Al Khelaifi told a news conference on Tuesday.

Pochettino, who was appointed by PSG in January 2021, won the Ligue 1 title in 2021-22 and the French Cup in 2020-21 but failed to deliver in the Champions League, the only major trophy that has eluded PSG since Qatar Sports Investment took over in 2011.

PSG, eight times league winners since the takeover, were Champions League runners-up in 2020 but they were knocked out in the last 16 last season by eventual champions Real Madrid.

Pochettino came in with a strong resume after making Tottenham Hotspur perennial top-four finishers in England’s Premier League and guiding them to the Champions League final in 2019.

Despite having a star-studded squad at his disposal at PSG, with Kylian Mbappe, Neymar and Lionel Messi leading the attack, Pochettino failed to win the other domestic trophies on offer, lifting only the league title last season.

Pochettino leaves PSG after 84 competitive games in charge, having won 55, drawn 15 and lost 14. — Reuters

“I appreciate the responsibility that I have so that PSG can have a great season. I have been getting ready for it. If I have accepted his job it is because I am capable of it. But we have to do it all together

CHRISTOPHE GALTIER
new PSG Manager



Kyrgios to face court next month in assault charge

LONDON: Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios will appear before a Canberra court next month after being charged with assault for an incident last year, local police said on Tuesday.

A statement from Australian Capital Territory Policing did not identify Kyrgios but “The Canberra Times” quoted the lawyer of the former world number 13 as saying that the charge was related to a “domestic relationship”.

“ACT Policing can confirm a 27-year-old Watson man is scheduled to face the ACT Magistrates court on the 2nd of August in relation to one charge of common assault following an incident in December 2021”, the

police said. Australian media said the charge was related to a complaint made by Kyrgios’s former partner Chiara Passari.

“It’s in the context of a domestic relationship”, Kyrgios’s barrister Jason Moffett was quoted as saying by “The Canberra Times”.

“The nature of the allegation is serious, and Mr Kyrgios takes the allegation very seriously. Given the matter is before the court... he doesn’t have a comment at this stage, but in the fullness of time we’ll issue a media release.”

Moffett did not respond to requests for comment while an email sent to Kyrgios’s representative was not answered.

Kyrgios last month became

the first athlete to join Evolve, the new sports agency co-founded by four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka.

The 27-year-old is set to face Chile’s Cristian Garin on Wednesday in the men’s quarter-finals at Wimbledon.

The Australian has been fined a total of \$14,000 during this year’s grasscourt major for two offences — spitting towards a fan after his first-round win and then for swearing in a fiery third-round clash with Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Wimbledon organisers, the All England Club, did not respond to requests for comment.

“The ATP is aware of the Australian case involving Nick

Kyrgios but as legal proceedings are ongoing it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time”, the men’s governing body ATP told Reuters by email.

In October last year, Kyrgios and his former model girlfriend Passari were moved to separate rooms in their Adelaide quarantine hotel after an argument.

An undeniable talent, Kyrgios can beat any top player when in form and in the mood but he has a long list of previous brushes with the tennis authorities.

Not since the days of John McEnroe’s tantrums has a player polarised opinion as much as Kyrgios and there is always a buzz surrounding the maverick Australian, whether it be on court or at his media conferences.

Greece’s world number five Tsitsipas labelled Kyrgios a “bully” with “an evil side” to his character after losing their bad-tempered Wimbledon clash last week. — Reuters



Oman clinch five medals at WAYC meet

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JULY 5

Oman clinched five medals on the concluding day of the second edition of the West Asian Youth Championship, which was hosted by Lebanon from July 3-6.

The Oman contingent had participated in three disciplines of sprint, throw and jump in the event where a total of 10 teams were in the fray.

Oman national star Mobin al Kindi was crowned with the gold medal in the hammer throwing competition, while Alia al Mughiri won the long jump gold in the women's section.

Nami al Busaidy won the silver medal in the high jump competition, Oman national runner Alaa al Zadjali won the bronze medal in the 100m race in women's competition.

While the Oman walking team won the bronze medal in the 1,000 metres through the player Khalid al Siyabi race in his first outdoor participation.

The stars of the Oman teams

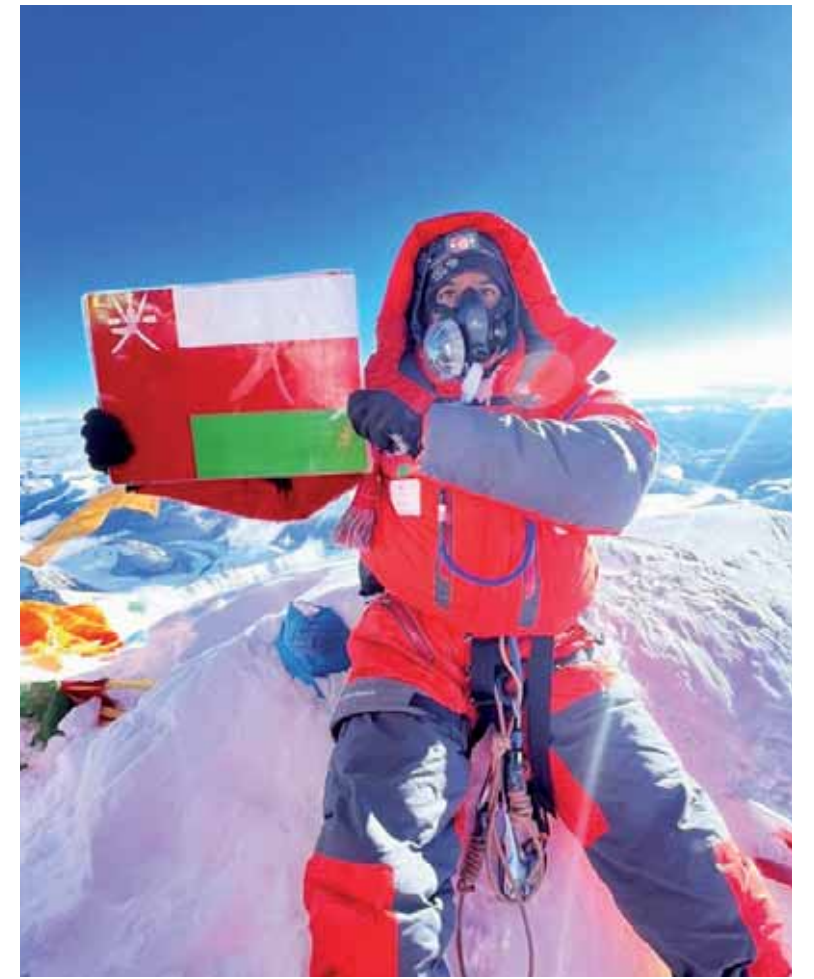
started to participate in the championship through the runner Khalid al Siyabi in a race with 10,000 metres.

Where runner Ahmed al Abdulsalam participated in the 110 metres hurdles, the runners Moayyad al Salami and Ahmed al Abdulsalam participated in the 200 metre race.

The runners Moayyad al Salami and Hamza al Jabri participated in the 400 metre race, the runner Abdulaziz al Habsi participated in 800 metre, and in the 1,500 metre race was Adnan al Shezawi and in the high jump competition were Namir al Busaidy and Ayham al Hosni.

As for the girls' team, the runners Alaa al Zadjali and Sheikha al Hina'i participated in the 100 metres race, and runner Alaa al Zadjali in the 200 metres competition. For the long and high jump competition Alia al Mughiri and Sheikha al Hina'i made their presence felt. The two archers Afnan al Balushi and Maryam al Shukaili participated in the hammer throwing.

■ SULEIMAN GET SUPPORT TO CLIMB MOUNT FINISON



Adventurer Suleiman bin Hamoud al Naabi, who is training to climb Mount Finison in the Antarctic as well as reach the Antarctic pole in November, received the support of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and private sector companies, Okio, Omani Indian Fertiliser Company, Daleel Oil Company, CCED, "Omantel", Mohsin Haider Darwish Company, Oman Society for Oil Services and SalamAir.

Sur gearing up for the Oman Sailing Championship 2022

MUSCAT: The traditional shipbuilding city of Sur will host the Oman Sailing Championship 2022 from 17-24 July where sailors from all Oman Sail sailing schools will compete for a place in the Oman National Team. Organised by Oman Sail and held under the authority of the Oman Maritime Sports Committee, athletes from the SailFree programme will also be in action in the RS Venture class for the first time in championship history, alongside the Diam24 – also making its first appearance at the championships – Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and iQFOiL classes.

Saleh al Jabri, Oman Sailing Championship Project Manager, said, "The Oman Sailing Championship is an exciting opportunity to bring talented



sailors together from our four sailing schools to gauge progress and identify the top performing athletes capable of representing Oman. This year's championship introduces the Diam24 class, a high-performance trimaran used

in international competition, and the RS Venture which will be used at the upcoming RS Venture Connect World Championships held in Oman."

He added, "Our aim is to help sailors perform to their full

potential and prepare our teams to compete at home and abroad to enhance the reputation of Oman as a sailing nation."

In total, 75 sailors are expected, representing Oman Sail's sailing schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Marina Bandar Al Rowdha, Al Musannah and Sur. All sailors will be able to take part in four days of training prior to the championships before another four days of competition.

There will be 20 races and no more than five each day in the iQFOiL competition and 12 with a maximum of three in all other classes. The top three sailors in each class will receive prizes and be considered to be part of the Oman National Team for upcoming national, regional and international competition.

Legends League Cricket is back with 4 Teams, 110 International Players

NEW DELHI: After the success of season 1, Legends League Cricket is back with 2nd season from September 20, 2022 to October 10, 2022 which would feature four privately owned Franchisees. Virender Sehwag, Irfan Pathan and Yusuf Pathan to play in the upcoming Legends League Cricket, second season will be played in Muscat, Oman.

The first season of Legends League Cricket had former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England, among other cricket nations divided into three Teams representing India, Asia and Rest of the World. Cricket fans all across the world saw the Legends of Cricket sweat it out at their competitive best during the first season.

Virender Sehwag said "I love



to be in the Cricket field. I missed the playing 1st season of LLC but it would be great to go back into the field with the LLC season 2"

Irfan Pathan said, "Excited to announce that I'll be back in action playing Legends League Cricket in September. Aur iss baar kuch naya bhi hone wala hai... so I am really looking forward to be in Oman."

Yusuf Pathan said, "Practice makes you perfect. And I'm perfecting my shots for action packed season 2 of the Legends



League Cricket. It was fun in January, and I am getting ready for September."

Raman Raheja, CEO, Legends League Cricket said, "We have 4 Franchisees owned teams, playing 15 matches between September 20 to October 10, 2022 at Oman. Currently we have 110 Top class players in the pool who would be put in 4 teams through a Player Draft process in early August 2022. So about 80 top players, essentially Legends of Cricket, would be playing in the upcoming season. Players like Sehwag, Irfan & Yusuf Pathan amongst others from India, Australia, England, Pakistan, SA, Sri Lanka, etc are going to be playing together. The format is such that it would make us an International T20 League with highest number of

International Cricketers in the playing eleven."

On Sehwag and Pathan brothers confirming their participation, he added "We are happy to have them in the league. With this year season, we are going to make a bigger impact not only on the viewers but also some handsome gains for the players' fraternity as well. We expect the league to further add to the huge fan following in the years to come."

Ravi Shastri, Commissioner of Legends League Cricket said "The Carnival of Legends is back. Top Cricketers from around the world would be seen coming together. These players have contributed immensely to cricket throughout their career. I am looking forward to watching them play the Legends League Cricket second season."

ROOT, BAIRSTOW

POWER ENGLAND TO HISTORIC CHASE



England's Jonny Bairstow celebrates reaching his century with Joe Root. – Reuters

ANDY JALIL
BIRMINGHAM, JULY 5

This was an England performance to savour, not just for the comfortable 7-wicket win in the carried-over fifth Test to level the series of 2021, but for the wonderful exhibition of batting by Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow in an unbroken fourth wicket partnership worth 269 runs. Root, with 142, remained unbeaten with his 28th Test hundred and Bairstow's 114 not out was his 12th Test hundred and the second of this match. Appropriately, he was man-of-the-match for his extraordinary feat.

England resumed their second innings on the fifth morning on 259 for three and looking for a further 119 to win. After their spirited batting of the previous day, it seemed the required runs would be quite attainable in the first session if their scoring tempo was maintained. Indeed, it was achieved in an hour-and-a-half's play. Root with 76 overnight and Bairstow on 72 did begin in much the same vein, particularly Bairstow, despite the bowlers achieving considerable movement under cloud cover. One ball in particular from Mohammad Siraj surprised Root as it nipped back into him from outside off stump

and rapping the pad but probably missing leg. Bairstow took two consecutive fours from Mohammad Shami's first over. The first was a lovely square drive to point and then another to backward point. Thirty runs came from the first five overs, 19 of them to Bairstow taking him into the nineties. Root's first four was exquisitely struck bending on one knee for the drive to cover and England's 300 was up in the 65th over as Root ran two to point and then a single took him too into the nineties. The balls were causing a problem with two ball changes having to be made in the first 40

minutes of play. But that did not stop the rate of scoring as the two batsmen brought up the two hundred of their stand from 249 balls with a second successive four struck by Root, off Jasprit Bumrah, which took him to 98. His hundred came in the following over with an edged four, his fourteenth from 136 balls, it flew over second slip. Bairstow slowed down his scoring in the nineties, playing no risky shots as he got nearer the chance of a second century in the same Test. It finally came when he dabbled a ball from Ravindra Jadeja to square leg, celebrating his achievement with a jump and his arms aloft.

He had faced 138 balls, twelve of which were hit for four and a six. He promptly hit two fours, the second of which a powerful straight drive of Siraj. Root meanwhile, having already reached his century was playing his shots freely which, by the end had given him 19 fours and a reverse swept six. Both batsmen had totally dominated the play making the bowling look quite innocuous. They gave a superb display of attractive strokes, powerful hitting as well as perfect understanding of running between the wickets. The scores were tied at 377 for three in 76.2 overs as Root reverse swept Jadeja for four and two balls

later another reverse sweep to cover for a single completed the wonderful run chase, the highest ever in history for England to win a Test.

SCOREBOARD	
India first innings:	416
England first innings:	284
India second Innings:	245
England second Innings (O/n: 259/3):	
A Lees (run out).....	56
Z Crawley b Bumrah.....	46
O Pope c Pant b Bumrah	0
J Root (not out).....	142
J Bairstow (not out).....	114
Extras (B-8, LB-7, NB-2, W-3).....	20
Total (For 3 wickets, 76.4 overs).....	378
Fall of wickets: 1-107, 2-107, 3-109	
Bowling: Bumrah 17-1-74-2, Shami 15-2-64-0, Jadeja 18-4-3-62-0, Siraj 15-0-98-0, Thakur 11-0-65-0	

England trying to rewrite Test cricket, says Stokes

BIRMINGHAM: England are out to rewrite how test cricket is played in the country, skipper Ben Stokes said after leading the side to a memorable seven-wicket victory in the fifth test against India on Tuesday. England rode unbeaten hundreds from Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow to pull off a record chase of 378 with two sessions to spare at Edgbaston for a thrilling series-leveling victory. It follows their home win against New Zealand when they chased down targets of 277, 299 and 296 to blank the world champions 3-0. "We're trying to rewrite how test cricket is being played in England," Stokes said of the team's new approach since he assumed

captaincy and Brendon McCullum took over as the head coach. "All the plans we've put together in the last 4-5 weeks we're going to try and carry forward. "We know that we want to give some new life to test cricket. The support we received has been fantastic in the short time that we've been around. "Inspiring the next generation is what we want to do. We want to bring in new fans and want to leave a mark on test cricket." Few expected England to win so easily after conceding a first innings lead of 132 and set a target they had never been able to achieve. Alex Lees and Zak Crawley got them off to a flyer with a rapid century stand.



England's Ben Stokes and India's Jasprit Bumrah pose with the LV trophy after the match. – Reuters

Even after they lost three quick wickets, centurions Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow continued to play their shots. Stokes said having clarity about individual roles was key to their stunning success. "When you have clarity like we do at the moment in the dressing room, it makes totals like that and just the game itself a lot easier. "The target of 378 five-six weeks ago would have been scary, but it was good," said the all-rounder. He quoted team-mate Jack Leach to articulate the new team philosophy: "Sometimes, teams will be better than us, but no one will be braver than us, quote by Jack Leach." — Reuters

business

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Pact signed for RO 30 million finfish project in Muscat

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 5

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed a contract on Tuesday for the implementation of a major finfish farming project off Wilayat Al Seeb in Muscat Governorate.

Total investment in the facility, covering an area of 1.5 million sq metres, is around RO 30 million. Construction on the project, which includes the installation of a number of floating cages, will start this year.

Only premium fish species are targeted for cultivation in this project. In the first phase, production is estimated at 3,000 tonnes per annum. Fingerlings will be bred within the floating case system.

An onshore facility, set on an area of 7,500 sq metres, will include a fish packaging and canning plant, feed store, equipment warehouse and other support infrastructure.



ONLY PREMIUM FISH SPECIES ARE TARGETED FOR CULTIVATION IN THIS PROJECT. IN THE FIRST PHASE, PRODUCTION IS ESTIMATED AT 3,000 TONNES PER ANNUM. FINGERLINGS WILL BE BRED WITHIN THE FLOATING CASE SYSTEM.

Al Madina Takaful denies fraud claims

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 5

Publicly traded takaful company Al Madina Takaful has denied media reports alleging that the company was the target of a purported fraud.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Tuesday, Usama al Barwani, CEO, said: “Regarding the immediate disclosure of the impact of the



recent market news of suspected fraud in the company, we would like announce to the shareholders and investment community that

there are no cases classified as fraud cases as yet; However, there was an incidence of non-declaration of interest of an employee's relative in a third-party service provider.”

The CEO further noted: “The internal audit report has been raised to the audit committee and then to the Board of Directors according to regulatory requirements and an investigation committee has been constituted by Board to look into this case and

as soon as it comes to a definitive conclusion, and if it is significant under the disclosure requirements of CMA, the Company shall make the necessary disclosure.”

Al Barwani stressed that the Al Madina Takaful, “with its strong financials, is well positioned to fulfil its commitment to the policyholders and there are no significant financial implications that could affect the Company's financial position”.

Two infrastructure contracts worth RO 85 million awarded



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 5

Leading contractors Galfar Engineering and Contracting SAOG and Al Hassan Engineering Company have announced that they have been awarded two key infrastructure contracts totalling around RO 85 million in value.

Galfar stated in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) that it has been awarded a contract worth around RO 73 million for the construction of the dual carriageway National Road Project (NR32) in Duqm. The client is the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

The 16 km road project, due for completion in 36 months, will begin in front of Duqm Refinery and run southwards towards the centre of Duqm.

In addition to three lanes in either direction, the carriageway will also include four signalised junctions, one roundabout and three

concrete bridges over wadis Sayy, Jurf and Dangert.

Earlier this week, Galfar won a contract from the Ministry of Defence for the dualisation of Phase 2 of Al Murtafaat Street at a cost of RO 16.145 million.

The 16 km road, includes 8.30 km of dual carriageway featuring a total of six traffic lanes with three lanes in each direction.

Also, as part of its scope, Galfar will construct 7.70 km of service roads, add three signalised junctions, two roundabouts and 17 major culverts in 18-months timeframe.

Meanwhile, publicly listed firm Al Hassan Engineering also announced that it has signed a contract with Oman LNG LLC for Engineering, Procurement, Construction, Commissioning and Performance testing of a New Sea Cooling Water Outfall Project at Oman LNG's facility in Qalhat, Oman for 12.5 million The execution period will be 18.5 months.

SUB.CO completes final splice for Oman Australia Cable system

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Australian-based submarine cable development specialist SUB.CO confirms that the final splice of the Oman Australia Cable (OAC) has been installed. The OAC — a 9,800 km system manufactured and installed by SUB.CO — has landing points in Perth, Australia; West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands; and Muscat, Oman.

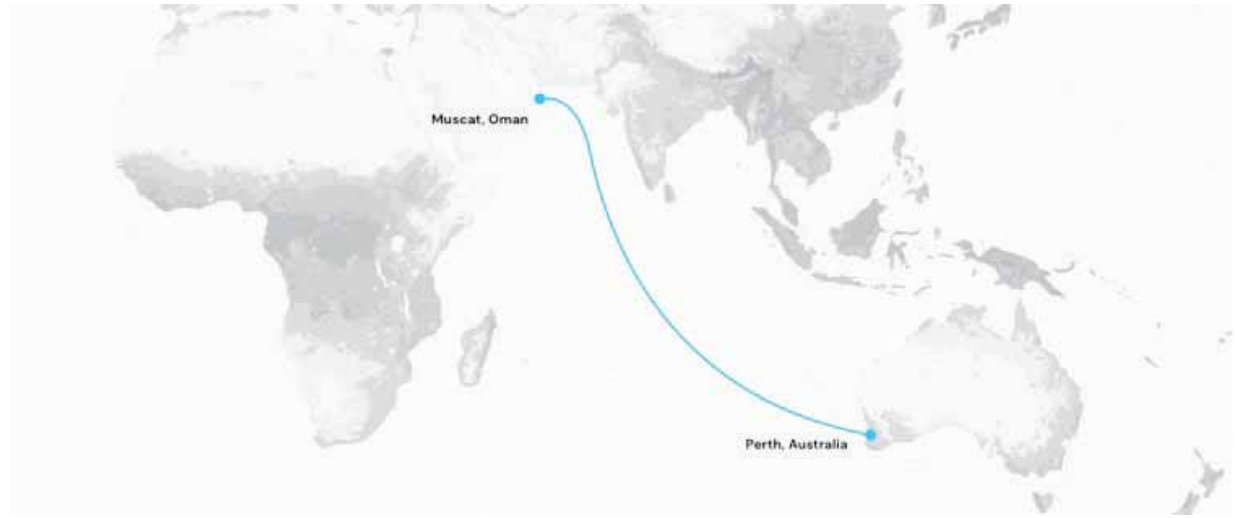
It is the first fully diverse cable between EMEA and Asia that avoids the Malacca Strait, a narrow stretch of water between Indonesia and Malaysia that has a high level of seismic and marine activity causing regular outages on submarine cables and a single point of geographical risk.

“I am both excited and

somewhat relieved to have achieved final splice on OAC and to see for the first-time light travel along the entire continuous optical path all the way between Oman and Australia. Such a great achievement and major milestone towards a more resilient Internet”, said Bevan Slattery, founder of SUB.CO.

Announced in 2019, OAC is Australia's first express subsea cable to Europe, the Middle East and Africa and creating a pathway of diverse connectivity from Australia to Oman, Europe and onwards.

“Today too much of our Internet traffic is concentrated travelling through routes that represent massive single points of failure, in shallow waters in the world's most heavily fished and busiest shipping channels of the Malacca Strait and



the Andaman and South China Seas. The Oman Australia Cable provides a completely diverse, deep-ocean express route between our two continents”, added Slattery.

It is a three-fibre pair system with an option to upgrade to

four fibre pairs based upon final demand. According to Submarine Cable Networks, the cable will also boast a design that features 100G DWDM and a total capacity of 39Tbps.

“More data is flowing across the

world than ever before. It's overdue that Australia had a fast, secure connection to Europe, the Middle East and Africa”, added Slattery.

“This is an important piece of the puzzle to improve Australian and international digital resiliency

and we are excited to be just months away from delivering our first services to customers.”

Last month, Omantel and SUB.CO entered into a large capacity agreement for connectivity between the Sultanate of Oman and various key telecom hubs in Europe through Omantel's extensive subsea network.

Through this arrangement, Omantel will be providing ultra-high capacity connectivity from Muscat to SUB.CO's new PoP's in London, Milan and Marseilles effectively extending the Oman Australia Cable from Australia to Oman and all the way to Europe. Final testing and commissioning of OAC is currently underway with the system expected to become ready for service in September 2022.

WITH OVER 2,000 HOTEL ROOMS, AL MOUJ MUSCAT TO DRIVE TOURISM GROWTH

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 5

Al Mouj Muscat welcomes 3.9 million visitors annually and through outstanding leisure experiences, the Sultanate of Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) is delivering on its promise of developing tourism in Oman, thus contributing to major economic growth.

Al Mouj Muscat, a world-class destination, attracts local, regional and international tourists through its award-winning golf course, lively marina and an array of oceanfront culinary experiences.

This comprehensive destination is home to leaders in the hospitality industry with international hotel names basing their properties in the heart of the mixed-use destination.

Hotels are a key feature of Al Mouj's sophisticated tourism infrastructure, with two international hotels now operational, the Kempinski Hotel Muscat and Mysk by Shaza that together offer 582 rooms.

As well, the 5-star St. Regis Resort is in opening phase and set to offer 440 rooms, along with the Al Mouj Rayhaan by Rotana which will have 251 rooms. Three additional hotels are in planning phase and with a total of seven hotels on project completion, the total number of rooms and suites available will rise to over 2,000.

Carsten Wiegandt (pictured) is the General Manager of the



Kempinski Hotel Muscat which opened its doors in 2018.

Kempinski Hotels is Europe's oldest luxury hotel group and Carsten explains why Al Mouj was the right location for the brand: "Al Mouj Muscat has created the perfect balance of authentic Omani hospitality, memorable leisure experiences and lifestyle aspiration.

"Our travellers tell us that they appreciate the natural beauty of Oman, and that Al Mouj offers a true sense of community. This environment is unique, and I am confident that it will attract growing numbers of regional and international visitors."

Al Mouj Golf is a travel and tourism success story in its own right, with the Greg Norman-designed course earning global recognition as a World 100 championship course and consistently being placed in the top two in the Middle East owing to its exceptional playing attributes and magnificent oceanside setting.

As well, it is the nation's first PGA course and has hosted the



Oman Open, a European Tour golf tournament, for three years and is on the European Tour. Building on its popularity with local golfers, across the Middle East and internationally, the club is investing in a series of major facility and building upgrades that will lift the playing experience even higher.

Given the estimated total economic impact per annum of golf travel to Oman has the potential to exceed RO 1.7 million, Al Mouj is confident it will play a major part in driving interest,

helping to develop the sector further.

Another jewel in Al Mouj's crown is its show-stopping Gold Anchor marina which surrounded by luxury residences, is also expanding and upon completion will accommodate 400 berths.

It provides an unrivalled setting for yacht owners and boating enthusiasts, who have a superb team of experienced Marina staff and support services at their disposal. In addition to being able to welcome more vessels, Al Mouj Marina established the marine

tourism industry and is currently home to 17 sea tour operators.

These local independent enterprises benefit from the vibrant destination's footfall and overall support for them has been instrumental in growing the highly popular area of marine tourism. Sailing, diving and snorkelling enthusiasts are well-served by the accredited businesses that are strategically located in the vibrant destination.

Al Mouj Muscat's supportive and pioneering approach has both created jobs and resulted in over

1,850 marine tour trips departing annually from the marina.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, adds: "Tourism is a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040 as it boosts job creation, in-country spend and creates new avenues for enterprise. Since inception, we have seen the development and growth of the sector through the attraction of world renowned hotel chains, championship golf course, award winning marina and exceptional culinary experiences, bringing in tourists from around the world."

Fibre optic infrastructure for Al Naseem Neighbourhood project

MUSCAT: Oman Broadband Company signed an agreement for the installation of passive fibre optic infrastructure across Al Naseem Neighbourhood project – the first community neighbourhood of the Souruh Initiative launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. The agreement was signed by Oman Broadband Company Chairman Said bin Abdullah al Manzari, and Dr Thomas Alexander, CEO – Al Adrak Real Estate Development Company.

Under the agreement, Oman Broadband will provide fibre optic infrastructure services and enable residential neighbourhoods to access high-speed communications services through service providers. Al Naseem, located in Barka, offers 1,051 housing units on an area of 355,000 square metres. (With inputs from ONA)



Marafiq Duqm welcomes OPAZ Chairman

DUQM: Marafiq recently welcomed a high-level delegation from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) headed by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy — Chairman of Board of Directors.

The objective of the visit was to get to know more about Marafiq's business and core operations and pay site visits to Marafiq's major projects in the Duqm Special Economic Zone. The high-level delegation visited the Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant (DIPWP) which supplies water and power to Duqm Refinery (OQ8).

They also paid a visit to the



power plant (operates by the natural gas and developed by Marafiq) which supplies the Duqm residential, commercial, industrial and tourism zones with power.

Moreover, Al Sunaidy and his accompanied group had a

site tour in the water production and distribution assets as well as the high voltage power transition line (80 km line supplying power to Ras Markaz). The visit concluded with an overview presentation highlighting Marafiq's business model, core

assets, projects, corporate social investments, In-Country Value, and human capital.

It's worth mentioning that Al Sunaidy appreciated Marafiq's crucial role in the Special Economic Zone and its commitment to providing water and power utilities. He also emphasised on the importance of maintaining high level standards of quality and reliability.

Such a visit emphasised Marafiq's commitment towards its stakeholders by sustaining good relationships with them and making sure they are always up to date with the company's related business.

Make every journey memorable in the Ford Explorer

MUSCAT: Ford's Explorer is a capable and impressive SUV that is loaded with technology and features to make the most of every journey. Improved off-road capability comes courtesy of intelligent four-wheel drive and an available new Terrain Management System that features seven easy-to-engage drive modes.

Standard features include a power liftgate, 8-inch digital touch screen with SYNC 3, and a comprehensive package of driver assist and safety technologies.

The Explorer is packed with the very latest innovations from Ford. Every Explorer comes standard with Ford Co-Pilot360, a suite of driver-assist technologies including Pre-Collision Assist with

Automatic Emergency Braking, which includes Pedestrian Detection, Forward Collision Warning and Dynamic Brake Support; Blind Spot Information System with Cross-Traffic Alert; Lane-Keeping System; Rearview camera with built-in lens cleaner and Auto headlamps with auto high-beams.

Other available Ford Co-Pilot360 Assist+ technologies include Evasive Steering Assist, which provides steering support to help avoid a collision; and Post-Impact Braking which provides braking after a collision to lessen injury and damage caused by a secondary crash event.

Explorer also is available with Ford's all-new Intelligent



Adaptive Cruise Control which automatically slows the vehicle down when traffic ahead slows. It also helps keep the vehicle centred in its lane.

The Explorer's 8-inch touch screen mounted in the centre of

the dash with navigation maps fills the entire screen for easy viewing, or split the space with audio information. The screen provides a quicker, more responsive interaction with the updated SYNC 3 system.

Standard SYNC 3's more intuitive layout gives drivers compatibility with available Apple CarPlay feature. A wireless charging pad is available that allows customers to recharge compatible mobile devices, and up to four USB ports, including new type-C outlets, charge next-generation mobile devices. Up to five 12-volt outlets and a 230-volt outlet are also available. For music lovers, Explorer offers an available 980-watt, 12-speaker B&O premium audio system.

The Explorer is equipped with a revised 2.3-litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine that produces 300 horsepower and 420Nm of torque.

The engine is matched to an

all-new 10-speed transmission and Intelligent All-Wheel-Drive system. With its quick-shifting 10-speed automatic transmission, Intelligent Four-Wheel Drive plus a Terrain Management System featuring seven selectable drive modes, the new Explorer is built to tackle virtually any adventure. Sand mode comes standard on all models.

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Helios Towers extends acquisition deadline for tower portfolio in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA

@JmObserver

Helios Towers, the independent telecommunication infrastructure company, has announced the extension of the long-stop date relating to its acquisition of Oman Telecommunications Company's (Omantel) passive infrastructure portfolio. The original date of July 12 has now been extended to September 30.

On May 11, 2021, Helios agreed to buy Omantel's passive infrastructure portfolio of 2,890 sites for \$575 million and representing an enterprise value of \$615 million, including the Group's estimate costs and capitalised leases of \$40 million.

The Africa-focused mobile phone tower developer said it had previously intended to be the sole purchaser, but then agreed to purchase 70% of the newly-incorporated holding company.

Helios Towers explained that the rationale for the partnership



was to combine the operational expertise of Helios with the local and regional expertise of Rakiza Telecommunication Infrastructure LLC (Rakiza), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Oman Infrastructure Fund (Rakiza Fund) which will hold the remaining 30 per cent.

The target assets are expected to deliver annual revenue of \$59 million and adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of \$40 million in the first full year of operations with further growth anticipated through collocation lease-up and 300 build-to-suit sites committed over the next seven years, for which \$35 million growth capex is expected to be invested.

Thales commits to strengthening Oman's in-country capabilities

Strategic contribution: Oman is one of the very first countries in the region to have embraced digital transformation, says Country Director Abdelhafid Mordi

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

Global advanced technology leader Thales says its decades-long engagement with the Sultanate of Oman has evolved from that of a vendor of technology solutions to a partner focused on the development of the country's local capabilities across a number of strategic fields.

Commencing its operations in Oman over 40 years ago, the French-based international tech giant is credited with implementing a range of vital projects on behalf of, among other sectors, the Ministry of Defence, airports and companies in the aerospace and technology industries.

But the transition to becoming a full-fledged partner, as opposed to a mere vendor, occurred when Thales won a major contract to secure Muscat and Salalah international airports – a move that necessitated a ramp-up of local in-country capabilities, according to a key official.

"Today, Thales is in a unique situation where we think and operate like a local company, fully embedded in the local ecosystem. Our goal is to continue supporting Oman with realising its Vision 2040 through the development of localised and sovereign technology capabilities," said Abdelhafid Mordi (pictured), Country Director of Thales in Oman.

"With this in mind, we are prioritising Omanisation and the localisation of industries with a focus on fortifying the country's capabilities in security, digital, aerospace, defence and space projects," he further noted.

In exclusive remarks to the *Observer*, Mordi underlined Thales' contribution to advancing Oman's digital transformation goals, recalling in particular the country's landmark National



Registry System (NRS) initiative. "Oman is one of the very first countries in the region to have embraced digital transformation," said the Country Director.

"One of the first few milestones was over 20 years ago in 2002, when the Sultanate of Oman launched its eGovernment project, introducing its National Registry System (NRS). This was a first of its kind, single, centralised database that maintained records for all citizens. The NRS provided a trusted base for the country's subsequent eGovernment initiatives."

A more recent example of Thales' support for Oman's cybersecurity is evident from the establishment of the Advanced Cybersecurity Academy (ACA) - the product of a partnership with Oman's Public Authority for Privatisation and Partnership

ONE OF THE FIRST FEW MILESTONES WAS OVER 20 YEARS AGO IN 2002, WHEN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN LAUNCHED ITS EGOVERNMENT PROJECT, INTRODUCING ITS NATIONAL REGISTRY SYSTEM (NRS). THIS WAS A FIRST OF ITS KIND, SINGLE, CENTRALISED DATABASE THAT MAINTAINED RECORDS FOR ALL CITIZENS. THE NRS PROVIDED A TRUSTED BASE FOR THE COUNTRY'S SUBSEQUENT EGOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

(PAPP).

"Thales provides a complete cyber training programme led by in-house cyber experts. An extension of this cooperation in the near future is the set-up in-country of an enhanced cyber platform that would provide sophisticated cybersecurity training and testing facilities," Mordi noted.

Significantly, knowledge transfer is one of two major underlying objectives of this first of its kind project in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the official.

"Through the ACA, we have been training specialists in government agencies and private entities such as banks and other corporates.

However, that's not where it ends – we have been providing special trainings to specialist trainers within these organisations

to ensure that they have the know-how and expertise they need to be autonomous. It's important that organisations have the independence they need to secure their systems and processes from cyber-attacks."

As part of the second objective, Thales is setting up a cyber-range platform, which is a simulator that allows candidates to proactively train against cyber-attacks in a controlled environment.

"It is systems like these that define a best-practice or protocol that allow us to strengthen innovation, education and industry in the country," he stated. Going forward, Thales has pledged to strengthen Oman's in-country capabilities.

"Thales has a strong presence in various sectors, including defence, security, digital identity, aviation, and space. A core priority for us is to support the progress of the country against Vision 2040, and we do this through secure, decisive technologies that are effective for critical moments.

This could be from proactive intelligence-gathering in times of peace, to early warning of emerging threats, and fast and decisive response in times of crisis to ensure anti access-air deny missions, or through technologically advanced solutions at airports and space stations. We work closely with key industry leaders on new technologies that strengthen Oman's in-country capabilities across different fields," Mordi added.

SEZAD organises 1st Environment Forum

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 5

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) held its 1st Environment Forum in collaboration with a group of companies specialised in providing environmental services and consultancy and other corporates operating in the Zone.

The Forum was presided over by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and attended by Shaikh Zahir bin Ali al Sunaidi, Deputy Wali of Duqm, representatives from the Environment Authority and other dignitaries in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The Environment Forum aims to strengthen and develop cooperation between various entities and companies, operating in SEZAD, in the field of environment protection and preservation.

This forum serves as a platform to share the expertise of different entities in promoting sustainable environmental development, and find new and innovative mechanisms to solve potential environmental problems and challenges.



Omani digital platform Nibras enters global market

Cutting-edge technology: iNNOVATEQ teams up with Shell to unlock O&G well's data potential

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JULY 5

A multi-year partnership agreement has been announced between Shell, a leading international energy company, and iNNOVATEQ, a leading digital transformation solutions provider, to launch a new commercial chapter for Shell's Production Universe (PU) software by Integrating the current (PU) system with "Nibras", iNNOVATEQ's Digital Integrated Asset Management platform.

PU-Nibras will start rolling out this year in more than ten

global-based Shell assets over six countries across the USA, Europe, Middle East, Australia, Africa, and Asia regions.

"Shell's aim in integrating the PU software with iNNOVATEQ's Nibras platform is to sustain PU with cutting edge technology while reducing operating expenditures and expanding the value of PU within Shell," says Paul Paterson, Data and Global Workflow lead at Shell.

iNNOVATEQ follows the philosophy of doing the right things, in the right way, offering their customers fit-for-purpose, hands-on, experience-driven solutions and services. We leverage over 20 years of experience to help our clients fast-track their own digital transformation journeys; by focusing on what works, how to ensure wide adoption, and how to



sustain the business gains.

"We look forward to enriching our offerings with this collaboration to assist petroleum operators in accelerating their digital transformations by offering PU in Nibras along with decades of innovation experience," says Dr Riyadh Moosa, CEO at iNNOVATEQ.

Expected benefits from the global collaboration between Shell and iNNOVATEQ are to bring the companies' experiences and their operational-driven technologies and expertise to the global market by offering PU-Nibras commercial version to ensure an easier, faster, and enhanced oil and gas asset management and production

optimisation.

Maximise the value generated by O&G Operators, enrich the operational effectiveness and efficiency of O&G Wells management, and enable the insights-driven decision-making, "This collaboration will unlock the full value of PU in Shell as it links the technology of PU to the integrated asset management platform of Nibras to facilitate more accurate prioritisation and faster initiation of asset actions to address deferrals and optimisations," says Wim Servaes, CTO at iNNOVATEQ.

It is estimated that PU delivers tens of millions of US dollars per year in value from the use of its output for well-by-well production allocation and real-time monitoring and optimisation. PU is currently deployed over a

range of Shell-operated production assets from Deepwater to onshore.

Nibras is currently being used by 3,000 users in 17 technical and business disciplines to manage over 8,000 wells and more than 11,000 pieces of surface facility equipment.

Nibras delivers significant business value to its clients by reducing HSE risk, saving 40 per cent of engineers' and operators' time, improving operational compliance by over 60 per cent, and generating over \$250 million in additional annual production.

"We are confident that our collaboration with Shell will bring the industry an outstanding solution that enables customers to leverage their operational data to generate and sustain significant value," says Mohammad Sweidan, CCO at iNNOVATEQ.

India’s crisis buffers are part optical illusion

A bear market magnifies weaknesses. In India, imported inflation caused by the war in Ukraine and aggravated by the US Federal Reserve’s aggressive rate hikes are depressing the currency and reviving the country’s terrible twin deficits — the current account and the budget.

The government’s defence buffers, key to maintaining foreign investors’ confidence and propping up the exchange rate, are thinner than they look.

Rocketing costs of imported food and energy will nearly triple the current account shortfall to 3.2 per cent of GDP by March, Emkay Global estimates.

Meanwhile, the fiscal shortfall remains high at over 6 per cent of output, limiting room for further spending. The rupee has softened 6 per cent to trade around 79 per dollar in 2022, a new record.

Fiscal and monetary policy have necessarily diverged. The government has extended a free food scheme until September and slashed taxes on fuel to ease living costs, but the finance ministry’s expenditure department warns against further generosity.

To restrain consumer price inflation that touched 7 per cent in June, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das hiked benchmark interest rates.

Foreign funds that own two fifths of India’s equity market are nonetheless fleeing, accelerating the weakening of the currency.

Keeping up with the Fed also risks stifling India’s post-pandemic recovery. Gross bank credit grew 12.1 per cent in May, which is good news but coming off a low base.

In this context, the rupee has unsurprisingly continued to weaken. New Delhi is suddenly scrambling to slow outflows, hiking taxes on gold imports read more and on petroleum exports, and Das has run down foreign exchange reserves to stem the rout: the stock has fallen to \$593 billion in June, a decrease of nearly \$50 billion since September.

India’s currency problem is not unique, and the economy is in better condition compared to other developing countries, in part thanks to its push to clean up bad debt before the Ukraine crisis hit.

Polymakers had managed to kill off an earlier so-called twin balance sheet problem, of which the fiscal deficit was one half, by slashing bad corporate debt to a six-year low as of March.

But if unilateral intervention to defend the rupee doesn’t work, India will have wasted precious reserves and damaged the central bank’s credibility. — Reuters

India’s currency problem is not unique, and the economy is in better condition compared to other developing countries.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD

An Iraqi farmer sits next to his sheep at a livestock market in Arbil, the capital of Iraq’s northern Kurdish autonomous region. — AFP

Investors warn of bitcoin risk to other assets



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our correspondent based in the UK

AMONG THE CONCERNS IS HOW A PROLONGED CRPTO DOWNTURN COULD HIT SOME INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE GAINED EXPOSURE TO THE MARKET, SUCH AS BANKS.

Cryptocurrency traders are bracing for more turmoil after a market meltdown claimed more than a thousand jobs and put the industry on the brink of a so called ‘crypto winter’ when trading is expected to be sluggish. Investors were left hoping for some respite after bitcoin fell last month to lows not seen since 2020.

The asset management arm of the UK-listed insurer, Aviva Investors, is keeping a close watch on bitcoin and other digital assets for potential spillover risks into other asset classes, as the market braces for a difficult winter.

Among the concerns is how a prolonged crpto downturn could hit some institutions that have gained exposure to the market, such as banks.

A portfolio manager within the multi-asset team at Aviva Investors, Guillaume Paillat, said: “Traditional banks have become more involved in crypto. If there are some desks that start to show negative numbers, that’s when it impacts investors like us — it impacts companies for whom it is not necessarily the main activity.”

The comments came as crptocurrencies including bitcoin tumble — investors were concerned by inflation gains and a move by crypto lender Celsius Network to halt withdrawals. Bitcoin’s price fell to around

\$21,000 — down 30 per cent since 9 June with a decline of about 70 per cent from its peak in November.

“We’ve had some internal deep dives to try to understand the space, with experts from the sellside who have been active in setting up desks. We are definitely not invested or looking to invest in bitcoin,” said Paillat.

“But it is growing as an important component in the economy. We need to look at it in terms of implications for other asset classes.” The absence of any regulatory framework seeing the crypto market is among the reasons the £268bn asset manager has shunned bitcoin. Its volatility and the fact it doesn’t generate any income, also make it less attractive to include in portfolios, said Paillat.

“The volatility we have seen in bitcoin, given the size of the crypto market, could have implications for more asset classes because of a spillover effect. Bitcoin is not behaving like the digital gold everyone was hoping it would. As it grows, it is something we need to monitor.”

The latest sharp drop for the world’s most popular digital asset follows a huge crypto rout in May, prompted by the collapse of stablecoins terraUSD and luna, which wiped out around \$60bn.

The value of the global cryptocurrency market has dropped from almost \$3tn in

mid-November last year to around \$916bn, according to figures from CoinMarketCap.

The latest sell-off has already had a knock-on impact on some big names involved in the crypto sector. Crypto exchange Coinbase, announced plans on June 14 to cut almost 20 per cent of its roughly 5000-strong workforce, with CEO Brian Armstrong citing the harsh economic conditions and the fact the company grew “too quickly” during the crypto bull run of 2021.

Meanwhile, Gemini, another crypto exchange, said earlier in May that it would cut 10 per cent of its workforce before the most recent market rout. The company’s billionaire founders Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss said the industry had entered a prolonged period where trading remains flat after a significant market fall. Despite the scepticism from Aviva Investors there is evidence that institutional investors want access to crypto.

According to study of 105 professional investors by Grayscale Investments, the world’s largest digital currency asset manager, respondents predicted institutions will replace retail investors as the main holders of digital assets. Those responding to the poll included fund managers, wealth managers and pension funds, with more than \$182bn in assets under management.

The energy price roller coaster



KENNETH ROGOFF

The author, a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University.

Over the past two and a half years, world oil and gas prices have been subject to demand shocks and supply shocks — and sometimes both simultaneously. The resulting volatility in energy markets is both a reflection and a microcosm of a careening global economy.

The price of Brent crude oil declined from a “normal” \$68 per barrel at the end of 2019 to \$14 per barrel in April 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic spread worldwide.

Two years later, in March 2022, the price soared to \$133 per barrel after Russia attacked Ukraine. Now it is falling again amid growing fears of a recession in the United

States. But the price could rise sharply if the Chinese economy bounces back from the stupor induced by its zero-Covid policies.

What will happen next, and how can policymakers keep their eye on environmental sustainability in the face of this market turmoil? One reason why oil and gas prices are so volatile is that short-term demand for energy responds much faster to changes in growth than to price changes.

So, when there is an energy shock, it can take a huge price change to clear the market.

And the pandemic was the mother of all shocks, bringing about the biggest sustained shift in demand since World War II. Before Covid-19, global oil demand was

about 100 million barrels a day, but lockdowns (and fear) sent demand plummeting to 75 million barrels a day.

Suppliers could not collectively turn off the spigot fast enough (slowing down a gushing oil well is not a trivial task). On April 20, 2020, the oil price fell briefly to minus \$37 per barrel, as storage facilities became overwhelmed and suppliers sought to avoid dumping penalties.

Investment in new oil and gas production had already been weak prior to the pandemic, partly in response to worldwide initiatives to steer economic development away from fossil fuels. The World Bank, for example, no longer finances fossil-fuel exploration, including

projects involving natural gas, a relatively clean energy source.

Environmental, social and governance investing and regulations are reducing oil and gas projects’ access to financing, which of course is the point.

That is perfectly fine if policymakers have laid out a feasible transition plan to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, but this has been a challenge, especially in the US and Asia.

Oil, coal and natural gas still account for 80 per cent of global energy consumption, roughly the same share as at the end of 2015 when the Paris climate agreement was adopted. Policymakers in Europe and now the US (under President Joe Biden) have laudable

ambitions to fast-track green energy during this decade.

But there was really no plan to cope with the V-shaped recovery in oil demand that came with the post-pandemic rebound, much less the energy-supply dislocations resulting from the Western-led sanctions on Russia.

The ideal solution would be a global carbon price (or a carbon credit trading scheme if a tax proves impossible).

In the US, however, the inflation-panicked Biden administration is seriously considering going in the opposite direction, and has called on Congress to suspend the federal gasoline tax – \$0.18 per gallon – for three months.

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#Living_with_COVID19



Empowering kids to conquer outdoor adventures

Omar bin Ahmed al Busaidy is an Omani photographer and the author of *Adventure Tourism in Oman*. He and his team in "Wadi Adventure" organise a range of trips around mountains and wadis, including camping, hiking, exploring wadis, and distinctive tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman but rather than make trips exclusive for adults, they are not making child-friendly activities to encourage the young ones to conquer the outdoors... **P20**

A Detroit Designer Works From Home

WHEN TRACY REESE introduced her sustainable-fashion brand, Hope for Flowers, in 2019, she knew she had to do things differently. Previously, for her now-shuttered namesake line, she would release no fewer than 10 collections in an average year — not including Plenty, her capsule collection, and other project developments. That meant about 30 collections to produce each year.

These days, Hope for Flowers releases about five collections, 15 to 25 pieces each, that include her colourful dresses, tops, skirts and pants.

"It had to be just a completely different business model than the one we were functioning in before," she said during an interview at her office in Detroit. "And it's not that the old one was so bad, but we were over designing, we were overdeveloping, we were overproducing."

Reese's workspace is housed in the

city's YouthVille Center, a facility that's bustling with children participating in academic and cultural programmes. Here, she has a team of five full-time employees, who handle everything from design to marketing to garment-making, surrounded by colourful, mixed-print furniture, collage boards propped against the walls, and clothing racks.

In 2018, after more than 30 years in New York City, Reese, 58, moved back to her hometown. She knew she wanted to create an environmentally conscious fashion line that would take a slower approach to garment-making, asking herself: How do you make a desirable product that's responsible, accessible and profitable?

"You either have the choice of kind of trying to compete with fast fashion, which is almost impossible," Reese said, "or trying to offer something that fast fashion definitely cannot, that the cus-



tomers recognises as different than what she's getting."

The switch from her first label, which she introduced in 1996 — and which led to her dressing Tracee Ellis Ross, Sarah Jessica Parker and Michelle Obama, hosting runway shows at New York Fashion Week and appearing at retailers in the United States and Japan — didn't come without readjustments.

In the years leading up to spring 2018, when she released the last line from the original label, Reese noticed more and more how fast fashion was affecting the contemporary market — the middle

lane of retail that attracts consumers who follow fashion but consume within relatively affordable price points.

Fast fashion captured the attention of the typical contemporary customer, who recognised it as an opportunity to keep up with the latest trends and not break the bank, despite its manufacturing and materials methods. Yet even with these changes in the industry and pressure from her two business partners to follow suit, Reese refused.

"We had a lot of retailers coming to us asking us to knock ourselves off at lower price points," Reese said. "It kind of went against everything that I was learning to believe in and understand about the footprint of our industry." — **NYT**

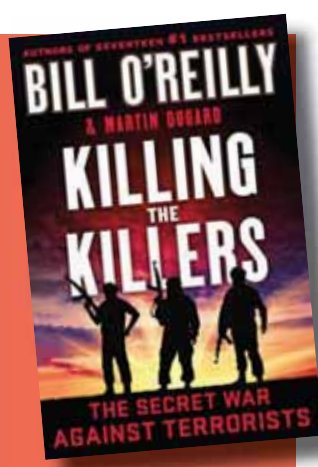


READ

KILLING THE KILLERS

BY BILL O'REILLY AND MARTIN DUGARD

The 11th book in the conservative commentator's Killing series gives an account of the global war against terrorists.



WHAT'S COOKING

Olena Shcherban, Ukrainian ethnologist and historian, who studies borscht and has 365 of its unique recipes from all over Ukraine in her private collection, wearing Ukraine's traditional clothes and headdress cooks borscht in clay, pots in the wood stove in the village of Opishnya in Poltava region. — **AFP**



ATTRACTIONS

In photo, the "Lion of Belfort", a monumental sculpture by French sculptor and painter Frederic Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904) in Belfort, eastern France. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

ANIMAL PLANET

White rhinos return to Mozambique park after 40 years



A MOZAMBICAN park welcomed its first white rhinos in 40 years on Friday after 19 of the threatened animals completed a 1,600-kilometre (thousand-mile) truck ride from South Africa, conservationists said.

The rhinos were reintroduced to Zinave National Park in southern Mozambique under an initiative to restore wildlife and boost the local economy.

Wildlife in the 4,000-square-kilometre (1,500-square-mile) haven was decimated by Mozambique's decades-long civil war, which ended in 1992, and by poaching.

"The return of the rhino allows for Zinave to be introduced as a new and exciting tourism destination in Mozambique," said Werner Myburgh, head of Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), the conservation group that led the project.

Zinave is now the only national park in Mozambique to house all "Big Five" African game animals — elephant, rhino, lion, leopard and buffalo — Myburgh said in a statement.

Since 2015, 2,400 animals from 14 species have been released into the reserve.

The rhinoceroses were hauled to Zinave from neighbouring South Africa over several days in June, in what the PPF said was the longest-ever transfer of rhinos by road.

On Friday, some of the animals were released from their enclosures into a sanctuary featuring extra security to protect them from poachers.

The ceremony was attended by President Filipe Nyusi and Environment Minister Ivete Maibaze.

"The protection of biodiversity is a universal imperative and together we will continue to fight for the preservation of our natural heritage," said Nyusi.

"Only then will future generations be able to enjoy the benefits of nature and join our mission of preserving our natural resources."

The white rhinoceros is classified as near-threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) while its cousin, the African black rhino, is listed as critically endangered.

The PPF said it planned to more than double the park's rhino population over the next three years, adding more from both species. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

BTS rekindle debate about military service in South Korea



A SURPRISE DECISION by South Korean boy band BTS to take a break from live shows has rekindled debate about mandatory military service in a country setting global pop-culture trends while facing a decades-old Cold War threat.

Military service is hugely contentious in South Korea where all able-bodied men aged between 18 and 28 are meant to serve for about two years as part of efforts to defend against a hostile North Korea.

Over the years particular categories of men have won exemptions — either allowed to put off service for a certain time or allowed to do shorter service — including men who win a medal at the Olympics or Asian Games and classical musicians and dancers who win a top prize at certain competitions.

Under a 2019 revision of the law, globally recognised K-pop stars were allowed to put off their service until the age of 30.

Parliament is now debating a new amendment that would allow K-pop stars to do just three weeks of military training.

For BTS and in particular for the band's oldest member, known to fans as Jin, the outcome of the deliberations in parliament will be momentous.

While the band's management company has long presented the seven BTS members as keen to do their duty, the reality of two years of full-time military service is coming sharply into focus as time ticks by.

Jin, 29, has put off his service for as long as he can and is facing the imminent prospect of a full stint — meaning two

years out of the public eye — when he turns 30.

For Jin and his band mates, waiting for parliament to decide has been hugely stressful and is the main reason they are taking a break from performing, said Yoon Sang-hyun, the lawmaker who proposed the amendment to include three-week training for K-pop stars.

"The members cited exhaustion and the need for rest as the main reason but the real reason was Jin's military service," Yoon said.

The extent to which BTS had raised South Korea's profile around the world through "soft power" should be taken into account when considering their military service, Yoon said.

"BTS has done a job that would take more than 1,000 diplomats to do," he said.

'HARD TIME'

Since their 2013 debut, BTS have become a worldwide sensation with their upbeat hits and social campaigns aimed at empowering youth.

BTS became the first Asian band to win artist of the year at the American Music Awards last year, and they met US President Joe Biden at the White House in May to discuss hate crimes targeting Asians.

Choi Kwang-ho, Secretary-General of the Korea Music Content Association, a coalition of K-pop agencies including the band's Big Hit management company, said the wait for a decision was excruciating.

"The young artists have been tortured with hopes that never come true," Choi said.

A Gallup poll in April

showed nearly 60 per cent of South Koreans supported the bill exempting globally successful K-pop stars from full military service, with 33 per cent opposed.

The band and their management company have steered clear of the debate but in April Big Hit official Lee Jinyoung told a news conference in Las Vegas that some band members were having a "hard time" because of "uncertainties" over the parliament debate. He called for a decision.

Jin, asked hours later about Lee's comments, said he was letting Big Hit handle the issue though adding that what Lee said reflected his view.

K-pop is not the only sector hoping for a change in the rules. The new administration of President Yoon Suk-yeol is considering exemptions for some engineers and researchers in the computer chip and other tech fields.

The Ministry of Defence pointed to a constitutional requirement for all citizens to do their duty to defend the country. "Adding pop culture artists in the scope of art and sports personnel who are eligible for the exemption requires careful consideration in terms of fairness," a ministry official said.

Some young men also wonder about the case for special treatment for BTS.

Seo Chang-jun, 20, said he understood why Olympic winners got an exemption but wasn't sure about BTS.

"The Olympic Games are national events where all Koreans cheer for the same team but not everyone is a BTS fan. Many people aren't interested in them," he said. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

German town united by 400-year-old theatre tradition



WALK AROUND the German Alpine village of Oberammergau, and the chances are you'll run into Jesus or one of his 12 disciples. Of the 5,500 people living there, 1,400 — aged from three months to 85 — are participating this year in the once-a-decade staging of an elaborate "Passion Play" depicting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dating back to 1634, the tradition has persisted through four centuries of wars, religious turmoil and pandemics — including the most recent Covid-19 crisis which caused the show to be postponed by two years.

"I think we're a bit stubborn," says Frederic Mayet, 42, when asked how the village has managed to hold on to the tradition.

Mayet, who is playing Jesus for the second time this year, says the Passion Play has become a big part of the town's identity.

The only prerequisite for taking part in the five-hour show, whether as an actor, chorister or backstage assistant, is that you were born in Oberammergau or have lived here for at least 20 years.

"I remember that we talked about it in kindergarten. I didn't really know what it was about, but of course I wanted to take part," says Cengiz Gorur, 22, who is playing Judas.

'Hidden talent' The tradition, which dates back to the Thirty Years' War, was born from a belief that staging the play would help keep the town safe from disease.

Legend has it that, after the first performance, the plague disappeared from the town.

In the picturesque Alpine village, Jesus and his disciples are everywhere — from paintings on the facades of old houses to carved wooden figures in shop windows.

You also can't help feeling that there is a higher-than-average quota of men with long hair and beards wandering the streets. An intricate image of Jesus graces the stage of the open-air Passion Play theatre, where the latest edition of the show is being held from mid-May to October 2.

"What has always fascinated me is the quality of the relation-

ship between all the participants, young and old. It's a beautiful community, a sort of 'Passion' family," says Walter Lang, 83.

He's just sad that his wife, who died in February, will not be among the participants this year.

"My parents met at a Passion Play, and I also met my future wife at one," says Andreas Roedel, village mayor and choir member.

Gorur, who has Turkish roots, was spotted in 2016 by Christian Stueckl, the head of the Munich People's Theatre who will direct the play for the fourth time this year.

"I didn't really know what to do with my life. I probably would have ended up selling cars, the typical story," he laughs.

Now, he's due to start studying drama in Munich this autumn.

"I've discovered my hidden talent," he says.

VIOLENCE, POVERTY AND SICKNESS

Stueckl "has done a lot for the reputation of the show, which he has revolutionised" over the past 40 years, according to Barbara Schuster, 35, a human resources manager who is playing Mary Magdalene.

"Going to the Passion Play used to be like going to mass. Now it's a real theatrical show," she says. In the 1980s, Stueckl cut all the parts of the text that accused the Jews of being responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, freeing the play from anti-Semitic connotations.

"Hitler had used the Passion Play for his propaganda," Schuster points out.

The play's themes of violence, poverty and sickness are reflected in today's world through the war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, says Mayet, the actor playing Jesus.

"Apparently we have the same problems as 2,000 years ago," he says.

For 83-year-old Lang, who is playing a peasant this year, the "Hallelujah" after Christ has risen for the final time in October will be a particularly moving moment.

"Because we don't know if we'll be there again next time," he says, his eyes filling with tears. — AFP

Empowering kids to conquer outdoor adventures

By Lama Al Rajhi

So many families especially those with young children, had to struggle for the past two summers due to the Covid situation with so many lockdowns, summer traditions were turned upside down, outings and kids' summer programmes were cancelled, and sun-filled days were snuffed out.

With everything returning to normal, it was time for families to let their kids experience the joy of the lost time in summer and challenge them to explore something new in the charming nature of Oman. These activities not only help the child physically but also allow them to discharge pent-up energy.

Omar bin Ahmed al Busaidy is an Omani photographer and the author of *Adventure Tourism in Oman*. He and his team in "Wadi Adventure" organise a range of trips around mountains and wadis, including camping, hiking, exploring wadis and distinctive tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Omar being also a father has inspired his team to include special trips with exploratory adventures for children aged between 6

and 13; to promote outdoor activities for kids in Oman.

"Being an adventure lover and a father of a child who is passionate about exploring and experiencing new things has inspired me to join my child Hafs and kids his age with Wadi Adventures, especially during summertime creating a different experience for them," Al Busaidy says.

The trips focus on shaping children's personalities, helping them define who they are, providing them with exploratory skills and more physical and health abilities, and introducing and exposing them to the wide range of geological and environmental terrain in Oman.

For the past year, Omar and his team have made several adventure trips for kids to wadi Mibam, Wadi Shab in the Wilayat of Sur, Wadi Al Arbeien in Quriyat, and blue pools of Al Hoqain, Snake canyon in Al Rustaq and other places.

He shares with us some skills wadi adventure activities have passed on to his kid Hafs and other children that they will rely on throughout their lives.

INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE

During outdoor trips, children are not only away from their parents, but also from their friends, the laziness of using electronic devices and video games, away from their comfortable homes. "This can allow them to learn the most profound personal skills that make them able to discover anything on their own and find their self-identity," Omar says.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

According to Omar, the adventure site is the place where children learn to engage in new activities they've never done before in a different environment. He says, "The adventure site aura can boost the kid's confidence to get out of their comfort zone".

"The child gains confidence in their physical abilities through hiking, swimming, and during climbing rope activities" he added.

Recalling one of the kid's adventures in Wadi Mibam in Tiwi, which is famous for its beautiful waterfalls and cold water, Omar says, "It was necessary to swim to cross to the other side of the wadi, the kids really enjoyed swimming in the first lake, but one of the kids got cold and when he saw the other long lake, he refused to continue and asked to be taken back

to the car."

He adds, "In order to teach the child to take responsibility in hardships in the adventure, I convinced him to carry him on my back to the other side of the lake".

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND CREATE FRIENDSHIPS

Trips can be the best way for a child to learn how to make friends. They get to learn how to solve problems without the interference of their parents, and after spending a full day with the same children and they help and encouraging each other to continue the adventure, each one of them will recognise the true bond of friendship.

Develop a relationship between the child and his surrounding environment.

Children's attitude toward protecting nature is built at an early age, thus it's important for a child to learn about the environmental diversity during trips.

Omar says "after staying in nature observing it beaches, mountains, sand, wadis, deserts, hills, caves and other terrains kids creates a bond between them and nature where they develop a sense of responsibility to preserve and protect it."