

P10

SEEB DEFEAT AL NAHDHA TO LIFT MAIDEN SUPER CUP TITLE



P13

OMAN CRUDE OUTPUT CLIMBS 9.7PC TO 1.047M BPD



P20

KHATLAT AL IBIL: WHEN THE FOLIAGE OF DHOFAR TURNS GOLD



MUSCAT

RISE IN DOCTORS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

The number of healthcare professionals in the private sector has increased compared to that of the public sector. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information's annual report, the number of doctors in the private sector increased to 2,617 in 2021 from 2,557 in 2019. The report added that there has been a decline in the number of doctors and nurses in the government sector over the last three years. **DETAILS ON P2**



Revenues to reach \$1.3 billion in 2022

UNDER HM'S LEADERSHIP OMAN SUCCEEDED IN FACING CHALLENGES

WASHINGTON: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy said that the Sultanate of Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has succeeded in facing the economic challenges during the corona pandemic and the crisis of low global oil prices.

In a report published on its website and prepared by British writer Jonathan Campbell James, the institute said: "His Majesty the Sultan has taken steps and decisions aimed at strengthening the efforts to



FDI stood at 19 per cent in the first quarter of 2022.

diversify the Omani economy, including legislations and laws on foreign capital investment and partnership between the public and private sectors. It aims to attract foreign direct investment to the Sultanate of Oman, and the laws which have been enacted to improve the administrative and financial control in the country, and to promote a favourable business environment. These measures fall within the main objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and Oman Vision 2040."

The report touched on the increase in FDI, which stood at 19 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, and an increase in non-oil exports in 2021, in addition to organising a number of conferences, including investment conference 'Oman for Renewable Energy' in London in July. It witnessed a strong presence of multinational companies which have implemented various projects in Oman and are seeking to invest again.

TURN TO P3

Depression moves towards Pakistan

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

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The latest reading of the satellite images indicates the probability of the tropical deep depression heading towards the coast of Pakistan, and the impact of the system on Sultanate of Oman is expected to be high and medium clouds which may bring isolated rains in the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta.

"Once it reaches the coast of Pakistan the system might die off or gain momentum," said weather forecaster at Oman Met Office.

There were reports of scattered rain in parts of Al Wusta and Dhofar with the continued flow of clouds associated with the tropical situation on South Al Sharqiah, North Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar and parts of Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi.

Oman Met Office said the tropical state deepened into a deep tropical depression with wind speed around the centre 27-33 knots on Saturday. Low horizontal visibility is expected in



deserts and open areas on Adam-Haima-Thamrait road due to active winds.

"The high wind speed will continue until Sunday night. Some of the weather stations recorded 38 knots wind speed which is nearly 80 km/hr. It is mainly located between Haima and Thamrait. The wind is strongest from morning till afternoon and then in the evening it slows down slightly," said the weather forecaster.

Wind activity is expected to continue during the day for the next two days, and with the rise

of dust, there has been a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility, especially in areas between Haima and Thamrait. Authorities urged motorists to be alert and maintain distance between vehicles while driving, avoid crossing lanes unnecessarily and switch on headlights even during daytime.

The Royal Oman Police said there is continued low level of horizontal visibility on Adam-Haima-Thamrait road and specifically urged motorists to, "Close the vehicle windows to prevent dust from entering, as well as turn on the headlights."

MESMERISING BEAUTY

Dhofar Governorate has mesmerising green plains by the coast and much more vegetated mountains specially in khareef season (from July to September) caused by monsoon. PHOTO BY DR SACHIN SINGH





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Oman-India joint military exercise concludes

NEW DELHI: The Royal Army of Oman and the Indian Army concluded the fourth edition of the joint military exercise Al Najah in Bikaner in the Indian state of Rajasthan on Friday. The exercise, which began on August 1, included target shooting practices, war games and crisis simulations.

The closing ceremony was attended by Brigadier General Jitesh Ralli, Commander of the 57th Brigade of the Indian Army; Brigadier General Humaid bin Abdullah al Maamari, Commander of the 23rd Infantry Brigade of the Royal Army of Oman; Rear Admiral Khamis bin Saeed al Farsi, Military Attaché in the friendly Republic of India; and a number of senior officers of the Royal Army of Oman and the Indian Army.

The joint Oman-India military exercise comes within the framework of the training plan of the leadership of the Royal Army



of Oman to maintain the high level of performance and training and combat efficiency of the members of the Royal Army of Oman, and within the annual training programmes that are implemented with brotherly and friendly countries to achieve training and national goals.

On the conclusion of Al Najah 4, Brigadier General Al Maamari of the Royal Army of Oman, said: “The Royal Army of Oman attaches great importance to the joint exercises with the armies of brotherly and friendly countries, because of their importance in terms of exchanging experiences and learn about the experiences of those armies. The joint exercise Al Najah 4 with the Indian Army is one of the successful models of joint exercises with brotherly and friendly countries.

Brigadier General Ralli of the Indian Army said: “We are working with the parachuters of the Sultan of Oman to carry out joint tactical exercises that will enhance the cooperation of the two forces participating in the exercise, as well as boost the efficiency of our forces through the exchange of military information and experience.”

Rear Admiral Al Farsi, the military attaché in the Embassy of Oman in India, said that the implementation of such joint military exercises aims at refining the combat capabilities and raising the combat readiness to achieve common goals.

Colonel Said bin Suhail Jdad, Commander of the Parachuters of the Royal Army of Oman, said: “This exercise was carried out based on the continuous training plans with brotherly and friendly countries that were drawn up within the training plans and programmes of the Royal Army of Oman.” — ONA

PRIVATE SECTOR SEES RISE IN DOCTORS

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

There has been a growth in the number of healthcare professionals in the private sector compared to that of the public sector.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information's (NCSI) annual report, the number of doctors in the private sector increased to 2,617 in 2021 from 2,557 in 2019.

At the same time, the report added that there has been a decline over the last three years in the number of doctors and nurses in the government sector, which includes health institutions under the Ministry of Health, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the Diwan of Royal Court, the Royal Oman Police and the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The total number of doctors in the public dropped to 6,409 by the end of 2021, from 7,045

by the end of 2019. The report indicated that the total number of doctors affiliated with the Ministry of Health dropped to 5,807 in 2021, compared to 6,419 by the end of 2019. At the same time, the number of nurses in the government sector declined during the past three years, from 16,245 in 2019 to 15,924 in 2021.

The number of dentists decreased from 371 in 2019 to 359, while the number of pharmacists increased from 848 in 2019 to 881

in 2021.

It may be noted as per the Ministry of Health's (MOH) last annual report in 2020, for every 10,000 population, there were 20 doctors and 44 nurses in the country compared to nine doctors and 26 nurses in 1990.

The public sector accounts for 62 per cent of the total health staff, the private sector accounts for 28 per cent of doctors, 76 per cent of dentists and 70 per cent of pharmacists.

Tourism recovery at a fast clip, says Fitch

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

Fitch Solutions International retained a positive outlook for tourism recovery in Oman over 2022 and 2023 with stronger growth envisaged over the 2024-2026 medium-term forecast period.

The market was depressed due to Covid-19 over 2020-21 but a notable recovery has been under way since late Q421. Underlying growth momentum over the coming years will be supported by the strategic Vision 2040 economic diversification agenda and the highly capitalised position of the state's tourism development authority, OMTRAN.

As of late May 2022, the government continues to aggressively implement its rebound strategy, unveil digital marketing initiatives and announce new sector specific investments. The plans are part of Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy and reduce its reliance on oil. Oman has already attracted RO 1.7 billion

in tourism investments out of a planned RO 3 billion between 2021 and 2023.

The number of integrated tourism complex projects in the country currently stands at 21, out of which 11 are on government lands owned by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and there are five development agreements already signed for these complexes and eight usufruct contracts.

The report of the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman was monitored through the agency's sources that include independent evaluation, tourism spending forecasts, government spending on tourism, and indicators of access to tourism.

The Oman Tourism Report has been researched at source and features Fitch Solutions' independent assessment and forecasts for tourist expenditure; government expenditure on tourism; passenger arrivals and departures by mode of transport, reason for travel, origin and destination; and the accommodation market.

WHO praises Oman's infectious diseases strategy

SALALAH: Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari (pictured), WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, praised the Sultanate of Oman's strategy on dealing with various infectious diseases.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency and Sultanate of Oman TV on the sidelines of the second Salalah Conference on Dermatology, Dr Al Mandhari said the cooperation between the private and public



health institutions helped in implementing protective measures set by the WHO against the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said there is clear decline in cases after citizens and residents took the vaccines recognised by the World Health Organization, adding: “Everyone should strive to take the vaccines in order to protect lives.”

The two-day Salalah Derm II Conference, organised by the Oman Dermatology Association and Al Nahdha Hospital, concluded on Saturday.

The conference discussed various topics including medical

ethics in aesthetic dermatology, updates in therapeutics, skin cancers, and topics related to dermatological manifestations of internal diseases.

It also included workshops and specialised symposiums in laser, dermoscopy, stem cell therapy in vitiligo and certain advanced practices.

The papers were presented by a conglomerate of distinguished local, GCC and international experts. — ONA



Due to low level of visibility on the Adam-Thamrait Road, be cautious while driving and maintain adequate distance between vehicles

MASIRAH FERRY SERVICES PAUSED OVER BAD WEATHER

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

Ministries and other government agencies announced safety measures and asked the people, especially those who are in the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta, to follow precautions as the Sultanate of Oman braces for deep depression.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has decided to temporarily stop ferry services in the Wilayat Masirah due to bad weather. “Due to strong winds,

high waves and fluctuations in weather, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has decided to stop the maritime traffic and the ferry transportation service to and from Masirah until the weather conditions improve,” a statement said.

Oman Meteorology issued an alert over flooding in low lying areas along the coast of the Arabian Sea due to the upcoming tropical depression. A video clip showed sea water entering the low areas on the coast of the Arabian Sea in the Wilayat of Mahout in

the Al Wusta Governorate.

The Civil Aviation Authority said the public must follow its weather forecasts before venturing out into sea. It also mentioned that high waves may topple small boats. It asked people to postpone tourist trips and fishing until the sea condition improves.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources called on farmers, livestock breeders, beekeepers and fishermen in South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta to take the necessary precautions to ensure safety of their life and properties. It also

called on everyone to stay away from dams and other water bodies.

The Royal Oman Police warned of low level of visibility on the Adam-Thamrait Road. One must take caution while driving and maintain adequate distance between vehicles. Frequent changing of lanes should be avoided except for necessity. Vehicle windows must be rolled up to prevent dust from entering and the headlights must be turned on.

Everyone must adhere to any instructions or alerts issued by the competent authorities and not take risks and endanger the lives of others, the police said.

CDAA gears up for deep depression

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as eight stations set up by the Civil Defence and Ambulances (CDAA) Authority are all equipped to render emergency services as the Sultanate of Oman faces the impact of the deep depression, which may cause isolated rains in the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta.

Speaking to the Observer, Lieutenant Ali al Farsi, spokesperson at the Public Relations Department of the CDAA said that the Authority is all prepared to face any untoward incident in the wake of the inclement weather conditions.

“We are closely following up with The Oman Meteorology authorities and are well prepared to act accordingly. We have eight stations located in Al Wusta, three of which are permanent and five are set up for Khareef Dhofar. All

stations are manned with experts in rescue operations should the need be,” Al Farsi said.

Although the deep tropical depression formed over northeast of the Arabian sea is heading to the northeast towards the Pakistani coast, Oman will be affected by rains in some parts including North and South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar, and some parts of Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi.

“Precautions are taken to minimise the impact of rains and flash floods and security forces and equipment are already deployed in those places highly prone to have the impact,” he added.

Several squads of CDAA forces have already been sent to these areas.

“People in these areas should remain calm and don’t panic. They should follow the official announcements and no forwarded news or baseless information should be followed”, the CDAA official added.

Revenues to reach \$1.3 billion in 2022

FROM PAGE 1

He said that His Majesty the Sultan has restructured the Council of Ministers, in addition to rationalising state-owned companies and sovereign wealth investment funds in five sectors within the Oman Investment Authority, in an effort to improve implementation processes and avoid duplication of efforts.

The report stressed that today Oman is able to achieve its economic growth goals through the ‘Medium-Term Financial Balance Plan 2022/2024’, which provided revenues of \$780 million in 2021, and is expected to reach \$1.3 billion in 2022, and the process is still ongoing. To restore balance to the budget, supported by a rise in oil prices, referring to the statistics of Fitch International Credit Rating Agency, which

confirmed that the public debt ratio has decreased from 67.3 per cent to 47.5 per cent.

The report pointed out that the Government of the Sultanate of Oman is continuing to benefit from the energy sector, as it is making great efforts to develop new sources, including the agreement to develop a green hydrogen-based ammonia production facility in Salalah, implement green hydrogen projects in Duqm and develop solar energy for production purposes in many oil and gas fields.

The report also noted the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman and its prominent role under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan in bringing peace to a number of issues in the region, including the Yemeni issue and the Iranian nuclear file. — **ONA**

Wadi Ain Rub beckons as Khareef enters last lap

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY DR SACHIN SINGH

Dhofar has mesmerising green plains by the coast and much more vegetated mountains specially in Khareef Season (July, August and September) caused by its monsoon.

Known in antiquity as Green Arabia, in reference to the mountains covered with green flora where cows and camels graze together, the coast of Dhofar offers an original environment for a hike in Oman. No doubt about it, hiking routes are fun. Especially in a region like Dhofar where there is plenty to discover.

Getting to Wadi Ain Rub

Wadi Ain Rub is located in Wilayat of Rakhyout in Dhofar Governorate, about 2 hours drive from Salalah. It’s a mesmerising valley with lush green mountains with a variety of flora that you should not miss when you are there. In order to get there, you will have to hike for about 45 minutes, which is approximately 1.5 km one way and for those who like to enjoy a cool swim during a rewarding trek, in the end there is a natural refreshing turquoise water swimming pool.

What to carry with you to Wadi Ain Rub?

1. Appropriate Footwear: Happy feet make for pleasant



hiking. Think about traction, support, and protection when selecting well-fitting shoes or boots.

2. Water
3. Food
4. Hiking backpack

Carry enough drinking water for your trip

Pack calorie-dense foods to help fuel your hike e.g. energy bars etc

Carry basic analgesics and anti-



allergic medications, quick dry towel and if you can then do carry a pair of spare clothes.

5. Waterproof phone case
6. Camera

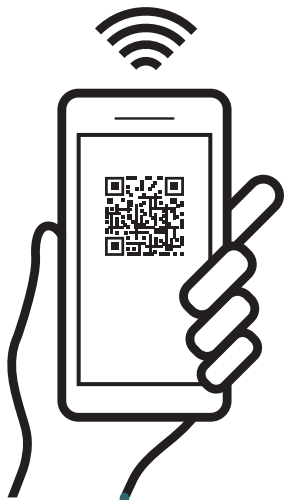
Tips when hiking in Dhofar

1. Travel with an adequate amount of water on your treks, as it is easy to get dehydrated when trekking.
2. It can be fairly slippery with loose rocks, so it is important to wear good shoes.

3. It’s advised to wear long trousers to avoid getting snapped by thorns.
4. Oman takes great care in being an eco-friendly country. While going on treks, do carry a spare bag for trash to avoid littering these trails.
5. Be cautious about snakes and other reptiles.
6. Don’t damage any of the plants along the way or pollute any of the water bodies.



Going CASHLESS



SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttyp](#)

Although traditionally a cash-dominated country, thanks to the adoption of a broader range of digital payment methods all segments of the society in Oman have increasingly switched to cashless payment channels.

The achievement is mainly attributed to the combined efforts of the government and financial institutions in boosting financial awareness, improving the country's payment infrastructure, and expanding the use of payment card acceptance systems among retailers.

Consequently, the volume of e-payment transactions increased by 40.6 per cent in 2021 as compared to 19.2 per cent witnessed in 2020, reveals a report by the Central Bank of Oman.

With regard to cheques for payments, the report points out a remarkable decline in their use in the last two years with 3.8 million cheques

in 2021, 4 million in 2020 compared to more than 4.7 million in 2019.

"The main driver for this trend was the wider spread of e-commerce and further movement away from cash and rising use of mobile phones," says the report.

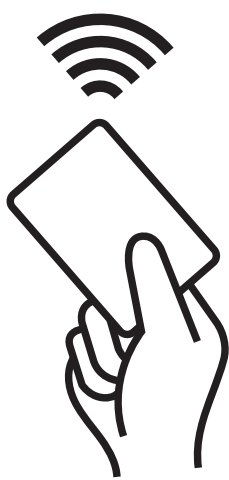
This shift, according to the apex bank, was further fueled by the lockdowns necessitated due to the Covid-19 that came as a measure to inhibit the pandemic spread.

In this regard, transaction volume via e-commerce and point of sale grew at a historical rate of 78.7 per cent and 47.9 per cent during 2021 and 2020, respectively.

The growing adoption of digital payments has contributed to the moderation in the use of cash.

"This is clearly reflected in the share of e-payment transactions by volume, where the share of point of sale increased by 3 per cent at the expense of ATM transactions as people were encouraged to avoid unnecessary cash usage," reveals the Financial Stability Report 2022.

Card payment continues to dominate the overall transactions supported by high consumer awareness and government initiatives to promote



electronic payments, it adds.

Developments such as the emergence of contactless payment cards, QR code payments and alternative payment methods are further anticipated to boost the Omani payment market going forward.

Although the pandemic has impacted consumer spending, it has also highlighted the importance of non-cash payment methods further driving the use of electronic payments in the country.

According to a report by GlobalData, Oman's eCommerce market has observed strong growth in consumer demand, expanding at a review-period CAGR of 15.1 per cent from RO 285.0 million in 2017 to RO 500.9 million in 2021.

"Growth has been supported by rising Internet and smartphone penetration as well as rising consumer confidence in eCommerce," the report by the UK-based agency said.

In addition, various government initiatives have helped stimulate growth in this space. The outbreak of Covid-19 also boosted online purchases of essential goods, as this helped

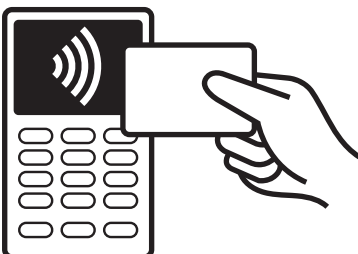
consumers avoid close social contact and potential disease vectors.

In order to implement this without imposing any cost burdens on retailers, the ministry is working with the CBO to ensure that the required hardware facilities are provided to retailers by local banks.

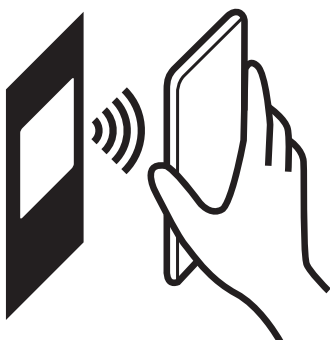
Additionally, the Central Bank regulates the merchant fee for electronic transactions, which must not exceed 1.5 per cent of card transactions and 0.75 per cent of mobile wallet transactions. This scheme is part of the Oman Vision 2040 initiative.

To boost cashless payments, in July 2021 Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion mandated that all commercial transactions at select stores and business establishments such as shopping malls, cafes and restaurants, grocery stores, commercial centres and gift markets must be conducted via cashless methods of payment with effect from January 2022.

Places that sell food items, restaurants and cafes are some of the facilities that are covered under this decision. The move seeks to achieve digital transformation through cooperation between all related counterparties.



THE GROWING ADOPTION OF DIGITAL PAYMENTS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE MODERATION IN THE USE OF CASH REFLECTED CLEARLY IN THE SHARE OF E-PAYMENT TRANSACTIONS BY VOLUME, WHERE THE SHARE OF POINT OF SALE INCREASED BY 3 PER CENT AT THE EXPENSE OF ATM TRANSACTIONS





Egypt’s parliament approves major cabinet reshuffle

CAIRO: An emergency session of parliament on Saturday approved several cabinet changes in Egypt’s first major reshuffle since 2019, with 13 ministers moved, the National Media Authority reported.

A statement said the House of Representatives had approved “all the nominations set forth in a letter from President Abdel Fattah el Sisi regarding a ministerial reshuffle”.

Sisi’s official Facebook page said the president had urged parliament to discuss the changes in the more than 30-strong cabinet, which were agreed following consultations with Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli.

There has been only one reshuffle since Madbouli took office in 2018, in December 2019. Following parliamentary approval, the new ministers are now expected to be sworn in.

The reshuffle does not include the key defence, interior, finance or foreign ministries.

But it does appoint new ministers of health, tourism and antiquities, commerce and industry, irrigation, civil aviation, immigration, education, higher education, military production, manpower,



A general view of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Guba, Ethiopia. Egypt’s new irrigation minister assumes the post amid increasing fears over water security and an impending water crisis. — AFP

public business sector, culture and local development.

The decision to replace outgoing irrigation minister Mohamed Abdel Aty comes just a day after Addis Ababa announced it had finished its third filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

The Ethiopian water project damming the Nile is proceeding without agreement from downstream countries Egypt and Sudan.

The new irrigation minister is Hani Sewilam, a professor of sustainable development and water resources management at the American University in Cairo. He assumes the post amid increasing fears over water security and an impending water crisis.

Other notable swaps include tourism and antiquities. Khaled Anani is credited with several high-profile attempts to revive Egypt’s vital tourism industry,

and he is succeeded by Ahmed Issa Abu Hussein.

The health portfolio has been filled by Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, the acting minister since October. Abdel Ghaffar’s former post of higher education minister will be filled by his deputy, Ayman Ashour.

Another notable appointment is Egyptian Air Force chief Mohamed Abbas Helmy, who takes on the civil aviation portfolio. — AFP

Foreigners flock to Canada for monkeypox vaccine

MONTREAL: With the monkeypox vaccine in short supply in the United States, thousands of foreigners, including Americans, are flocking to Montreal to get their shots.

Canada’s second-largest city, located about 70 kilometres north of the US border in Quebec province, has decided to make the vaccine available to all those who consider themselves to be at risk. Robb Stilson, an art director from Denver, Colorado, took advantage of the opportunity during a visit to Montreal last week.

“It’s very difficult in the States to get

vaccinated,” Stilson said as he lined up to get a shot at a pop-up vaccination centre together with his husband and two daughters. “I’ve friends who have waited 8 or 9 hours to get in.”

Because contact tracing is difficult, authorities in Montreal decided to offer the vaccine to all those who are at risk to stem the spread of the virus.

Since the vaccination campaign was launched in mid-May, as soon as the first cases of monkeypox were detected, Montreal has inoculated 18,500 people, 13 per cent of them foreigners. — AFP



Notice Regarding Tender No. (118/2022)

Ministry of Social Development Note to all companies operating regarding **Tender No. (118/2022)** published on **7/8/2022** about providing male and female workers for the fulfillment unit and treatment unit & evaluation and qualification center, Companies that are entitled to enter the tender under the activity of cleaning, washing and pest control instead of the activity of industrial workshop.

www.mosd.gov.om

IRAQ POLITICAL DEADLOCK



Members of the security forces snap pictures as Supporters of Iraq's Coordination Framework set up tents on a bridge leading to the capital Baghdad's Green Zone, on Saturday, a day after they launched their own sit-in and nearly two weeks after supporters of Moqtada Sadr stormed parliament and began an open-ended protest. — AFP

Number of migrants reaching EU sharply rises

WARSAW: The number of migrants arriving in the European Union rose by 86 per cent between January and July compared to the same period last year, the European border agency Frontex said.

In July alone, the number increased by 63 per cent year on year to 34,570, according to a news release publishing the preliminary data. Overall, 155,090 migrants arrived in the EU from January to July, it said.

Ukrainian refugees entering the EU through border crossings were not included in the figures, the agency said.

According to Frontex, 7.7 million Ukrainian citizens have entered the EU since the start of the Russian war in February.

More than 14,866 irregular entries, “nearly three times more” than in July last year, were recorded via the Western Balkan route, which continues to be “the most active”.

The main nationalities on this route were migrants from Syria,



Emergency personnel are seen at an accident site on the A6 freeway at the Kittsee border crossing, northeastern Austria. A people smuggler rolled over with his overcrowded van while trying to escape a police check on the freeway. — AFP

Afghanistan and Turkey.

The central Mediterranean route was used by more than 42,500 migrants between January and July, an increase of 44 per cent compared to the first seven months of last year.

The number of detections on the Eastern Mediterranean route remained high with 22,601 arrivals, “more than double”

compared to last year.

The number of arrivals in Cyprus accounted for more than half of the total number of detections, with most migrants coming from Syria, Nigeria and Congo.

On the EU’s eastern border, the number of illegal crossings has fallen by 32 per cent since the start of the year, to 2,923. — AFP



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Tender Announcement
Sale of Diesel Fuel Oil Al Rusail Power Plant

Al Rusail Power Company SAOC is offering for sale of approximately 16,000,000 litres of diesel fuel at two of its storage tanks located at its Plant Site, as part of winding down its business operations in the Sultanate of Oman. The entire diesel fuel oil supply will be sold on an “as is where is” basis to the highest bidder and the Company invites interested companies to purchase the entire supply of 16,000,000 litres.

The diesel fuel oil has been recently tested and these test results will be made available to potential bidders. Test results indicate that the diesel fuel oil being stored is acceptable for use. Bidders may wish to either rely on these results in determining the price they are willing to pay or undertake their own tests, at their cost. Interested bidders are encouraged to arrange a Plant Site visit to familiarize themselves with the diesel fuel oil system, diesel fuel oil removal and transporting logistics. Details regarding arrangements for a site visit are described in the tender document.

Bids must be submitted on or before close of business (05 pm GST) on **7th September, 2022**.

Tender documents which include further detailed information and data about the diesel fuel oil system can be obtained by downloading the Tender Document from the Company’s website at: <https://www.smnpower.com/tenders.php>

The bid price for the diesel fuel oil shall be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to:

Al Rusail Power Company SAOC
Qurum Building, Building No.1022, 1st Floor, Office No.15, Way No.1013,
Al Qurum - Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



Two Diesel Fuel Oil Storage Tanks at Al Rusail Power Plant Site



150,000 Bangladeshi tea workers strike against dollar-a-day wages

DHAKA: Nearly 150,000 workers at more than 200 Bangladeshi tea plantations went on strike on Saturday to demand a 150 per cent rise to their dollar-a-day wages, which researchers say are among the lowest in the world.

The minimum wage for a tea plantation worker in the country is 120 taka a day -- about \$1.25 at official rates, but only just over a dollar on the free market.

One worker said that was barely enough to buy food, let alone other necessities.

"Nowadays we can't even afford coarse rice for our family with this amount," said Anjana Bhuyian, 50.

"A wage of one day can't buy a litre of edible oil. How can we then even think about our nutrition, medication, or children's education?" she said.

Unions are demanding an

increase to 300 taka a day, with inflation rising and the currency depreciating, and said that workers in the country's 232 tea gardens began a full-scale strike on Saturday, after four days of two-hour stoppages.

"Nearly 150,000 tea workers have joined the strike today," said Sitaram Bin, a committee member of the Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union.

"No tea worker will pluck tea leaves or work in the leaf processing plants as long as the authority doesn't pay heed to our demands," he said.

Plantation owners have offered an increase of 14 taka a day, after an 18-taka rise last year and M Shah Alom, chairman of the Bangladesh Tea Association, said operators were "going through difficult times with profit declining in recent times".



Bangladesh's tea garden workers protest in Srimangal. – AFP



Afghan women march in Kabul on Saturday. – AFP

Taliban violently disperse women's protest in Kabul

KABUL: Taliban fighters beat women protesters and fired into the air on Saturday as they violently dispersed a rare rally in the Afghan capital, days ahead of the first anniversary of the movement's return to power.

Since seizing control on August 15 last year, the Taliban have rolled back the marginal gains made by women during two decades of US intervention in Afghanistan.

About 40 women — chanting "bread, work and freedom" — marched in front of the education ministry building in Kabul, before the fighters dispersed them by firing their guns into the air.

Some women protesters who

took refuge in nearby shops were chased and beaten by Taliban fighters with their rifle butts.

The demonstrators carried a banner which read "August 15 is a black day" as they demanded rights to work and political participation.

"Justice, justice. We're fed up with ignorance," they chanted.

"Unfortunately, the Taliban from the intelligence service came and fired in the air," said Zholia Parsi, one of the organisers of the march.

"They dispersed the girls, tore our banners and confiscated the mobile phones of many girls."

But protester Munisa Mubariz vowed to continue fighting for

women's rights.

"If the Taliban want to silence this voice, it's not possible. We will protest from our homes," she said.

Some journalists covering the demonstration — the first women's rally in months — were also beaten by the Taliban fighters.

While the Taliban authorities have allowed and even promoted some rallies against the United States, they have declined permission for any women's rally since they returned to power.

The United Nations and rights groups have repeatedly slammed the Taliban government for imposing the restrictions on women. — AFP

Lanka allows controversial Chinese ship visit

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka granted port access on Saturday for a controversial Chinese research vessel despite neighbouring India's concerns that it could spy on New Delhi's military installations, officials said.

The Yuan Wang 5 is described as a research and survey vessel by international shipping and analytics sites, but according to Indian media it is a dual-use spy ship.

New Delhi is suspicious of Beijing's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and influence in Sri Lanka, seeing both as being firmly within its sphere of influence.

The Yuan Wang 5 was originally due to call at Sri Lanka's Chinese-run Hambantota port on August 11, only for Colombo to ask Beijing to indefinitely defer the visit following India's objections.

But Sri Lanka's harbour master, Nirmal P Silva, said he had received foreign ministry clearance for the ship to call at Hambantota from August 16 to 22. "The diplomatic clearance was received by me today. We will work with the local agent appointed by the vessel to ensure logistics at the port," Silva said.

Foreign ministry sources confirmed that Colombo had renewed permission for the Chinese visit, which had initially been granted on July 12. — AFP

India overtakes China to become biggest buyer of Russian oil

NEW DELHI: India has said that there was no pressure on it from Western countries or anywhere else over its energy purchases from Russia, as Indian firms step up imports of oil and coal from the country shunned by some governments for its invasion of Ukraine.

India, the world's third-biggest crude importer, overtook China to become the biggest buyer of Russian oil in July based on sea-borne volumes, having bought very little from the country before the start of the war in Ukraine in February.

Also in July, Russia became



Schoolchildren wave Indian national flags to celebrate during an event ahead of the country's 75th Independence Day in Mumbai. – AFP

India's third-largest coal supplier, up from the sixth position historically, as discounts drove shipments to a record.

The US has tried to lure India away from its main arms supplier Russia, but New Delhi says its own needs as an emerging country are paramount.

"Our decisions on what we do regarding purchase of oil or other things related to that will be guided by our energy security requirements, our perspective will be guided by energy security," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi told a news conference. — AFP

Swathe of China swelters in high temperatures

SHENZHEN: Several regions of China including the major southwestern city of Chongqing baked in temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) on Saturday, while the country's national observatory continued its red alert for extreme heat.

In Zhejiang, home to many factories and exporters, a meteorological official said that the eastern province has broken its previous record for high temperature days this year, with 31 days above 35C and 16 days above 38C.

Along with Chongqing, which saw temperatures up to 42.1C on Saturday, Hubei, Hunan, Shandong, Anhui, Xinjiang, Jiangxi and Fujian were among



People walk along Huaqiangbei Commercial Street in Shenzhen. – AFP

the provinces and regions where temperatures exceeded 35C.

A thunderstorm appeared to have helped spare Shanghai from breaking its 40.9C record on Saturday, though residents of the commercial hub of 25 million still expressed fatigue from the ongoing heatwave.

"It's like being in a steamer, it's really hot," said 70-year-old resident Shen Fengming.

SHORT TAKES

NAYPYIDAW

Junta curbs political parties meeting foreigners

Myanmar's ruling junta has moved to restrict political parties from meeting foreigners or international organisations ahead of an election expected next year.

The Southeast Asian nation has been plunged into turmoil and its economy is in tatters since a February 2021 coup which ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government.

The military alleged widespread voter fraud during November 2020 polls



which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won in a landslide, although international observers said the election was largely free and fair.

GENEVA

UN rights chief to visit Rohingya camps

Michelle Bachelet is to make the first visit by a UN rights chief to Bangladesh this week, including to the sprawling refugee camps home to nearly a million Rohingyas.

Bachelet's office announced that the trip from Sunday to Wednesday was at the Dhaka government's invitation.

It will be one of the former Chilean president's final acts as the United Nations high commissioner for human rights before her four-year term expires



at the end of the month.

During her visit to the capital Dhaka, the UN rights chief is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other ministers.

PYONGYANG

Mask mandate lifted after Covid 'victory'

North Korea has lifted a mask mandate and eased other virus restrictions, state media said on Saturday, days after leader Kim Jong Un declared "victory" over Covid-19.

The announcement comes after Pyongyang earlier this week blamed Seoul for causing the Covid-19 outbreak in the North and threatened to "wipe out" the South Korean authorities, if necessary.

Virus restrictions were eased as "the public health crisis created



in the country was completely defused and its whole territory was turned into a clean one free from the malignant virus in the shortest period," Korea Central News Agency reported.



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In brief

CETINJE



11 DEAD IN MASS SHOOTING

Eleven people, including two children and a gunman, were killed in a mass shooting in Montenegro, and six others were injured, a state prosecutor told Vijesti TV after an initial investigation of the crime scene.

Montenegro Police director Zoran Brdjanin said a 34-year old man with a hunting rifle shot dead two siblings, one 8 years old and another 11 years old, and injured their mother who died later in the afternoon in a medical facility.

“The family was staying at the house of the shooter as tenants,” Brdjanin said. He said the motive for the shooting was not yet known, and he did not give the name of the shooter but said his initials were VB.

BERLIN



MILITARY SUSPENDS MALI MISSION

Germany is suspending its military mission in Mali until further notice, the Defence Ministry in Berlin said, in another blow to security ties between the troubled West African country and Europe.

The Malian government has repeatedly denied the Bundeswehr overflight rights, which it needs to facilitate troop rotation, a spokesperson said in announcing the move, meaning transport flights and reconnaissance operations will be suspended with immediate effect. Government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit said Germany was prepared in principle to continue participating in an international peacekeeping mission.

AGUAS CALIENTES



TOURISTS, LOCALS IRATE OVER MACHU PICCHU SNAFU

The suspension of ticket sales to Machu Picchu sparked protests among angry tourists and merchants from the town closest to the Inca citadel.

Authorities had recently begun limiting the number of visitors to the jewel of Peruvian tourism to reduce wear and tear but increased the number of daily visitors from 4,044 to 5,044 in July following industry complaints.

The protests took place in the neighbouring town of Machu Picchu, formerly called Aguas Calientes, where visitors arrive by train before boarding minibuses that transport them to climb the ancient site through a narrow mountain pass.

Moscow warns of possible end to bilateral relations with US



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a BM21 Grad multiple launch rocket system in a frontline in Kharkiv region, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues. — Reuters

MOSCOW: Any possible seizure of Russian assets by the United States will completely destroy Moscow's bilateral relations with Washington, TASS quoted the head of the North American Department at the Russian foreign ministry as saying on Saturday.

Russia's relations with the West have deteriorated sharply since Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on February 24, calling it a “special military operation”.

The West responded with unprecedented economic, financial and diplomatic sanctions, including freezing around half of Russia's gold and foreign exchange reserves that stood near \$640

billion before February 24.

Top Western officials, including European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, have suggested seizing the frozen reserves to help fund the future reconstruction of Ukraine.

“We warn the Americans of the detrimental consequences of such actions that will permanently damage bilateral relations, which is neither in their nor in our interests,” Alexander Darchiev told TASS in an interview.

It was not immediately clear which assets he was referring to.

The United States and its European allies have also frozen \$30 billion of assets held by wealthy individuals with ties to

Russian President Vladimir Putin, including yachts, helicopters, real estate and art, according to the Biden administration.

The US Department of Justice was seeking broader authority from Congress to seize Russian oligarchs' assets as a means to pressure Moscow over its actions in Ukraine, a prosecutor said in July.

Darchiev also said that Russia warned the United States that diplomatic ties would be badly damaged and could even be broken if Russia is declared a state sponsor of terrorism.

Speaking about the situation in Ukraine, Darchiev said that the US influence on Kyiv had increased

to the degree that “Americans are increasingly becoming more and more a direct party in the conflict”.

Darchiev confirmed that Viktor Bout, an imprisoned Russian referred to by American prosecutors as one of the world's most prolific arms dealers, as well as US basketball star Brittney Griner and former Marine Paul Whelan detained by Russia are being discussed in prisoner swap talks between Moscow and Washington, according to TASS.

Meanwhile, Russian forces have taken full control of Pisky, a village on the outskirts in Ukraine's Donetsk region, Interfax cited the Russian defence ministry as saying on Saturday. — Reuters

Trump under fire for lax security practices

WASHINGTON: The seizure of classified US government documents from Donald Trump's sprawling Mar-a-Lago retreat spotlights the ongoing national security concerns presented by the former president, and the home he dubbed the Winter White House, some security experts say.

Trump is under federal investigation for possible violations of the Espionage Act, which makes it unlawful to spy for another country or mishandle US defence

information, including sharing it with people not authorised to receive it, a search warrant shows.

As president, Trump sometimes shared information, regardless of its sensitivity. Early in his presidency, he spontaneously gave highly classified information to Russia's foreign minister about a planned IS operation while he was in the Oval Office, US officials said at the time.

But it was at Mar-a-Lago, where well-heeled

members and people attended weddings and fundraising dinners frolic on a breezy ocean patio, that US intelligence seemed especially at risk. While Secret Service provided physical security for the venue while Trump was president and afterward, they are not responsible for vetting guests or members.

The Justice Department's search warrant raises concerns about national security, said former DOJ official Mary McCord.

— Reuters

Colombia to restart peace talks with ELN rebels



Schoolchildren read the booklet 'A Tree With Many Truths' during the launch of the programme 'The Schools Embrace the Truth' at a public school in Bogota. — AFP

HAVANA: Colombia's government has given the green light to resume peace talks with the country's largest remaining rebel force, a key electoral promise that brought leftist President Gustavo Petro to power.

Colombian government officials met with members of the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Havana, where they have been based since 2018, with Bogota saying it officially recognises the “legitimacy of dialogue... in the search for peace.”

“Both parties agree on the need to restart a dialogue process with facts that show Colombian society and the world that this will be real,” High Commissioner for Peace Danilo Rueda said.

Present at the meeting were officials from Norway and Cuba, the guarantors of the talks, as well as representatives of the UN secretary-general and the Colombian Episcopal Conference.

Petro, a former guerilla who has vowed to pursue negotiations with the rebels, has said that he wants to strike new peace agreements with the ELN and other armed organisations, as well as end the government's “war on drugs,” which he considers a failure.

At a press conference in Bogota, Petro said that rapprochement with the ELN is “a tentative process of looking at what was left four years ago and seeing what can be rescued.” — AFP

‘Dead fish everywhere’ in German-Polish river

SCHWEDT: Thousands of fish have washed up dead on the Oder River running through Germany and Poland, sparking warnings of an environmental disaster as residents are urged to stay away from the water.

The fish floating by the German banks near the eastern town of Schwedt are believed to have washed upstream from Poland where first reports of mass fish deaths were made by locals and anglers as early as on July 28.

German officials accused Polish authorities of failing to inform them about the deaths, and were taken by surprise when the wave of lifeless fish came floating into view.

In Poland, the government has also come under heavy criticism for failing to take swift action.

Almost two weeks after the first dead fish appeared floating by Polish villages, Polish Prime



Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said on Friday that “everyone had initially thought that it was a local problem”.

But he admitted that the

“scale of the disaster is very large, sufficiently large to say that the Oder will need years to recover its natural state.”

“Probably enormous quantities

of chemical waste was dumped into the river in full knowledge of the risk and consequences,” added the Polish leader, as German Environment Minister Steffi Lemke urged a comprehensive probe into what she called a brewing “environmental disaster”.

ATYPICAL

Standing by the riverbank, Michael Tautenhahn, deputy chief of Germany's Lower Oder Valley National Park, looked in dismay at the river on the German-Polish border.

“We are standing on the German side — we have dead fish everywhere,” he said.

“I am deeply shocked... I have the feeling that I'm seeing decades of work lying in ruins here. I see our livelihood, the water — that's our life,” he said, noting that it's not just fish that have died, but also mussels and likely countless other

water creatures.

“It's just the tip of the iceberg.”

The Oder has over the last years been known as a relatively clean river, and 40 domestic species of fish make their home in the waterway.

But now, lifeless fish — some as small as a few centimetres, others reaching 30-40 cm — can be seen across the river. Occasionally, those still struggling to pull through can be seen flipping up in the water, seemingly gasping for air.

Officials believe that the fish are likely to have been poisoned.

“This fish death is atypical,” said Axel Vogel, environment minister for Brandenburg state, estimating that “undoubtedly tonnes” of fish have died.

Fish death is often caused by the distortion of oxygen levels when water levels are too low, he explained. — AFP

Home is where the heart is



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

A seventy-old woman was recently brought to my clinic by her son who was concerned about her memory. Although being of Omani origin, she has been living in Zanzibar all her life even after her grown-up sons moved to Oman.

Following the death of her husband more than 30 years ago, she started adopting village girls whom she treated as her own children. “They gave her company and compensated for the feeling of not having a daughter of her own,” her son explained. She would visit her sons in Oman once a year but would go back to her farm in the little village in Zanzibar which she considers her home.

More recently her memory was deteriorating and she would walk out of her house and forget the way back or give away her money to strangers. The girl she adopted was finding it hard to care for her. Her sons wanted her to settle here in Oman so they can look after her and she can get better medical care but she was adamant to go back to Zanzibar despite the pressure from her family. They wanted me to convince her to remain in Oman.

The conversation we had was not easy, while understanding the logic of the family wanting her to stay. I also considered her wish, though it may sound unreasonable.

This situation made me think of

‘WE TEND TO DEVELOP VERY STRONG EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO THE PLACES WHERE WE LIVE AND EXPECT FUTURE STABILITY IN THAT PARTICULAR PLACE WE CALL HOME’

what and where we call home?

Driving through some of the remote villages in Oman, I often wonder why anyone would live in an isolated land between the mountains. What attracts them to be away with little facilities that we all, town people, take for granted?

How do they spend their time?

Don't they feel lonely? Some of the answers I get when I bring up this topic for discussion with my friends are “but that's their home” and “they are used to that lifestyle”.

According to psychologists, people develop very strong emotional attachments to the places that they live at, which bring them a greater satisfaction with their home and expectations of future stability in that particular place.

These feelings also include attachments to other people such as friends, other family members and neighbours with whom they developed long lasting memories. Human beings often

change their place of birth either for work or study or sometime due to natural or man-made disasters. Some find it easier to settle, call the new place home and form new social connections, yet for others there is always that sense of wanting to go back to their roots.

Their childhood memories are possibly because of nostalgia to the places they had their memories or because they are searching for a deeper understanding of how they think about themselves and their connection with the world around them.

I hope you find peace and tranquillity wherever you call home.

Volunteer firefighters key in France’s fight against wildfires

ARTHUR CONNAN

Volunteer firefighters have been called up from their day jobs all over France this summer to help battle wildfires.

“It’s the first year we’ve been summoned so much to help outside” our region, said 23-year-old Victorien Pottier.

Volunteer firefighters make up more than three-quarters of all the nearly 252,000 firefighters in the country, according to official figures.

They have been on the frontline dousing flames this summer as the country tackles a historic drought and a series heatwaves that experts say are being driven by climate change.

These have included a huge blaze in the southwestern region of Gironde, which erupted in July and destroyed 14,000 hectares before it was contained.

But it continued to smoulder in the tinder-dry pine forests and peat-rich soil, and flared up again this week, burning a further 7,400 hectares.

When he is not on duty once every five weeks in the northwestern village of Quelaines-Saint-Gault, Pottier works preparing orders for a large dairy products manufacturer.

In southwest France, Alisson Mendes, 36, a sales assistant for a prominent supermarket group, said she went to help fight the massive blaze in Gironde for two days.

She said she would be prepared to go back, but thought her chances were slim as she had heard there was a long waiting list of other volunteers hoping to go and help out.

“They prioritise those who’ve never been,” she said.

France’s Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Wednesday called on private companies to free up their volunteer firefighters so they could come and help.

Large companies, including the national gas and electricity providers, on Friday said they would do their best.

So did Pottier’s dairy product company. In the beginning, it was not very enthusiastic about him volunteering his time, says Pottier, who has been on call to fight fires for more than three and a half years.

“But then they saw what was in it for them,” he said.

“We’re good at spotting risky situations within the company, which helps to avoid work accidents.”

Each firm decides how many days they can free up those employees in a case of emergency through a deal they sign with the local firefighting services.

But Samuel Mathis, secretary general of the volunteer firefighter syndicate, says smaller companies cannot so easily afford to do without their staff.

The government “tells companies to free up volunteers,” he said. — AFP

Wonking out: Is 2022 like 1980?



PAUL KRUGMAN

The writer is an American economist and public intellectual

It has been a good week on the inflation front. First, we had a flat month for the consumer price index — zero inflation in July. Then we saw an actual decline in the producer price index.

Naturally, there is a lot of pushback against the good news. I’ve been seeing many warnings against believing those who claim that the problem of inflation has been solved. The thing is, I don’t know who is supposed to be making that claim. Every economist I know believes that America still has high underlying inflation. The real question is how hard it will be to get that underlying inflation down — whether we’re going to need an extended slump like the one we went through in the 1980s. And the answer to that question depends a lot on whether you think our current situation resembles that in 1980.

First, about the good news: One of the most durable and successful concepts in macroeconomics is the distinction between headline inflation and “core” inflation, which excludes highly volatile prices. The traditional calculation of core inflation excludes food and energy; that calculation has been called into question given the strange disruptions and price movements we’ve seen in the era of Covid-19, but the traditional measure is good enough for today.

Until July, headline rates were more or less consistently running well above core inflation; now, with gasoline prices falling, supply chain problems easing and so on, we’re seeing that difference reverse itself. The result is likely to be several months, at least, of fairly low inflation.

But, as I said, underlying inflation remains high, at least by the standards of the past 30 or so years. There are many competing estimates of that underlying rate, but by and large they tend to be in the range of 4 per cent to 5 per cent, compared with a Federal Reserve target of 2 per cent inflation.

So how hard will it be to achieve that target?

The last time we saw inflation rates this high was at the beginning of the 1980s. Comparisons between data then and now are a bit tricky, because the Bureau of Labour Statistics has changed the way it estimates inflation. But it has produced estimates of the inflation rates it would have reported in the past if it had been using modern methods. If we compare those estimates for 1980 with recent inflation — this time over the past year — today’s inflation is lower than it was

in 1980, but not all ‘that’ much lower.

And getting 1980’s inflation down was a painful process. We tend to look at the Reagan-era economy through rose-coloured glasses, partly because conservatives have spent decades glorifying it. But the reality was that America went through a long period of very high unemployment after the Fed began cracking down on inflation.

IF EXPECTED INFLATION REMAINS LOW, ACTUAL INFLATION IS SO HIGH. THE ANSWER PROBABLY IS THAT THE US ECONOMY IS CURRENTLY OVERHEATED IN A WAY IT WASN’T IN 1980

And one point I haven’t seen made is that all this unemployment didn’t get inflation down to 2 per cent; back in the 1980s the Fed was content to stabilise inflation at around 4 per cent. So right now we’re faced with the need to achieve a disinflation comparable with the one engineered by Paul Volcker.

So why imagine that this time will be easier? The answer goes back to the

reason (most) economists believe that disinflation was so hard in the 1980s. Back then, the story goes, everyone had come to expect high inflation in perpetuity. Wages and prices were being set based on that expectation, so inflation became self-sustaining. Disinflation required squeezing the economy hard and long enough to break that self-sustaining cycle.

And while actual inflation now doesn’t look very different from what it was in the 1980s, expectations about future inflation look very different indeed.

Back then, the public expected roughly 10 per cent inflation in perpetuity; today, the public expects inflation to be somewhat elevated in the near term but drop back to normal levels soon.

The story for professional economic forecasters is similar. In the early 1980s, Blue Chip forecasters expected around 8 per cent inflation over the next 10 years; now they expect less than 3 per cent, and financial markets expect inflation of less than 2.5 per cent.

You might ask why, if expected inflation remains low, actual inflation is so high. The answer probably is that the US economy is currently overheated in a way it wasn’t in 1980. And if that’s right, getting inflation down requires cooling the economy off, but not putting it through an extended slump.

So that’s the case for saying that 2022 ‘isn’t’ 1980. Should we believe it?

— The New York Times



Get busy living, in Oman’s fields of dreams



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

I have always been an advocate of sports as a way of growing individuals in a way that ensures they will become, and be, the very best version of themselves... and I don't believe that will ever change.

My own experience of sport has been lifelong, enthusiastic, passionate, frustrating, painful, yet always incredibly satisfying, there is always a philosophical reward. I cannot remember a time when... hot, sweaty, exhausted, beaten, or humiliated, I've not drawn something from the experience. So... with the voice of experience, let me share some of mine, and maybe you will be encouraged to do something, not searching for experiences, because, as in Kevin Costner's 'Field of Dreams' movie, "they will come..."

Growing up in the deep south of New Zealand, in a port town, surrounded on three and a half sides by the sea, I should have been a swimmer, naturally. But I have always feared the water. Strange isn't it, I love being on the water, in boats, but even knee deep in the water I have always imagined that there was a massive shark just waiting to take me away, so I rarely went to the beach, never got the other kids' suntans, but did some other stuff instead.

I used to watch the yachting, intrigued by how different yachts performed at different angles to the wind, and the tactics of racing... I would dream of one day sailing myself. And you wouldn't believe it, watching the New Zealand Championship for the two-man 'X Class', a

OMAN LENDS ITSELF TO SPORTS FOR ALL THE FAMILY, WHETHER FOOTBALL, YACHTING, GOLF, CLIMBING, RUNNING, CYCLING, WALKING, OR WHATEVER, AND HAVING COVERED EVENTS LIKE THE TOUR OF OMAN, THE UTMB EVENTS, AND THE MUSCAT MARATHON, MEETING SPORTS SUPERSTARS... YOU JUST CAN'T BUY THOSE EXPERIENCES, OR THE LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPORTS

crewman never showed for Mervyn Mcmanaway, from Marlborough... he asked everywhere and finally got to me. "Young fella, how would you like to?...?" he began. I had a lifejacket on before you could say 'Jack Robinson,' and crewed two champs with him, unplaced, but hooked on yachting ever since.

I learned to fish from the wharves, beaches, and rocks, often with a few meters of string, a hook, with a battery or a stone as a sinker (weight), and shellfish meat as bait. One day, I even caught a meter long barracuda from the 'Old Wharf', at Bluff, with a stinky, smelly, thrown away fish head, a blunt hook, and about 12 feet of unplaited rope... That day I was the 'king' of the barefoot fishermen boys.

I have fished all over the world since those days, and some of the best experiences have been with Sulieman al

Hajri, or Frans Kohler, sometimes the experiences are just so much fun, letting them go after catching them is the ultimate feelgood sensation. But the best thing about fishing is that for the last decade, my wife Lena and myself have fished from the shores of Oman... and enjoyed unique sporting, and bonding experiences. We have enjoyed fishing the coastal beaches of Sharqiyah, especially Al Siyaa, not for big fish, but for the fun of it, for meeting people, sharing tall stories, as fisher folk do, for unforgettable memories.

For us though, the ultimate shore-fishing experiences were on Masirah Island, when we would enjoy the luxury of the Masirah Island Resort at night, and fish every day! The authentic experience of sharing the highs and lows of no bites, or big catches. We will never forget fishing Biyad Beach on a day when, despite clear skies and little wind, the sea was incredibly busy, when Lena hooked and landed three huge Australian Darts within 15 minutes, while standing only 20 metres away, I got nothing! But the sheer unadulterated joy on her face... you can't buy those experiences.

Oman lends itself to sports for all the family, whether football, yachting, golf, climbing, running, cycling, walking, or whatever, and having covered events like the Cycling Tour of Oman, the UTMB events, and the Muscat Marathon, meeting sports superstars like Paula Radcliffe, Vincenzo Nibali, Eoin Keith, and Nadhira Al Harthy, well... you just can't buy those experiences, or the lifestyle and health benefits of sports.

Oman is the sportsman's playground, the field of dreams for feelgood, feel better, and be better, experiences. Get busy... becoming the healthiest, and best version of you.



UP IN THE CLOUDS!

Britain's Sasha Pardoe competes during the Women's Park BMX Cycling Freestyle event at the European Cycling Championships in Munich, southern Germany. The event is part of the European Championships Munich 2022 running from August 11 to 21, and including nine different types of sport.
- AFP

What does India want from Russia?

BRIGITTE GRANVILLE,
SUSHANTA MALLICK

If there was a prize for the most quotable comment on international relations so far in 2022, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar would be in the running. Responding to criticism of his country's neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war at a security forum in Slovakia in June, Jaishankar said that "Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problems."

Like most major crises, the war is shedding stark light on our era, and India's response to it is particularly illuminating. India's current foreign policy does more than just exemplify how the conflict has intensified deglobalisation trends. It also highlights the paradox inherent in the country's increasing emphasis on "strategic autonomy" as the world fragments into rival power centres: the United States and its alliance system versus China and its major satellite, Russia. The essence of this paradox is that India's quest for self-reliance — keeping its distance from the principals of Cold War 2.0 and seeking advantage from diverse relationships — entails multidimensional international engagement.

For example, European politicians painfully weaning their countries off imported Russian energy have criticised India for buying more Russian oil — after Western sanctions reduced its price by about a third relative to the world market price. Indian purchases of Russian crude increased to 1.1 million barrels per day (mbpd) by late July and now account for over one-fifth of Indian oil consumption, compared to just 2 per cent last year.

The standard official Indian response is that, despite Europe's extensive sanctions, the continent's energy trade with Russia still dwarfs India's. More tellingly, however, India's purchases of discounted Russian oil are not only cushioning the blow to itself as a poor energy-importing country, but also helping to prevent even more economic pain for Europe. If the 4.3 mbpd of crude oil that Russia sold to the West last year (or six mbpd including oil products) had no alternative markets like India, the world oil price would be even higher.

Recognising the importance of keeping Russian oil on the market, the G7 has now come up with an alternative sanctions strategy that could present India with its next big test. The West's Plan A was to combine, by the end of 2022, a partial embargo on direct imports of Russian oil with an attempt to choke off Russian oil exports to third countries by leveraging Western (and especially British) dominance of the global marine insurance market.

Plan B is the so-called "price cap"

mechanism. This would allow Russia to continue exporting oil but set a maximum price just sufficient to cover its production costs, thereby depriving the Russian state of any war-financing rent.

When the price cap scheme was first officially aired at the G7 summit in June, several leaders, notably German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, publicly questioned its viability — especially regarding compliance by third-party buyers of Russian oil. Even if Russia

AS THE UKRAINE WAR CONTINUES, INDIA'S QUEST FOR SELF-RELIANCE INCREASINGLY ENTAILS MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT. ITS SKILLFUL APPROACH MEANS THAT THE FORTHCOMING 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE WILL COINCIDE WITH THE COUNTRY ACHIEVING SIGNIFICANT — AND ADVANTAGEOUS — GEOPOLITICAL AUTONOMY

agreed to the cap, who would get access to its deeply discounted oil, and who would pay the full market rate? Russia would be much more likely simply to reduce output, hoping to offset its losses with the resulting further price surge for whatever residual oil exports evaded the Western insurance net.

Either way, India will be in a pivotal position. While Russia's opaque oil sales to China will continue regardless, India

can look forward to various arbitrage opportunities. It will continue importing substantial quantities of Russian oil at ever cheaper prices. And in the event that such imports weakened Western measures to squeeze Russia's oil rents, the US would be unlikely to threaten — much less impose — secondary sanctions on India.

After all, successive US administrations — under Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden — have refrained from using their legal powers under existing legislation to place secondary sanctions on India for continuing to buy Russian weapons. The reason for this is clear: A closer security partnership with India has become a vital part of America's China policy. Specifically, the Quad — an informal security grouping comprising the US, Japan, Australia, and India — has emerged as a cornerstone of US Indo-Pacific strategy, and would not survive the US sanctioning one of its members.

Of course, the US-India security relationship is mutual, given the live Chinese threat to Indian territory along the Himalayan Line of Actual Control — as the deadly June 2020 border skirmish showed. But India's fear of China also implies a strategic dimension to its ties with Russia that goes well beyond opportunistic oil and arms purchases. India has an interest in keeping Russia close and not allowing a monolithic and estranged Russia-China Eurasian axis to loom over the Indian subcontinent.

India is playing this multifaceted game adroitly. In defence procurement, it has acquired advanced Russian S-400 air-defence systems and agreed to extend until 2031 the licensed local production of Russian weapons. But it has also increased arms purchases from Nato members, notably France.

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Indian purchases of Russian crude increased to 1.1 million barrels per day by late July.

sport

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Seeb defeat Al Nahdha to lift maiden Super Cup title



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

Seeb lifted its historic maiden title of 2022 Super Cup after they edged past Al Nahdha 2-0 in the summit clash on Friday night at Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah. Under a pleasant weather of Khareef, Marwan Taeab and Salah al Yahyaei powered Seeb to claim the first major triumph in the new footballing season of 2022/2023 as both of them registered the winning goals in the match. The first half ended in a goalless draw despite series of scoring attempts

missed by both teams. In the deciding half, Seeb pressed hard towards Al Nahdha goalie Ibrahim al Mukhaini. After several chances, Marwan Taeab managed to open the scoring account through a strong header to lead his team in the 84th minute. Salah al Yahyaei confirmed Seeb's victory when he struck the second goal of the evening before few minutes of the final match whistle by the referee Yahya al Balushi. Later, the chief guest, His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, presented the medals and awards



to Seeb and Al Nahdha players, coaching staff and match officials in the presence of Salim al Wahaibi, Chairman of OFA, top dignitaries and officials. The historic triumph of Super Cup meant, Seeb delivered a successful top performance at domestic level after clinching the HM Football Cup and Omantel league titles in the previous season. Seeb managed to reach into the West Zone semifinals. In this stage, Seeb will meet Kuwait's Arabi SC on September 5. The West Zone final, to be hosted by the winners of the Arabi SC-Al Seeb Club tie, will

be held on October 4. The other semis tie will be between Bahraini clubs East Riffa and Al Riffa and it is scheduled on September 6. The 2022/2023 top-tier league will begin on August 18 with three matches. The league title holder Seeb will begin their defending title with a match against new arrival Al Bashaer club at Seeb Sports Stadium. First division league champion, Al Oruba, will meet Al Suwaiq at the former home in Sur Sports Complex. The third joiner from first division league, Sur, will take on Al Musannah in the same day.

World Cup 2022: the official ball

Al Rihla

Means "the journey" in Arabic. Designed to travel faster in flight to support peak game speeds

20 panels

In treated polyurethane, the form and texture allows a high level of stability and precision

"Speedshell" technology

Makes the ball more aerodynamic, increases speed in flight, improves rotation in the air

CRT-Core

Maximises shape retention, air inflation, and rebound accuracy

Design inspired by the culture, architecture, traditional boats and flag of Qatar

First official World Cup ball made using water-based inks and glues

A selection of previous balls

1930 - Uruguay T-Shape

Brown leather with removable air chamber

1970 - Mexico Telstar

32 black and white panels. More visible for the first televised World Cup

2006 - Germany Teamgeist

First ball without stitches

2010 - South Africa Jabulani

Eight heat-joined panels, criticised by players

2014 - Brazil Brazuca

Six heat-joined panels for a better performance in the rain

2018 - Russia Telstar 18

A new form of panel for improved stability in the air, and an integrated computer chip

Source: FIFA

AFP

Oman athletics, swimming and cycling teams concluded their participation at Konya 2021

WALEED AL JAHWARI
KONYA, AUGUST 13

The Oman national athletics team finished their participation in the fifth edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games, which is being held in Turkish city of Konya from August 9 to 18, by winning three medals (one gold and two bronze). On the last day of the athletic competitions, the team's star, Fatek Beit Jaaboub, managed to win the gold medal in the high jump competitions, Barakat al Harthy, Ammar al Seifi, Mohammed al Saadi and Ali al Balushi won the bronze medal in the 4x100m relay, registering a new Omani record with a time of 39.21 seconds. The star of our national athletics team, sprinter Barakat al Harthy, was able to achieve the first medal for Oman in the competitions of the fifth edition of the Games, after he managed to get the bronze medal in the 100 metres race, recording a time of 9.99 seconds. Athletics players presented different results and numbers. In his first participation in the general competitions with a weight of 7 kg, Mubeen al Kindi achieved a distance of 57.26 metres in the final to overthrow the hammer, and the runner Hussein al Farsi recorded a time of 4.03.37 minutes in the 1,500m race,



Mazoon al Alawiyah finished the women's 100 hurdles in a time of 14.18 seconds. Oman shooting team completed their competition in the 'Trap' category on Friday by achieving ninth place in the mixed competitions (men and women), hitting 128 dishes out of 150, and for the skeet category, the team finished the preparations to participate in the tournament on Sunday and Monday in the singles category, while the mixed competition will be on Tuesday. The men's team is represented by Yasser al Nasiri, Naghmoush al Hatali and Mohammed al Gharbi, and the women's team is represented by Fatima al Sulaimiyah. In the cycling competition, Mazen al Riyami won the 31st place, while the cyclist Munther al Hasani ranked 36th place out of 70 participants in the individual general race in the cycling competition. The Oman National Swimming Team participated in the championship competitions by swimmer Nasser al Kindi in the 100m butterfly competitions, and recorded a time of 1.03.90 minutes, while the swimmer Muhannad Awlad Thani participated in the 200m backstroke competitions, and recorded a time of 2.24.81 minutes.

World Cup will force Real Madrid to rotate more, says Ancelotti

MADRID: Real Madrid will have to rotate their squad more to keep players fresh with the World Cup less than 100 days away, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Saturday. The Italian is concerned about the condition of the players after the tournament in Qatar that kicks off on Nov. 20. "Until the World Cup we are not going to have many problems because the players want to get to the World Cup in good condition," Ancelotti told a news conference ahead of Real's LaLiga opener at Almeria on Sunday. "The big question is how the players will return after the World Cup, ahead of what is the most important moment of the season for their clubs. "We have to evaluate the

tiredness. These are things that we have questions about today. It's a new experience for all of us." Ancelotti said this was one of the main reasons he urged the club not to let any of the key players that won the Champions League-LaLiga double leave in the transfer window and why he wanted to strengthen some positions so he has a deeper squad. "The idea is to rotate more than last year and I'll be able to do it more this season because we have a very strong squad, more complete in every level than last year," Ancelotti said. "We have to keep everyone motivated and there is a World Cup that means we have to have a fairly big squad and in good condition." — Reuters



14 countries to take part in Oman Sail Arab Sailing Championship

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

Sailors from as many as 14 countries across the region will compete over five days at the Oman Sail Arab Sailing Championship 2022, which is due to take place from October 11-15 2022 at Barceló Mussanah Resort. Returning for the first time since 2019 in Egypt, sailors from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and the UAE have confirmed their participation at the most sought-after event.

The Championship is open to



Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, RS:X and iQFOiL windsurfing and RS Venture para sailing. Alongside prizes for the top three sailors and countries, the best-performing countries overall will also receive prizes.

Shaikh Khalifa Abdullah al Khalifa of Bahrain, President of the Arab Sailing Federation, said, "We are very pleased to be able to announce the return of the Arab Sailing Championship and to host the event in Oman. This is a great opportunity to showcase the sailing skills of young sailors from across the MENA region and mark a return to action for all members of the Arab Sailing Federation as well as a debut for para sailing in the RS Venture class. The Barceló Mussanah Resort is a wonderful venue, capable as we have seen of hosting the very best sailors in the world and we are looking forward to taking to the beautiful clear

waters in October."

Dr Khamis al Jabri, Oman Sail CEO, said, "This is a great opportunity for our young sailors to test themselves against their peers within the Arab Sailing Federation across several disciplines. Oman Sail has a history of good performances in this championship, and to be able to perform on home water will be a huge honour for our sailors. We are also very proud to be able to include para sailing this year as sailing in Oman and across the region continues to take great strides towards inclusivity and equality while proving sailing is a sport for all."



Mid-morning Euro marathons confirmed despite warm weather

MUNICH: The start times for the European championship marathon races on Monday will not be moved forward from mid-morning despite warm temperatures in Munich, reports suggest.

Some 50 athletes from several countries had in an open letter called on organisers to change the start time to earlier in the morning to have cooler temperatures and avoid any health risks for the participants.

But the original start times of 10.30am (0830 GMT) for the women and 11.30am (0930 GMT) for the men have now been confirmed, the German athletics

federation (DLV) website said on its website, citing European Athletics (EA).

Temperatures are not forecast to be as high as originally feared but still to reach 24 to 26 degrees Celsius during the race.

DLV doctor Karsten Hollander said that EA had pledged in March to decide in the athletes' favour in the case of warm weather and also spoke of a heat protocol of which details were however never communicated.

"There was only a statement that Munich weather data would be included in the deliberations on the start times," Hollander said. — dpa

Villa's Gerrard outfoxes Lampard



Everton's Amadou Onana in action with Aston Villa's Calum Chambers. — Reuters

LONDON: Aston Villa's Steven Gerrard got the better of his former England team-mate Frank Lampard, now in charge at Everton, as his side won 2-1 when the two faced each other as managers for the first time in the Premier League on Saturday.

Both teams fell to opening day defeats last weekend, but Gerrard's side turned their fortunes around at the expense of the visitors under Lampard, his former midfield rival when they played for Liverpool and Chelsea respectively.

"I'm really pleased with our level of performance, I believed that if we found that level there would be a different outcome from last week," Gerrard told the BBC.

"We looked a different team today. It was tough conditions for both sets of players, but they were excellent in terms of the game plan. We really wanted to make it about their back three, and both goals have come off that."

Villa's Ollie Watkins managed

to stretch the Everton defence as he created goals for Danny Ings and Emiliano Buendia and, despite a late own goal by former Everton player Lucas Digne, Villa stood firm to claim the three points.

"I thought we should have got a draw at the end of the game, we had two or three good chances late on. When we were set defensively and organised, I didn't think they gave us huge problems," a disappointed Lampard told BT Sport.

"When we gave the ball away, a couple of transitions, they scored two goals. That's the reality of Premier League football, you can't make those mistakes and give the ball away when you're open, we got punished for that."

The defeat was Everton's second in their opening two games of the season and they face newcomers Nottingham Forest next Saturday at Goodison Park, while Villa travel to Selhurst Park to take on Crystal Palace.

— Reuters

Last chance for World Cup glory?

KARIM BENZEMA 34	LUKA MODRIC 36	LIONEL MESSI 35	CRISTIANO RONALDO 37	MANUEL NEUER 36
France	Croatia	Argentina	Portugal	Germany
Forward	Midfielder	Forward	Forward	Goalkeeper
95 selections (since 2007*)	149 selections (since 2006)	162 selections (since 2005)	188 selections (since 2003)	110 selections (since 2009)
37 goals	21 goals	86 goals	117 goals	

Sources: FIFA, UEFA, AFP Photos

*Dismissed from French selection between 2015 to 2021 for "sextape" blackmail concerning teammate Mathieu Valbuena

AFP

Motor racing-Formula E title goes down to Sunday’s finale in Seoul

SEOUL: The all-electric Formula E championship will be decided in Sunday's final race of the season in Seoul with Mercedes' Stoffel Vandoorne 21 points clear of sole remaining rival Mitch Evans.

New Zealander Evans won Saturday's first race of the double-header for Jaguar, after seizing the lead into the first corner from third on the grid, with Belgian

Vandoorne fifth at Seoul's Olympic Stadium.

The first E-Prix held in the South Korean capital ended behind the safety car after a late crash involving Mahindra's Alexander Sims.

Former McLaren Formula One driver Vandoorne now has 195 points to Evans' 174 with Mercedes also leading the teams' standings.



Vandoorne will be champion if he finishes at least seventh on Sunday.

DS Techeetah's double champion Jean-Eric Vergne and Venturi's Edoardo Mortara dropped out of mathematical title contention in a race that started on a damp and slippery track and was red-flagged after an early eight-car pileup.

Outgoing champion Nyck de Vries was one of those involved, escaping unhurt after his Mercedes was trapped under the Nissan of Swiss driver Sebastien Buemi.

"This morning was tricky. We didn't quite have the pace but the rain came at the right time and I qualified up front," said Evans after his fourth win of the season.

— Reuters

OMAN FM 90.4

Jump Start

AMAL AL BALUSHI TALAL AL SHAHRI

WEEKDAYS 7AM

OMAN FM

Under-pressure Green hangs on as Phachara makes move in Singapore

SINGAPORE: Thailand's Phachara Khongwatmai moved to take a share of the third-round lead with Malaysia's Gavin Green after signing for a three-under-par 69 at the International Series Singapore on Saturday.

Green, who held an overnight three-shot lead, could not extend his advantage further as he succumbed to pressure and returned with a 72 at the Asian Tour sanctioned event.

The Singapore tournament is also part of the new International Series that received \$400 million in funding from the Saudi-backed LIV.

After carding identical rounds of 65 in the first two days, Green admitted to struggling on the third.

"I'm not going to lie. There is pressure. I was trying to push away, it was just hard, I could not get anything going," said the Malaysian.

Unlike his first two days, which were bogey-free and saw 14 birdies, Green only made one birdie on eight, while dropping his first shot of the week on the par-four 13.

"It was such a grind. I couldn't get anything going. Golf is not a game where you can be perfect all the time. But we are still in it, as there are still 18 more holes to go," said Green.



Phachara, meanwhile, stumbled early with a bogey on his second hole. But he recovered well, with birdies on holes five, six, eight and 14 to compile a three-day total of 14-under-par 202 at the Tanah Merah Country Club.

The 23-year-old Thai said he was confident he could clinch his second win on the Asian Tour if he improved his putting.

"If I make a lot of putts, then maybe it's mine. I hit the ball well today but just missed a lot of putts. I hope the putter works tomorrow," said Phachara. — AFP

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INSURANCE 1 YEAR Or Cash Gift in Lieu of Insurance RO 125

COROLLA

SERVICE 3 YEARS / 30,000 KMS (whichever is earlier)

INSURANCE 1 YEAR Or Cash Gift in Lieu of Insurance RO 175

CAMRY

SERVICE FROM 2 YEARS / 20,000 KMS UP TO 3 YEARS / 30,000 KMS (whichever is earlier)

INSURANCE 1 YEAR Or Cash Gift in Lieu of Insurance From RO 250 up to RO 275

Campaign Period: 17th July 2022 – 15th September 2022. Benefits are applicable for all purchases except Government Organizations & Ministries. "Cash gift in lieu of insurance" Cash Gift is given in Lieu of Insurance only as applicable for respective models. In case customer chooses Insurance (as applicable), he/she will not be eligible for "Cash gift in lieu of insurance" offer. Cash Gift in lieu of insurance can also be used as part of down payment. *Comprehensive 1 Year Insurance (Oman only, excluding diesel grades) on 20YM / 19PLT: Supra, 20YM / 20 PLT: Camry HEV, Avanza, 21YM / 21 PLT: Corolla 2.0, Corolla Cross, RAV4, Fortuner, Hilux 4x2 & Hilux 4x4, 22YM / 22 PLT: Yaris SD, RAIZE, Corolla 1.6, Corolla 2.0, Corolla Cross, Camry 2.5, Camry 3.5, Camry HEV, C-HR, RAV4, RAV4 HEV, Fortuner, Hilux 4x2, Hilux 4x4. Insurance benefit under the campaign would be given upto the extent applicable for Private vehicles only. Additional premium as per Insurance norms will have to be paid by the RAC, Taxi & Driving School Company. **1 Year / 10,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 1 service at 10,000 Kms service interval for Petrol models based on normal operating conditions (Excluding DSL grades) on Toyota Hilux. **2 Years / 20,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 2 services at 10,000 Kms service interval for Petrol models based on normal operating conditions (Excluding DSL grades) on all Toyota models excluding Corolla, Camry 2.5, Avalon, Supra, Rush, RAV4, Fortuner, FJ Cruiser, LC WGN (Excluding 22YM), Hilux, Hiace, Lite Ace & Coaster. **3 Years / 30,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 3 services at 10,000 Kms service interval for Petrol models based on normal operating conditions (Excluding DSL grades) on all models of Corolla, Camry 2.5, Rush. **4 Years / 40,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 4 services at 10,000 Kms service interval for Petrol models based on normal operating conditions on all models of RAV4 (Excluding HEV), FJ Cruiser. Vehicles may include dealer-installed items. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom. Pictures and colours shown above are for illustrative purposes only.

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Array of new industrial projects unveiled for investment

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13:

A sizable portfolio of investment opportunities in the industrial and manufacturing sector, many of them backed by offtake agreements, has been unveiled for investment by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Identified with the support of the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit, these investment opportunities relate to projects and initiatives that fall under the auspices of: Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Nama Holding and Mazoon Dairy. In all, 22 such initiatives for industrial investment have been offered via the Invest in Oman portal of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry

and Investment Promotion. Opportunities include: Manufacture of low voltage, gas insulated switchgear manufacturing; Air intake filters for gas turbines; Supply of raw materials for thermoplastic tubes; Manufacture of measuring instruments (temperature, level, pressure); Manufacture of IPF valves and valves, controls, actuators; Manufacture of perforating blasters for oil and gas applications; Manufacture of drilling parts; Manufacture of CCTV poles; Mixed chemicals, such as demulsifiers, Glycol (TDI, Diethylene, Monoethylene), polyamine, Shale Retarder Blend, Manufacture of reverse osmosis membranes; Manufacture of smart electrical device (AMR), MVAR5 capacitor banks in primary substations and 20 MVAR capacitor banks in primary substation and 11KV ring main unit: oil type, SF6 type, 33 and



11 kV air separator switch; and manufacture of carton packaging. PDO has outlined investment opportunities linked to the supply of electric motors that convert electrical energy into mechanical energy that operates at a voltage of less than 1,000 volts for use in hazardous and non-hazardous

environments. Another proposal is linked to the manufacture of air intake filters for gas turbines. These air filters must prevent intake of dust particles with a size of more than 0.4 micrometres from entering the gas turbines and generators. There are many other applications of filters from the HVAC system in buildings to industrial and medical systems. Other opportunities pertain to the manufacture and supply of raw materials for thermoplastic tubes used in the production of tubes for corrosion protection in PDO flow lines, pipelines and their applications. Investments in these manufacturing opportunities will further enhance the industrial sector's contribution to GDP growth, create new hubs for investment in various governorates, as well as open up employment avenues for local Omanis, the ministry added.



Pact signed for \$40m chemical project in Sur

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13:

Sur Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn", has signed an investment contract with Al Ghaith for Chemical Industries to establish chemical plant on 60,000 sq m with an investment value exceeding \$40 million. This value-adding project aims at promoting the growth of chemical industries and supplying the oil and gas, petrochemical and water treatment industries with basic chemicals and raw materials. Eng Abdulqadir al Balushi, Director General of Sur Industrial City, informed that this project will adopt advanced chlor-alkali technologies. "The production lines will be operated with cutting-edge and environmentally friendly technologies, which shall enhance the quality of the plant's output. It is hoped that the project will provide a range of job opportunities for Omanis," Al Balushi pointed out. On his side, Eng Al Mamoon al Baadani, CEO of Al Ghaith for Chemical Industries, said: "We look forward to starting construction works during the last quarter of this year to expand production operations for caustic soda, hydrochloric acid, calcium chloride and sodium hypochlorite, and meet the needs of customers in the oil and gas, chemical industries, and water treatment sectors. The plant is expected to commence commercial production during the first half of 2024, thanks to the efforts made by Sur Industrial City management to facilitate the investment process."

Key conference to showcase MSX's investment appeal

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is organising a promotional conference for listed companies on September 5, showcasing the investment environment for the securities sector in the Sultanate of Oman. Haitham bin Salim al Salmi (pictured), CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, said: "The conference is a promotional platform for publicly listed public shareholding companies with the aim of introducing them, their financial performance, the most prominent projects in which they operate and their future plans to local, regional and international investors. Al Salmi explained that the conference will bring together the CEOs of the largest public shareholding companies, and includes several working papers on economic achievements and projects in the Sultanate of Oman that enhance its position in meeting the aspirations of investors and making it an attractive investment environment, and restructuring government companies



Promotional conference for listed companies slated for September 5 to showcase investment environment for the securities sector

through the Oman Investment Authority (OIA). He added that the organisation of the conference comes within the framework of the transformation witnessed by the Muscat Stock Exchange by changing its identity into a company operating as a commercial entity. The strategic plan it is currently working on will be prioritised to promote the attractiveness of the stock

exchange and also attract capital. The CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange pointed out that the conference will enhance effective communication between investors and public shareholding companies to develop the performance of these companies and identify the available investment opportunities, which will be an opportunity for companies to expand and diversify the investor base in their shares. He stressed that the MSX seeks to continue holding such promotional conferences and meetings that will enhance the position of the exchange on the global investment map, and introduce investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman. The conference will be attended by representatives from financial bodies and organisations, banks and investment companies, portfolio managers from different countries of the world, and representatives from the Omani capital market sector, investment institutions and brokerage firms. (With inputs from ONA)



Oman crude output climbs to 1.047m bpd

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 13

Oman's average crude oil production as of the end of June 2022 was 1.047 million barrels per day (bpd), representing an increase of 9.7 per cent compared to 954,900 bpd during the corresponding period of 2021. Data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information indicated that the average price of oil until the end of June increased by 60.9 per cent to reach \$90.4 per barrel compared to the same period last year. Oman's total oil exports recorded a growth of 16.2 per cent until the end of June 2022, with China topping the list of countries importing Omani oil, lifting 123.100 million barrels during this period. The total domestic production of natural gas in the Sultanate of Oman (plus imports) as of the end of last June increased by 4.4 per cent to reach 25.770 billion cubic metres (bcm) compared to 24.694 bcm during the same period of 2021. The reason for this increase is mainly due to the increase in associated gas production by 7.9 per cent to reach 4.881 bcm this year, compared to 4.523 bcm until the end of June 2021. Production of non-associated gas (including import) also increased by 3.6 per cent to reach 20.888 bcm this year, up from 20.170 bcm last year. Industrial projects came in first place in terms of their consumption of natural gas with about 15.490 bcm (an increase of 6pc), followed by oilfields at 6.447 bcm (an increase of 2.1 per cent), power plants at 3.715 bcm (an increase of 1.4 pc), industrial zones at 120.5 million cubic metres. (With inputs from ONA)



Malabar Gold and Diamonds launches Gemstone Jewellery Fest

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading global jewellery retailer with over 285 outlets across 10 countries launches the ‘Gemstone Jewellery Festival’ across their showrooms in GCC, Singapore & USA.

This festival showcases a dazzling array of jewellery, delicately designed with precious gems and uncut diamonds. These stunning pieces crafted in gold, perfectly capture the brilliance of real gems and is a treat for the eyes.

Gemstone Jewellery Festival mainly features Era – uncut diamond jewellery and Precia – precious gem jewellery. The Era collection, exquisitely crafted in 22K gold, is inspired by the cultural heritage of India and features the magnificence of uncut diamonds and precious gems, symbolising royalty and sheer brilliance while Precia is a fine assortment of jewellery encrusted with emeralds, rubies and sapphires and beautifully handcrafted in 22k gold.

It features a graceful collection of precious gem jewellery, designed for the contemporary woman. Malabar Gold and Diamonds is also offering customers a limited period offer of zero deduction gold exchange against Era & Precia jewellery as part of the festival.

A whole new collection of jewellery across bangles, earring and necklaces have been curated within the Era and Precia collections, incorporating latest



design trends to suit the varied interests of the customer.

These are available across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets and come with a transparent price tag and quality certification. As part of the Malabar Promise, the brand also offers tested and certified diamonds, guaranteed buyback, zero-deduction gold exchange, assured lifetime maintenance, jewellery exchange within 15 days and much more for jewellery purchased from Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

Established in 1993 in the Indian state of Kerala, Malabar Gold & Diamonds today has a strong retail network of over 285 outlets spread across 10 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centres, wholesale units and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East & USA.

Kalyan Jewellers celebrates India’s independence with discounts

MUSCAT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands, has announced bumper discounts to mark the 75th year of India’s Independence. The exciting offers will allow patrons to register instant benefits on their jewellery purchases from Kalyan Jewellers.

As part of the Indian Independence Day Offer, the jewellery brand has announced up to 75 per cent off on making charges for gold jewellery purchases, while patrons can avail up to 75 per cent off on diamond jewellery purchases adding further delight to the shopping experience. These one-of-its-kind offers run across Kalyan Jewellers’ showrooms in the region from August 11 to 15. Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers says, “At Kalyan Jewellers, it gives us immense pride and joy as India



is about to complete 75 years of Independence on August 15. As a global jewellery brand, that was born in India, we wanted to mark the occasion by offering a distinctive shopping experience to the brand’s patrons in the region.”

“Since the company’s inception, we have been pioneers in empowering consumers by introducing revolutionary customer-centric programmes. We aspire to continue taking major



strides in that direction. With the launch of the special Independence Day Offer campaign, we aim to take another step in that direction, enabling customers to maximise benefits from their jewellery purchases on this momentous occasion.”

The jewellery retailed at Kalyan Jewellers go through multiple purity tests and patrons also receive the Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate which

guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information and transparent exchange and buy-back policies.

The certification is part of the brand’s commitment towards offering the very best to its loyalists.

Kalyan Jewellers’ showrooms stock popular house brands such as Tejasvi (Polki jewellery), Mudhra (handcrafted antique jewellery), Nimah (Temple jewellery) and Glo (dancing diamonds). Other sections at the showroom include Ziah (Solitaire-like diamond jewellery), Anokhi (uncut diamonds), Antara (wedding diamonds), Hera (daily wear diamonds) and Rang (precious stones jewellery).

For more information on the brand, its collections and offers, visit <https://www.kalyanjewellers.net/>

ahli islamic inaugurates 18th branch in Nizwa

MUSCAT: ahli islamic recently inaugurated its 3rd branch in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, bringing the total number of its branches in Oman to 18.

The new branch, situated in Wilayat of Nizwa, is designed to meet the requirements of its growing number of customers outside the capital area. Its prime location, will enhance customers’ ease and convenience of banking with ahli islamic. Equipped with state of the art amenities, it reflects the Bank’s commitment to provide highest level of service, with focus on ‘partnering’ with customers.

Expressing delight at the new launch, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, DGM, Head of ahli islamic said, “This marks yet another glorious milestone in our expansion process. Our concerted efforts to bring the Bank closer to our customers has set us on the right growth curve. We are committed



to meet and exceed our customers’ requirements and will continue enhancing our network to make banking with ahli islamic the best option for all. Our streamlined operations is what sets us apart in the industry; our Shari’a-compliant banking solutions have been rewarding for customers who seek to operate their business under Shari’a principles.

“The new branch marks our third entry within Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, which has, in the recent years, seen a spurt in the number of customers. And with Nizwa being the regional centre of Al Dakhiliyah, our renewed presence at the branch is primed to create a new buzz

among patrons and potential customers who now have easy access to a host of banking services in their vicinity. We rely on customer feedback and market analysis to discern the changing demands and needs of the community in which we operate in; the launch of this spanking new branch, in the heart of Nizwa, is a result of that connectivity.”

Featuring contemporary design and modern infrastructure facilities, ahli Islamic branch in Nizwa will encapsulate the bank’s mission to be a vibrant and innovative centre of banking. It will be manned by a team of qualified personnel who are trained and equipped to address specific banking concerns of customers.

Both individual and corporate customers, including SMEs, will have access to all banking services, whether it is to open an account or avail financing solutions.

Ooredoo leverages its LoRa Alliance® membership



MUSCAT: An active player in setting the pace for digital transformation, Ooredoo congratulated the LoRa Alliance Board and members for a successful LoRaWAN World Expo in Paris. Hosted by the LoRa Alliance, the two-day event featured some of the world’s most powerful names in technology and business, highlighting the transformational power of the LoRaWAN ecosystem for Internet of Things (IoT) and devices management platforms.

As the first telecoms operator in Oman and the GCC to have joined the LoRa Alliance, the membership enables the company to collaborate with other IoT service providers, chip manufacturers, solution developers and other businesses serving the industry’s requirement to push the technology forward.

Own a Kia Pegas, get a chance to win a trip to Fifa World Cup

MUSCAT: Kia customers who purchase a Pegas can now look forward to winning a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup event in Qatar. Besides the Pegas, customers owning any brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, Live in action.

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

The Pegas is a fun family car, perfect to move around town or even run errands at ease. Equipped with a range of features, technology and space the impressive Pegas

makes every journey comfortable and hassle-free. For added convenience and safety the Pegas is also equipped with rear parking system and steering audio control.

Powering the Pegas is an efficient 1.4-litre MPI (multi-point injection) gasoline engine, which produces maximum output of 94PS at 6,000rpm and maximum torque output of 13.5 @ 4,000 rpm. It offers an impressive fuel-efficiency of 17.8 Kms/L.

The exterior of the Pegas, is stylish. The sculpted body panels and bold character lines are complemented by a striking colour palette and a carefully-balanced sedan silhouette. The Pegas’ profile is enhanced with a chrome radiator grille, body colour bumper and door handles,



body colour outside mirrors, side repeater lamp in outside mirror, halogen lamps, 14” steel wheel, front fog lamp and rear fog lamp. Viewed from the side, the profile of the Pegas gives it a finely-balanced silhouette. Its definitive character

lines give the impression of motion, even while it sits stationary.

The interiors of the Pegas are spacious and well thought out. The centre fascia has been designed to enhance ease-of-use, with many of the car’s functions controlled with

clear, ergonomic buttons.

Adding appeal to the interior of the Pegas is power windows, front console centre armrest with storage box, driver’s seat adjuster, manual air conditioning, Radio and Bluetooth.

The Pegas is also immensely practical for storing luggage. The trunk has a capacity of 475 litres, enough to store up to three golf bags, or a couple of large suitcases. As the trunk lid opens, illumination within the trunk also reveals any smaller items that could be forgotten.

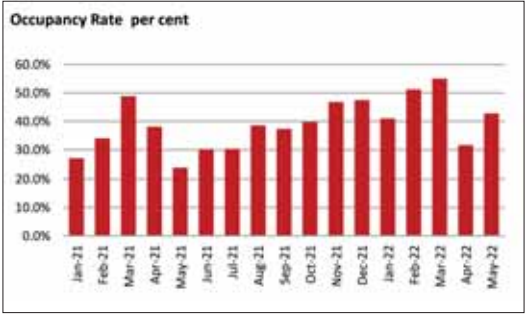
Furthermore, the Pegas is equipped with an array of safety features, including four airbags, Electronic Stability Program (ESP), Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Tyre Pressure Monitoring

System (TPMS) and Keyless Entry System.

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

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award’, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award. Conditions apply. Do visit visit Kia showroom for details.

MSX closes the week down after 4 positive weeks



MUSCAT: MSX30 index ended the week lower by 0.97 per cent. Industrial index ended the week up by 3.33 per cent. Services index and financial index closed lower by 1.65 per cent and 0.08 per cent respectively.

The MSX Shariah index closed down by 0.27 per cent.

The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman were at 1.572 million in June 2022, representing an increase over May 2022 registered vehicles at 1.568 million, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Private vehicles topped the list of vehicles registered at 1.249 million, followed by 0.235 million commercial vehicles and 0.028 million taxis. The number of vehicles with temporary registration increased to 7,152 in June 2022 compared to 6,603 vehicles in May 2022.

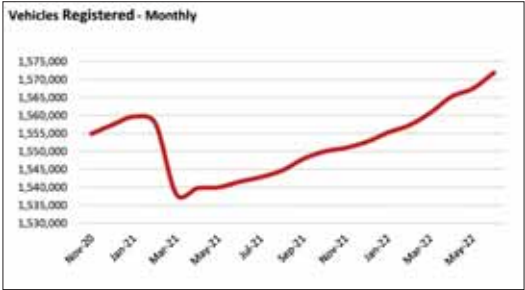
Oman's consumption of natural gas increased by 4.4 per cent YTD in June 2022.

Total production of natural gas increased to 4,629 million cubic metres (mn cm) in June 2022 against 4,592 million cubic metres in the corresponding period of 2021.

Energy Development Oman (EDO) has achieved a new milestone by being assigned a BB-long-term issuer credit rating with a stable outlook by the S&P Global Ratings.

The international credit rating agency S&P's stand-alone credit profile assessment of EDO is bbb- which is an investment grade rating level. Mazin bin Rashid al Lamki, EDO's Chief Executive Officer, said, "This inaugural credit rating from S&P is a significant step ahead in EDO's development and certainly self-assuring as it relates to EDO's strategy going forward. In this report, S&P have recognised EDO's access to sizeable reserves, leading domestic share of Omani hydrocarbon production, and low operating cost structure, all of which support strong credit ratios."

(Courtesy: U-Capital)



A customer shops for vegetables at a market in Rotterdam as inflation has risen in The Netherlands affecting the prices of pasta, bread and sunflower oil in particular. – AFP

INFLATION HITS DUTCH

For electric vehicle makers, winners and losers in climate bill



JACK EWING

The writer is a business reporter focusing on electric cars

The climate and energy package awaiting final approval by Congress aims to achieve two goals that are not always compatible: Make electric vehicles more affordable while freezing China out of the supply chain.

Auto industry representatives have been griping that the proposed \$7,500 tax credits for electric vehicle buyers come with so many strings attached that few cars will qualify. Buyers can't have very high incomes, the vehicles can't cost too much, and the cars and their batteries have to meet made-in-America requirements that many carmakers cannot easily achieve.

"It's going to be a lot harder for cars to qualify and for consumers to qualify for a federal tax credit for the purchase of an EV," said John Bozzella, president of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents large US and foreign automakers.

Some companies will benefit more than others from the sweeping legislation, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, which the House is expected to approve after the Senate's approval on Sunday.

The new credits favour companies, like Tesla and General Motors, that have been selling electric cars for years and have reorganised their supply chains to produce vehicles in the United States. A joint venture between GM and LG Energy Solution will soon open a battery plant in Ohio, part of a wave of electric vehicle investment by

EVEN AUTOMAKERS THAT MIGHT LOSE ACCESS TO TAX CREDITS COULD BENEFIT FROM THE LAW IN OTHER WAYS. THE BILL CONTAINS BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO HELP CARMAKERS BUILD FACTORIES AND ESTABLISH LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS

automakers and suppliers.

Vehicles sold by Tesla and GM will regain eligibility for incentives that the carmakers had lost because they had sold more than their quota of 200,000 electric cars under current law. The legislation eliminates that cap.

The legislation could be thornier for companies like Toyota and Stellantis, which owns Chrysler, Jeep and Ram, because they have not started making or selling large numbers of battery-powered vehicles in the United States.

The legislation effectively penalises newer electric car companies, like Lucid and Rivian, whose vehicles may be too expensive to qualify for the credits. The incentives apply to sedans costing no more than \$55,000 and pickups, vans or SUVs costing up to \$80,000.

Lucid's cheapest sedan starts at more than \$80,000. Rivian's electric pickups start at \$72,500 but can easily top \$80,000 with options. The company said it was exploring whether customers could lock in the incentives by making a binding purchase

agreement before the new law took effect.

Even automakers that might lose access to tax credits could benefit from the law in other ways. The bill contains billions of dollars to help carmakers build factories and establish local supply chains. Dealers will profit from a provision granting \$4,000 credits to used electric vehicles, with few strings attached.

"We have to look at this law in its totality," said Margo Oge, former director of the Office of Transportation and Air Quality at the Environmental Protection Agency. "Is it perfect? No. It will create jobs, and it will be good for the climate."

And once automakers make changes to their supply chains required by the bill, they will be able to offer customers generous incentives for the rest of the decade and then some. It may take a few years, but eventually the legislation will help make electric cars cheaper than gasoline and diesel vehicles, analysts say.

"The consumer tax credit was certainly not written in a way I would write it," Sen Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich, told reporters this week, referring to the \$7,500 incentive. But in the interest of getting the bill passed, she said, she acceded to the wishes of Sen Joe Manchin, D-W Va. Manchin has said it makes little sense to subsidise electric vehicles because demand is so strong that there are long waiting lists for many models.

Still, Stabenow added, "There are a lot of wonderful things in here for us."

— New York Times

The future of Web3 is not the present



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The writer is a member of the International Press Association

Let us not mistake the present with the future. I just spent a few days in Seoul, South Korea, where — besides the worst flood in at least five decades — the Korea Blockchain Week took place at the Grand Intercontinental Paranas, in the middle of the very Gangnam that the famous song popularised.

If we stare at the present only, the common view might be that cryptocurrencies have crashed, thus the industry as a whole is in bad shape.

However, I might argue quite the opposite. True, most cryptocurrencies have lost significant value in the past few months. But so did the stock market as well as some of the major currencies like the Euro. It is an

overall downturn. That is the trend for the time being. Yet, underneath the noise, things might be rosier than most observers might imagine.

For a start, during the 2021 crypto bull run, when the price of tokens grew significantly, a large number of new users became accustomed to the technology.

The popularisation of Non Fungible Tokens (NFT) was fuelled by large brands getting on board. The world renowned jewellery household Tiffany entered in the industry with an eight digits investment. Their partnership with Crypto Punk steamed up creativity and opportunities.

Sportswear brands have launched their own NFT collections and entered the Metaverse. Entertainment stars went full on

CRYPTOCURRENCIES WILL CONTINUE TO GO UP AND DOWN, BUT THE BEST OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE HERE TO STAY

Web3 with their shows. You see the difference?

In the previous bull to bear market (circa 2017-2018) it was all about finance. And finance we know, is win or lose. But this time around, it is a lot about economy. And economy is win/win.

Economy is all about purchasing something. In the largest majority of cases the prices of a product or a service reflect the market value. Almost always it is dictated by the meeting point of demand and supply. Web3 is mostly about ownership of digital assets, and

what you buy is what you get.

Finance is different from that perspective, especially in crypto, where most users buy cryptocurrencies through centralised exchanges, which notoriously own the key to the funds.

In other words, we do not really own the cryptocurrencies that we buy through a centralised exchange, but — in theory — we own a digital or physical asset through a NFT.

In theory because some of the marketplaces still have a centralised approach, and we own the asset only as long as the intermediary platform exists.

Regardless of technicalities, the biggest shift in perspective in the Web3 scene is that we went from a purely speculative market with

little or no use case in 2019, to a fully developed — or developing — ecosystem that promises ownership and interoperability.

At Korea Blockchain Week I had the opportunity to meet with many fellow Venture Capitals. The sentiments seems to be positive overall. The opinions that I gathered converge on the certainty that what is being built now is set to drive innovation in 2024 and 2025.

While the way of investing might have slightly changed, the determination of Web3 VCs as well as some Web2 more traditional VCs is stronger than ever.

VCS tend to invest for the future, while consumers look at the present. Cryptocurrencies will continue to go up and down, but the best of the new technologies are here to stay.

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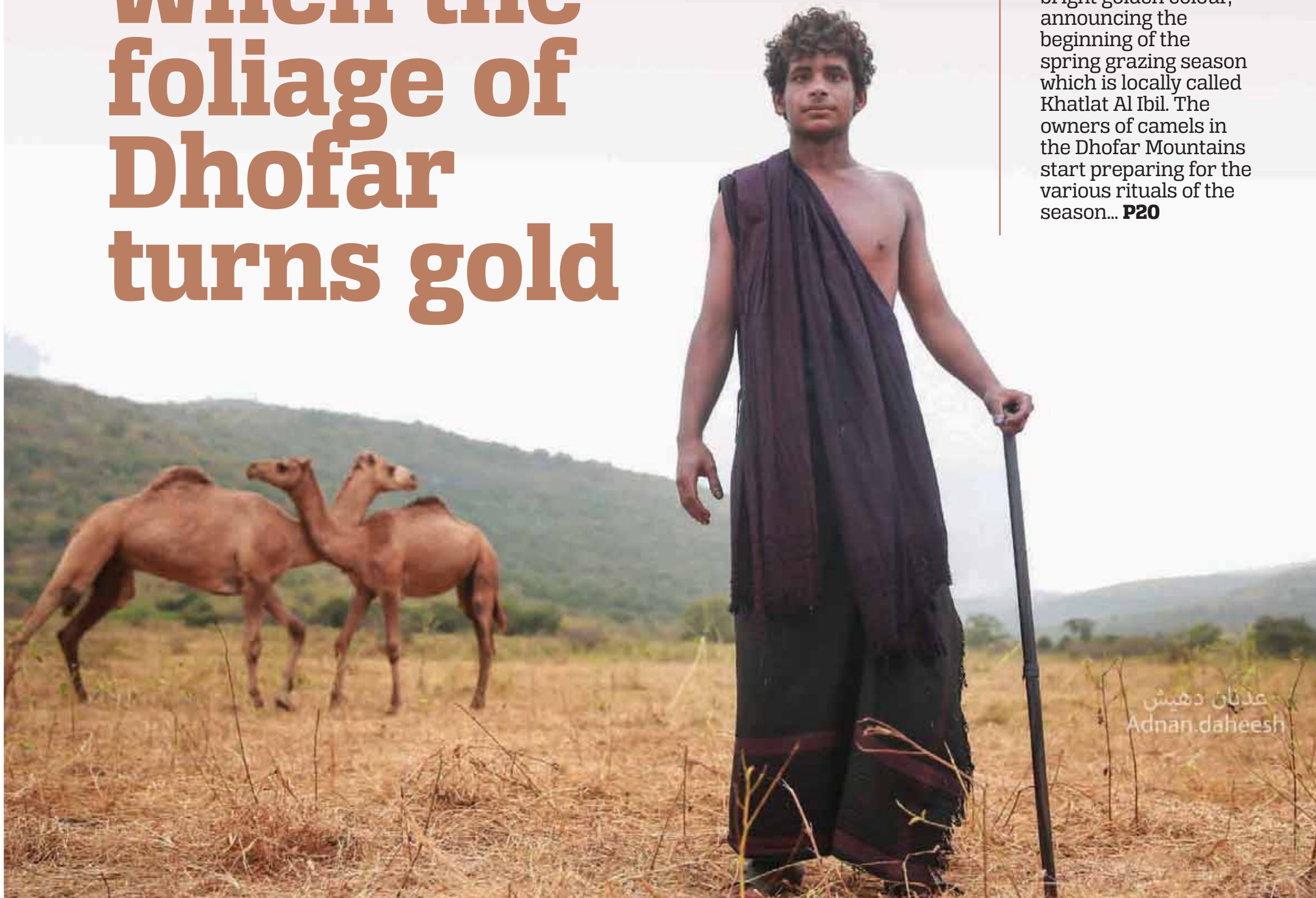
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Khatlat Al Ibil: When the foliage of Dhofar turns gold

After the monsoon season in Dhofar, when the spring sun finally rises, the foliage acquires a bright golden colour, announcing the beginning of the spring grazing season which is locally called Khatlat Al Ibil. The owners of camels in the Dhofar Mountains start preparing for the various rituals of the season... **P20**



Endangered sharks, rays caught in protected Med areas: study

ENDANGERED SHARKS, rays and skates in the Mediterranean are more frequently caught in protected than in unprotected areas, according to research published on Tuesday highlighting the need for better conservation for critically threatened species.

The three types of elasmobranch are among the species most threatened by overfishing.

While often landed as by-catch — or caught in nets of boats seeking to land other species — demand for their fins and meat has driven an estimated 71-per cent decline in ocean sharks and rays since 1970.

Although they are among the oldest marine species on Earth, their

slow growth rate and late maturity mean one third of elasmobranchs are categorised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as at risk of extinction.

While dozens of nations have banned large-scale fishing of endangered shark, ray and skate species, true global catch figures are likely to be hugely underestimated as 90 per cent of the world's fishing fleet is made up of small-scale boats.

Researchers in Italy wanted to get a better idea of how species fare in the Mediterranean's partially protected areas, which allow some fishing with restrictions.

They used photo-sampling and



image analysis to compile a database covering more than 1,200 small-scale fishing operations across 11 locations in France, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia and Greece.

PROTECTED AREAS

The team then used statistical models to demonstrate that catches of threatened species were higher in partially protected areas than in areas with no protection at all.

"People assume that it is large-scale trawlers that are impacting bio-

diversity, which is true and there's a lot of evidence for this," said co-author Antonio Di Franco, from the Sicily Marine Centre.

"There is less research on small-scale fishing's impact and our research shows that there is this potential."

The team found that catches they analysed in partially protected areas landed 24 species of shark, skate and ray — more than a third of which are endangered.

This is likely in part due to the species' preference for coastal waters, where most small-scale fisheries prefer to operate.

"We don't know the activity of small-scale fisheries in general, we don't know how many nets they actually fish or where they fish," said Di Franco.

Overall, in the partially protected areas studied, 517 elasmobranchs were caught compared with 358 in non-protected areas.

In terms of mass, the weight of shark, ray or skate species caught in partially protected areas was roughly double that in non-protected areas.

More than 100 countries have committed to increase the amount of protected oceans worldwide to 30 per cent by 2030.

Di Franco said there were a number of steps countries could take to help threatened species, including fitting smaller fishing boats with GPS trackers and ensuring that protected areas were joined up, allowing the species to more easily change living regions.

"Protected areas are a great potential benefit to biodiversity but the point is to look at management," he said.

"But often countries don't have the capacity to properly manage stocks."

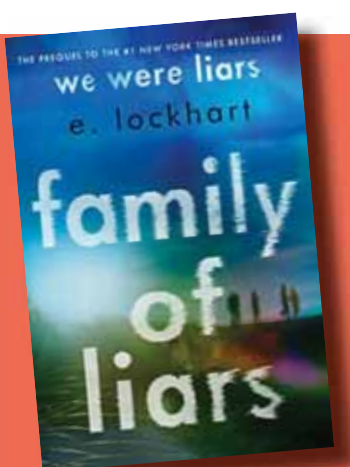
— AFP

READ

FAMILY OF LIARS

BY E. LOCKHART

This prequel to "We Were Liars" focuses on Cady's mother and aunts as teenagers in 1987.



A CATTLE ISSUE

A department of Agriculture and Food Security officer injects a cow with a dose of vaccine to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease at a cattle farm in Tangerang, Banten province, Indonesia. — Reuters



FRUITS IN SEASON

Mirabelle plums of Lorraine hang on a tree in a field during harvest in Vigneulles-les-Hattonchatel, eastern France. — AFP





In Syria, a ‘golden’ crop struggles to regain its shine

RETURNING TO THEIR orchards after years of war, Syrian pistachio farmers hoping to revive their valuable crop have had their hopes dashed by scorched trees and the ravages of climate change.

Laden with maroon-coloured bunches of nuts that are harvested in summer, the pistachio tree is known in Syria as “a golden tree in a poor land”, reflecting the value of a fruit long exported across the Middle East and Europe.

But farmers near the northwestern village of Maan are harvesting just a quarter of the crop they gathered before the war, farmer Nayef Ibrahim said.

Ibrahim and his family left their farms when the area became a frontline in the conflict that erupted in 2011. They returned after government forces drove out rebels in 2019.

They found pistachio trees slashed and burned during the conflict - and the new ones they have planted will take up to 12 years to bear fruit, Ibrahim said.

A successful harvest on his farm would likely take longer, with the road to recovery slowed by “the lack of rainfall, climate change as a whole, and the lack of basic materials that a farmer needs,” he said.

Syria saw its worst drought in more than 70 years in 2021, with harvests across the country hit hard, according to the International Rescue Committee aid group.

Ibrahim estimated his fields had received half the rainfall of previous years but that the rising costs of fuel to pump in water meant he couldn’t afford an alternative.

Nutrient-rich soil that could help him boost production was also unavailable or expensive, he said.

“I need fertiliser. There is none. I need water. There is none,” he said.

prompted global price hikes.

The West has tightened its sanctions on the Syrian government since conflict broke out in 2011 over rights violations, but many Syrians say the measures have hit regular citizens the hardest.

“It’s hard for me to get pesticides because of the economic siege,”

their shells split naturally, generating a cracking noise that guides farmers to trees ready for picking.

They are poured into machines that peel and sort them by size before being bagged in 50 kg sacks labelled “Aleppo pistachio” – a name recognised across much of the Middle East.

Clutching a bunch of freshly

with indications of a poor wheat harvest adding to concerns about food supplies in a country where the UN says more people are in need than at any point since 2011.

Agriculture ministry official Jihad Mohamed said pistachio farming had suffered because the areas where they are grown had been badly affect-

ed by the war, noting widespread tree cutting.

Despite that, exports continued with Syrian pistachios selling in markets including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, he said.

— Reuters



CULTURE

Scarring for life: Traditional practice fades in Sudan



KHOLOUD MASSAED of the Hadaria tribe in Sudan vividly recalls the day her face was scarred with a sharp blade, an ancient practice that was once common.

Now in her 80s, she still carries on each cheek the three lesion lines that have since darkened over time.

“They took me to a man who was known to carry out this practice. He did it with a small knife,” Massaed said in her village of Om Maghad, some 66 kilometres (40 miles) south of Khartoum.

“I was seven years old and I cried. They told me I should have these facial marks as it’s a sign of beauty.”

Tribal scarring, an ancient practice that used to be commonplace in

the same agonies.

“I didn’t take any of my children to be marked,” she said. “It’s a different time now.”

“Only old people still bear these markings, not the younger generations.”

Like Massaed, Fatma Ahmed of the Ja’aileen tribe bears similar lines on her face.

“The pain lasted for weeks,” she said, adding that she used many traditional healing ointments to ease her suffering.

Communities in remote rural areas of Sudan have long struggled to access proper healthcare because of poor facilities and infrastructure.

Many men were also marked for life.

For males, these marks often varied from small



Sudan, involves marking the skin, mainly to identify tribal affiliation or as a symbol of attractiveness.

It was also practised in Sudan, where according to Minority Rights Group roughly 30 per cent of the population is believed to belong to African minorities, while the rest are Sudanese Arabs.

The practice has greatly reduced over the years, with many now viewing it as unsanitary, archaic and obsolete.

“People used to sing for it,” said Massaed. “It had great value in the past.”

For a long time, she struggled to come to terms with her scarring, and now she is grateful that the practice has been dying out.

When her own children came of age, Massaed refused to let them endure

vertical or horizontal lines on the cheeks to shapes resembling a “T” or “H”, according to Babiker Mohammed from the Mahas tribe.

“It was not a choice back then. It was inevitable,” said the 72-year-old.

“People just took children to the person known for marking faces, and he would mark the face according to their tribe name,” he said.

Mohammed said that he too refused to mark his own children.

“I’m probably from the last generation that had their faces marked in Sudan,” he said.

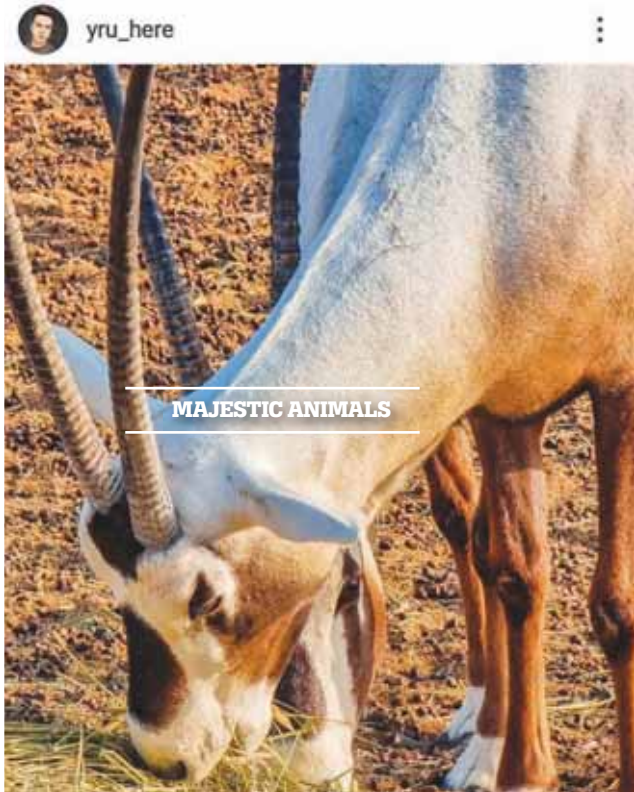
Idris Moussa Abdelrahman, who is from the Ja’aileen tribe, hopes the practice never returns.

“It’s a distortion and harms people for no reason.” — AFP



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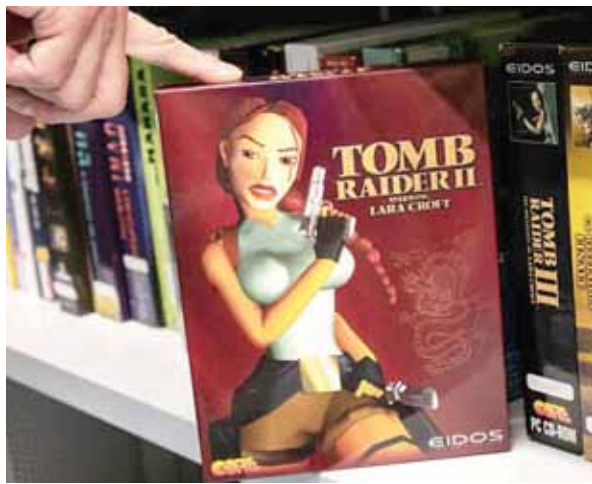
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AROUND THE WORLD

CHANGING WORLD

'Total art': Inside France's vast video game archive



In the bowels of an imposing modernist tower in Paris, Laurent Duplouy carefully handles a pristine copy of "Tomb Raider" before slotting it back on the shelf alongside thousands of other classic video games.

Duplouy oversees a huge archive of games at France's National Library (BNF), one of the longest-running efforts to preserve a part of global heritage that is often overlooked by cultural institutions.

"The video game can be regarded as total art, because it combines graphic art, narrative art and a narrative structure," Duplouy told.

The 1990s glass and steel structure, a short hop from the banks of the River Seine, houses room upon room of archived books, where researchers and students quietly go about their business.

But Duplouy is adamant the video game collection is not out of place in the august surroundings.

"For the BNF, video games are as precious as the other documents deposited here," he said.

"We pay the same attention to them. It is cultural heritage in its own right."

The treasured collection now holds some 20,000 titles in all possible formats, from cartridges to diskettes and CD-ROM, and adds a further 2,000 samples each year.

A team of 20 looks after the collection, empowered by a 1992 law on the preservation of multimedia documents.

While the law did not mention video games specifically, its wording is wide enough to be interpreted that way, making it one of the oldest pieces of legislation of its kind anywhere in the world.

The US Library of Congress only began its efforts to preserve digital media in 2000, and there

are many other initiatives led by enthusiasts across the world.

EMULATOR HUNT

The video games are stored on darkened shelves at a constant temperature of 19 degrees to protect them from humidity.

A few floors above, there is also an enviable collection of vintage gaming consoles — from the earliest examples such as the rare Magnavox Odyssey from the early 1970s, to the Atari Lynx and Sega Saturn, all the way to the Nintendo Game Boy, the ultimate 1990s icon.

"We are keeping these consoles to give future researchers, decades or even hundreds of years from now, an understanding of how to play these video games, what hardware was used," said Duplouy.

While the consoles and physical games can be stored on shelves and behind glass, there are huge challenges with many games that can no longer be found in physical form.

For these, the library relies on communities of enthusiasts who re-create old games on modern computers.

"We have two engineers in the multimedia department who are constantly monitoring these issues to find emulators, make them work and make them compatible with our collections," said Duplouy.

The archivists also face a problem that many games are now played in the cloud and never exist in physical form.

Duplouy said the library was locked in negotiations with publishers and platforms to find a workaround.

Ultimately, he said, the ambition is to hold the largest collection in the world.

"It would be great for French heritage," he said. — AFP

ART

Rescuing Art in Ukraine with Foam, Crates and Cries for Help



A MONTH AFTER the Russian army invaded Ukraine, photographer Roman Metelskiy stood on the platform of this western city's domed art nouveau railway station, watching trains full of women and children evacuating from the east. But he was waiting for a carriage from the other direction. This one, from the west, was full of Bubble Wrap.

Few Ukrainian cultural institutions had prepared for a full-scale invasion. Museums, churches, castles and libraries had neither materials nor guidance on how to preserve the country's valuable art.

"We had to start from scratch," Metelskiy said. "We were asking for packaging materials. For financial support. For advice on how to preserve and package things."

So with the government on war footing, he and other arts professionals formed an ad hoc preservation committee, the Center to Rescue Cultural Heritage, over coffee in early March. (In this Hapsburg city, Metelskiy said, "everything happens over coffee.")

"We were pretty astonished," he said. "We thought that instructions already existed."

Ivan Shchurko, a member of Lviv's regional parliament who was at the coffee meeting that first day, remembered feeling scared and disoriented as they hunted for help. "We were looking for people with the same interests, the same values," he said.

They contacted a dozen Polish museums and palaces, and March 27, a train arrived from Warsaw laden with cardboard boxes and bags of plastic foam beads. Another emergency shipment arrived on April 4, with wrapping materials and protective gloves from Norway and Denmark. Other supplies arrived from libraries in Germany, Latvia and Estonia, and museums in Britain and Slovenia.

Teams in Lviv stuffed the packing materials into vans or the back of their cars, ferrying the supplies cross-country to vulnerable institutions in

Chernihiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. By June, Shchurko and Metelskiy were presiding over mountains of foam-core boards and reams of plastic film that filled the lobby of a university library: humanitarian aid of a more cultural kind.

"In times of war, there are two irreversible losses: people and our culture," Metelskiy said. "The rest can be rebuilt."

As the Ukrainian army steps up its counteroffensive in the east this summer, heritage specialists in the west are engaged in a related battle: to preserve Ukraine's monuments, museums, historical collections and religious sites. The Russian invasion is a culture war to its core, and heritage sites have been damaged both from errant shelling and targeted destruction.

Ukraine has accused Russian-led forces of looting in the occupied cities of Mariupol and Melitopol. Regional museums outside the capital, Kyiv, and the northeastern city of Kharkiv have burned to their foundations.

But where Ukraine's soldiers have relied on a central chain of command, its civilian army of scholars, curators, archivists and architects say they have had precious little guidance.

Officials in Kyiv and in regional administrations have certainly taken steps to keep the country's heritage intact. The national culture ministry has hosted workshops, won commitments from international partners, and kept a public database of damaged and destroyed monuments for future legal claims.

"Before the full-scale war, we were not ready for such a barbaric action, although the ministry was doing our best to protect our cultural sites," said Kateryna Chuyeva, a deputy minister of culture, during a March briefing on the destruction of Ukraine's churches and historical archives. "But what we are witnessing now in western Ukraine is people are very much engaged in defending and protecting cultural sites."

The ministry has been spar-

ing with details on how many collections it has had a hand in evacuating, citing wartime exigencies. Yet, interviews with museum directors and other heritage leaders in Lviv and Kyiv had a common refrain: If you wanted practical necessities, you had to find them yourself.

"Our officials who cut us off, and leave the cultural sphere with minimum resources, make us work even more," Metelskiy said.

So, by coordinating via WhatsApp groups and WeTransfer files, and raising funds on crowdfunding platforms, they have made significant strides at preserving endangered icons and artworks — and they have done it mostly by themselves.

"It's very hard, but it's a very big chance to help my colleagues," said Olha Honchar, the 29-year-old director of the Territory of Terror Memorial Museum, which documents the city's Nazi and Soviet past. "From the first day of the war, we understood that the Lviv region would start to be a shelter, and Lviv museums would be mediators from donor countries."

In early March, Honchar set up a nonprofit that has funnelled financial support to more than 750 museum workers in eastern and southern Ukraine. The payments, mostly under \$100 and delivered via smartphone app, have helped to keep employees of arts institutions above water as their salaries go unpaid.

While Ukrainian refugees were welcomed by European cultural institutions, those who stayed behind needed immediate humanitarian aid that those arts institutions were ill prepared to deliver. Foreign donors were reaching out — but they wanted spending controls that people caught up in war couldn't provide.

"We need packing materials," Honchar said. "But we also have to help people who work with these packing materials. We must support the human potential of culture in Ukraine." — NYT

ANIMAL PLANET

Like Bees of the Seas, These Crustaceans Pollinate Seaweed



MOVE OVER, BIRDS and bees. There is another pollinator on planet Earth, and it lives in the sea.

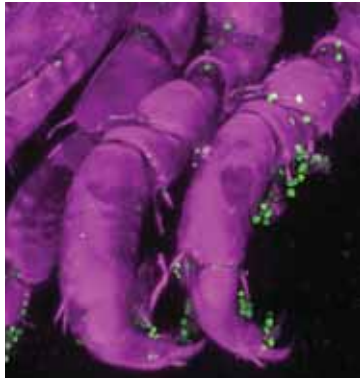
In a study published late last month in the journal *Science*, scientists found that a tiny crustacean, *Idotea balthica*, plays the role of pollinator for a species of seaweed. They do this by inadvertently collecting the algae's sticky spermatia, its equivalent of pollen, on their bodies and sprinkling it around as they move from frond to frond in search of food and shelter.

This is the first time an animal has been observed fertilising algae. This discovery not only extends the scope of species that use this reproductive strategy, but it also raises questions about whether it first evolved on land or in the sea.

It was long thought that animals only pollinated plants on land. However, in 2016 scientists discovered that zooplankton pollinate *Thalassia testudinum*, a seagrass species found in the Caribbean. Seagrasses are the only flowering plants that grow in marine environments but remain closely related to terrestrial plants. Seaweed, on the other hand, while technically plants, are not closely related to terrestrial plants.

The discovery that *Thalassia testudinum* was pollinated by animals was made after scientists noticed an unusually high density of marine invertebrates visiting seagrass flowers. Shortly after this discovery, Myriam Valero, a population geneticist at Sorbonne University in France, observed something similar happening among the red algae she was studying.

The seaweed species she was studying, *Gracilaria gracilis*, always seemed popular with invertebrates, specifically the isopod species *Idotea balthica*. Because *Gracilaria gracilis* produce spermatia that, like pollen grains, cannot move on their own, Valero wondered if the isopods might be playing a role in the spermatia's dispersal. Earlier studies suggested that the spermatia of *Gracilaria gracilis* were dispersed by ocean currents, but given their abundance in calm coastal rock pools, Valero suspected that another dispersal mechanism was at play.

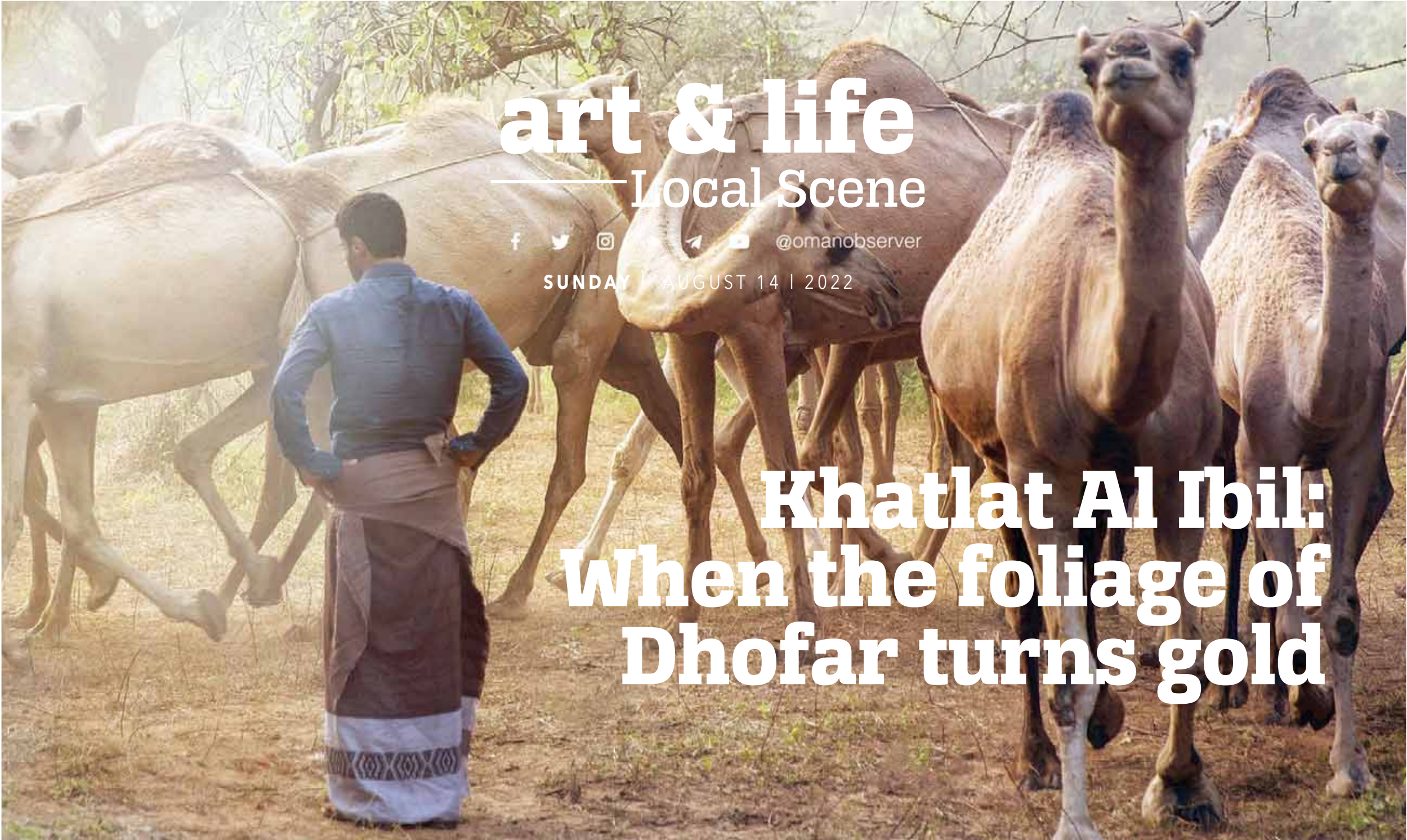


To test her hypothesis, Valero and Emma Lavaut, a graduate student at Sorbonne, grew male and female *Gracilaria gracilis* and placed them 6 inches apart in seawater tanks. Half the tanks were populated with the tiny crustaceans, and half were not. At the end of their experiment, they found that fertilisation occurred around 20 times as much in the tanks with the isopods than in the tanks without them.

In a subsequent experiment, the researchers took crustaceans that had spent time in tanks with reproductive male *Gracilaria gracilis* and transferred them to tanks with unfertilised female algae. They found that doing so also resulted in high rates of fertilisation. They examined the isopods under a microscope and found that they had spermatia stuck to nearly every part of their bodies.

The researchers believe that the isopods have a mutualistic relationship with the seaweed. The algae provide the isopods with food in the form of a species of microalgae that grow on their surface as well as shelter. In exchange, the isopods help fertilise the algae.

"This is such a profoundly fascinating study that really shakes up our understanding of how seaweeds reproduce," said Jeff Ollerton, a visiting professor at the Kunming Institute of Botany in China who was not involved with the study but co-wrote a perspective article that accompanied the study in *Science*. "This type of interaction may have been going on long before plants ever evolved, and using a third party for reproduction may have much deeper roots than we ever realised — if you'll excuse the pun." — NYT



art & life

Local Scene

f t i y v @omanobserver

SUNDAY | AUGUST 14 | 2022

Khatlat Al Ibil: When the foliage of Dhofar turns gold



where camels are released to graze and the expansion of grazing paths that were affected by the rains.

Khatlat Hejailan in Rakhyout is considered one of the most important sites of spring grazing, because of the ancient traditional rituals that coincide with it, and the presence of visitors to enjoy that wonderful atmosphere, where fire stoves ignite at night away from the city, the place is very calm, where the camels eat, while the wonderful voice of some chanters who chanter the amazing Omani traditional songs with which silence prevails. After a while, the camel's owners start milking the camels.

The milk is served cold and fresh to the guests, which is favoured by many, or sometimes boiled on the fire or by placing pebbles on the fire and then placed in the milk pot until it reaches the boiling point, and it is called locally (Ma'atheeb milk).

Khatlat Hejailan is distinguished from others by having Al Badh plant, which is a small coconut-like seed that is abundant in the spring in "Hejailan" region, where many residents of Dhofar Mountains flock to this place in order to reap this fruit, which is extracted by simple digging in the ground. Where it is cooked with methane gas found in animal fertilisers and served after being peeled to be eaten with ghee, and it is considered one of the delicious spring meals preferred by most Dhofari people, and many of its extractors sell it in cans worth about RO 50.

The grazing season lasts for about a month until all the herbs and trees dry up and it becomes difficult for the camels to climb to the grazing places where they cannot stand on those herbs because they might fall, leaving the grazing place for the cows to graze throughout the winter.

This interesting season is considered a relaxation and purification from the pressures of life, as some employees take vacations during this season to enjoy the most beautiful moments that combine wildlife and charming nature.

By Arwa al Hashimi
Photos by Adnan Dhaish

Residents of Dhofar Governorate are longing for the spring season (Serb), where pastures are diverse, all trees and herbs grow in them after the rainy autumn season, and the mountains are covered in green as the eye can see.

Dhofar is known for its astonishing mountain ranges with their unique terrains, on which the autumnal "monsoon" wind blows with its rain, spit and wonderful fog, making the slopes, plains and valleys look like green gardens that delight the beholder with their brightness.

When the spring sun finally rises, those trees and herbs acquire a bright golden colour, announcing the beginning of the spring grazing season which is locally called Khatlat Al Ibil. The owners of camels in the Dhofar Mountains start preparing for the various rituals of the season, heading their herds in groups to the grazing places that were closed at the beginning of autumn. Many lovers of these rituals from different regions of Dhofar join them. While grazing the camels in the pastures, Dhofaris carry different heritage Arts such as Habot and Al Nana.

Like other wilayats of Dhofar, Rakhyout celebrates this season, when the camels are released to graze in nature among the green forests. Rakhyout is one of Dhofar's wilayats that is well-known for Al Khatla season with more than 30 sites for spring camel grazing, which is accompanied by a prior preparation of Al Mabarek which is the local name for the places