

P10

OMANI DUO FINISHES RUNNERS-UP



P13

STONE LAID FOR NEW IRON ORE PELLETISING PROJECT



P20

AL QABIL - A HIDDEN GEM IN DESERT WELCOMES TOURISTS



■ MUSCAT

COUNCIL OF OMAN’S ANNUAL SESSION

Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Council of Oman will open its fourth annual session today. The State Council will commence its fourth annual session (2022-2023) of the seventh term (2019-2023) while Majlis Ash’hura will inaugurate its fourth annual session of the ninth term (2019-2023), separately at their premises in Al Bustan, today. During its third annual session that ended on July 14, the State Council achieved a lot within the framework of its financial and legislative powers set forth by the Basic Statute of the State and the Law on the Council of Oman.

DETAILS ON P2

OMAN FLAYS ATTACK ON IMRAN KHAN

The Sultanate of Oman condemned the attempted assassination of Imran Khan, former prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Sultanate of Oman affirmed its solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan reiterating its constant stance rejecting all forms of violence and terrorism. Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has asked chief justice to investigate an alleged murder plot against Imran Khan. “I will write to the Chief Justice to form a commission comprising all judges of the Supreme Court to investigate the allegations,” Sharif said.

■ A GEM OF ANCIENT OMAN



One of the oldest archaeological sites in Oman, Harat Al Bilad is a cultural treasure. Located in the Wilayat of Manah, this architectural masterpiece has four mosques, 376 ancient houses, and almost 250 wells which date back over nine centuries, opening a window into Oman’s vibrant heritage and shed light on the lives of ancient times. **DETAILS ON P2**

125 in fray for OCCI elections

KABEER YOUSUF
 @kabeeryousef

A total of 125 candidates including 116 Omanis and 9 expatriates are in the fray for the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the BoD

of OCCI branches. The elections are scheduled for November 22. The OCCI announced the candidates and voters list on Thursday. The list runs up to 295 pages. There are 27 contestants from Muscat Governorate, while 11 from Dhofar, eight from North Al Sharqiyah, 10 each from South Al Sharqiyah and North Al Batinah, nine from South Al Batinah, six contestants from Al Wusta, eight from Al Dhahirah, six from Al Dakhiliyah, seven from Al Buraimi and eight are seeking the positions from Musandam Governorate. **TURN TO P2**

Oman to take part in COP27

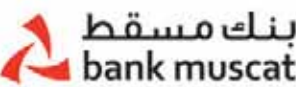
DELEGATED BY HM, AUFI LEAVES FOR EGYPT

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Saturday left for the Arab Republic of Egypt to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27), which will be held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from November 6 to 18.

The COP27 is part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) international environmental treaty signed by 154 states and aims to limit the impact of human activities on the climate. The Signatory Countries pledged to return to the meeting this year to agree on a further reduction of green-house gases and carbon dioxide emissions with the objective of keeping temperature rises within 1.5 °C limits.

The conference has four major objectives namely: mitigation of the emission of greenhouse gases, adaptation (how are countries going to adapt and help others do the same), climate finance with many finance-related discussions are already on the agenda and co-operation among the participating countries to reduce global warming to less than 2°C. The realisation of these objectives requires quick measures that contribute to achieving the aspirations of all parties, which is the implementation of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

It is noteworthy that Oman announced the realisation of zero carbon neutrality by 2050 through an ambitious national plan and the establishment of the Oman Sustainability Centre based on the outcomes of the carbon management lab to keep pace with the global action on reducing carbon emission. — ONA



Celebrating 10 years of Special Opportunities

From day-to-day transactions to fulfilling big dreams, Meethaq is proud to serve customers all across Oman with a Sharia-compliant suite of retail banking products and services.



 2465 6666

www.meethaq.om


Pioneer of Islamic Banking in Oman





Council of Oman’s fourth annual session begins today

MUSCAT: Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Council of Oman will open its fourth annual session on Sunday.

The State Council will commence its fourth annual session (2022-2023) of the seventh term (2019-2023) while Majlis Ash’shura will inaugurate its fourth annual session of the ninth term (2019-2023), separately at their premises in Al Bustan.

During its third annual session that ended on July 14, the State Council achieved a lot within the framework of its financial and

legislative powers set forth by the Basic Statute of the State and the Law on the Council of Oman.

Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, said the State Council held six regular sessions during which 16 topics were discussed including draft laws referred to it by the Council of Ministers. The State Council also approved a number of studies and proposals presented by its standing committees.

The State Council, during its third annual session, accomplished a number of draft

laws and referred them to His Majesty the Sultan namely the draft amendments of the National Records and Archives Law, the draft amendments of the Security Law and the draft amendments of the Notary Public Law, Al Saadi said.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura, pointed out that the first meeting will discuss the plans of the standing committees for the fourth annual session.

During its first regular meeting, Majlis Ash’shura will be briefed about the draft general budget

of the state for the fiscal year 2023 which was forwarded to the council by the government and is currently under study by the economic and financial committee.

Also to be discussed by Majlis Ash’shura are ministerial statements of the previous annual session, the economic and financial committee’s report on the mining sector, the establishment of an Omani investment centre and the government’s plan to deal with revenues accrued from the difference between the estimated and the actual price of oil.

125 in fray for OCCI poll

FROM PAGE1

In addition, there will be six members representing Oman’s Public Shareholding Companies and nine foreigners who hold golden visas under the long-term residence status in the category of Foreign Investors Companies.

The voters and candidates are free to raise any objections to the list from Sunday (November 6) till Tuesday (November 8), with the Appeals Committee, according to the Elections Committee, which is supervising the OCCI electoral process for 2022-2026.

Any appeals against the list of candidates can only be submitted by Friday (November 10).

The OCCI Elections Committee has approved the election mechanism for the BoD elections and to all of its branches and opened candidacy for membership with the chamber from September 25 until September 29 via its website.

The prime criteria for the candidacy for membership of the BoD and the Boards of Directors

of the branches is to be an Omani, except for the candidates for membership of the board from among the representatives of public shareholding companies listed on Muscat Stock Exchange, and foreign investors who have obtained an investor residency.

The candidate should hold a Bachelor’s degree or have practical experience in doing business in the private sector for a period of not less than 10 years, as well as having been a member of the chamber for a period of not less than five years, and his age shall not be less than 30 years, and he shall hold good conduct and reputation.

Additionally, the candidate shouldn’t be an employee in one of the units of the state’s administrative apparatus and other public legal persons or a paid worker in the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman or abroad, with the exception of the executive heads of public shareholding companies who are candidates for membership of the board.

Oman to host Regional Cybersecurity Week

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will host the Regional Cybersecurity Week from Sunday.

As many as 400 specialists from 45 countries are taking part in the event which is organised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in collaboration with the Arab Regional Cyber Security Centre of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The activities of the week include conducting the 10th Regional Cybersecurity Drill for Arab countries and the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the 10th Regional Conference on Cybersecurity which will be held under the theme ‘Innovation in Cybersecurity Industry’, among other events.

— ONA

Gem of a restoration of ancient Oman

HARAT AL BILAD, ONE THE OLDEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, OPENS WINDOW TO LIFE CENTURIES AGO

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, NOV. 5

One of the oldest archaeological sites in Oman, Harat Al Bilad is a cultural treasure. Located in the Wilayat of Manah in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, this architectural masterpiece contains four mosques, 376 ancient houses, and almost 250 wells which date back over nine centuries, opening a window into Oman’s vibrant heritage and shed light on the lives of ancient times.

Harat Al Bilad, an ancient settlement quarter (harah), is a fine example of fortified town on the desert borderlands, pierced by four gateways, surrounded by a stone and mud brick wall, and with two formidable watchtowers.

Before the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism initiated the conservation of Harat Al Bilad in the early-2000s, it had been uninhabited for decades and was quickly attaining a state of extreme dilapidation. This was when the government stepped in and purchased houses from owners. And today one can see the ancient Oman in modern Manah.

According to OmanTripper, a blog written by Ali Mohammadi documenting the beauty of Oman, “Harat Al Bilad is much more unique not only it is probably the largest old quarter neighbourhood (harah) in Oman, with a couple of really old mosques, but that it has also been preserved and restored in its entirety unlike, for example, Harat Al Yemen in Izki.”

The history researcher, Khalfan bin Salim al Busaidi, a resident of Manah, in his book Grants and Gifts in the History of the People in Manah, said Harat Al Bilad



dates back to the fifth century AD. The scholar Shaikh Nejad bin Ibrahim was among the first who settled in Harat Al Bilad and founded Al Yamania Quarter in 470 AD. Harat Al Bilad has been referred to by several names such as Manah Fortress and Fortress of bin Nejad. It was the seat of an active scientific movement and saw reproduction of many books and Fiqh encyclopedias.

The visitors of the harah, when entering the main door from the north, will find Bab Al Sabah, (Morning Gate), which was built close to the wilayat’s market, in



The ancient settlement quarter (harah) is a fine example of fortified town on the desert borderlands, pierced by four gateways, surrounded by a stone and mud brick wall, and with two formidable watchtowers

addition to other doors scattered throughout the harah like Bab Al Qasab, Bab Al Nasr, Bab Al Rawla and Al Burj and Bab Al Dujain.

Inside the harah stands the long corridor that divides the harah into two halves, east and west, through the lanes, corners, corridors, narrow alleys, balconies, arches, gates and Sabla (public council) of sons of Rashid, Al Mutaila Sabla and the Bustan Sabla, where the people of harah used to meet.

Harat Al Bilad includes 4 old mosques spread along its central passage: Al Ali, Al Ain, Al Shara, Al Rahba, and Quran schools, in addition to a furnace that was used in certain occasions. It also has natural springs like Ain Bani Nejad, named after Shaikh Nejad bin Ibrahim, which is a Waqaf property.

Oman handed over the Harat Al Bilad project, which was recently restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, to Al Amara Al Ariqa Company in 2018. Al Amara Al Ariqa, under this agreement, undertakes all the management of this historical harah that attracts a lot of tourists as it is one of the ancient cultural settlements in the Sultanate of Oman.



World Cup fans can visit Qatar without tickets

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

In a new development, Qatar will allow World Cup fans to visit the country from December 2, even without tickets.

As per the existing rules, only those without tickets could enter Qatar unless they were travelling with a Hayya card, which allows three non-ticketed fans for \$140 (RO70).

The new rules will encourage Fifa fans to experience the World Cup experience even if they do wish to watch matches in the stadium.

"Fans without tickets can enter the State of Qatar after the conclusion of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 Group Stage — starting from December 2, 2022," the official statement said. The Sultanate of Oman is also actively inviting World Cup fans as it is one of the major and approved cities to receive World Cup fans.

Visitors holding the Hayya card can apply for a visa online or on arrival at land or airports and avail of the shuttle flights operated by the national airline, Oman Air, during the match days.

World Cup fans (Hayya cardholders) can enter the Sultanate of Oman with a free



The new rules will encourage Fifa fans to experience the World Cup experience even if they do wish to watch matches in the stadium

multiple-entry visa (valid for up to 60 days). The Hayya cardholder can avail of this facility for family members and will be allowed to change the visa to another category during his stay in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with certain conditions.

Oman Airports said there would be dedicated departure and arrival gates, baggage conveyors, check-in counters fans, and a customer service team in place to guide passengers through custom routes. Arrangements have also been made for fans to and from the airport via special bus stops for buses.

Ticket fares for shuttle flights have been reduced from the prices earlier announced by the airline.

CRUISE SHIP DROPS ANCHOR AT KHASAB



The Khasab Port received the German cruise ship Mein Schiff 6 with 2,232 tourists on Friday. The ship, which came from Dubai, is the first cruise ship to arrive at Khasab in the 2022-2023 tourist season. The arriving tourists were welcomed at a reception organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism. Mein Schiff 6 earlier visited at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat on Thursday.

VOX stops shows in some screens including Ruwi

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

VOX Cinema has stopped regular shows at five theatres in Suhar and Sur. The shows at other places will not be affected.

"As a responsible business focused on long-term sustainable growth, we have made the decision to close some VOX Cinemas in the Sultanate of Oman, with

immediate effect," a spokesperson of Majid Al Futtaim Leisure, Entertainment and Cinemas said in a statement to the Observer.

The shows at VOX Ruwi, Shatti al Qurum, and Panorama Mall, besides its screens in Suhar and Sur, are suspended as the agreement with the landlords has ended, according to reliable sources.

"Following an operational review into the performance of

our brands, we have identified opportunities to improve the efficiency of our businesses and ensure our portfolio is profitable and creates value for our customers and our company," he said.

As many as 15 screens in these five centres catered to the citizens and expatriate populations. The shows in other centres of VOX will continue unchanged.

"We are grateful to all the

guests who have supported us over the years and been part of our journey. We are extremely grateful to our staff for their dedication and service and, we are extending our full support to them through the next steps with the aim of redeploying all staff."

However, movie lovers can still enjoy a cinematic experience at other VOX Cinemas across the Sultanate of Oman.

AI contest winners to get financial, technical support



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, presented cash awards to winners of the Artificial Intelligence Talents Competition 2022 in Muscat last week.

The event was held in association with the Omani Intellectual Property Association and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

Several government, private and other institutions took part in the event.

The competition aims to encourage grades 6-12 students to conduct research on artificial intelligence, work on data analysis and future predictions, and encourage innovation in clean and renewable energy, food security and resource conservation.

Dr Ali bin Khamis al Alawi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani



Association for Intellectual Property, spoke on the topic while, the Innovation Oasis Company presented a presentation on the various stages of the competition. The first 10 winning projects were given cash prizes, and certificates were distributed to successful participants.

Al Alawi said, "This national competition aims to spread awareness on the importance of creating innovative solutions, and to produce applied research capable of finding realistic solutions."

The AI and IPR competition

winners will get financial and technical support.

"In addition, it encourages entrepreneurship, studies and research related to finding solutions to society's challenges, introducing the importance of intellectual property nationally, and disseminating it among all groups and segments."

Safia al Rashidiyah of Innovation Oasis Company, said: "The award fields have been diversified to include various problems; pollution, food security, climate change, safe disposal of waste, recycling."

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Building CMA Network Infrastructure

Tender Number	Tender Main Scopes	Release Request for Bids	Last date for Specifications Purchase	Last date of Bid Submission	Tender Fee OMR
5 / 2022	Designing Network Infrastructure , Delivering, mounting, configuring and migrating all equipment, software and licenses (perimeter and Data center Firewall , NAC solution , access and core switches , and security end point solution)	6 November 2022	15 November 2022 3:00 PM	1 December 2022 3:00 PM	100/- OMR Non Refundable

Companies and institutions registered as Grade excellent, Grade I and II and specialized in mentioned tender main scopes, may obtain tender document / Specifications from Finance and Admin department upon receipt of complete payment of the tender fees via bank transfer and provide scanned copy of the deposit receipt along with Registration certificate and business card to the email .

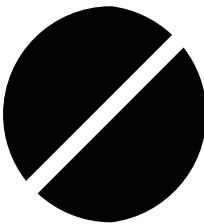
- All RFQs submitted become the property of CMA.
- Tenderer should submit a Tender Bond not less than (2%) of the Tender value, valid for Ninety (90) Days from the latest date of submission.
- The CMA reserves the right to cancel any RFQ at any time and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Proposals, or any or all of the items in one of the Proposals, without assigning any reasons.
- CMA is not obligated to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Name of beneficiary: Capital Market authority
Account no : 0423019706330018
Bank: Bank Muscat- Corporate Branch- CBD
SWIFT code: BMUSOMRXXXX
Please attach a copy of the deposit receipt

If the tender is not awarded to the company, the bank guarantee will be refunded.
For inquiries, please contact :
e-mail : admin@cma.gov.om
Telephone Number : 24823299
From 8 am to 3 pm.
Sunday to Thursday.



CHECK



MEDICATIONS
LOSE THEIR
EFFICACY AFTER
THE EXPIRY DATE.
IF THE EFFICACY
IS LESS, THE
DRUG WON'T
HELP A PATIENT
IN CONTROLLING
SUGAR, BP OR
BLOOD CLOTS

EXP

RY

BALQUEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

CAN I SAFELY TAKE A MEDICATION if it has reached the expiration date? Which drugs should never be used past their expiration date? For many patients, these questions arise because medications can be expensive to replace expired ones. But is it safe to use expired medicines? Doctors say one should not take medicines which are beyond use date. The US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) said one should not use expired medicines because of potential toxic risks. For example, blood thinners, which prove less effective and can lead to serious complications.

Dr K P Raman, senior cardiologist, said there are three issues. “The first one is the efficacy. Does it deteriorate after the expiry date? Secondly, do the adverse effects increase after the expiry date? Lastly, any ill health after consuming expired medicine will haunt the user’s mind. Did it happen because I took expired medicine? It may be, in reality, a coincidence. However, the patient will blame the doctor and may even sue him/her.”

“Because of these reasons, I will not prescribe expired medicines to any patient. Moreover, the law prohibits it. But I, being a doctor, know very well that most medicines are safe and effective after the expiration date, at least for a couple of years, and I consume myself being fully aware of which expired medicines. I should avoid, for example, Tetracyclines, Nitroglycerin, insulin, etc. There is, in fact, a big list. Nevertheless, I do not recommend self-medication. One also should take into account how the expired medicine was stored. Was it kept in the recommended temperature zone or in a hot, humid place?” The US FDA conducted a study on 100 drugs and found that 90 per cent of medicines are safe and effective even 15 years after expiry.

To ensure potency and efficiency do not store medicines in bathroom cupboards (hot and humid). Store them in a dry and cool place. Do not leave them in vehicles in hot weather. Keep them in tight bottles.

Dr Dilip Singhvi, a specialist in Internal Medicine, said, “As per the law, it is mandatory to have the expiry date mentioned on each medicine.”

The expiration date on a drug does stand for something, but probably not what you think it does. This is the date at which the manufacturer can still guarantee the full efficacy and safety of the drug. If the efficacy is less, the drug won’t help a patient in controlling sugar, BP or blood clots.

If expired medication is taken, a person may have an allergic reaction to it. Liver or kidney damage is likely from expired tetracycline medication. Therefore, it is important to check the expiry date before taking the medication, and properly dispose of the expired medication.

DATE BEFORE POPPING PILLS



Italy demands countries take responsibility for migrant boats

ROME: A row escalated over who should take care of migrants rescued by charity groups off the Italian coast, with Italy insisting that countries whose flag was flown by the boats should bear some of the responsibility and Norway disagreeing.

Three charity vessels holding almost 1,000 migrants have been at sea off Italy for more than a week waiting for permission from the new rightist government in Rome to dock. All their requests have so far been rejected, they say. Two are flying the Norwegian flag and one is flying the German flag.

Italy last week sent letters to the embassies of Germany and Norway, saying ships by non-governmental organisations flying their flags were not following European security rules and were undermining the fight against illegal immigration.

But Norway replied that it could not intervene.

“Norway has no responsibility under human rights conventions or the law of the sea for persons taken on board private Norwegian-flagged vessels in the Mediterranean,” Ambassador Johan Vibe said.

The German Embassy on Wednesday urged Italy to provide help swiftly, saying the NGO ships made an important contribution to saving lives at sea.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi told a news conference on Friday that the German-flagged Humanity 1 with 179 people aboard, including more than 100 unaccompanied minors, was heading towards the Sicilian city of Catania.

He said the boat would be



Migrants prepare to get on board the Ocean Viking ship sailing in the international waters off Libya in the Mediterranean Sea, after being rescued by European maritime-humanitarian organisation 'SOS Mediterranee'. – AFP

allowed to stop close to the port and Italy would take charge of those facing health emergencies and the minors. But the boat and the rest of those onboard would then be sent out of territorial waters.

“We won’t neglect humanitarian obligations... but we want to stick to the point regarding duties of flag states,” Piantedosi said.

Petra Krischok, a press officer at the German NGO who is aboard the vessel, said the migrants were sleeping on the deck and could soon face rough seas after days of good weather.

More than a quarter of the group had been sick with flu-like symptoms, she said in e-mailed comments.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

The two vessels flying Norwegian flags have more than 800 people onboard and are sailing off Sicily.

Norway told Italy “the primary responsibility for coordinating the work to ensure a safe port for those in distress at sea lies with the state responsible for the search and rescue area where such assistance has been rendered”.

“Neighbouring coastal states also have a responsibility in such matters,” the ambassador’s statement added.

On Thursday, charity SOS Mediterranee, which operates one of the two boats, the Ocean Viking, said it had asked Greece, Spain and France to help as Italy and Malta had not responded to

its docking requests.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told RMC-BFM TV that international law said Italy should take in the migrants, but added that Paris and Berlin were ready to offer assistance.

“We have told our Italian friends, together with our German friends, that we are ready to take in, as we have done in previous cases, some of the women and children so that Italy is not alone in receiving them,” he said.

Migrant numbers have surged in Italy over the last week, with more than 6,200 people arriving since October 27, compared to 1,400 in the same period in 2021, government data shows.

— Reuters

Pro-Bolsonaro protests dwindle as Brazil handover starts

SAO PAULO: Brazilian police said they had nearly finished clearing hundreds of roadblocks by supporters of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who have been protesting since his election loss to veteran leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

After Lula’s narrow victory on Sunday, Bolsonaro supporters blocked highways and camped out at army bases to demand a military intervention to keep the defeated incumbent in power.

“All federal highways are now free of roadblocks,” though five partial closures that don’t impede traffic remain in two of Brazil’s 27 states, federal highway police said. The blockades threatened to cause havoc in Latin America’s largest economy, but diminished since Bolsonaro urged supporters to “unblock the roads.” Police have broken up more than 960 roadblocks, they said.

Pro-Bolsonaro protests outside military bases had dwindled in Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Ex-army captain Bolsonaro was silent for nearly two days after the election, raising fears he would try to cling to power with the backing of hardline supporters.

But after a series of key

allies acknowledged the result, he said he would respect the constitution, and authorised the start of the transition process for Lula’s inauguration on January 1.

But Bolsonaro has still not explicitly conceded defeat nor congratulated Lula.

The outgoing president met briefly on Thursday with vice-president-elect Geraldo Alckmin, who is heading Lula’s transition team.

Alckmin said the meeting had been “positive,” and that Bolsonaro had promised “all information and assistance needed for a smooth transition.”

Although Bolsonaro urged supporters to lift their roadblocks, he also encouraged “legitimate demonstrations,” raising fears Brazil may still face turbulence.

In the latest violent incident linked to the divisive election campaign, a 12-year-old girl shot at a Lula victory party in the city of Belo Horizonte died on Thursday of her wounds. Ex-metalworker Lula, 77, who led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, won an unprecedented third term with 50.9 per cent of the vote, to 49.1 per cent for Bolsonaro — the closest presidential election in the country’s modern history. — AFP



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire at a cafe in Kostroma. – Reuters

13 killed in Russian nightclub fire

MOSCOW: At least 13 people died after a fire broke out in a busy nightclub in the Russian city of Kostroma, officials said on Saturday. Kostroma is a city of around 270,000 people, 300 km north-east of Moscow on the banks of the river Volga.

The fire took place in the early hours of the morning at Polygon, a multi-purpose recreation venue used as a cafe. Rescuers said 250 people were evacuated from the building. State media cited investigators as saying the fire started after a man fired a flare gun indoors, setting the ceiling alight. Police have now detained a man in connection with the incident, the interior ministry said.

“After firing a flare, decorative elements on the ceiling caught fire and the fire began to spread instantly. Very quickly the room

began to fill with acrid smoke and the evacuation exits were difficult to see. There was pushing and panic,” TASS news agency reported, citing a source.

Most of those killed in the fire had been found in the smoking room, utility room and near the toilets, TASS reported, citing emergency services. “As a result of the fire, 13 people died; the number of dead and injured is being clarified,” the Investigating Committee said in a statement. The fire was extinguished as of 7:29 am (0429 GMT), according to the regional governor.

Video shared by investigators showed firefighters spraying water on what appeared to be the smouldering, collapsed roof of the building. According to rescuers, the fire covered an area of 3,500 square metres. — Reuters

Pope thrills small Gulf Catholic community with big Mass

AWALI: Pope Francis said Mass for thousands of Catholics in Bahrain on Saturday, thrilling members of the small foreign Catholic community from around the Gulf and urging them to show kindness to their hosts, even if they are sometimes looked down on.

The crowd of about 30,000 people that filled Bahrain’s National Stadium was the second-largest gathering for a papal Mass on the Arabian Peninsula, following one that drew more than 100,000 in the United Arab Emirates in 2019.

“This is a miracle,” said Mary Grace Fortes, 36, a Filipino who works at the reception of a hotel in Bahrain. “So important for us.”

Like many Filipino women who work outside their country, Fortes is married and sends money back home to help support her family, including her husband and 16-year-old son.

Hundreds of Catholic foreign workers were bussed in over the 25-km King Fahd Causeway that links Bahrain with Saudi Arabia.

“The Bahrainis arranged everything perfectly for us,” said Jos Chazoor, 53, who is from Kerala in India and works as a manager for a medical equipment company in Saudi Arabia.

Chazoor’s 75-year-old mother was too overcome with emotion to



Pope Francis arrives to preside over a holy mass at Bahrain National Stadium. – Reuters

respond to a reporter’s questions just before the pope arrived in the packed stadium to an enthusiastic welcome by faithful waving yellow-and-white Vatican flags.

“She is too thrilled to talk,” said Chazoor, who drives with his mother over the causeway from Saudi Arabia regularly to attend Mass in one of Bahrain’s two churches, which provide pastoral care for the some 160,000 Catholics

in Bahrain. In his homily, Francis appeared to praise Bahrain’s relatively open policy towards non-Muslims.

“This very land is a living image of coexistence in diversity, and indeed an image of our world, increasingly marked by the constant migration of peoples and by a pluralism of ideas, customs and traditions,” he said.

As Francis was driven on a

open popemobile through the crowd on the stadium’s pitch just before the start of the Mass, a speaker on the altar platform shouted “God bless the pope, God bless the royal family.”

The prayers of the faithful during the Mass were read in languages spoken by foreign workers including Tagalog, Swahili, Malayalam, Tamil and Konkani. — Reuters



Marine Le Pen and newly elected French far-right party Rassemblement National (RN)'s president Jordan Bardella attend the party's congress in Paris. – AFP

27-year-old Bardella to succeed Marine Le Pen

PARIS: France's far-right National Rally on Saturday designated Jordan Bardella, its 27-year-old rising star, to succeed Marine Le Pen as party chief and pursue efforts to move the group toward the political mainstream. Bardella, who was widely expected to win as Le Pen's protege, won 85 per cent of the votes from party members, beating Louis Aliot, mayor of the southern city of Perpignan, who garnered 15 per cent. A beaming Le Pen announced the result during a meeting in Paris. His nomination comes after the party had its best-ever showing in parliamentary elections earlier this year, gaining 89 seats even after Le Pen failed to unseat Emmanuel Macron in her third run for the presidency. "Over 40 years of struggle, the National Front succeeded in putting all the major issues facing our society at the heart of public debate," Le Pen said, referring to the party's former name. Bardella has embraced Le

Pen's efforts to shed the virulent anti-Semitic and extremist views fomented by her father, party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was excluded in 2015. But the National Rally was rocked this week by the suspension of one of its parliamentarians, accused of making a racist outburst against a fellow lawmaker in parliament. Bardella also faces the daunting task of getting the party on solid financial footing as it faces inquiries over alleged misuse of public funds by party members, including Le Pen. Brought up in a gritty Paris suburb by his Italian-born mother, Bardella promotes a slick image, is rarely seen out of a suit, and has impressed both admirers and critics with sharp performances in election debates. "One of the things I'm most proud of is helping a new generation of leaders and lawmakers to emerge... who resemble the people and convey its aspirations," Le Pen said. — AFP

Trump signals 2024 comeback

WASHINGTON: Kicked off Twitter and Facebook after his supporters stormed the US Capitol, Donald Trump eventually set up his own platform Truth Social, declaring in April 2022 after a stumbling launch: "I'm Back! #COVFEFE." Yet to concede his loss to Joe Biden, Trump is now signalling he will seek the White House again in 2024. And with midterm elections on Tuesday, he is doubling down on voting conspiracy theories he has wielded ever since the 2016 election, which he won, and amplified since his defeat four years later. In the past 58 days, Trump has shared about 100 posts on Truth Social casting doubt on the integrity of US elections, according to an analysis of the former president's more than 1,200 interactions in that period. "Here we go again!" Trump wrote on November 1, sharing a



Donald Trump during a rally in Florence, Arizona. – AFP

misleading headline about ballots in Pennsylvania, a swing state he lost to Biden but which next week could determine if Republicans win back the Senate. "Rigged Election!" Trump added. The tactics mirror his 2020 playbook, when he tweeted repeatedly before the election that mail-in ballots were rife with fraud. Dozens of court cases have since ruled otherwise. But such misinformation

could undermine confidence as Americans vote in the first national polls since the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, experts say. "If leaders tell their followers that elections are unreliable, their followers believe them," Russell Muirhead, professor of politics and democracy at Dartmouth College, said. "Trump's insistence that elections are flawed (when they're not) is doing one thing: it is

corroding American democracy." Trump posts often on Truth Social, sometimes dozens of times a day. In the last two months, he has attacked Biden and Democrats, criticised ongoing investigations against him and glorified his own rallies and accomplishments. Trump has also lavished praise on Republicans who support his stolen-election claims, such as Kari Lake, who has signalled she may reject the results if she loses her bid to become Arizona governor. And he has engaged more brazenly than ever with extremist content, including dozens of posts from promoters of the QAnon conspiracy theory. Although Trump's reach on Truth Social is relatively small — 4.46 million compared to the 88.8 million he enjoyed on Twitter — experts say the misinformation he spreads reverberates across the Internet. — AFP

■ PROTEST FOR PEACE



People demonstrate for peace and against Russia's invasion of Ukraine during a protest in Rome on Friday. – Reuters

Nearly 100-year-old Mahathir to run in general election

LANGKAWI: Mahathir Mohamad, the nearly 100-year-old elder statesman of Malaysian politics, filed his candidacy on Saturday in what is likely to be his final race, as campaigning for upcoming general elections began. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob called for elections 10 months ahead of schedule, with the graft-tainted ruling party of jailed ex-leader Najib Razak seeking to cement its political comeback four years after it was dramatically voted out. A Guinness World Record holder for being the "world's oldest current prime minister" when he became premier for a

second time in 2018, the 97-year-old Mahathir will stand again to defend his parliamentary seat in the holiday island of Langkawi in the November 19 vote. Visibly slowed by age but still looking healthy, Mahathir was greeted by dozens of supporters waving flags of his Homeland Fighters' Party as he arrived at a local government office in Kuah, the island's main town, to register his candidacy. Mahathir told reporters that he stood a "good chance" of winning and laughed off suggestions he should retire. "I'm still standing around and talking to you, I think making



Mahathir Mohamad heading to the nomination centre in Langkawi. – AFP

reasonable answers," he said. He added his party would not form any alliances with parties that are led by "crooks or jailbirds", an apparent reference to the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Ismail, of the UMNO, and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, of the Pakatan Harapan coalition, have also filed their candidacies elsewhere in the country. Anwar urged voters to come out in big numbers, as fears circulated that torrential rain during the monsoon season could dampen turnout. "I am optimistic we will win," he told reporters from his

constituency in the northern Perak state. Meanwhile, in Sabah, in Malaysia's part of Borneo Island, police fired tear gas to disperse scores of supporters of a minor opposition party who attempted to force their way into a nomination centre in the interior town of Tenom after their leader's candidacy was rejected. Hazani Ghazali, the internal security police chief, was quoted by The Star news portal as saying that tear gas was fired to disperse the crowd, with no injuries reported. Serious violence is rare during general elections in Malaysia. —AFP

SHORT TAKES

VIENNA

Almost 1,000 journalists killed in 10 years

In the past 10 years, 958 journalists have been killed, according to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. In the same period, more than 1,000 have been locked up in prisons, the high commissioner said at a conference on the protection of journalists in Vienna. "The numbers are unacceptable," Türk said. The meeting was organised by the Austrian Foreign Ministry with the United Nations to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Ac-



tion on the Safety of Journalists. Türk considered it a success that in the course of the action plan some 50 countries have created or strengthened mechanisms to protect media professionals.

JAKARTA

K-pop concert halted after 30 faint in crush

K-pop band NCT 127 was forced to end their first concert in Indonesia early after 30 people fainted in a crush, police said. Indonesia is still reeling after more than 130 people, including over 40 children, died in a stadium stampede last month -- one of the deadliest disasters in football history. Police spokesperson Endra Zulpan said late on Friday that the concert near the capital Jakarta had been going for around two hours when fans started surging forward to get



closer to the stage. "Because of it, 30 people fainted. To prevent other incidents, we decided to stop the concert at 9.20 PM (1420 GMT)," Zulpan said, adding that the collapsed fans had recovered.

NEW YORK

Divided UNSC takes no position on N Korea

At the ninth meeting of the UN Security Council this year on the issue of North Korea, the divisions within the body once again prevented any action to curb the increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula. The 15 members of the UN's most powerful body failed to agree on a joint statement in New York. Instead, a number of countries - including the US, Britain and France - separately condemned Pyongyang's ongoing missile tests. "The unity of the



Security Council in this matter is essential to ease tensions, overcome the diplomatic impasse and the negative action-reaction cycle," Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari warned.

Migrants describe hunger, illness and trauma at UK asylum centre



EUAN WARD

The overcrowded facility in southeastern England is supposed to house asylum-seekers for very short periods, but teenagers who have stayed there detailed inhumane conditions and long stays

Mohammad, 17, emerged groggily from his hotel near Heathrow Airport into the spitting rain on Thursday, his flimsy sandals slapping at the wet concrete. It has been weeks since he slept or ate properly, he said.

He crossed his arms and shivered, then gazed up at the sky as a plane roared overhead. Before he was taken to the hotel, Mohammad said, he spent 25 days at the Manston migrant centre on England’s southeastern coast.

Recounting his time in the troubled Manston center, Mohammad, who is from Iraqi Kurdistan, described how asylum-seekers had been forced to sleep in chairs in freezing temperatures, adding that many had become sick in overcrowded tents. He said that he had been fed too little and often gone hungry, that many people were “filthy” because there weren’t enough showers, and that he had been prevented from contacting his family in Iraq to let them know that he had survived the perilous journey across the English Channel.

“All migrants are suffering in Manston camp, believe me,” he said. “It is not a situation that humans deserve to live in.”

As a minor, Mohammad’s last name has been withheld to protect his privacy.

He is just one of thousands of asylum-seekers who have passed through the Manston centre since it opened in January, many of them children. The centre has been racked in recent weeks by mounting allegations of inhumane conditions, including severe overcrowding, and has found itself at the centre of heated debate about migrant policy that has roiled Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s new government.

On Friday, a Home Office spokesperson said “it is still the case that Manston remains resourced and equipped,” when asked to respond to accusations of poor and dangerous conditions. Still, the Home Office had said on Thursday that it had been taking steps to “immediately improve the situation on the ground,” adding that 1,000 people had been relocated from the centre over five days. As of Thursday, Manston was holding almost double its capacity.

Manston was built to hold 1,600 migrants, but in recent weeks, it had housed around 4,000.

Mohammad’s account could not be independently verified, but his depiction of the conditions at Manston generally aligned with inspection reports from immigration officials and interviews by The New York Times with union officials who had spoken with staff members at the centre.

And when shown photographs of the facility, Mohammad was able to identify it, without prompting, as the one at Manston. He was one of four teenagers interviewed by the Times at the hotel who recounted harsh conditions at the centre. Mohammad spoke in his native Kurdish, and the Times translated his account.

The Times also viewed transcripts of interviews by two aid organisations, the Refugee Council and Humans for Rights Network, with other teenagers who had been housed at Manston. They described similar hardships to those detailed by Mohammad, saying that they had often gone hungry because of a lack of food. Some said that they had been forced to sleep while sitting up at night because of the cramped conditions and that they had been refused medical attention because of staff shortages.



An aerial view shows the Manston short-term holding centre for migrants, near Ramsgate in south east England. — AFP

One boy, a 16-year-old from Sudan, said he had spent nearly three weeks sleeping on discarded food boxes with just one set of soggy clothes — an experience, he noted, that reminded him of the harsh conditions he had endured in Libya’s detention camps. “I used to sleep during the day to stay awake at night because I was afraid of nightmares,” he said of his time at Manston.

The aid groups’ interviews were shared with the Times without the names of the migrants attached to protect their privacy. Most are now living in the care of local authorities elsewhere in Britain, the aid groups said, although some are still staying unaccompanied in hotels.

Official rules for short-term migrant holding facilities stipulate that asylum-seekers are supposed to stay there for only a day, but many — including young children — have been held at Manston for weeks, according to inspection reports, aid groups and interviews with migrants.

The crisis at Manston has engulfed Britain’s home secretary, Suella Braverman, who has been accused of ignoring legal guidance to relieve the overcrowding and find housing for the asylum-seekers there. She denied those accusations in Parliament on Monday, but she did say that the asylum system was “broken.”

On Wednesday, the leader of the opposition Labour

Party, Keir Starmer, seized on that statement. Noting that the Conservative Party had been in power since 2010, Starmer pressed Sunak. If the asylum system was indeed broken, Starmer said, “Who broke it?”

Braverman visited the site on Thursday.

According to the Home Office, close to 40,000 people have crossed the English Channel by small boat this year — the highest number since figures began to be collected in 2018. Nearly all of them have claimed asylum, which has contributed to a backlog of 127,000 applications, according to official figures.

Outside the airport hotel on Thursday, Rohullah Bilimsevar, 28, and Ramin Karwan, 29, huddled together in the cold, both still dressed in the same thin jogging suits they had been given after arriving at the Manston centre more than a month ago. They said that they were former journalists from Afghanistan and showed documents to that effect. They said that they had been moved out of the centre on Wednesday.

“There are no beds for sleeping. No food. There were lots of children there,” said Bilimsevar, who noted that he had fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took power.

He added that there were 200 people in one tent and that each person got just one blanket.

GOP seeks to erase Democrats’ supermajority in NY

For four years, a cycle of victories by progressive-minded Democrats has pushed the New York state Legislature to the left, carrying their party to legislative supermajorities and creating an unfettered path for liberal priorities to be enacted around housing, climate change and abortion rights.



LUIS FERRÉ-SADURNÍ

But this year, a national Republican wave is threatening to curb those progressive gains and vanquish the Democrats’ veto-proof supermajority, as Republicans seek to expand their diminished foothold in the state Capitol.

While the Assembly is solidly in Democratic control, Republicans seem well positioned to make inroads in the state Senate, where competitive races are playing out in about a dozen districts, from western and central New York to Long Island.

Although Senate Republicans face a steep challenge to regain the majority they lost to Democrats in 2018 — they would need to win 12 seats — Democrats are just one seat away from losing their two-thirds supermajority in the 63-seat chamber.

That outcome, Republicans believe, is more than within reach.

“I’ve made it my sole mission over these last two years not only to grow our conference but, first and foremost, to end the supermajority,” said Rob Ortt, the Republican minority leader in the state Senate. “That is not only my focus, but that is my hope and expectation as we go toward election night.”

Most of the Democratic incumbents locked in competitive races are more moderate members from competitive swing districts outside New York City that largely lean Democratic but are at play this cycle because of the favourable political climate for Republicans.

As the party in power, Democrats have raked in millions of dollars in contributions from unions, businesses and other special interests seeking to shape legislation, allowing them to significantly outspend Republicans and mount vigorous campaigns to defend some of their most vulnerable incumbents.

But it remains to be seen whether that fundraising edge will be enough to overcome a political climate that some concerned lawmakers have described as potentially calamitous for Democrats, even in a solidly liberal state like New York where Democrats outnumber Republicans more than 2-to-1. That has raised the specter of unforeseen upsets just two years after Democrats had secured the largest majority in state history.

“History on this stuff is pretty clear: It’s a tough year when you’re in charge, and it’s a midterm election,” said state Sen



US Vice President Kamala Harris, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul (C) and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (R) during a rally in New York City. — AFP

A Republican surge is threatening to counter gains made by progressive-minded Democrats, who have pushed the State Legislature to the left in recent years

Michael Gianaris, the Democratic deputy majority leader. “I would be perfectly happy to have the second-largest majority in the history of the state, even if it’s a little bit smaller than what we currently have.”

In the 150-seat Assembly, Democrats — who have enjoyed a majority for nearly a half-century — would see their supermajority vanish if they lose eight of the 107 seats they control, still an uphill climb for Republicans.

“It’s a midterm election, and we take nothing for granted,” said Michael Whyland, a spokesperson for Carl Heastie, the Assembly speaker. “We feel we are well positioned heading into Election Day.”

Part of the calculus may largely hinge on the outcomes at the top of the ballot.

Gov Kathy Hochul, who is seeking her first full term after replacing Gov Andrew Cuomo last year, is facing a tougher-than-expected challenge from Rep Lee Zeldin, a Republican from Long Island, where Zeldin is anticipated to perform strongly, potentially helping Republicans in down-ballot races there.

Senate Democrats are already bracing to lose as many as three or four seats in the swing suburbs of Long Island. While they are expected to gain one Republican-held seat in Suffolk County that was recently redrawn to include more Hispanics, heavily favouring Democrats, they have all but given up on trying to protect their most vulnerable incumbent on Long Island, state Sen John Brooks.

Attention please



Dr Hamed al Sinawi @alsinawi

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

“A recent study reported in the Harvard Business Review reveals that our own restless thoughts, not smartphones, are the main cause of our poor attention”

According to recent research the average human adult attention span was 12 second in the year 2000 but it dropped to 8 seconds in 2021. We frequently use smartphones and other online services, which is generally blamed for this decline.

As we go around, it’s not unusual to see people texting as they enter a mosque or a shopping centre, as they are driving, or even as they are using their phones in the restroom. The only time I can think of when people would put their phones away is when they are flying on an airplane, but since some airlines now provide Internet access while in the air, even that break has been

taken away from us.

Since we started carrying our virtual workplaces around in our smartphones, we have developed an addiction with wanting to be constantly online, whether it is for work or for entertainment.

The average person picks up their phone more than 1,500 times per week, or once every 5.5 minutes, according to a new study, while the typical office worker checks their e-mail 11 times per hour. It’s interesting to note that despite how much time we spend online, the average user only stays on a website for 10 to 20 seconds before leaving.

This shows that people struggle with concentration and attention, as some of us are powerless against the impulse to check notifications as soon as they pop up on our

THE AVERAGE PERSON PICKS UP THEIR PHONE MORE THAN 1,500 TIMES PER WEEK, OR ONCE EVERY 5.5 MINUTES, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY, WHILE THE TYPICAL OFFICE WORKER CHECKS THEIR E-MAIL 11 TIMES PER HOUR

smartphones. However, a recent study reported in the Harvard Business Review reveals that our own restless thoughts, not smartphones, are the main cause of our poor attention.

According to psychologists, we typically spend about 47 per cent of each waking hour “mind wandering and daydreaming.” Imagining your forthcoming vacation while

you drive to work or practicing an argument you believe you’re about to have with your husband or a coworker, even if it may never happen. These are things we all do without even realising it.

What can we do, then, to increase our focus? Psychologists suggest using a technique they call Notice-Shift-Rewire to help us pay attention. You begin by becoming aware of your wondering. This is not always simple, but it might be helpful to pay attention to clues.

For example, if you see a stop sign while driving or walking to work, ask yourself if your mind is there or elsewhere. When you become aware that your thoughts are wandering, change your focus to what you are doing right now.

For instance, if you are biting into an apple, try concentrating on

the crunchiness, sound and flavour of the fruit as you do so. Try to concentrate on what your friend or coworker is saying when you are speaking to him.

The last stage is to reinforce this new focus-related habit. With time and effort, you will be able to perfect this approach, but don’t get discouraged if you find that your mind keeps returning to the wondering state. Try focusing on the current moment for 15 to 30 seconds. People who have used it believe it is an easy approach to lower stress and boost productivity.

Finally, it’s worthwhile learning new strategies to refocus and evaluate our interactions with the Internet, whether our lack of focus is caused by using our smartphones or an ingrained component of our minds.

Palestinians express indifference to Netanyahu return

GARETH BROWNE & MAI YAGHI

The election triumph of veteran hawk Benjamin Netanyahu may usher in one of the most right-wing governments in Israeli history but for many Palestinians it’s just a change of brand.

The difference between Netanyahu and defeated centrist incumbent Yair Lapid is like the difference “between Pepsi and Coca Cola,” said Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh soon after the result of Tuesday’s election was confirmed.

Netanyahu’s previous terms in office saw what little remained of the Middle East peace process collapse in a surge of Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank.

During his brief premiership, Lapid adopted a more conciliatory approach, approving a modest increase in the number of Israeli work permits issued to Palestinians from the blockaded Gaza Strip and using his speech to the UN General Assembly in September to express support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yet few Palestinians were shedding tears over Lapid’s departure.

“At least, with Lapid gone, we can stop pretending that the Israelis are interested in peace,” said Ahmad Saadi, a 31-year-old market stallholder, as he left afternoon prayers in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

“Maybe now the world will see that Netanyahu is not the exception, he represents the true feelings of Israelis, and they are not interested in peace.”

In the Gaza Strip, where more than half the workforce is unemployed, the additional work permits were welcome for the lucky few who got them.

But Gazans also remember the three-day war which Lapid launched against gunmen in August, in which 49 Palestinians died, 17 of them children.

“I am afraid that Netanyahu and the right will cancel the permits for workers from Gaza,” said construction worker Sohail Mohammed, 54, who recently managed to get one of the 17,000 Israeli work permits made available under Lapid.

“I only just got the permit that gave me and my family hope for a better life,” he added.

For Mohammed al Hindi, 27 and unemployed, it was “a boring repetition of the same scenario”.

“The repercussions on us in Gaza are not important, because what matters to them is the security of Israel,” he said.

FEAR OF FAR RIGHT

Palestinian analyst Noor Odeh said the differing ideological positions expressed by Israeli politicians over the future of the occupied territories made little difference to policy, which was always dictated by the security fears of Israelis.

— AFP

Twitter was never free. The question is, what’s the cost?



Zeynep Tufekci

The writer is a sociologist and an opinion columnist



Some have ridiculed the idea of charging fees for a blue checkmark, claiming it would undermine free speech and create inequalities. — Reuters

Since Elon Musk became the owner of Twitter last week, there’s been a lot of brouhaha over his plans for it, especially the possibility of various fees, such as one for verification badges. Those are the blue check marks that let people know an account belongs to whom it says it belongs. They have mostly been granted through an opaque process to notable users — celebrities, heads of state, official agencies, journalists.

Some have ridiculed the idea of charging fees, claiming it would undermine free speech and create inequalities. They argue that pressure from advertisers — who have begun to shy away from Twitter since Musk took over — would force him to continue trying to moderate the site to dampen hate speech — something he signaled he might do differently from before.

Critics have said fees could make them leave the site and implored others to do so too. Leave if you like, but Twitter is likely to remain influential in shaping the news, as well as broader culture, even if many users leave, especially since journalists seem highly influenced by the platform.

The idea that advertisers alone will save us from hate speech and the further degradation of digital social media is wishful thinking. A primarily

LEAVE IF YOU LIKE, BUT TWITTER IS LIKELY TO REMAIN INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING THE NEWS, AS WELL AS BROADER CULTURE, EVEN IF MANY USERS LEAVE, ESPECIALLY SINCE JOURNALISTS SEEM HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY THE PLATFORM

advertiser-financed site is neither free nor healthy. The reliance on advertising by so much of our digital public sphere — Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Twitter — has perniciously fueled tribalization, hate speech and surveillance.

Humans have strong in-group and out-group tendencies — sociology-speak for my team versus your team. At its best, civilisation has subsumed that dynamic into benevolent forms such as athletic competitions and pride in national accomplishment, rather than war, ethnic hatred and xenophobia. If you want to keep a group of people engaged, fueling that group competition is a pretty good method,

and that’s what one observes on social media, often not so benevolently. It’s not so much an echo chamber where groups don’t hear from one another as a football stadium where we bond by yelling at the fans from the other side.

This means that whatever the topic, by design and by algorithm, social media often elevates the worst, most divisive content, paired with “aaaw” and affirming-type content that promotes in-group bonding. Those are two sides of the same coin. It’s like a cafeteria that serves highly processed, fatty, sugary, salty food at every meal, exploiting human weakness to lure and ruin.

To target their ads more precisely, platforms relentlessly collect our data and build artificial intelligence-powered models that predict people’s interests and vulnerabilities. This results in an enormous surveillance infrastructure that can be used to find who’s more likely to be persuaded to change their nutritional supplements, but also to hunt down women who may be pregnant and possibly seek abortions.

This is an infrastructure of authoritarianism, created to deliver ads more effectively. It’s a terrible model for the digital public sphere.

— The New York Times

What politician and AC have in common?

I'll tell you later. In the meantime, in what could be a significant game-changer for the Sultanate of Oman, and the entire MENA region, the Kyung Hee University in Seoul, working alongside the University of Notre Dame in the United States has this week announced the successful development of a highly efficient window treatment, a transparent radiative cooler, that can potentially reduce energy costs by reducing the need for air conditioning units in hotter climates.

This is no overnight discovery, as Professor Sang Hyuk Im and his PhD student researcher Jin Hyuk Heo first published the theoretical possibility for the ground-breaking perovskite solar cell, way back in 2015. The early trials promised so much that even though the research team laboured intensively in the interim, struggled with the limitations imposed by the diminishing efficiencies of single-layered processes, they were always confident, according to the researcher, that they would find a way.

This week's announcement that they have found a way to successfully 'sandwich' dual layered structures within solar cell window coatings has significant energy-saving implications for the region, with the initial research theoretically proven, but without sufficient savings for commercial investment, this multi-layered nanotechnology holds so much promise for Omani society, as air conditioning free environments must be so much healthier. Personally, I wouldn't be throwing out the units just yet, but all things being equal, the writing is on the wall.

Professor Im's team bypassed the initial issue of reduced efficiency through the utilisation of a process that sealed each layer in a laminated coating. He explained that "As the demand for photovoltaic electricity grows in the future, so will the need for higher efficiencies to reduce the overall cost. The new perovskite-perovskite tandem cells will be a great improvement in terms of both a higher efficiency envelope and greater cost-effectiveness."

The second major issue was in maintaining clarity of vision, as initial



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

PROFESSOR IM'S TEAM BYPASSED THE INITIAL ISSUE OF REDUCED EFFICIENCY THROUGH THE UTILISATION OF A PROCESS THAT SEALED EACH LAYER IN A LAMINATED COATING

research indicated a dual-layered technology was possible, in a relatively simple process. However, there was an unwanted change to the ability to see through the initial treated windows which affected their transparency significantly, as in shutting out the light sources, vision through those windows was poor, and would never be acceptable to even the most desperate of purchasers. Fortunately, Dr Tengfui Luo, Wenjie Shang, Seongmin Kim, and their highly regarded team at Notre Dame, were able to perfect a process that used the process without adversely affecting the visual experience, thus opening a plethora of commercial opportunities.

The UK's Daily Mail heralded the breakthrough, writing "The coating lowers the temperature inside buildings, without expending a single watt of energy," and explained that normal windows allow ultra-violet and infrared light through, heating rooms, whereas this new process effectively blocks them maintaining a cooler interior, with predictions of a conservative thirty per cent reduction in daytime temperatures, and equivalent energy savings in hot, dry, environments. Even in their cooler climate, the Mail's science correspondent, Shivali Best, is talking significant energy savings in the region of 30 per cent.

Personally, I've never liked air conditioning a lot, even though they are pretty much an essential in Oman. But they can be noisy and intrusive, and sitting, sleeping, or working under the perpetual motion of an AC unit can't be good for you can it! But worst of all is the environmental change when you leave the house and go outside. Your glasses fog up, and you stumble like a drunkard. The heat hits you like an express train, the change having twice the effect. It can't be healthy; it can't be good for you. In fact, the only place I like the air conditioner is at the gym, where it's my favourite machine.

I genuinely hope this research, this game-changer, can be the 'next big thing, in building and construction in the Sultanate of Oman, because you need to understand that an air conditioner is like a flailing politician... makes a lot of noise but doesn't get much done!

A QUALITY CHECK



A government employee harvests saffron stigma at the India International Kashmir Saffron Trade Centre in Pampore on the outskirts of Srinagar on Saturday. – AFP

From Russia with cash: Georgia booms as Russians flee Putin's war

JAKE CORDELL

As war chokes Europe, a small nation wedged beneath Russia is enjoying an unexpected economic boom.

Georgia is on course to become one of the world's fastest-growing economies this year following a dramatic influx of more than 100,000 Russians since Moscow's war on Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's mobilisation drive to drum up war recruits.

As much of the globe teeters towards recession, this country of 3.7 million people bordering the Black Sea is expected to record a vigorous 10 per cent growth in economic output for 2022 amid a consumption-led boom, according to international institutions. That would see the modest \$19 billion economy, well known in the region for its mountains, forests and wine valleys, outpace supercharged emerging markets such as Vietnam and oil exporters such as Kuwait buoyed by high crude prices.

"On the economic side, Georgia is doing very well," Vakhtang Butskhrikidze, CEO of the country's largest bank TBC, said in an interview at its Tbilisi headquarters. "There's some kind of boom," he added. "All industries are doing very well from micros up to corporates. I can't think

THIS COUNTRY OF 3.7 MILLION PEOPLE BORDERING THE BLACK SEA IS EXPECTED TO RECORD A VIGOROUS 10 PER CENT GROWTH IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT FOR 2022 AMID A CONSUMPTION-LED BOOM

of any industry which this year has problems."

At least 112,000 Russians have emigrated to Georgia this year, border-crossing statistics show. A first large wave of 43,000 arrived after the war began February 24 and Putin moved to quash opposition to the war at home, according to the Georgia government, with a second wave coming after Putin announced the nationwide mobilisation drive in late September.

Georgia's economic boom — whether short-lived or not — has confounded many experts who saw dire consequences from the war for the ex-Soviet republic, whose economic fortunes are closely tied to its larger neighbour through exports and tourists. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), for example, predicted in March the Ukraine conflict would deal a major blow to the Georgian economy. Likewise the World Bank forecast in April that the country's growth for 2022 would drop to 2.5 per cent from an initial 5.5 per cent.

"Despite all expectations that we had... that this war on Ukraine will have significant negative

implications on the Georgian economy, so far we don't see materialisation of these risks," said Dimitar Bogov, the EBRD's lead economist for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

"On the contrary, we see the Georgian economy growing quite well this year, double digits."

Yet the stellar growth is not benefiting everyone, with the arrival of tens of thousands of Russians, many tech professionals with plenty of cash, driving up prices and squeezing some Georgians out of parts of the economy such as the housing rental market and education.



A man carries a bag on his head as he travels from Russia across the border to Georgia at the Zemo Larsi/Verkhny Lars station. – Reuters file photo

Business leaders also worry that the country could face a hard landing should the war end and Russians return home.

Georgia itself fought a short war with Russia in 2008 over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, territories controlled by Russian-backed separatists. Now, though, Georgia's economy is reaping the benefits of its proximity to the superpower — the two share a land border crossing — and a liberal immigration policy which lets Russians and people from many other countries live, work and set up businesses in the country without needing a visa.

Furthermore, those fleeing Russia's war are accompanied by a wave of money. Between April and September, Russians transferred more than \$1 billion to Georgia via banks or money-transfer services, five times higher than during the same months of 2021, according to the Georgian central bank.

That inflow has helped push the Georgian Lari to its strongest level in three years.

Roughly half of the Russian arrivals are from the tech sector, according to TBC's CEO Butskhrikidze and local media outlets, chiming with surveys and estimates from industry figures in Russia that pointed to an exodus of tens of thousands of highly-mobile IT workers after the invasion of Ukraine.

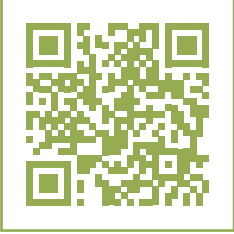
"These are high-end people, rich people... coming to Georgia with some business ideas and increasing consumption drastically," said Davit Keshelava, senior researcher at the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET).

"We expected the war to have a lot of negative impacts," he added. "But it turned out quite different. It turned out to be positive."

— Reuters

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Denmark's Holger Rune plays a forehand return during the men's singles semi-final tennis match between Denmark's Holger Rune and Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime. – AFP

Rune gets revenge on Auger-Aliassime to reach first Masters final

PARIS: Danish teenager Holger Rune defeated the in-form Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-2 on Saturday to reach the first Masters final of his career in Paris.

Rune avenged his loss to Auger-Aliassime in last weekend's final in Basel. He will take on defending champion Novak Djokovic or Stefanos Tsitsipas for the title in the French capital.

The 19-year-old Rune is through to his fourth successive final. He beat Tsitsipas to lift the trophy in Stockholm last month after finishing as the runner-up in Sofia. A quarterfinalist at this year's French Open, Rune collected his fourth straight victory over a top-10 player this week by ending Auger-Aliassime's 16-match winning run.

The Canadian was attempting to become the first man to win four tournaments in as many weeks since Ivan Lendl swept five over a five-week span in 1981.

Auger-Aliassime paid the price for a hesitant swinging volley after a gentle looping return from Rune as he conceded the lone break in the third game of the opening set.

Rune then broke the eighth seed

twice in succession to start the second set, inflicting a first defeat on Auger-Aliassime since his first-round loss at the Astana Open a month ago.

Having arrived in Paris with just three match wins at the Masters level, Rune began his run to the final this week by beating three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka in the first round.

He then took down Hubert Hurkacz followed by Andrey Rublev before seeing off Carlos Alcaraz as the world number one retired with injury while trailing by a set on Friday.

Rune is set to climb to a new career high of 12th after reaching the final. He will break into the top 10 for the first time if he wins the title.

Djokovic is bidding for a record-extending seventh Paris crown and 39th Masters triumph.

He has won the past seven meetings with Tsitsipas, who is making his first semifinal appearance at this event. The Greek fifth seed has a tour-leading 60 wins this season. He has reached seven finals in 2022 which is joint most alongside Alcaraz. — AFP

Omani duo finish runners-up

Chinese pair of Likejiang and Jiaxin clinch title of Oman Beach Pro Tour Future

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Chinese pair HA Likejiang and Wu Jiaxin defeated Oman's duo Mazin al Hashmi and Hood al Jalbobi 22-24 and 16-21 to clinch the Men's Oman Beach Pro Tour Future title in Suhar late on Friday.

Latvian players Tocs and Fokertos managed to earn third place award after they beat Czech Republic's Dumek and Sedlak 2-1 (18-21, 22-20 and 11-15).

The four-day event concluded in Suhar after registering a huge success in the organisation of this world-class event.

The final day of the championship was under the auspices of Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA, in presence of Ali al Kawari, Chairman of Qatar and West Asian Volleyball Federations, Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, Chairman of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA), and top dignitaries.

After completion of the concluding match, the chief guest and chief of OVA

handed over the awards, medals and trophies to the top winners. Later, they took some group photos with the winning teams and organising committee members.

Oman's stars in beach volleyball secured their final match ticket as they edged Czech pair of Dumek and Sedlak 21-16 and 21-12 while the Chinese pair beat Latvian duo of Tocs and Fokertos 16-21, 21-18 and 15-12.

The Oman Beach Pro Tour Future recorded a huge crowd during all days of the tournament. The event took place in the Suhar municipal park and was under the organisation of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) in coordination with FIVB, the international governing body of volleyball.

As many as 28 teams took part in the event representing 15 countries across the world including: Latvia, Turkey, Lithuania, Brazil, Bolivia, Denmark, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, China, Austria, Australia, Czech, Gambia and Japan.

Chief guest Abdulsalam al Murshidi affirmed that hosting of these sporting

international events have different positive values to the country. "It was a strong tournament which featured attendance of top teams from different parts of the world. The event was attended by a good crowd and was managed under perfect organisation. It was a successful international volleyball tournament in Oman," he ended.

A FIVB technical representative appreciated the organisation of the event.

"The organising committee managed successfully the event and this reflects Oman's capability to host global sporting events at different levels specially the beach volleyball championships which featured attendance of good crowd," he said.

Commenting on a query about the technical performance of Oman Beach Pro Tour Future, the FIVB representative responded that the event featured very tough competitions among the participating teams. "As many as 28 teams took part in the event including some Olympic players like Martiniz and Tocs besides other top players," he said.





Players from Yokohama F Marinos celebrate after taking Japan's professional J-League football title following their 3-1 victory over Vissel Kobe to put them at the top of the standings, in Kobe on November 5, 2022. – AFP

Yokohama secure J1 League title with final day win

TOKYO: Yokohama F Marinos clinched the J1 League title for the first time since 2019 on Saturday when Kevin Muscat's side notched up a 3-1 win over Vissel Kobe on the final day of the season to keep defending champions Kawasaki Frontale at bay.

Takuma Nishimura and Teruhito Nakagawa earned Marinos the victory and took Muscat's team onto a title-winning total of 65 points from 34 games, two more than Frontale.

Kawasaki, who needed to win on Saturday and for Marinos to slip to a loss against Kobe to claim

a fifth league title in six seasons, registered a 3-2 win over FC Tokyo.

Yokohama's title win is the club's first under Australian coach Muscat, who succeeded compatriot Ange Postecoglou at the helm last year when he left Japan to take over at Scottish side Celtic.

Both clubs will qualify for

the 2023/24 edition of the Asian Champions League, which is due to kick off in September next year.

Marinos took the lead against Kobe when Elber's header looped over Yuya Tsuboi in the 26th minute but former Newcastle United striker Yoshinori Muto glanced his header home three

minutes into injury time as the teams went in level at half-time.

Nishimura struck from close range after Tsuboi spilled Kota Mizunuma's free kick eight minutes into the second half and Nakagawa put the result beyond doubt with 17 minutes remaining when he slotted in Mizunuma's

cut-back from the right.

Frontale picked up their win over FC Tokyo despite playing for more than hour with 10 men when goalkeeper Jung Sung-ryong was sent off, with Ryoma Watanabe's own goal 15 minutes from time sealing Kawasaki a 3-2 victory.

— Reuters



Ibri crowned U-18 TT champions

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Ibri Club won the title of the Under-18 Youth Table Tennis Championship 2022 after surpassing Seeb Club 3-1 in the final match at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

In the individual level competitions, Ahmed al Riyami from Seeb succeeded in winning the championship in the singles category, after he succeeded in overcoming Mohammed al Mutawa from Saham Club 3-0 in an exciting match. Badr al Jasasi from Ibri Club came in third place after he beat Luqman al Farsi from Ibri Club in the play-off match to determine the third and fourth places.

Ibri, Saham and Masirah clubs were able to reach the semifinal stage of the team competition category, after they came in the top four places in the group.

Ibri were able to eliminate



Saham, while Seeb beat Masirah.

In the match to determine the third and fourth places, Saham Club managed to win the third place after defeating Masirah Club, while Ibri Club won the title after its important victory over Seeb Club.

At the individual level of the quarter competitions, Ahmed al Riyami won the championship after he started in the round of 16 by defeating Mohammad al Jassasi from the Ibri Club. Al Riyami beat Munther al Ghassani from Seeb

Club in the semifinal and won the crown after overcoming Luqman al Farsi from Ibri Club in the final.

At the end of the final match, Abdullah bin Mohammad Bamakhalaf, Chairman of Oman Table Tennis Association, and Mohammed bin Humaid al Jassasi, member of the board of directors, honoured the clubs that won the top three places.

Ibri players received the gold medals, Seeb got silver medals and Saham players earned the bronze medals.

Ronaldo has last chance to shine on World Cup stage in Qatar

PORTUGAL: Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo, who has been named the best player in the world five times, will arrive in Qatar with a mission to prove that he can still make a difference.

It is indisputable that Ronaldo is one of the greatest forwards of all time but his latest struggles with Manchester United and Portugal have raised many questions about whether his brilliant career is nearing a bitter end.

Ronaldo is the leading scorer in the history of men's international football with 117 goals in 191 official matches.



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo. – Reuters

Between his first Portugal goal versus Greece at Euro 2004 and his most recent, a double against Switzerland in June 2022, 18 years have passed, making him a model of longevity.

He has scored 818 goals in his career and holds the record for the most Champions League goals in the competition's history with 140.

However, for a model athlete who got used to breaking records playing for some of the biggest clubs in the world, like Real Madrid, Juventus and Manchester United, his current form and attitude have been under the spotlight.

His brace versus the Swiss in the Nations League were his only goals in the 10 games Portugal have played in the last year.

With United he has scored just three times this season and his problems with manager Erik ten Hag have made headlines, with

Ronaldo struggling to get into the starting team and expressing his dissatisfaction over the lack of minutes.

He was United's top scorer last season with 24 goals in all competitions after joining them from Juve. His contract is due to expire in June 2023, though United have an option to extend by a further year.

In his fifth World Cup, Ronaldo will arrive captaining a team of standout players who are widely seen as among the world's best but who have arguably underachieved on the biggest stage.

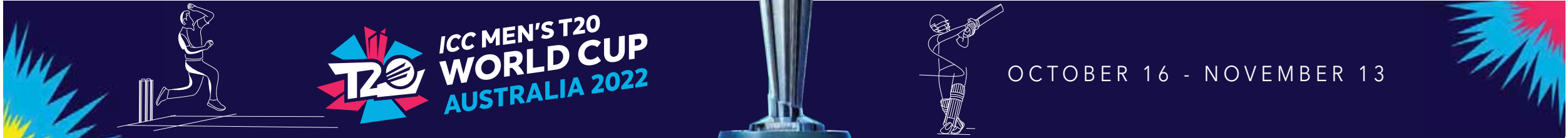
After reaching the World Cup

semifinals in 2006, they were knocked out twice in the last 16 (2010 and 2018) and at the group stage in 2014.

But even though the impression is that Ronaldo's brilliant path is coming to an end, he begs to differ.

"There is still a little more of Cristiano left. I'm part of a young team, I want to be in the World Cup but also in the next Euros," Ronaldo said at an event in Portugal in September.

A relentless mentality that could be the key to him making a statement with his country in Qatar against all odds. — Reuters



India, South Africa eye T20 World Cup semifinal slots

MELBOURNE: South Africa and India will look to seal places in the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals with regulation wins over cricketing minnows as the Super 12 phase wraps up with a flurry of matches on Sunday.

South Africa suffered their first major setback with a 33-run defeat to Pakistan in Sydney on Thursday but Temba Bavuma's team will aim to restore normal service against the already-eliminated Netherlands in the early match at Adelaide Oval.

A win would ensure South Africa finish in the top two of Group 2 and advance to next week's semis, but defeat would see them miss the knockout rounds for a third T20 World Cup in succession while opening the door for Pakistan and Bangladesh.

STRONG FAVOURITES

India, who lead the group with six points, one ahead of the Proteas, will be strong favourites to fend off Zimbabwe in the evening match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and sew up top spot.

"We need to be as clinical as possible," all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin told reporters on Saturday.

"We know no team is a brush-over... We can't go in there and expect them to crumble."

Third-placed Pakistan play fourth-placed Bangladesh in the second leg of the Adelaide Oval double-header and will be cheering on the Netherlands before taking the field.

With both Asian sides on four points, one less than

South Africa, the winner will reach the semifinals if the Proteas slip up.

However, if South Africa advance, only Pakistan would likely still be in contention given Bangladesh's net run rate (-1.276) is well behind India's (+0.73).

With victories in their last eight completed T20 matches against Bangladesh, Pakistan will be expected to keep the semifinal race alive until at least the final match and pray Zimbabwe can do the unthinkable against Rohit Sharma's India.

"You don't need any motivation, whether it's the World Cup or not," said Pakistan batsman Shan Masood.

"Just playing for your country, putting that shirt on, I think for every individual in this camp, it means a lot."

Zimbabwe played giant-killer by beating Pakistan in their Super 12 clash but crashed out of the tournament with a deflating defeat to the Netherlands.

Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine said the chance to take the wicket of India's talismanic batsman Virat Kohli should be motivation enough for his bowlers.

"How often do you get the opportunity to put Virat Kohli in your pocket?" he asked.

"I'm pretty sure that our fast bowlers will be raring to go come tomorrow."

"Obviously with the win against Pakistan, it's given us a huge amount of belief that we can beat any side in the tournament."

"I don't think that will change going into tomorrow's game." — Reuters

Stokes takes England into semis as Australia dumped out

SYDNEY: Ben Stokes hit a gutsy unbeaten 42 as England reached the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals on Saturday with a tense four-wicket win over Sri Lanka — and ended Australia's title defence. England needed to win to make the last four from Group 1 alongside already qualified New Zealand and they achieved the feat in a nail-biting finish with two balls to spare at Sydney Cricket Ground.

If they had lost, hosts Australia would have gone through.

Sri Lanka looked on track for a big total when they reached 80-2 after 10 overs, but the aggressive Pathum Nissanka was out for 67 and the Asian champions crumbled to 141-8, with Mark Wood taking 3-26.

England raced to 75 without loss in reply and looked on track for an easy win. But they collapsed to 111-5 under pressure from the Sri Lankan spin attack and it went to the wire.

"Didn't enjoy that match, how close it was," admitted skipper Jos Buttler. "We just had to find a way to win that game."

"These situations are built for him (Stokes)," he added. "He can play a lot of roles for us in this T20 setup."

Man-of-the-match Adil Rashid, whose spin kept Sri Lanka's batsmen at bay, was also full of praise for Test skipper Stokes.

"It was a tight game, it happens in T20 cricket," he said. "They bowled well and created pressure but Stokesy played magnificent so we got over the line."

The victory was not enough to dethrone New Zealand at the top of the table with England settling for second and a semifinal in Adelaide. The fate of Group 2 will be determined on Sunday.

Sri Lanka's defeat ended Australia's stuttering tournament, with their title defence never recovering after losing heavily to New Zealand on the opening day, then having to share the points



with England due to rain.

"I think the wicket played a part in this game, even the English batters struggled in the second half," said Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka.

"I think we played good cricket in patches, but we had a few injuries which cost us the tournament."

RUNS FLOWING

Sri Lanka, who have not beaten England in a T20 since 2014, won the toss and asked England to field, conscious that all five previous games at the SCG during the World Cup had been won by the team batting first.

Nissanka pulled Stokes for an authoritative six off the second ball and two more sixes in the third over, off Wood, signalled their intent. But an aggressive 39-run opening stand came to an end when Kusal Mendis (18) attempted another boundary from Chris Woakes and Liam Livingstone held a catch near the ropes. Nissanka kept the runs flowing but his new partner Dhananjaya de Silva (9) slogged at a slower Sam Curran ball and was caught by Stokes.

Sri Lanka reached 80-2 at the halfway point, but then Livingstone took a simple catch to remove Charith Asalanka (8).

Nissanka brought up his second

50 of the tournament and ninth overall, but tight bowling from Rashid slowed the run rate and he eventually accounted for Nissanka, who heaved to substitute fielder Chris Jordan at long-on after a 45-ball knock. Sri Lanka never regained momentum, making just 25 off the last five overs.

In reply, Alex Hales and Buttler plundered 70 off the six-over powerplay, smashing 11 boundaries in the process.

Sri Lanka gave themselves hope when Buttler (28) and Hales (47) were out in the space of three overs, with the spin of Wanindu Hasaranga accounting for both of them. — AFP

Pakistan 'lost sleep' over losses but bounced back: Masood



ADELAIDE: Pakistan batsman Shan Masood on Saturday praised his team's character in battling back to stay in the hunt for a semi-finals spot after losing their first two matches at the Twenty20 World Cup.

Captain Babar Azam's side need to win their final Super 12 match against Bangladesh in Adelaide on Sunday -- and for other results to go their way -- to grab a place in the final four.

Pakistan suffered heartbreaking losses to arch-rivals India and Zimbabwe before finding form and drubbing South Africa on Thursday in a dramatic, rain-affected match in Sydney.

"The timing of the losses proved costly for us because we are still not in that top two position," Masood told reporters.

"But we haven't lost hope. Life teaches us harsh lessons and this was one of them. The way it affected the boys, they lost sleep, their morale went down. And how

we responded after those setbacks showed our character and it was a big thing.

"The best to come out of failure is that you learn from your mistakes. If we look at it from a balanced point of view, then we see the team has responded well since the loss to Zimbabwe."

Pakistan, currently third in the wide-open Group 2 table, can advance if India lose to Zimbabwe in the last league match on Sunday. They are also in if South Africa lose their clash against the Netherlands or the match is a washout.

Masood said the way Pakistan fought back to post 185-9 against South Africa, after being in trouble at 43-4, and then winning by 33 runs via the DLS method had lifted the morale of the team.

"Mood is good. South Africa dominated the early stages of the game, but the way we came back and bowled well, even after the rain break, we kept up our momentum," said Masood.

"So we will focus on taking two points from the Bangladesh game and that is in our hands. Hope will always be there till the last ball is bowled in this group."

Bangladesh, who had narrow wins over the Netherlands and Zimbabwe, also have a slim chance to advance if they win against Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval.

The Tigers gave India a scare in their previous match — decided by the DLS method — and are level at four points with Pakistan, but with a far inferior run-rate.

But technical consultant Sridharan Sriram said he is proud of the show his boys have put on in this tournament.

"This is the best tournament Bangladesh has ever had in a T20 World Cup," Sriram told reporters.

"We've never won two games in Super 12s in the history of Bangladesh cricket, so we've done that, so I think the boys should be proud of themselves." — AFP



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business



Competitive profit rates starting from
4.95%

DRIVE THE CAR OF YOUR DREAMS
with Maisarah Auto Finance

Offer is valid till 31 December 2022 and is applicable for new, additional finances. Not valid for takeover of auto finance from other banks.

2477 5777 | www.maisarah.om

[/MaisarahOman](#) [@MaisarahIslamic](#) [@Maisarah.Islamic](#)

To know more



MAISARAH

OPAZ unveils vision to position the Sultanate of Oman as investment destination of choice

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) launched its vision and mission, as part of its annual strategic plan for 2022 aimed at enhancing the investment environment in OPAZ affiliated zones, which contribute to boosting the national economy through attracting investment in various economic sectors to all zones.

OPAZ employees contributed to developing the vision and mission, which translate OPAZ competencies stipulated in the Royal Decree No. (105/2020), establishing the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and defining its roles and objectives, and with

reference also to the Royal Decree (53/2022) transferring the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to OPAZ.

These four key roles include planning and regulation, facilitation and operation in some cases. OPAZ vision promotes its affiliated zones as “the investment destination of choice”.

This is reflected in its mission “developing and regulating the zones affiliated with OPAZ and providing an attractive and sustainable investment environment” that attracts investors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. On the other hand, OPAZ has approved its values that enable employees, customers and investors to support achieving the vision. These values are “Responsibility, Cooperation, Transparency and Creativity”.



Such remarkable values reflect employees’ belief in the significance and worth of performing their duties and shouldering the responsibility to serve their country and ensuring satisfaction for investors, businesspersons and all those benefiting from the services provided by OPAZ and all its affiliated zones.

Speaking on the occasion,

“**Involving employees in developing the vision, mission and values marks a real partnership between OPAZ and its employees to bring a plan on which all depends to implement OPAZ competencies, set policies and perform their tasks in the different affiliated zones**

**HUDA BINT
ABDULLAH AL
HABSIYAH**
Board Member, OPAZ

Huda bint Abdullah al Habsiyah (pictured), OPAZ Board Member

and supervisor of the team managing the vision and mission project, explained that the vision, mission and values of OPAZ were developed by a team of employees through different well-planned phases. These phases attracted around 100 employees of OPAZ, the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and other free zones affiliated with OPAZ. Having them all in this project mirrors the confidence of OPAZ Board of Directors in the employees and their important role as a key partner in working on OPAZ mission and achieving its vision.

“The vision and mission are of great importance and regarded an essential pillar upon which OPAZ directions, plans and strategy are based towards the development, regulation and supervision of the special economic zones, free and

industrial zones. Further, involving employees in developing the vision, mission and values marks a real partnership between OPAZ and its employees to bring a plan on which all depends to implement OPAZ competencies, set policies and perform their tasks in the different affiliated zones.”

OPAZ was established as per the provision of the Royal Decree No. (105/2020), issued on August 18, 2020. It oversees the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, free zones in Sohar, Salalah and Al Mazunah and any other special economic zone or free zone in the Sultanate of Oman. OPAZ also oversees the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) as per the provision of the Royal Decree No. (53/2022), issued on June 28, 2022.

Foundation stone laid for new iron ore pelletising project in Oman

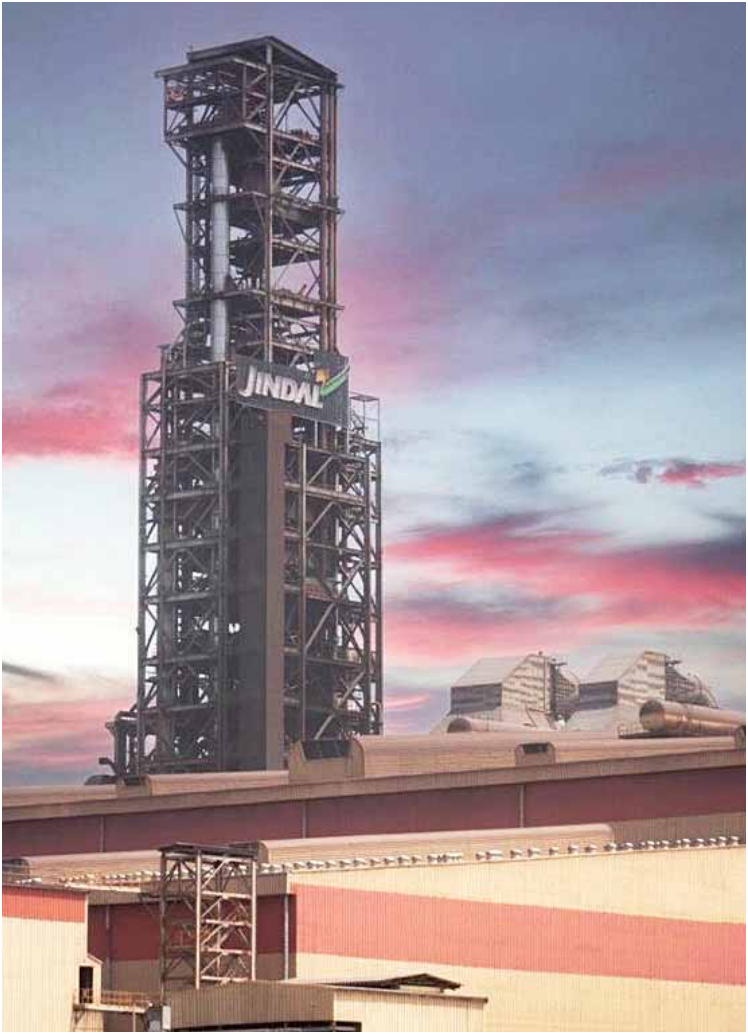
CAPTIVE PROJECT: Output from the 6 MTPA capacity mill meet the raw material requirements of Jindal Shadeed’s integrated steel mill in Sohar Port

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel (JSIS), which operates a major integrated steel complex at Sohar Port and Freezone, has announced that its affiliate Vulcan Pelletizing LLC has commenced construction work on an iron ore pelletising plant on its premises.

In a post on its social media account over the weekend, Jindal Shadeed said the project, when fully operational, will be the largest single kiln pelletising plant in the Gulf region. The 6 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) capacity plant will provide the required feedstock for Jindal Shadeed’s steel manufacturing operations in Sohar. As a captive project, its output will be wholly dedicated to meeting the raw material requirements of Jindal’s steel mill at the industrial port.

The foundation-stone laying ceremony was led by V R Sharma, Vice Chairman of India-based Jindal Group, who also underlined the significance



of the pelletising plant to ensure reliable and sustainable raw material supplies to Jindal Shadeed.

Pellet quality is also key to ensuring the smooth functioning of the steel mill complex, he noted.

Also present was Sanjay Anand, Managing Director of Vulcan Group, which acquired

a significant stake in Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel following the exit of its previous owner — India-based conglomerate Jindal Power & Steel.

Speaking at the ceremony, Anand said the project will feature the highest capacity kiln supported by all the latest technologies. The project will also generate employment

opportunity and contribute to in-country value (ICV) development, he stated.

Harssha Shetty, CEO - Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel (JSIS), also shared his views on the importance of pellet quality in iron-making in terms of better productivity at optimised cost.

Earlier this year, the Helsinki-headquartered machinery manufacturer Metso Outotec said it had won a contract worth around \$31 million for the manufacture and installation of a grate kiln-type pelletising plant. Grate kilns produce pellets of more consistent quality at a lower cost than other types of pelletising systems.

In addition to the core machinery, the hardware will also include the travelling gate, rotary kiln and annular cooler. When operational in early 2024, Vulcan’s plant will be the second such iron ore pelletising project to be in operation in Sohar Port & Freezone.

The industrial port is also home to a giant pelletising project of Vale Oman Pelletising Company, an Oman-Brazilian joint venture majority owned by Vale, one of the world’s largest mining companies. In addition to a pelletising plant of 9 MTPA capacity, Vale Oman also operates a giant stockyard and distribution centre with a throughput of 40 million tonnes per year.

Oman’s oil exports to Japan records 127% growth



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Oman’s oil exports to Japan recorded a remarkable growth of 172.1 per cent to reach 9.21 million barrels until the end-September, compared to the same period last year. It increased by 801,500 barrels compared to until end-August 2022 with 8.41 million barrels.

Meanwhile, oil exports to South Korea increased by 42.5 per cent during this period. Until end of August 2022, oil exports to South Korea increased by 68.7 per cent.

Oman’s total oil exports witness an increase of 14.6 per cent until the end of September, compared to the same period last year.

The Sultanate of Oman’s production of crude oil and oil condensates increased by 10.4 per cent until the end of September, to reach 289,785,600 barrels, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Until August 2022, Oman’s total crude oil and oil condensate production reach 257,034,700

barrels. Crude oil production alone recorded an increase of 14.1 per cent during this period, while production of oil condensate decreased by 2 per cent until the end of September compared to the same period in 2021.

The average price of Omani crude oil also recorded a 58 per cent increase until the end of September 2022 to reach \$96.2 per barrel, compared to \$60.9 per barrel at the end of September 2021. The average daily oil production increased by 10.4 per cent until the end of September 2022 compared to the previous period. Same from last year.

On the other hand, natural gas production (including imports) in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of last September witnessed an increase of 16.4 per cent to reach 39.2 billion cubic metres.

Data issued by NCSI indicated an increase in natural gas consumption in industrial areas by 28.6 per cent, industrial projects by 19.3 per cent, oil fields by 12.5 per cent and power plants by 11.9 per cent.

Bank Nizwa’s positive growth demonstrates its excellence in Islamic banking

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, has recorded a positive trajectory of growth as reflected in its financial results in the third quarter of 2022. As a testament to its progress, Bank Nizwa has turned in a commendable financial performance by registering an 18 per cent growth in net profit.

The bank’s total assets also increased by 7 per cent, reaching RO 1,487 million in September 2022 from RO 1,384 million

in September 2021. The gross financing portfolio improved by 8 per cent to RO 1,217 million, whilst the total customer deposit portfolio rose by 13 per cent to RO 1,209 million. The increase in financing and deposit portfolios in retail and corporate businesses has provided the bank with the impetus to maintain its growth.

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalili (pictured), Chairman of Bank Nizwa said: “During the year, your bank has turned



in a commendable financial performance by registering

eighteen per cent growth in net profit. This is the result of our ability to adapt to the economic realities, including the competitive environment in which we operate and a resilient balance sheet”

He added: “After the re-opening surge in 2021, growth in 2022 has created a positive sentiments in the global economy. Supported by significant pent-up demand and rising prospects of continued government reforms programmes to help sustained economic

recovery. We expect an accelerated pace of growth in the coming months to drive a robust economic recovery through 2022, resulting in economic growth.

According to the IMF, Oman’s economy is expected to grow by 4.3% in 2022 and 2.5% in 2023. The revenue and spending efficiency are expected to rise while the public debt is projected to decrease in the medium term.”

As a result of healthy activity across its wholesale and retail

businesses and cost control, the Islamic bank reported a 2 per cent boost in shareholder equity and a 16 per cent increase in operating income.

As a result of the successful implementation of its 2025 strategic plan for growth, the bank will continue to cultivate its balance sheet in a controlled manner. It will diversify revenue streams, control expenses, improve margins, enhance its digital capabilities, and expand its customer base.

The Sustainable City — Yiti wins two awards



MUSCAT: The Sustainable City - Yiti (TSC - Yiti), Oman’s first fully sustainable city and the largest sustainable community in the Middle East, bagged two prestigious awards at the 10th edition of the Dossier Construction Awards & Summit (DCIAS). The project won both the ‘Best Sustainable Project’ and ‘Best Sustainable Development’ accolades for providing the highest standards of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

This includes clean energy production, recycling, vertical farming, and the adoption of clean and sustainable transportation, as well as other solutions that improve residents’ quality of life and reduce their carbon footprint. The project was launched earlier this year, as a joint venture between Diamond Developers, the leading company

in developing sustainable communities, and Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), as phase 1 of the Yiti Integrated Tourism Development Masterplan.

Bringing together the leading names and recognising the top performers across construction, infrastructure, real estate, manufacturing and design & engineering consultancy, the Dossier Construction Awards & Summit is renowned and established as a mark of international excellence.

The award ceremony was held in Sheraton Oman hotel in the presence of Dr Khalfan al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning and leaders across various industry. Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group received the awards on behalf of The Sustainable City - Yiti.

Al Aufi to deliver keynote address at Green Hydrogen Oman Summit

MUSCAT: Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, will present the keynote speech at the opening of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 (GHSO), which will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Muscat, during December 5-7, 2022.

The keenly anticipated opening address will shed light on, among other issues, Oman’s newly unveiled strategy for the development of a world-scale green hydrogen industry to support the decarbonisation of the Omani economy, as well as cater to the energy transition goals of other nations.

An overview of this ambitious vision was shared recently by officials of the ministry, joined by representatives of Oman Vision 2040, Energy Development Oman and the newly established hydro-centric energy firm Hydrom. At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to reducing Oman’s climate-warming CO2 emissions to Net Zero by 2050 – a goal that envisions investments of an estimated \$140 billion in a full-fledged domestic green hydrogen industry over the next several



decades.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the 3-day GHSO Summit & Exhibition has been organised by Birba Energy Services with the support of a number of prominent local and international energy-related organisations.

Underscoring its appeal and reach, the forum will be attended by a distinguished gathering of energy ministries representing hydrogen producers and importers, as well as policymakers,

a Green Hydrogen Hub; Oman Green Hydrogen Infrastructure; Green Hydrogen Value Chain (In-Country Value); Partnership and Investment; Green Hydrogen Projects’ Finance & Bankability; and Green Hydrogen Projects in Oman.

Additionally, a Technical Conference will take place in parallel with the main conference. In addition International experts representing key segments of the hydrogen value chain will conduct a series of masterclasses on December 5 covering with four categories Green Hydrogen Technology, Green Hydrogen Application, Green Hydrogen Regulations & Policy and Green Hydrogen Safety.

Prefacing the Summit is an exclusive VIP session scheduled to take place at Kempinski Hotel Muscat on December 5, 2022. A number of ministers representing leading energy producing and importing nations will be in attendance, joined by policymakers, experts and CEOs from leading energy companies from Oman and around the world. Al Aufi will also address this ‘by-invitation only’ event.

Bank Muscat offers Asalah and Al Jawhar customers exclusive offers

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to offer outstanding benefits to its Asalah Priority Banking customers and Al Jawhar Premier Banking customers, in line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and its continued commitment to customer service excellence.

A number of offers are currently available for customers to enjoy during their travel with family and friends to various local and international destinations.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager — Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “We are thrilled with the high level of customer interest in taking advantage of various travel offers, from Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their confidence in Bank Muscat’s range of products and services, and urge everyone to take maximum advantage of the value-added benefits currently on offer.



Furthermore, we promise our customers that they can look forward to new offers and services that will keep pace with their aspirations and needs in the future.”

Exclusive benefits available to Asalah customers include access to more than 50 lounges worldwide including the Prime Class and Majan lounges at Muscat International Airport and the Khareef lounge at Salalah Airport. Asalah customers can also access a range of premium benefits at over 900 prestigious properties from the Visa Luxury Hotel Collection.

Other lifestyle benefits include the complimentary Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 “Buy 1, Get 1 Free” offers in Oman and at international destinations as well as rewards of

indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments.

The Asalah Visa Signature Credit Card on the other hand facilitates 12 complimentary visits to over 1,000 airport lounges worldwide including those at Muscat and Salalah. The Credit Card also offers 1% cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members.

Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport. A complimentary Dragon Pass facilitates airport dining offers at more than 200 restaurants globally while a 25 per cent discount is available on Meet

and Greet services at 450 global destinations.

It is also worth noting that Asalah customers have access to a 24/7 global concierge service through a variety of channels including telephone, email, digital and WhatsApp. The 24-hour concierge provides a personal service to Visa Signature cardholders, taking care of all the details so they can simply focus on enjoying their restaurant, travel or shopping experience.

Similarly, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food; entertainment and shopping that are available through the ‘Xperience with the Entertainer’ app on their smartphones. They have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 800.

Meanwhile, the Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Card offers access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to lounges at Muscat airport. Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a ‘Meet and Greet’ service with 15 per cent discount at over 450 global destinations.



Do more than you expect with the powerful Ford Ranger Wildtrak

MUSCAT: Ford’s powerful and capable Ranger Wildtrak is engineered to take you places and help you get more out of your journey. From varied off-road terrains to on-road roles, the Ranger Wildtrak offers the finest experiences.

The Ford Ranger Wildtrak is built for adventure. Its high-strength steel frame ladder chassis, its tough steel body and versatile cargo box make it an ideal companion for unplanned outings. The tough exterior design incorporates a high beltline, a raked grille and slanted windshield which give Ranger its athletic appearance and superb aerodynamics

which helps cut wind noise and improve fuel economy.

Off-road, Ranger’s short front and rear overhangs mean impressive approach and departure angles for tackling steep terrain, while its ample ground clearance allows it to clear obstacles easily. Ranger is also able to navigate watery obstacles up to 800mm deep, allowing drivers to push through conditions that may stop its competitors in their tracks.

The powerful Ranger Wildtrak is equipped with a 3.2-litre turbodiesel engine that produces 196 hp and 470 Nm of torque. This is paired to a six-speed auto transmission.



How difficult is it to start a manufacturing business?

STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association

WHETHER YOU HAVE GOT A BETTER MOUSETRAP, NEW ORGANIC FACE CREAM, OR AN ECO-FRIENDLY BAMBOO RANGE, THIS COLUMN WILL WALK YOU THROUGH THE BASICS ON STARTING A PRODUCTION COMPANY.

Recently we talked about the main opportunities and challenges in opening a fully remote digital marketing agency. Today we go back to something more concrete, discussing the inception of a manufacturing business.

Whether you have got a better mousetrap, new organic face cream, or an eco-friendly bamboo range, this column will walk you through the basics on starting a production company.

We put this guide together to help your new business be successful, whether you are wondering how to set up a home-based manufacturing company, or have already secured enough capital to begin purchasing production equipment.

The ideal scenario is to have a modern machine that can produce the product that you want to sell. Imagine how easy it would be if you could just insert raw materials and output a finished product. But manufacturing is more complex than that. A rightly so. If it was so easy to produce, you would face endless competition.

That is why it is useful to have some sophisticated steps in your production that are hard to replicate. Especially manual labour that could add an artisan element to the production.

Those are hard to replicate and could add significant value. When it comes time to apply for financing for your business, or bring on any partners, you are going to want to present a

business plan that answers all of the most pressing questions related to how to start a manufacturing company. To answer the questions with reliable answers, you will need to create a detailed business plan that makes a case for your new manufacturing company.

Once you narrow down your niche, start by deciding what types of marketing activities will make the biggest difference for your new company, then use your plan to create a list of skills that you will need to implement those.

Ideally, you want to ensure that before starting a business, you are familiar with, and able to tap into, the resources that are available to support your production company's endeavours.

The manufacturing sector is one industry that requires significant amounts of research prior to starting your business. Every successful manufacturing business must begin with a little bit of market research. Clearly, the manufacturing sector is not in great shape after the global pandemic disruption to supply chain... but there is still plenty that can be done to help you head off problems.

That said, the challenges inherent in the manufacturing sector makes it a promising sector for budding entrepreneurs: since starting a manufacturing company is challenging, and since the manufacturing sector is still highly sought after, you can minimise the competition that you might face, and ultimately earn plenty.

Sometimes, the best manufacturing businesses to start with are offering products or services that already exist, as they will already have a market for it. While the domestic economy looks promising as a low hanging fruit, it is quite important that you keep an open mind in exporting your products.

Oman is a great country, but a relatively small market compared to countries with larger population. Seeking partnerships for sales and distribution in other geographies is a great strategy to ensure expansion.

Lastly, seek government incentives for setting up your manufacturing business. The Sultanate of Oman offers many incentives designed for ambitious entrepreneurs.

an acceleration in government investment projects. Headwinds, however, remain for the real estate sector but there are some emerging signs of market stability."

During 2020, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the decline of the expatriate population that started in 2017 with around 230,000 expatriates leaving Oman over the course of the year. Last year saw expatriate numbers reduce further but in H1 2022, the expatriate population grow by approximately 10 per cent, driven almost exclusively by an influx of expatriate workers rather than professionals.

OFFICE RENTAL

Recent years have seen the introduction of a significant supply of new office space which has exceeded demand. Savills estimates

Use of 3D printing technology underway at Duqm SEZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

The capabilities of 3D printing technology are being harnessed to construct new structures at the Fishermen's Village coming up in the Tourism Zone at Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

According to the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), 3D printing has been deployed to construct a housing unit with annexes, alongside a café, in the Tourism Zone.

Eng Saif bin Nasser al Busaidi, Director of the Projects Department, said the housing unit and café are being 3D printed on 101 square metres plots at Al Sayadin Village.

Each structure is being constructed in record time spanning a handful of days, in contrast to the traditional construction timeframe.

In addition, 3D printing based construction does away with the need for concrete columns — a typical time-consuming



requirement. 3D printing technology converts the cement material into an integrated structure.

Last year, OPAZ's Board of Directors had approved the use of 3D printing based construction technology as part of a wider

effort to deploy more technologies and innovations to speed up the implementation of projects at the SEZ.

Italian bio and agro-food research excellence presented at SQU

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Sultan Qaboos University hosted Professor Francesco Canganella of Tuscia University in Viterbo for two seminars on dual agrobiology and biomedical issues for human space exploration as well as on the role of microbial ecology and industrial applications.

The lecture highlighted the latest researches conducted by his lab at Tuscia University on applied microbiology and highlighted new opportunities for academic and industrial collaboration on sustainable development, such as biodegradation of agrofood waste and use of microbial biomolecules for industrial purposes.

"The Embassy of Italy welcomes the initiative as an enabler for further bilateral collaboration between Italy and Oman.

"As a key player in Italy for advanced studies in agriculture



and agrofood, Tuscia University is leading research on sustainable issues and its centre of excellence for agrofood, forestry, environment and biology, providing state-of-the-art facilities and laboratories for innovation.

"Sharing this know-how with Oman can be beneficial to support the expansion of the agriculture in the Sultanate," commented Alessandro Garbellini of the

Embassy of Italy.

Professor Canganella added: "Tuscia University is ready to work together with Omani researchers and students on new technologies for sustainable farming in areas with water scarcity.

"The scholarships just granted under the current Erasmus+ programme will soon provide opportunities to study and work together."

MSX30 Index ends week marginally higher

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week up by 0.01 per cent. The Financial Index ended the week higher by 0.34 per cent. The Industrial Index ended the week up by 0.54 per cent. However, the Service Index ended the week lower by 0.67 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index was up by 0.87 per cent.

Oman Fisheries Company has announced to its shareholders that it has signed a sales agreement with Saudi Fisheries Company on Wednesday, November 2, 2022. The agreement shall enter into force from the date of its signing for a period of 3 years. The agreement aims to export 1,200 metric tonnes of fish as a first stage, with revenues of not less than one million Omani rials annually.

Bank Muscat, HSBC Oman and NBO and Ahli Bank have a provision cover > 100 per cent, indicating prudent provisioning norms. HSBC Oman has the lowest NPL ratio while Bank Dhofar has the highest.

ECL Stage-wise data indicates that over 70 per cent of total of each bank's exposure is in Stage 1 of impairment or in simpler words, is performing, with the remainder being in Stage 2 and Stage 3.

The highest exposure in Stage 3 is for NBO and Bank Dhofar (at about 6 per cent each), while the lowest exposure in Stage 3 is for HSBC Oman and Ahli Bank. Within exposures in Stage 3, Bank Muscat has the highest provision cover, followed by NBO and Ahli Bank, while Sohar International and Bank Dhofar have relatively lower coverage. Ahli Bank and Bank Dhofar have the highest per cent of restructured loans; however, for Ahli Bank, more than 50 per cent of restructured loans are in Stage 3.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Oil price boost helps stabilise real estate market

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Leading global real estate adviser Savills released its latest research analysing Oman's real estate market performance. The report provides a comprehensive snapshot of the Sultanate's macroeconomic environment whilst focusing on the residential and commercial real estate sectors.

Swapnil Pillai, Associate Director, Middle East Research, said, "Oman's economy has recovered well from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and weak oil prices. The government's financial position is much stronger now than it has been for several years, despite the pandemic, due to a prudent fiscal approach. Recent months have also witnessed



that there is currently around 400,000 sqm of mid to higher grade office space for the rental market in Muscat with a further roughly 100,000 sqm of office space under construction, although much of this is lower to mid-end.

Due to tepid demand relative to supply, there has been downside pressure on occupancy with only

a limited number of buildings currently achieving occupancy levels in excess of 70 per cent.

Realistically, achievable rental values dropped by 5 to 10 per cent over the course of 2021 and are currently 25 to 40 per cent lower than 2015 with the Shatti Al Qurum submarket showing the greatest resilience.

The notable recent upswing in oil prices, if sustained, is likely to have a positive impact on the commercial sector and could help to drive demand and occupancy.

Matthew Wright, Head of Consultancy at Savills Oman, said, "We expect market conditions to remain challenging over the remainder of 2022 in terms of both demand and achievable rental values but high oil prices, if sustained, are likely to provide a boost for commercial activity."

Recent years have seen extensive development of residential units — particularly of low to moderate grade residential apartments with limited to no facilities — for the rental market across Muscat, which has resulted in a significant oversupply relative to diminished demand.



WJ Towell Group Company

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com



**أوربيت
ORBIT**

Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



شوبین جفت
Shoppinggift

**GET
FREE
SHOPPING
VOUCHER**

with every purchase of
TallyPrime single user



ASIAsOLUTIONS

TALLY
**GOLD
PARTNER**

TALLY  FOR
VAT

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guruprasad@asiasolutions.net
<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 6, 2022

RABEE AL THANI 11, 1444 AH

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

LAMASAT BUSINESS CONSULTANCY SERVICES
Accounting Services,
VAT and Consultancy Services
Contact: **24571454** GSM: **95392251**

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in
(Aziba - Khwair
Qurum - Ruwi
Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072



■ SIT, WANTED

INDIAN female (M Tech Civil Structural Engineering) having 7 years experience as Quantity Surveyor cum Quality Control Engineer, looking for suitable position. Contact: 96154505.

GENERAL manager with
16+ years experience
in Oman, MBA — BE,
seeks suitable placement.
Contact: 94008034.

INDIAN male graduate
Executive Secretary/
Stenography/ Oman DL
and Muscat experience
available. Contact:
79256679.

PLANNING engineer,
PMP. Indian male
Civil Eng. Around 10
years experience in
construction projects.
Softwares: Primavera P6,
MS Office, ERP, having
Oman driving licence.
Ready to join, email:
engineer4planning@gmail.
com, Call: 78002582.

INDIAN Male,
17 years of Oman
Marketing experience
in Multiple Industry
(FMCG Trading,
Media, Digital
Printing, Events, &
Hospital) with own
car is looking for
suitable placement
with/without visa;
Call/whatsapp +968
99803006.

GRADUATE
Engineer (B.E. Civil,
Indian) with over 20
years of experience
(13 years in Oman).
Previously served
as Project Manager,
Manager - Operations
and Dy. GM. Looking
for suitable placement
Contact: 92850419
Email: jojkyk@
gmail.com

■ SIT. WANTED

FINANCE manager,
M.Com, 17 years
experience in
Oman, valid D/L.
looking for suitable
placement. Contact:
71702324, email:
abdulrasheedlulu@
gmail.com



النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
 DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE



WORLD WIDE
DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA • BANGLADESH
 NEPAL • SRILANKA • INDONESIA
 PHILIPPINES • AFRICA • EUROPE
 USA • ALL GCC



TOLL FREE NUMBER

80066766

www.alnamanicargo.com

FREE PICK UP 24/7

☎ 95587410, 9988 1554, 99636698, 94940231, 98523831

Branches : Ruwi, Hamriya, Dhaia, Seeb, Barka, Suwaig, Sohar



HAVE A PROPERTY

FOR RENT?

Advertise
with us.

Contact us on:
99639264

URGENTLY REQUIRED SALES ENGINEER

- ◆ One of the leading Omani Organisations is seeking to hire multiple sales engineers in their Oil & Division.
- ◆ Preference is given to candidates who have at least 3-4 years of experience in Trading of Instrumentation, Electrical & Mechanical Products to all the Oil & Gas industry in Oman. He must possess an Omani / GCC driving license.
- ◆ Salary is among the best in the best in the industry with fixed and variable components. Annual bonus and Incentives are provided against good performance.

Kindly send your CV's at
Recruit.oman4@gmail.com

**AUDIT,
ACCOUNTING,
VAT, TAXATION**

Contact:
97239696
95355638

**Gulf Center
Consultancy & Audit**
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING
SERVICES:

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax:24503566
Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

**PEST CONTROL
OMAN CO. L.L.C.**

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crococoraches),
Public Health chemicals, Agriculture
chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits
and other insect repellent from
UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in
Pest Control Service,
Bedbug Treatment,
Rodent Treatment,
Snake Treatment
and Termite
Treatment [Pre
& Post Construction]



Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SERVICES

AUTOCAD/
REVIT ARCH
MEP, part/full-
time. Contact
WhatsApp:
79037728.

AL SUMRI AC
maintenance. We are
ready to repair and
install all types of Air-
Conditioner within
Muscat Governorate.
94301888.

FOR RENT

FLATS 2bhk and
1 bhk in Mumtaz.
Contact 99341138
and 90991079.

BUILDING of
1.500 sqm 3 stories,
accommodation,
store and office at
Misfa. ☎99432177,
99010964.

■ RENT A CAR

**Buttercup
Rent A Car**
AMAZING OFFERS

- Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
- Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts.

☎ 972494490.

LUXURIOUS
Toyota bus 2016,
air-conditioned, 30
passengers, offered
for daily/monthly/
annually, Muscat.
Contact: 98080609,
96316269.

REQUIRED

**URGENT REQUIREMENT ·
MARKETING EXECUTIVE**

A REPUTED MEI
(**Mechanical,
Electrical &
Instrumentation**)
contracting company
based in Sultanate of
Oman looking for
experienced marketing
executives. Candidates
with minimum 5
years relevant field
experience in Oman
with valid Omani
driving licence may
forward the CV to
directrecruit2022@
gmail.com



OMAN **Observer** DAILY

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 16, 1442 AH

OMAN **Observer** DAILY

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABULLAH BIN SALM AL SHAIRI VOL. 38 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

Be Careful.
Be Responsible!
#OmniCare #OmniSafe

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER



MUSCAT: In a ceremony held at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Sayed Khalid bin Sultan.

Sayed bin Khalid bin Sultan took the oath of office at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on Thursday. **SEE ALSO PAGE 16**

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Revolution and in commemoration of the country's 50th anniversary, the Ministry of Finance has issued a new 50 Omani banknote from this month.

GOING PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has issued a warning to the public to follow social distancing guidelines and to avoid large gatherings.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has issued a warning to the public to follow social distancing guidelines and to avoid large gatherings.



Al Qabil: A hidden gem in the desert — is now ready to welcome tourists

During Al Qabil's Saturday souq, kids and adults alike dress up in their best clothes. Villagers bring all their wares and sell them along the main village street. There is so much to discover in this small village that Fahar bin Hamood al Farsi's effort to put it on the tourist map deserves appreciation... **P20**

UNESCO: One-third of World Heritage glaciers to disappear by 2050

GLACIERS IN THE DOLOMITES in Italy, Yellowstone National Park in the United States and on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania will likely vanish by 2050, according to the United Nations Cultural Organization UNESCO.

A third of all glaciers listed as

UNESCO World Heritage areas will disappear by then as the result of global warming, according to a report issued on Thursday by Paris-based UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Those glaciers are already losing 58 billion tonnes of ice every year.



There are about 18,600 glaciers spread across 50 different World Heritage sites around the world, according to UNESCO. Together, the glaciers cover roughly 66,000 square kilometres and account for about 10% of the world's glacier area.

The glaciers have been melting faster since 2000 because of higher CO2 emissions.

Two-thirds of the remaining World Heritage glaciers could still be saved if efforts to combat global warming limit rising temperatures to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times.

Experts, however, contend that only radical measures and major global political commitment could keep rising temperatures below the 1.5-degree target.

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay described the report as "a call to action" for the world to combat climate change ahead of the international COP27 climate conference in Egypt.

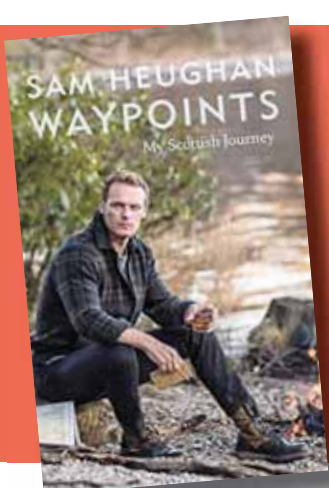
"Only a rapid reduction in our CO2 emissions levels can save glaciers and the exceptional biodiversity that depends on them," Azoulay said. — dpa

READ

WAYPOINTS

BY SAM HEUGHAN

The Scottish actor travels along West Highland Way to connect with moments that shaped his views.



FASHION TREND

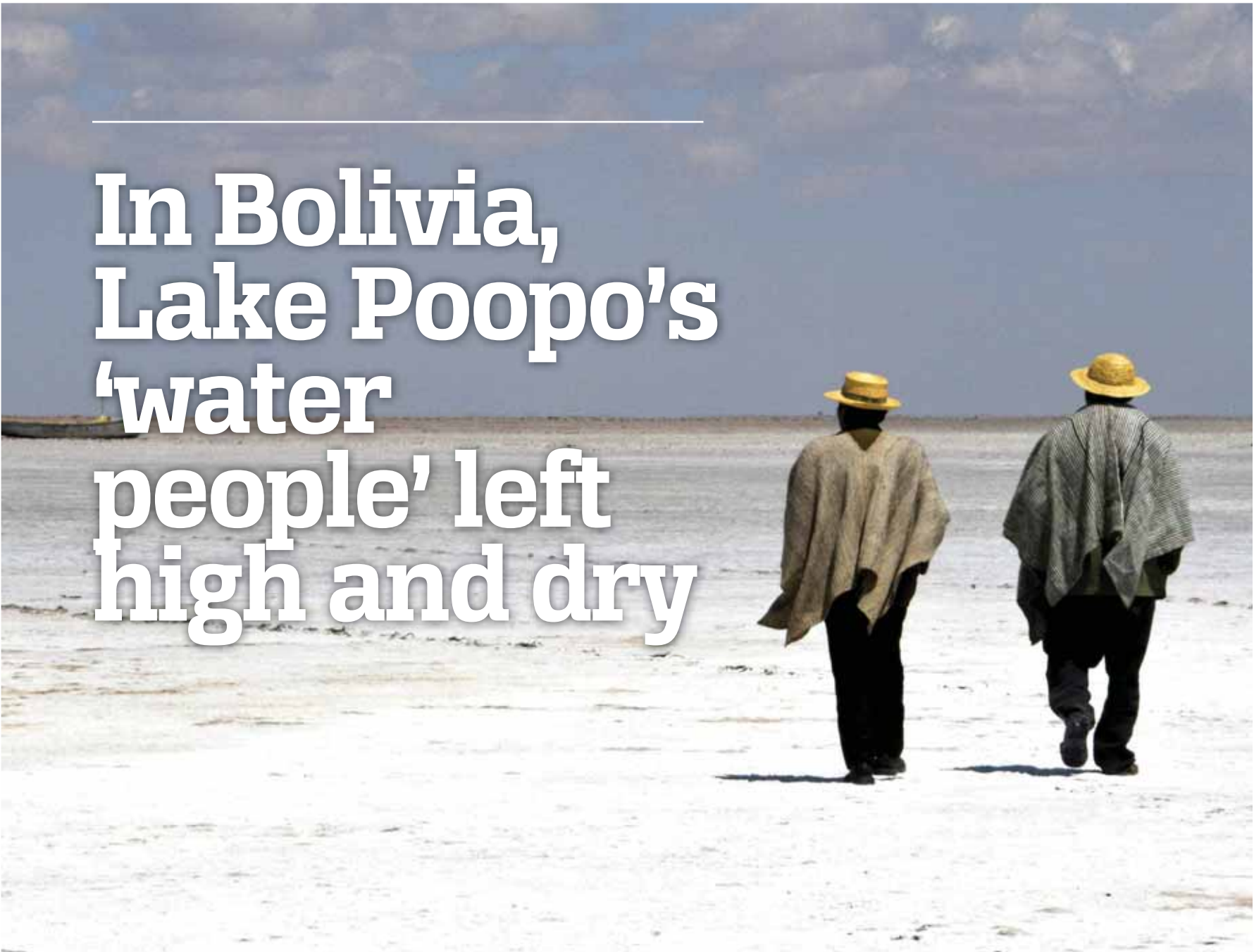
Models present creations by Rinaldy Yunardi during the 2022 Jakarta Fashion Week in Jakarta. — AFP



ART ATTACK

Visitors are reflected in a mirror as they look at The Creation of Jesus on the Cross by Rembrandt on display at Museum Bredius in The Hague. The museum discovered that the oil sketch was by Rembrandt, despite the claim by several art historians that it must have been by an imitator. — AFP





In Bolivia, Lake Poopo's 'water people' left high and dry



AN ABANDONED BOAT rests on the cracked earth where formerly it floated. Lake Poopo, once Bolivia's second-largest, has mostly disappeared — taking with it a centuries-old culture reliant entirely on its bounty.

Felix Mauricio, a member of the Uru Indigenous community, used to be a fisherman. Now 82, he gazes over a barren landscape and chews coca leaf to suppress the hunger pains.

"The fish were big. A small fish was three kilos," he recalls of the good old days.

At its peak in 1986, Lake Poopo

Mauricio has always lived in Punaca Tinta Maria, a village in the southwestern region of Oruro.

His grandparents settled in the area in 1915 at a time when the waters of Lake Poopo lapped at doorsteps and intermittently flooded huts.

- NO LAND EITHER -

Mauricio's is one of only seven families left in Punaca Tinta Maria, which used to have 84 of them, according to a 2013 survey.

There are only about 600 members left of the Uru Indigenous community —



small crops.

A major problem is that the Uru have little access to land.

Their villages are surrounded by members of another Indigenous community called the Aimara, who jealously guard the farmland they occupy with property titles from the government.

The state has announced plans to distribute land to the Uru as well, but the community claims most of it is infertile and useless.

- 'WE HAVE BEEN ORPHANED' -

What is left of the lake is largely an

"Who thought the lake would dry up? Our parents trusted Lake Poopo... It had fish, birds, eggs, everything. It was our source of life," lamented Luis Valero, the spiritual leader of the Uru people of the region.

As his five children chased each other around an unused canoe grounded outside the family's mud hut, the 38-year-old mused: "We have been orphaned."

But Mauricio, wearing a traditional poncho and a hat made of totora — an indigenous reed from which boats used to be fashioned, still holds out hope that things will go back to how they were.



spanned some 3,500 square kilometres (1,350 square miles) — an area more than twice the size of Greater London.

But by the end of 2015 it had "fully evaporated" according to a European Space Agency timeline of satellite images tracking the lake's decline.

Scientific studies have blamed a confluence of factors, including climate change and water extraction for farming and mining in the area on the Bolivian high plains, some 3,700 metres above sea level.

"Here was the lake... It dried up quickly," Mauricio said, kneeling in the dry bed and playing with a miniature wooden boat he had carved himself — pushing it around with a wistful look, like a kid lost in an imaginary world.

which goes back thousands of years in Bolivia and Peru — in Punaca Tinta Maria and the neighbouring settlements of Llapallapani and Vilaneque, according to a 2013 survey.

"Many lived here before," said Cristina Mauricio, a resident of Punaca Tinta Maria who guesses her age at 50.

"They have left. There is no work." Since 2015, rainfall has returned a shallow film of water to parts of the lake, but not enough to navigate or to hold the fish or water birds the Uru — who still call themselves "water people" — used to catch and hunt.

With none of the lake's natural offerings left, the Uru have had to learn new skills, working today as bricklayers or miners, some growing quinoa or other

evaporated bed of salt the village's remaining residents had hoped would be Poopo's last gift to them.

They banded together and invested what little they managed to raise into equipment for a small plant to mine the salt and refine it.

But they hit an unforeseen snag: they could not find the \$500 needed to buy bags to package the salt in.

The business has stalled.

"The Uru will disappear if we do not heed the warnings," senator Lindaaura Rasguido of Bolivia's ruling MAS party said on a visit to the community in October.

She and her delegation were met with traditional dancing and poems in a language very few still speak.

Staring at the bare soil where he once navigated through waves and wind, he said the lake "will return. In five or six years' time, it will be back," he insisted, with more hope than confidence.

A 2020 study in the journal Nature Reviews Earth & Environment said global annual mean lake evaporation rates are forecast to increase 16 per cent by 2100.

And according to the UN, the number of people living in water-scarce areas will rise to between 2.7 and 3.2 billion people by 2050 from 1.9 billion in the early- to mid-2010s.

Natural disasters displaced 30.7 million people within their own countries in 2020, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. — AFP

TRAVEL TALES

French Alps village says goodbye to ski lift of winters past



OLDER RESIDENTS of Saint-Firmin can recall learning to ski on slopes served by one of the first lifts above the village, one that will now be seen only in pictures of days when winter meant abundant snow.

Wearing hard hats and T-shirts in the bright autumn sunshine, volunteers recently gathered to pull down the pylons that had been rusting unused for the past 15 years.

Sparks flew as saws cut through the eight columns that crashed like trees onto the grass of the Valgaudemar valley, the pieces then dismantled and lugged or dragged to the bucket of a waiting tractor.

"We no longer have the climate that produces constant snow, and we can't install snow cannons here," said local councillor Didier Beazon, who enlisted the help of the NGO Mountain Wilderness.

The old lift at Saint-Firmin tops out at 1,550 metres (5,100 feet) and mostly faces south — a situation that effectively dooms its chances to remain a winter sports destination as temperatures have risen across Europe.

The lift, installed in 1963 as newly prosperous post-war generations were flocking to the slopes, will end up in a local scrapyard.

It was the 70th operation to remove obsolete installations, including nearly two dozen abandoned ski lifts, orchestrated by Mountain Wilderness, created in Italy in 1987.



Around 3,000 such installations are rusting across French mountain ranges, it estimates, and the goal is to encourage local authorities to remove them and return the landscape to its pristine state.

"The ultimate goal is to have each developer, each agency, take responsibility for the dismantlement, without the intervention of an NGO or volunteers," said Nicolas Masson, an administrator at Mountain Wilderness's French arm.

"Removing a structure and putting things back in their natural state should be the norm, it's a fundamen-



tal part of sustainable development," he said. "Unfortunately that doesn't always seem so obvious."

- ALTERNATIVE FUTURES -

Other leftover relics include installations, rubble and trash from forestry and agriculture operations such as logging cables or disused gates, or from military or industrial activities.

Some pose dangers, like World War II barbed wire barriers that can injure sheep flocks or deer.

"We know that we won't be able to remove it all ourselves," said Carmen Grasmick, one of the Mountain Wilderness volunteers.

For the NGO, the clean-up campaign also aims to nudge other communities to consider alternatives to focusing almost exclusively on skiing, and develop outdoor activities more in tune with a changing climate.

It notes the high costs in terms of resources for operating a resort, especially as more stations turn to artificial snow-making machines to ensure slopes are available all winter.

French villages in lower altitudes of the Alps as well as the Pyrenees mountains are already confronting the new reality of lifts that may never be turned on again.

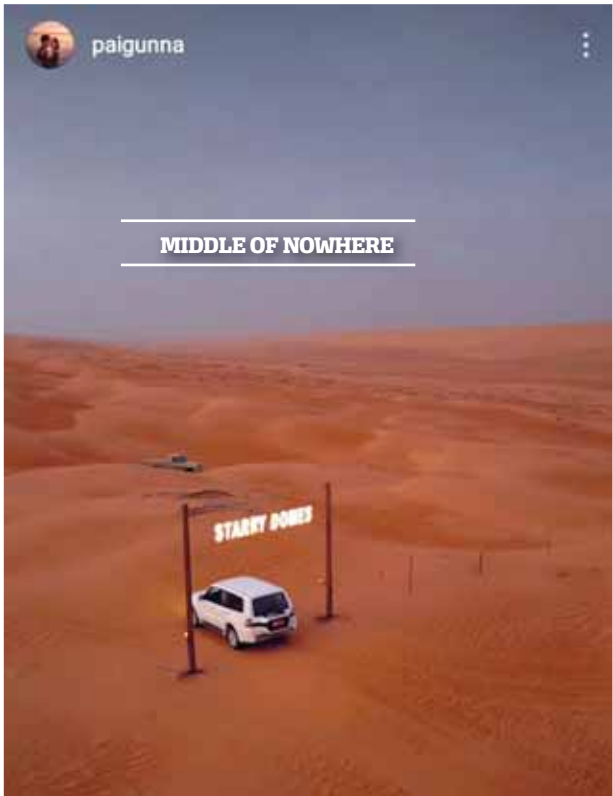
"There will always be people who are sad because it's where they learned to ski, it happens each time," Grasmick said.

"But there are places like here where they have the courage to turn the page. Because in any case, there's nothing else to be done." — AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



AROUND THE WORLD

SCIENCE

It Takes a Lot of Elephant Brains to Solve This Mystery



AN ELEPHANT'S TRUNK has 40,000 muscles and is strong enough to uproot a tree yet sensitive enough to suction up fragile tortilla chips.

But how does an elephant's brain help accomplish these feats? That has been difficult to study, according to Michael Brecht, a neuroscientist at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Weighing in excess of 10 pounds, the elephant's brain degrades quickly after death.

Brecht and his colleagues were fortunate enough to gain access to a trove of elephant brains from animals that had died of natural causes or were euthanised for health reasons and ended up either frozen or in a fixative substance at the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin.

In a recent study in the journal *Science Advances*, the researchers reported elephants had more facial neurons than any other land mammal. The study also helped to pinpoint major differences between the neural wirings of African savanna elephants and Asian elephants.

Using the brains of four Asian elephants and four African savanna elephants, the researchers homed in on the facial nucleus, a bundle of neurons concentrated in the brainstem. In mammals, these neurons serve as the control centre for facial muscles.

The researchers divided the facial nucleus into regions of neurons that controlled the elephant's ears, lips and trunk. African elephants sported 63,000 facial neurons, while their Asian cousins had 54,000.

Brecht's team expected both African savanna and Asian elephants to possess massive stores of facial neurons.

While the animals look similar, they have major facial differences. African elephants have much larger ears, which they fan out when they charge. The researchers found a neurological correlation — African elephants devoted roughly 12,000 facial neurons to controlling just their ears. This not only dwarfs the amount of neurons controlling Asian elephant ears, it is nearly 3,000 more neurons than are needed to operate the entire human face.

Another major difference is how each elephant wields its trunk, which requires nearly half of the elephant's total facial neurons to operate. African elephants utilise two fingerlike projections on the tips of their trunks to pinch objects. Asian elephants have only one fingerlike projection and grasp objects by wrapping their trunks around them. The researchers pinpointed two neural regions in African elephants that probably correlated to fine finger control at the tips of their trunks; those regions were less defined in Asian elephants. — **NYT**

CHANGING WORLD

Ancient Greek artifacts go on display for first time, amid protests



FIFTEEN ANCIENT GREEK artifacts from the private Cycladic art collection of a US billionaire went on display for the first time on Wednesday in Athens, under an agreement which has stirred controversy in Greece.

The Cycladic antiquities, which Greece says are "masterpieces of unique archaeological value," travelled to Athens following a deal between Greece and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art for the repatriation of 161 artifacts collected over the years by Leonard N Stern, a businessman and philanthropist.

Speaking at a ceremony on the eve of the exhibition's opening to the public, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said it was "truly a special day for the cultural life of the country," describing the works as "priceless antiquities of rare beauty which are returning to their home."

After being displayed for a year at the Cycladic Museum in Athens, the 15 works — the most significant of the collection — will be displayed in New York from early 2024 for 25 years. They will gradually be returned to Greece.

The Stern collection features some 161 works made in the Cyclades cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea, primarily in the early Bronze Age. Greece's culture ministry says many of the objects in the collection, which includes figurines and vases, are considered to be "extremely rare" or unique examples of the art and technique of the Cycladic civilisation.

The deal between Greece and The Met, which was ratified by Greek lawmakers in September, has stirred controversy in Greece, where the opposition as well as many archaeologists and conservators have called for their immediate, permanent return.

Five unions of archaeologists, conservators, and ministry

employees called the agreement "a scandal" in a statement ahead of the opening.

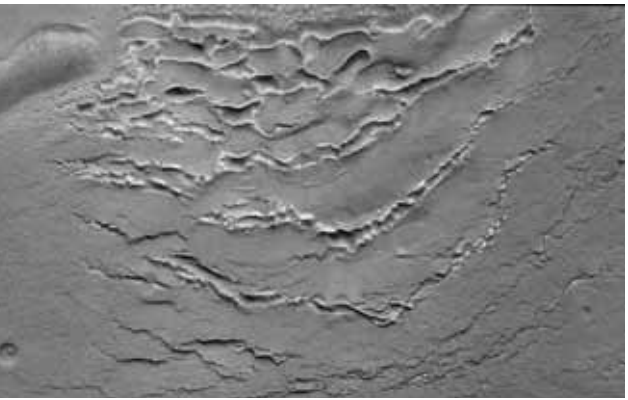
"These objects have not been checked legally as to whether they are authentic or fake, nor how they got from the Cyclades to the collection of a multimillionaire in New York," they said in the statement.

A small group of protesters held a white banner outside the museum during the event on Wednesday reading, "They're stolen." Mitsotakis defended the deal as "a blueprint for other solutions to come", hinting at the "Elgin Marbles", as they are often known — 75 metres of Parthenon frieze, 15 metopes and 17 sculptures — which Greece has campaigned for since they were removed by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 19th century when he was ambassador to the Ottoman Empire then ruling Greece.

The British Museum, custodian of the marbles, has ruled out returning them. — **Reuters**

SPACE

House-Hunting on Mars Has Already Started



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is a wild card, and moving there is bound to be expensive. But one of the best options for shelter when humans finally make it to the red planet will be subterranean caves. These rocky hollows, which exist in droves on both Earth and the moon, are natural buffers against the harsh conditions of Mars.

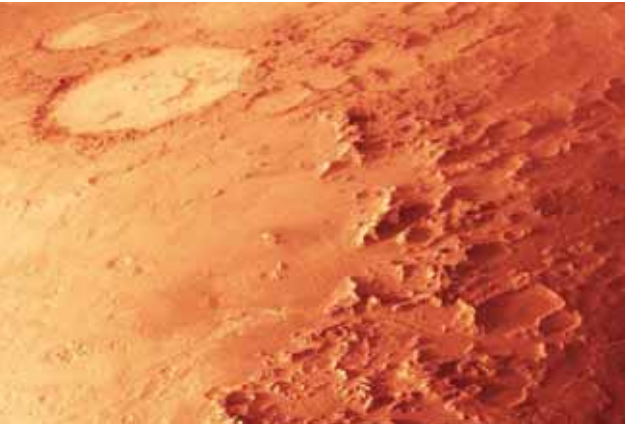
At the recent Geological Society of America Connects 2022 meeting in Denver, researchers pinpointed nine leading cave candidates worthy of future exploration. All of these grottos appear to extend at least some distance underground, and they're close to landing sites accessible to a lightweight

ing two criteria. First, they required that a cave be within roughly 60 miles of a suitable spacecraft landing site. Second, they stipulated that high-resolution imagery be available.

Bardabelias and her collaborators defined a suitable landing site as one below an elevation of roughly 3,300 feet.

The team required that top-shelf imagery be available for each cave candidate. That honour belongs to HiRISE, or the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment camera aboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

There were 139 apparent caves that satisfied the



rover.

These structures would offer a respite from the challenging Martian environment, said Nicole Bardabelias, a geoscientist at the University of Arizona. "Everything at the surface is subject to harsh radiation, possible meteorite or micrometeorite bombardment and really large day-to-night temperature swings," she said.

To home in on Mars' most sought-after real estate, Bardabelias and her colleagues consulted the Mars Global Cave Candidate Catalog. This compendium, based on imagery collected by instruments aboard the Mars Odyssey spacecraft and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, inventories over 1,000 candidate caves and other peculiar-looking features.

The researchers narrowed the catalog by impos-

team's criteria, and Bardabelias and her collaborators manually examined images of each one. After disregarding features such as bridge-shaped rock formations that obviously weren't caves, the team analysed the remaining pitlike features. The researchers homed in on only those that appeared to extend some distance underground, which yielded a sample of nine leading cave candidates.

These potential caves are worth a closer look, Bardabelias said. But none of the rovers operating on Mars are close enough to explore any, so that task falls to spacecraft orbiting the red planet. Follow-up HiRISE images taken from different angles and in different lighting conditions will reveal new details about these caves, Bardabelias said. — **AFP**

art & life

Local Scene

f t i y v @omanoobserver

SUNDAY | NOVEMBER 6 | 2022



Al Qabil: A hidden gem in the desert — is now ready to welcome tourists

By Rumpa Mitra
Insta: @rumpa_mitra

There are many surprising things about Al Qabil. This agricultural village in the Al Sharqiyah Governorate is a hidden gem that remains to be unknown to a lot of people but taking a stroll during its Saturday morning souq unveiled many interesting facts.

Having been invited by Fahar bin Hamood al Farsi, the young Omani running the Instagram account @Generations_oman, we left Muscat at 4 am without expectations of what was awaiting us in the area.

Fahar has been investing his time to put both Al Qabil and his home town Mudhairib on the tourist maps that part of his effort is to extend invites to media and influencers to shed light on the area.

Fahar shared that as of today, they are organising a local morning souq in the village at least once a month.

"Winter is coming and the villagers are planning to organise regular souq meets every Saturday with different themes. It will be an ideal place to showcase the handcrafted items by the locals and sell them," Fahar shared.

He added, "Also they are trying to create a place where the locals and the tourists can come and meet each other to exchange the culture and tradition more conventionally."

During the souq market day, kids and adults alike dress up in their best clothes that mirror

how their ancient souqs used to do.

Jihan al Harthiyah, the souq leader looked very determined to convert this Village souq day into a festival day for Al Qabil.

"I have been to different villages and weekend markets but the vibes at Al Qabil were a different experience than any of my previous ones. It was 7 am when we reached near to the souq area, the villagers were busy preparing their stalls and decorating and arranging their products. It felt heartwarming to us when they approached every tourist visiting the souq to greet and accompany them," she said.

"Overall it felt like all the villagers merged like a huge family celebrating their weekend together, spreading their deep-rooted culture and showcasing the crafts at the same time. It was more like a family-oriented gathering welcoming international tourists to be part of it," she added.

Villagers came with homemade items to sell and some of them were exhibiting the process in front of your eyes.

Rabae al Maskari, who was making the Mandoos using palm leaves was catching everyone's attention though. Instead of making the flat mats or regular items that we see, he was preparing different household items using palm leaves.

Other villagers were selling traditional dress materials having intricate handwork on them, not to mention spices honey, and date stalls are mandatory in any souq you visit.

There were also ladies making wristbands and key chains using goat wool. Surprisingly I have never seen these items except in the mountain areas. A teenage girl was showcasing her drawing talent, also some small toy stalls were there with kids around them. The smell from the different food stalls was creating an aroma around the entire place.

Mostly when we visit any souq it is all about the shops and the items but Al Qabil Village souq was providing a different experience to add to your memory. It was kind of a festival among the villagers where the tourists were allowed to blend smoothly.

Every villager was interacting with the tourists and noticed that most of them were explaining the culture, craft, food or lifestyle and some were busy attending to the buyers who wanted the items to take back to their own country as perfect souvenirs. Generations_oman and the leader of the souq Jihan Al Harthiyah were thoughtful enough that they even organised some entertainment for the people attending the village souq. To entertain the crowd they organised a dramatic entry of blogger Amelia, who promotes the Omani villages and villager's life, craft, and products through her Instagram page. The horse and donkey ride was stealing the show, not only the kids but witnessed many tourists taking the short rides to take pictures. Here want to mention, no animals were harmed and villagers take care of them.



P10

OMANI DUO FINISHES RUNNERS-UP



P13

STONE LAID FOR NEW IRON ORE PELLETISING PROJECT



P20

AL QABIL - A HIDDEN GEM IN DESERT WELCOMES TOURISTS



■ MUSCAT

COUNCIL OF OMAN’S ANNUAL SESSION

Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Council of Oman will open its fourth annual session today. The State Council will commence its fourth annual session (2022-2023) of the seventh term (2019-2023) while Majlis Ash’hura will inaugurate its fourth annual session of the ninth term (2019-2023), separately at their premises in Al Bustan, today. During its third annual session that ended on July 14, the State Council achieved a lot within the framework of its financial and legislative powers set forth by the Basic Statute of the State and the Law on the Council of Oman.

DETAILS ON P2

OMAN FLAYS ATTACK ON IMRAN KHAN

The Sultanate of Oman condemned the attempted assassination of Imran Khan, former prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Sultanate of Oman affirmed its solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan reiterating its constant stance rejecting all forms of violence and terrorism. Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has asked chief justice to investigate an alleged murder plot against Imran Khan. “I will write to the Chief Justice to form a commission comprising all judges of the Supreme Court to investigate the allegations,” Sharif said.

■ A GEM OF ANCIENT OMAN



One of the oldest archaeological sites in Oman, Harat Al Bilad is a cultural treasure. Located in the Wilayat of Manah, this architectural masterpiece has four mosques, 376 ancient houses, and almost 250 wells which date back over nine centuries, opening a window into Oman’s vibrant heritage and shed light on the lives of ancient times. **DETAILS ON P2**

125 in fray for OCCI elections

KABEER YOUSUF
 @kabeeryousef

A total of 125 candidates including 116 Omanis and 9 expatriates are in the fray for the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the BoD

of OCCI branches. The elections are scheduled for November 22. The OCCI announced the candidates and voters list on Thursday. The list runs up to 295 pages. There are 27 contestants from Muscat Governorate, while 11 from Dhofar, eight from North Al Sharqiyah, 10 each from South Al Sharqiyah and North Al Batinah, nine from South Al Batinah, six contestants from Al Wusta, eight from Al Dhahirah, six from Al Dakhiliyah, seven from Al Buraimi and eight are seeking the positions from Musandam Governorate. **TURN TO P2**

Oman to take part in COP27

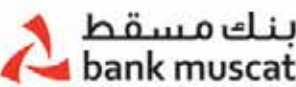
DELEGATED BY HM, AUFI LEAVES FOR EGYPT

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Saturday left for the Arab Republic of Egypt to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27), which will be held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from November 6 to 18.

The COP27 is part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) international environmental treaty signed by 154 states and aims to limit the impact of human activities on the climate. The Signatory Countries pledged to return to the meeting this year to agree on a further reduction of green-house gases and carbon dioxide emissions with the objective of keeping temperature rises within 1.5 °C limits.

The conference has four major objectives namely: mitigation of the emission of greenhouse gases, adaptation (how are countries going to adapt and help others do the same), climate finance with many finance-related discussions are already on the agenda and co-operation among the participating countries to reduce global warming to less than 2°C. The realisation of these objectives requires quick measures that contribute to achieving the aspirations of all parties, which is the implementation of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

It is noteworthy that Oman announced the realisation of zero carbon neutrality by 2050 through an ambitious national plan and the establishment of the Oman Sustainability Centre based on the outcomes of the carbon management lab to keep pace with the global action on reducing carbon emission. — ONA



Celebrating 10 years of Special Opportunities

From day-to-day transactions to fulfilling big dreams, Meethaq is proud to serve customers all across Oman with a Sharia-compliant suite of retail banking products and services.



 2465 6666

www.meethaq.om



Pioneer of Islamic Banking in Oman



Council of Oman’s fourth annual session begins today

MUSCAT: Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Council of Oman will open its fourth annual session on Sunday.

The State Council will commence its fourth annual session (2022-2023) of the seventh term (2019-2023) while Majlis Ash’shura will inaugurate its fourth annual session of the ninth term (2019-2023), separately at their premises in Al Bustan.

During its third annual session that ended on July 14, the State Council achieved a lot within the framework of its financial and

legislative powers set forth by the Basic Statute of the State and the Law on the Council of Oman.

Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, said the State Council held six regular sessions during which 16 topics were discussed including draft laws referred to it by the Council of Ministers. The State Council also approved a number of studies and proposals presented by its standing committees.

The State Council, during its third annual session, accomplished a number of draft

laws and referred them to His Majesty the Sultan namely the draft amendments of the National Records and Archives Law, the draft amendments of the Security Law and the draft amendments of the Notary Public Law, Al Saadi said.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura, pointed out that the first meeting will discuss the plans of the standing committees for the fourth annual session.

During its first regular meeting, Majlis Ash’shura will be briefed about the draft general budget

of the state for the fiscal year 2023 which was forwarded to the council by the government and is currently under study by the economic and financial committee.

Also to be discussed by Majlis Ash’shura are ministerial statements of the previous annual session, the economic and financial committee’s report on the mining sector, the establishment of an Omani investment centre and the government’s plan to deal with revenues accrued from the difference between the estimated and the actual price of oil.

125 in fray for OCCI poll

FROM PAGE1

In addition, there will be six members representing Oman’s Public Shareholding Companies and nine foreigners who hold golden visas under the long-term residence status in the category of Foreign Investors Companies.

The voters and candidates are free to raise any objections to the list from Sunday (November 6) till Tuesday (November 8), with the Appeals Committee, according to the Elections Committee, which is supervising the OCCI electoral process for 2022-2026.

Any appeals against the list of candidates can only be submitted by Friday (November 10).

The OCCI Elections Committee has approved the election mechanism for the BoD elections and to all of its branches and opened candidacy for membership with the chamber from September 25 until September 29 via its website.

The prime criteria for the candidacy for membership of the BoD and the Boards of Directors

of the branches is to be an Omani, except for the candidates for membership of the board from among the representatives of public shareholding companies listed on Muscat Stock Exchange, and foreign investors who have obtained an investor residency.

The candidate should hold a Bachelor’s degree or have practical experience in doing business in the private sector for a period of not less than 10 years, as well as having been a member of the chamber for a period of not less than five years, and his age shall not be less than 30 years, and he shall hold good conduct and reputation.

Additionally, the candidate shouldn’t be an employee in one of the units of the state’s administrative apparatus and other public legal persons or a paid worker in the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman or abroad, with the exception of the executive heads of public shareholding companies who are candidates for membership of the board.

Oman to host Regional Cybersecurity Week

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will host the Regional Cybersecurity Week from Sunday.

As many as 400 specialists from 45 countries are taking part in the event which is organised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in collaboration with the Arab Regional Cyber Security Centre of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The activities of the week include conducting the 10th Regional Cybersecurity Drill for Arab countries and the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the 10th Regional Conference on Cybersecurity which will be held under the theme ‘Innovation in Cybersecurity Industry’, among other events.

— ONA

Gem of a restoration of ancient Oman

HARAT AL BILAD, ONE THE OLDEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, OPENS WINDOW TO LIFE CENTURIES AGO

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, NOV. 5

One of the oldest archaeological sites in Oman, Harat Al Bilad is a cultural treasure. Located in the Wilayat of Manah in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, this architectural masterpiece contains four mosques, 376 ancient houses, and almost 250 wells which date back over nine centuries, opening a window into Oman’s vibrant heritage and shed light on the lives of ancient times.

Harat Al Bilad, an ancient settlement quarter (harah), is a fine example of fortified town on the desert borderlands, pierced by four gateways, surrounded by a stone and mud brick wall, and with two formidable watchtowers.

Before the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism initiated the conservation of Harat Al Bilad in the early-2000s, it had been uninhabited for decades and was quickly attaining a state of extreme dilapidation. This was when the government stepped in and purchased houses from owners. And today one can see the ancient Oman in modern Manah.

According to OmanTripper, a blog written by Ali Mohammadi documenting the beauty of Oman, “Harat Al Bilad is much more unique not only it is probably the largest old quarter neighbourhood (harah) in Oman, with a couple of really old mosques, but that it has also been preserved and restored in its entirety unlike, for example, Harat Al Yemen in Izki.”

The history researcher, Khalfan bin Salim al Busaidi, a resident of Manah, in his book Grants and Gifts in the History of the People in Manah, said Harat Al Bilad



dates back to the fifth century AD. The scholar Shaikh Nejad bin Ibrahim was among the first who settled in Harat Al Bilad and founded Al Yamania Quarter in 470 AD. Harat Al Bilad has been referred to by several names such as Manah Fortress and Fortress of bin Nejad. It was the seat of an active scientific movement and saw reproduction of many books and Fiqh encyclopedias.

The visitors of the harah, when entering the main door from the north, will find Bab Al Sabah, (Morning Gate), which was built close to the wilayat’s market, in



The ancient settlement quarter (harah) is a fine example of fortified town on the desert borderlands, pierced by four gateways, surrounded by a stone and mud brick wall, and with two formidable watchtowers

addition to other doors scattered throughout the harah like Bab Al Qasab, Bab Al Nasr, Bab Al Rawla and Al Burj and Bab Al Dujain.

Inside the harah stands the long corridor that divides the harah into two halves, east and west, through the lanes, corners, corridors, narrow alleys, balconies, arches, gates and Sabla (public council) of sons of Rashid, Al Mutaila Sabla and the Bustan Sabla, where the people of harah used to meet.

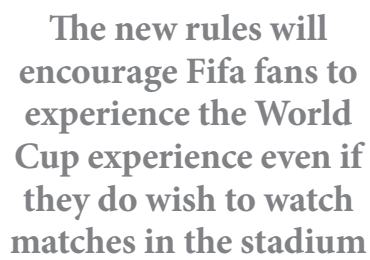
Harat Al Bilad includes 4 old mosques spread along its central passage: Al Ali, Al Ain, Al Shara, Al Rahba, and Quran schools, in addition to a furnace that was used in certain occasions. It also has natural springs like Ain Bani Nejad, named after Shaikh Nejad bin Ibrahim, which is a Waqaf property.

Oman handed over the Harat Al Bilad project, which was recently restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, to Al Amara Al Ariqa Company in 2018. Al Amara Al Ariqa, under this agreement, undertakes all the management of this historical harah that attracts a lot of tourists as it is one of the ancient cultural settlements in the Sultanate of Oman.

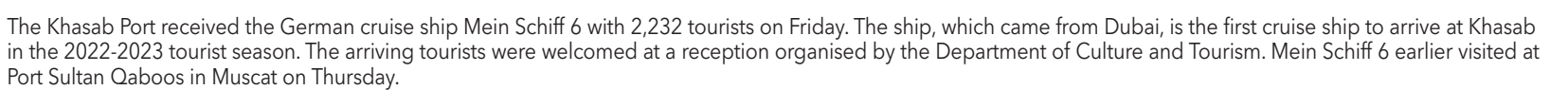


VINOD NAIR
 @vinot_nair

World Cup fans (Hayya cardholders) can enter the Sultanate of Oman with a free



Ticket fares for shuttle flights have been reduced from the prices earlier announced by the airline.



KABEER YOUSUF
 @kabeeryousef

“As a responsible business focused on long-term sustainable growth, we have made the decision to close some VOX Cinemas in the Sultanate of Oman, with

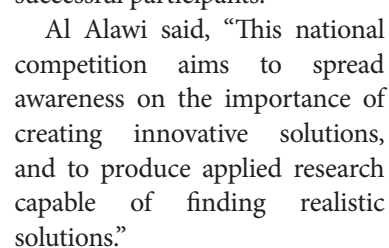
“Following an operational review into the performance of

"We are grateful to all the

However, movie lovers can still enjoy a cinematic experience at other VOX Cinemas across the Sultanate of Oman.

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
 @Afrahalbalushia

Dr Ali bin Khamis al Alawi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani



Safia al Rashidiyah of Innovation Oasis Company, said: "The award fields have been diversified to include various problems; pollution, food security, climate change, safe disposal of waste, recycling."



Tender Number	Tender Main Scopes	Release Request for Bids	Last date for Specifications Purchase	Last date of Bid Submission	Tender Fee OMR
5 / 2022	Designing Network Infrastructure , Delivering, mounting, configuring and migrating all equipment, software and licenses (perimeter and Data center Firewall , NAC solution , access and core switches , and security end point solution)	6 November 2022	15 November 2022 3:00 PM	1 December 2022 3:00 PM	100/- OMR Non Refundable

- All RFQs submitted become the property of CMA.
- Tenderer should submit a Tender Bond not less than (2%) of the Tender value, valid for Ninety (90) Days from the latest date of submission.
- The CMA reserves the right to cancel any RFQ at any time and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Proposals, or any or all of the items in one of the Proposals, without assigning any reasons.
- CMA is not obligated to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

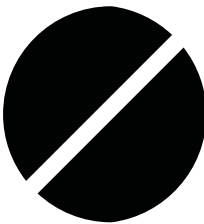
Name of beneficiary: Capital Market authority
Account no : 0423019706330018
Bank: Bank Muscat- Corporate Branch- CBD
SWIFT code: BMUSOMRXXXX
Please attach a copy of the deposit receipt

If the tender is not awarded to the company, the bank guarantee will be refunded.
For inquiries, please contact :
e-mail : admin@cma.gov.om
Telephone Number : 24823299
From 8 am to 3 pm.
Sunday to Thursday.





CHECK



MEDICATIONS
LOSE THEIR
EFFICACY AFTER
THE EXPIRY DATE.
IF THE EFFICACY
IS LESS, THE
DRUG WON'T
HELP A PATIENT
IN CONTROLLING
SUGAR, BP OR
BLOOD CLOTS

EXP

RY

BALQUEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

CAN I SAFELY TAKE A MEDICATION if it has reached the expiration date? Which drugs should never be used past their expiration date? For many patients, these questions arise because medications can be expensive to replace expired ones. But is it safe to use expired medicines? Doctors say one should not take medicines which are beyond use date. The US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) said one should not use expired medicines because of potential toxic risks. For example, blood thinners, which prove less effective and can lead to serious complications.

Dr K P Raman, senior cardiologist, said there are three issues. “The first one is the efficacy. Does it deteriorate after the expiry date? Secondly, do the adverse effects increase after the expiry date? Lastly, any ill health after consuming expired medicine will haunt the user’s mind. Did it happen because I took expired medicine? It may be, in reality, a coincidence. However, the patient will blame the doctor and may even sue him/her.”

“Because of these reasons, I will not prescribe expired medicines to any patient. Moreover, the law prohibits it. But I, being a doctor, know very well that most medicines are safe and effective after the expiration date, at least for a couple of years, and I consume myself being fully aware of which expired medicines. I should avoid, for example, Tetracyclines, Nitroglycerin, insulin, etc. There is, in fact, a big list. Nevertheless, I do not recommend self-medication. One also should take into account how the expired medicine was stored. Was it kept in the recommended temperature zone or in a hot, humid place?” The US FDA conducted a study on 100 drugs and found that 90 per cent of medicines are safe and effective even 15 years after expiry.

To ensure potency and efficiency do not store medicines in bathroom cupboards (hot and humid). Store them in a dry and cool place. Do not leave them in vehicles in hot weather. Keep them in tight bottles.

Dr Dilip Singhvi, a specialist in Internal Medicine, said, “As per the law, it is mandatory to have the expiry date mentioned on each medicine.”

The expiration date on a drug does stand for something, but probably not what you think it does. This is the date at which the manufacturer can still guarantee the full efficacy and safety of the drug. If the efficacy is less, the drug won’t help a patient in controlling sugar, BP or blood clots.

If expired medication is taken, a person may have an allergic reaction to it. Liver or kidney damage is likely from expired tetracycline medication. Therefore, it is important to check the expiry date before taking the medication, and properly dispose of the expired medication.

DATE BEFORE POPPING PILLS



Italy demands countries take responsibility for migrant boats

ROME: A row escalated over who should take care of migrants rescued by charity groups off the Italian coast, with Italy insisting that countries whose flag was flown by the boats should bear some of the responsibility and Norway disagreeing.

Three charity vessels holding almost 1,000 migrants have been at sea off Italy for more than a week waiting for permission from the new rightist government in Rome to dock. All their requests have so far been rejected, they say. Two are flying the Norwegian flag and one is flying the German flag.

Italy last week sent letters to the embassies of Germany and Norway, saying ships by non-governmental organisations flying their flags were not following European security rules and were undermining the fight against illegal immigration.

But Norway replied that it could not intervene.

“Norway has no responsibility under human rights conventions or the law of the sea for persons taken on board private Norwegian-flagged vessels in the Mediterranean,” Ambassador Johan Vibe said.

The German Embassy on Wednesday urged Italy to provide help swiftly, saying the NGO ships made an important contribution to saving lives at sea.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi told a news conference on Friday that the German-flagged Humanity 1 with 179 people aboard, including more than 100 unaccompanied minors, was heading towards the Sicilian city of Catania.

He said the boat would be



Migrants prepare to get on board the Ocean Viking ship sailing in the international waters off Libya in the Mediterranean Sea, after being rescued by European maritime-humanitarian organisation ‘SOS Mediterranee’. – AFP

allowed to stop close to the port and Italy would take charge of those facing health emergencies and the minors. But the boat and the rest of those onboard would then be sent out of territorial waters.

“We won’t neglect humanitarian obligations... but we want to stick to the point regarding duties of flag states,” Piantedosi said.

Petra Krischok, a press officer at the German NGO who is aboard the vessel, said the migrants were sleeping on the deck and could soon face rough seas after days of good weather.

More than a quarter of the group had been sick with flu-like symptoms, she said in e-mailed comments.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

The two vessels flying Norwegian flags have more than 800 people onboard and are sailing off Sicily.

Norway told Italy “the primary responsibility for coordinating the work to ensure a safe port for those in distress at sea lies with the state responsible for the search and rescue area where such assistance has been rendered”.

“Neighbouring coastal states also have a responsibility in such matters,” the ambassador’s statement added.

On Thursday, charity SOS Mediterranee, which operates one of the two boats, the Ocean Viking, said it had asked Greece, Spain and France to help as Italy and Malta had not responded to

its docking requests.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told RMC-BFM TV that international law said Italy should take in the migrants, but added that Paris and Berlin were ready to offer assistance.

“We have told our Italian friends, together with our German friends, that we are ready to take in, as we have done in previous cases, some of the women and children so that Italy is not alone in receiving them,” he said.

Migrant numbers have surged in Italy over the last week, with more than 6,200 people arriving since October 27, compared to 1,400 in the same period in 2021, government data shows.

— Reuters

Pro-Bolsonaro protests dwindle as Brazil handover starts

SAO PAULO: Brazilian police said they had nearly finished clearing hundreds of roadblocks by supporters of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who have been protesting since his election loss to veteran leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

After Lula’s narrow victory on Sunday, Bolsonaro supporters blocked highways and camped out at army bases to demand a military intervention to keep the defeated incumbent in power.

“All federal highways are now free of roadblocks,” though five partial closures remain in two of Brazil’s 27 states, federal highway police said. The blockades threatened to cause havoc in Latin America’s largest economy, but diminished since Bolsonaro urged supporters to “unblock the roads.” Police have broken up more than 960 roadblocks, they said.

Pro-Bolsonaro protests outside military bases had dwindled in Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Ex-army captain Bolsonaro was silent for nearly two days after the election, raising fears he would try to cling to power with the backing of hardline supporters.

But after a series of key

allies acknowledged the result, he said he would respect the constitution, and authorised the start of the transition process for Lula’s inauguration on January 1.

But Bolsonaro has still not explicitly conceded defeat nor congratulated Lula.

The outgoing president met briefly on Thursday with vice-president-elect Geraldo Alckmin, who is heading Lula’s transition team.

Alckmin said the meeting had been “positive,” and that Bolsonaro had promised “all information and assistance needed for a smooth transition.”

Although Bolsonaro urged supporters to lift their roadblocks, he also encouraged “legitimate demonstrations,” raising fears Brazil may still face turbulence.

In the latest violent incident linked to the divisive election campaign, a 12-year-old girl shot at a Lula victory party in the city of Belo Horizonte died on Thursday of her wounds. Ex-metalworker Lula, 77, who led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, won an unprecedented third term with 50.9 per cent of the vote, to 49.1 per cent for Bolsonaro — the closest presidential election in the country’s modern history. — AFP



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire at a cafe in Kostroma. – Reuters

13 killed in Russian nightclub fire

MOSCOW: At least 13 people died after a fire broke out in a busy nightclub in the Russian city of Kostroma, officials said on Saturday. Kostroma is a city of around 270,000 people, 300 km north-east of Moscow on the banks of the river Volga.

The fire took place in the early hours of the morning at Polygon, a multi-purpose recreation venue used as a cafe. Rescuers said 250 people were evacuated from the building. State media cited investigators as saying the fire started after a man fired a flare gun indoors, setting the ceiling alight. Police have now detained a man in connection with the incident, the interior ministry said.

“After firing a flare, decorative elements on the ceiling caught fire and the fire began to spread instantly. Very quickly the room

began to fill with acrid smoke and the evacuation exits were difficult to see. There was pushing and panic,” TASS news agency reported, citing a source.

Most of those killed in the fire had been found in the smoking room, utility room and near the toilets, TASS reported, citing emergency services. “As a result of the fire, 13 people died; the number of dead and injured is being clarified,” the Investigating Committee said in a statement. The fire was extinguished as of 7:29 am (0429 GMT), according to the regional governor.

Video shared by investigators showed firefighters spraying water on what appeared to be the smouldering, collapsed roof of the building. According to rescuers, the fire covered an area of 3,500 square metres. — Reuters

Pope thrills small Gulf Catholic community with big Mass

AWALI: Pope Francis said Mass for thousands of Catholics in Bahrain on Saturday, thrilling members of the small foreign Catholic community from around the Gulf and urging them to show kindness to their hosts, even if they are sometimes looked down on.

The crowd of about 30,000 people that filled Bahrain’s National Stadium was the second-largest gathering for a papal Mass on the Arabian Peninsula, following one that drew more than 100,000 in the United Arab Emirates in 2019.

“This is a miracle,” said Mary Grace Fortes, 36, a Filipino who works at the reception of a hotel in Bahrain. “So important for us.”

Like many Filipino women who work outside their country, Fortes is married and sends money back home to help support her family, including her husband and 16-year-old son.

Hundreds of Catholic foreign workers were bussed in over the 25-km King Fahd Causeway that links Bahrain with Saudi Arabia.

“The Bahrainis arranged everything perfectly for us,” said Jos Chazoor, 53, who is from Kerala in India and works as a manager for a medical equipment company in Saudi Arabia.

Chazoor’s 75-year-old mother was too overcome with emotion to



Pope Francis arrives to preside over a holy mass at Bahrain National Stadium. – Reuters

respond to a reporter’s questions just before the pope arrived in the packed stadium to an enthusiastic welcome by faithful waving yellow-and-white Vatican flags.

“She is too thrilled to talk,” said Chazoor, who drives with his mother over the causeway from Saudi Arabia regularly to attend Mass in one of Bahrain’s two churches, which provide pastoral care for the some 160,000 Catholics

in Bahrain. In his homily, Francis appeared to praise Bahrain’s relatively open policy towards non-Muslims.

“This very land is a living image of coexistence in diversity, and indeed an image of our world, increasingly marked by the constant migration of peoples and by a pluralism of ideas, customs and traditions,” he said.

As Francis was driven on a

open popemobile through the crowd on the stadium’s pitch just before the start of the Mass, a speaker on the altar platform shouted “God bless the pope, God bless the royal family.”

The prayers of the faithful during the Mass were read in languages spoken by foreign workers including Tagalog, Swahili, Malayalam, Tamil and Konkani. — Reuters



Marine Le Pen and newly elected French far-right party Rassemblement National (RN)'s president Jordan Bardella attend the party's congress in Paris. – AFP

27-year-old Bardella to succeed Marine Le Pen

PARIS: France's far-right National Rally on Saturday designated Jordan Bardella, its 27-year-old rising star, to succeed Marine Le Pen as party chief and pursue efforts to move the group toward the political mainstream. Bardella, who was widely expected to win as Le Pen's protege, won 85 per cent of the votes from party members, beating Louis Aliot, mayor of the southern city of Perpignan, who garnered 15 per cent. A beaming Le Pen announced the result during a meeting in Paris. His nomination comes after the party had its best-ever showing in parliamentary elections earlier this year, gaining 89 seats even after Le Pen failed to unseat Emmanuel Macron in her third run for the presidency. "Over 40 years of struggle, the National Front succeeded in putting all the major issues facing our society at the heart of public debate," Le Pen said, referring to the party's former name. Bardella has embraced Le

Pen's efforts to shed the virulent anti-Semitic and extremist views fomented by her father, party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was excluded in 2015. But the National Rally was rocked this week by the suspension of one of its parliamentarians, accused of making a racist outburst against a fellow lawmaker in parliament. Bardella also faces the daunting task of getting the party on solid financial footing as it faces inquiries over alleged misuse of public funds by party members, including Le Pen. Brought up in a gritty Paris suburb by his Italian-born mother, Bardella promotes a slick image, is rarely seen out of a suit, and has impressed both admirers and critics with sharp performances in election debates. "One of the things I'm most proud of is helping a new generation of leaders and lawmakers to emerge... who resemble the people and convey its aspirations," Le Pen said. — AFP

Trump signals 2024 comeback

WASHINGTON: Kicked off Twitter and Facebook after his supporters stormed the US Capitol, Donald Trump eventually set up his own platform Truth Social, declaring in April 2022 after a stumbling launch: "I'm Back! #COVFEFE." Yet to concede his loss to Joe Biden, Trump is now signalling he will seek the White House again in 2024. And with midterm elections on Tuesday, he is doubling down on voting conspiracy theories he has wielded ever since the 2016 election, which he won, and amplified since his defeat four years later. In the past 58 days, Trump has shared about 100 posts on Truth Social casting doubt on the integrity of US elections, according to an analysis of the former president's more than 1,200 interactions in that period. "Here we go again!" Trump wrote on November 1, sharing a



Donald Trump during a rally in Florence, Arizona. – AFP

misleading headline about ballots in Pennsylvania, a swing state he lost to Biden but which next week could determine if Republicans win back the Senate. "Rigged Election!" Trump added. The tactics mirror his 2020 playbook, when he tweeted repeatedly before the election that mail-in ballots were rife with fraud. Dozens of court cases have since ruled otherwise. But such misinformation

could undermine confidence as Americans vote in the first national polls since the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, experts say. "If leaders tell their followers that elections are unreliable, their followers believe them," Russell Muirhead, professor of politics and democracy at Dartmouth College, said. "Trump's insistence that elections are flawed (when they're not) is doing one thing: it is

corroding American democracy." Trump posts often on Truth Social, sometimes dozens of times a day. In the last two months, he has attacked Biden and Democrats, criticised ongoing investigations against him and glorified his own rallies and accomplishments. Trump has also lavished praise on Republicans who support his stolen-election claims, such as Kari Lake, who has signalled she may reject the results if she loses her bid to become Arizona governor. And he has engaged more brazenly than ever with extremist content, including dozens of posts from promoters of the QAnon conspiracy theory. Although Trump's reach on Truth Social is relatively small — 4.46 million compared to the 88.8 million he enjoyed on Twitter — experts say the misinformation he spreads reverberates across the Internet. — AFP

■ PROTEST FOR PEACE



People demonstrate for peace and against Russia's invasion of Ukraine during a protest in Rome on Friday. – Reuters

Nearly 100-year-old Mahathir to run in general election

LANGKAWI: Mahathir Mohamad, the nearly 100-year-old elder statesman of Malaysian politics, filed his candidacy on Saturday in what is likely to be his final race, as campaigning for upcoming general elections began. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob called for elections 10 months ahead of schedule, with the graft-tainted ruling party of jailed ex-leader Najib Razak seeking to cement its political comeback four years after it was dramatically voted out. A Guinness World Record holder for being the "world's oldest current prime minister" when he became premier for a

second time in 2018, the 97-year-old Mahathir will stand again to defend his parliamentary seat in the holiday island of Langkawi in the November 19 vote. Visibly slowed by age but still looking healthy, Mahathir was greeted by dozens of supporters waving flags of his Homeland Fighters' Party as he arrived at a local government office in Kuah, the island's main town, to register his candidacy. Mahathir told reporters that he stood a "good chance" of winning and laughed off suggestions he should retire. "I'm still standing around and talking to you, I think making



Mahathir Mohamad heading to the nomination centre in Langkawi. – AFP

reasonable answers," he said. He added his party would not form any alliances with parties that are led by "crooks or jailbirds", an apparent reference to the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Ismail, of the UMNO, and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, of the Pakatan Harapan coalition, have also filed their candidacies elsewhere in the country. Anwar urged voters to come out in big numbers, as fears circulated that torrential rain during the monsoon season could dampen turnout. "I am optimistic we will win," he told reporters from his

constituency in the northern Perak state. Meanwhile, in Sabah, in Malaysia's part of Borneo Island, police fired tear gas to disperse scores of supporters of a minor opposition party who attempted to force their way into a nomination centre in the interior town of Tenom after their leader's candidacy was rejected. Hazani Ghazali, the internal security police chief, was quoted by The Star news portal as saying that tear gas was fired to disperse the crowd, with no injuries reported. Serious violence is rare during general elections in Malaysia. —AFP

SHORT TAKES

VIENNA

Almost 1,000 journalists killed in 10 years

In the past 10 years, 958 journalists have been killed, according to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. In the same period, more than 1,000 have been locked up in prisons, the high commissioner said at a conference on the protection of journalists in Vienna. "The numbers are unacceptable," Türk said. The meeting was organised by the Austrian Foreign Ministry with the United Nations to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Ac-



tion on the Safety of Journalists. Türk considered it a success that in the course of the action plan some 50 countries have created or strengthened mechanisms to protect media professionals.

JAKARTA

K-pop concert halted after 30 faint in crush

K-pop band NCT 127 was forced to end their first concert in Indonesia early after 30 people fainted in a crush, police said. Indonesia is still reeling after more than 130 people, including over 40 children, died in a stadium stampede last month -- one of the deadliest disasters in football history. Police spokesperson Endra Zulpan said late on Friday that the concert near the capital Jakarta had been going for around two hours when fans started surging forward to get



closer to the stage. "Because of it, 30 people fainted. To prevent other incidents, we decided to stop the concert at 9.20 PM (1420 GMT)," Zulpan said, adding that the collapsed fans had recovered.

NEW YORK

Divided UNSC takes no position on N Korea

At the ninth meeting of the UN Security Council this year on the issue of North Korea, the divisions within the body once again prevented any action to curb the increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula. The 15 members of the UN's most powerful body failed to agree on a joint statement in New York. Instead, a number of countries - including the US, Britain and France - separately condemned Pyongyang's ongoing missile tests. "The unity of the



Security Council in this matter is essential to ease tensions, overcome the diplomatic impasse and the negative action-reaction cycle," Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari warned.

Migrants describe hunger, illness and trauma at UK asylum centre



EUAN WARD

The overcrowded facility in southeastern England is supposed to house asylum-seekers for very short periods, but teenagers who have stayed there detailed inhumane conditions and long stays

Mohammad, 17, emerged groggily from his hotel near Heathrow Airport into the spitting rain on Thursday, his flimsy sandals slapping at the wet concrete. It has been weeks since he slept or ate properly, he said.

He crossed his arms and shivered, then gazed up at the sky as a plane roared overhead. Before he was taken to the hotel, Mohammad said, he spent 25 days at the Manston migrant centre on England’s southeastern coast.

Recounting his time in the troubled Manston center, Mohammad, who is from Iraqi Kurdistan, described how asylum-seekers had been forced to sleep in chairs in freezing temperatures, adding that many had become sick in overcrowded tents. He said that he had been fed too little and often gone hungry, that many people were “filthy” because there weren’t enough showers, and that he had been prevented from contacting his family in Iraq to let them know that he had survived the perilous journey across the English Channel.

“All migrants are suffering in Manston camp, believe me,” he said. “It is not a situation that humans deserve to live in.”

As a minor, Mohammad’s last name has been withheld to protect his privacy.

He is just one of thousands of asylum-seekers who have passed through the Manston centre since it opened in January, many of them children. The centre has been racked in recent weeks by mounting allegations of inhumane conditions, including severe overcrowding, and has found itself at the centre of heated debate about migrant policy that has roiled Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s new government.

On Friday, a Home Office spokesperson said “it is still the case that Manston remains resourced and equipped,” when asked to respond to accusations of poor and dangerous conditions. Still, the Home Office had said on Thursday that it had been taking steps to “immediately improve the situation on the ground,” adding that 1,000 people had been relocated from the centre over five days. As of Thursday, Manston was holding almost double its capacity.

Manston was built to hold 1,600 migrants, but in recent weeks, it had housed around 4,000.

Mohammad’s account could not be independently verified, but his depiction of the conditions at Manston generally aligned with inspection reports from immigration officials and interviews by The New York Times with union officials who had spoken with staff members at the centre.

And when shown photographs of the facility, Mohammad was able to identify it, without prompting, as the one at Manston. He was one of four teenagers interviewed by the Times at the hotel who recounted harsh conditions at the centre. Mohammad spoke in his native Kurdish, and the Times translated his account.

The Times also viewed transcripts of interviews by two aid organisations, the Refugee Council and Humans for Rights Network, with other teenagers who had been housed at Manston. They described similar hardships to those detailed by Mohammad, saying that they had often gone hungry because of a lack of food. Some said that they had been forced to sleep while sitting up at night because of the cramped conditions and that they had been refused medical attention because of staff shortages.



An aerial view shows the Manston short-term holding centre for migrants, near Ramsgate in south east England. — AFP

One boy, a 16-year-old from Sudan, said he had spent nearly three weeks sleeping on discarded food boxes with just one set of soggy clothes — an experience, he noted, that reminded him of the harsh conditions he had endured in Libya’s detention camps. “I used to sleep during the day to stay awake at night because I was afraid of nightmares,” he said of his time at Manston.

The aid groups’ interviews were shared with the Times without the names of the migrants attached to protect their privacy. Most are now living in the care of local authorities elsewhere in Britain, the aid groups said, although some are still staying unaccompanied in hotels.

Official rules for short-term migrant holding facilities stipulate that asylum-seekers are supposed to stay there for only a day, but many — including young children — have been held at Manston for weeks, according to inspection reports, aid groups and interviews with migrants.

The crisis at Manston has engulfed Britain’s home secretary, Suella Braverman, who has been accused of ignoring legal guidance to relieve the overcrowding and find housing for the asylum-seekers there. She denied those accusations in Parliament on Monday, but she did say that the asylum system was “broken.”

On Wednesday, the leader of the opposition Labour

Party, Keir Starmer, seized on that statement. Noting that the Conservative Party had been in power since 2010, Starmer pressed Sunak. If the asylum system was indeed broken, Starmer said, “Who broke it?”

Braverman visited the site on Thursday.

According to the Home Office, close to 40,000 people have crossed the English Channel by small boat this year — the highest number since figures began to be collected in 2018. Nearly all of them have claimed asylum, which has contributed to a backlog of 127,000 applications, according to official figures.

Outside the airport hotel on Thursday, Rohullah Bilimsevar, 28, and Ramin Karwan, 29, huddled together in the cold, both still dressed in the same thin jogging suits they had been given after arriving at the Manston centre more than a month ago. They said that they were former journalists from Afghanistan and showed documents to that effect. They said that they had been moved out of the centre on Wednesday.

“There are no beds for sleeping. No food. There were lots of children there,” said Bilimsevar, who noted that he had fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took power.

He added that there were 200 people in one tent and that each person got just one blanket.

GOP seeks to erase Democrats’ supermajority in NY

For four years, a cycle of victories by progressive-minded Democrats has pushed the New York state Legislature to the left, carrying their party to legislative supermajorities and creating an unfettered path for liberal priorities to be enacted around housing, climate change and abortion rights.



LUIS FERRÉ-SADURNÍ

But this year, a national Republican wave is threatening to curb those progressive gains and vanquish the Democrats’ veto-proof supermajority, as Republicans seek to expand their diminished foothold in the state Capitol.

While the Assembly is solidly in Democratic control, Republicans seem well positioned to make inroads in the state Senate, where competitive races are playing out in about a dozen districts, from western and central New York to Long Island. Although Senate Republicans face a steep challenge to regain the majority they lost to Democrats in 2018 — they would need to win 12 seats — Democrats are just one seat away from losing their two-thirds supermajority in the 63-seat chamber.

That outcome, Republicans believe, is more than within reach.

“I’ve made it my sole mission over these last two years not only to grow our conference but, first and foremost, to end the supermajority,” said Rob Ortt, the Republican minority leader in the state Senate. “That is not only my focus, but that is my hope and expectation as we go toward election night.”

Most of the Democratic incumbents locked in competitive races are more moderate members from competitive swing districts outside New York City that largely lean Democratic but are at play this cycle because of the favourable political climate for Republicans.

As the party in power, Democrats have raked in millions of dollars in contributions from unions, businesses and other special interests seeking to shape legislation, allowing them to significantly outspend Republicans and mount vigorous campaigns to defend some of their most vulnerable incumbents.

But it remains to be seen whether that fundraising edge will be enough to overcome a political climate that some concerned lawmakers have described as potentially calamitous for Democrats, even in a solidly liberal state like New York where Democrats outnumber Republicans more than 2-to-1. That has raised the specter of unforeseen upsets just two years after Democrats had secured the largest majority in state history.

“History on this stuff is pretty clear: It’s a tough year when you’re in charge, and it’s a midterm election,” said state Sen



US Vice President Kamala Harris, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul (C) and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (R) during a rally in New York City. — AFP

A Republican surge is threatening to counter gains made by progressive-minded Democrats, who have pushed the State Legislature to the left in recent years

Michael Gianaris, the Democratic deputy majority leader. “I would be perfectly happy to have the second-largest majority in the history of the state, even if it’s a little bit smaller than what we currently have.”

In the 150-seat Assembly, Democrats — who have enjoyed a majority for nearly a half-century — would see their supermajority vanish if they lose eight of the 107 seats they control, still an uphill climb for Republicans.

“It’s a midterm election, and we take nothing for granted,” said Michael Whyland, a spokesperson for Carl Heastie, the Assembly speaker. “We feel we are well positioned heading into Election Day.”

Part of the calculus may largely hinge on the outcomes at the top of the ballot.

Gov Kathy Hochul, who is seeking her first full term after replacing Gov Andrew Cuomo last year, is facing a tougher-than-expected challenge from Rep Lee Zeldin, a Republican from Long Island, where Zeldin is anticipated to perform strongly, potentially helping Republicans in down-ballot races there.

Senate Democrats are already bracing to lose as many as three or four seats in the swing suburbs of Long Island. While they are expected to gain one Republican-held seat in Suffolk County that was recently redrawn to include more Hispanics, heavily favouring Democrats, they have all but given up on trying to protect their most vulnerable incumbent on Long Island, state Sen John Brooks.

Attention please



Dr Hamed al Sinawi @alsinawi

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

“A recent study reported in the Harvard Business Review reveals that our own restless thoughts, not smartphones, are the main cause of our poor attention”

According to recent research the average human adult attention span was 12 second in the year 2000 but it dropped to 8 seconds in 2021. We frequently use smartphones and other online services, which is generally blamed for this decline.

As we go around, it’s not unusual to see people texting as they enter a mosque or a shopping centre, as they are driving, or even as they are using their phones in the restroom. The only time I can think of when people would put their phones away is when they are flying on an airplane, but since some airlines now provide Internet access while in the air, even that break has been

taken away from us.

Since we started carrying our virtual workplaces around in our smartphones, we have developed an addiction with wanting to be constantly online, whether it is for work or for entertainment.

The average person picks up their phone more than 1,500 times per week, or once every 5.5 minutes, according to a new study, while the typical office worker checks their e-mail 11 times per hour. It’s interesting to note that despite how much time we spend online, the average user only stays on a website for 10 to 20 seconds before leaving.

This shows that people struggle with concentration and attention, as some of us are powerless against the impulse to check notifications as soon as they pop up on our

THE AVERAGE PERSON PICKS UP THEIR PHONE MORE THAN 1,500 TIMES PER WEEK, OR ONCE EVERY 5.5 MINUTES, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY, WHILE THE TYPICAL OFFICE WORKER CHECKS THEIR E-MAIL 11 TIMES PER HOUR

smartphones. However, a recent study reported in the Harvard Business Review reveals that our own restless thoughts, not smartphones, are the main cause of our poor attention.

According to psychologists, we typically spend about 47 per cent of each waking hour “mind wandering and daydreaming.” Imagining your forthcoming vacation while

you drive to work or practicing an argument you believe you’re about to have with your husband or a coworker, even if it may never happen. These are things we all do without even realising it.

What can we do, then, to increase our focus? Psychologists suggest using a technique they call Notice-Shift-Rewire to help us pay attention. You begin by becoming aware of your wondering. This is not always simple, but it might be helpful to pay attention to clues.

For example, if you see a stop sign while driving or walking to work, ask yourself if your mind is there or elsewhere. When you become aware that your thoughts are wandering, change your focus to what you are doing right now.

For instance, if you are biting into an apple, try concentrating on

the crunchiness, sound and flavour of the fruit as you do so. Try to concentrate on what your friend or coworker is saying when you are speaking to him.

The last stage is to reinforce this new focus-related habit. With time and effort, you will be able to perfect this approach, but don’t get discouraged if you find that your mind keeps returning to the wondering state. Try focusing on the current moment for 15 to 30 seconds. People who have used it believe it is an easy approach to lower stress and boost productivity.

Finally, it’s worthwhile learning new strategies to refocus and evaluate our interactions with the Internet, whether our lack of focus is caused by using our smartphones or an ingrained component of our minds.

Palestinians express indifference to Netanyahu return

GARETH BROWNE & MAI YAGHI

The election triumph of veteran hawk Benjamin Netanyahu may usher in one of the most right-wing governments in Israeli history but for many Palestinians it’s just a change of brand.

The difference between Netanyahu and defeated centrist incumbent Yair Lapid is like the difference “between Pepsi and Coca Cola,” said Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh soon after the result of Tuesday’s election was confirmed.

Netanyahu’s previous terms in office saw what little remained of the Middle East peace process collapse in a surge of Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank.

During his brief premiership, Lapid adopted a more conciliatory approach, approving a modest increase in the number of Israeli work permits issued to Palestinians from the blockaded Gaza Strip and using his speech to the UN General Assembly in September to express support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yet few Palestinians were shedding tears over Lapid’s departure.

“At least, with Lapid gone, we can stop pretending that the Israelis are interested in peace,” said Ahmad Saadi, a 31-year-old market stallholder, as he left afternoon prayers in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

“Maybe now the world will see that Netanyahu is not the exception, he represents the true feelings of Israelis, and they are not interested in peace.”

In the Gaza Strip, where more than half the workforce is unemployed, the additional work permits were welcome for the lucky few who got them.

But Gazans also remember the three-day war which Lapid launched against gunmen in August, in which 49 Palestinians died, 17 of them children.

“I am afraid that Netanyahu and the right will cancel the permits for workers from Gaza,” said construction worker Sohail Mohammed, 54, who recently managed to get one of the 17,000 Israeli work permits made available under Lapid.

“I only just got the permit that gave me and my family hope for a better life,” he added.

For Mohammed al Hindi, 27 and unemployed, it was “a boring repetition of the same scenario”.

“The repercussions on us in Gaza are not important, because what matters to them is the security of Israel,” he said.

FEAR OF FAR RIGHT

Palestinian analyst Noor Odeh said the differing ideological positions expressed by Israeli politicians over the future of the occupied territories made little difference to policy, which was always dictated by the security fears of Israelis.

— AFP

Twitter was never free. The question is, what’s the cost?



Zeynep Tufekci

The writer is a sociologist and an opinion columnist



Some have ridiculed the idea of charging fees for a blue checkmark, claiming it would undermine free speech and create inequalities. — Reuters

Since Elon Musk became the owner of Twitter last week, there’s been a lot of brouhaha over his plans for it, especially the possibility of various fees, such as one for verification badges. Those are the blue check marks that let people know an account belongs to whom it says it belongs. They have mostly been granted through an opaque process to notable users — celebrities, heads of state, official agencies, journalists.

Some have ridiculed the idea of charging fees, claiming it would undermine free speech and create inequalities. They argue that pressure from advertisers — who have begun to shy away from Twitter since Musk took over — would force him to continue trying to moderate the site to dampen hate speech — something he signaled he might do differently from before.

Critics have said fees could make them leave the site and implored others to do so too. Leave if you like, but Twitter is likely to remain influential in shaping the news, as well as broader culture, even if many users leave, especially since journalists seem highly influenced by the platform.

The idea that advertisers alone will save us from hate speech and the further degradation of digital social media is wishful thinking. A primarily

LEAVE IF YOU LIKE, BUT TWITTER IS LIKELY TO REMAIN INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING THE NEWS, AS WELL AS BROADER CULTURE, EVEN IF MANY USERS LEAVE, ESPECIALLY SINCE JOURNALISTS SEEM HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY THE PLATFORM

advertiser-financed site is neither free nor healthy. The reliance on advertising by so much of our digital public sphere — Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Twitter — has perniciously fueled tribalization, hate speech and surveillance.

Humans have strong in-group and out-group tendencies — sociology-speak for my team versus your team. At its best, civilisation has subsumed that dynamic into benevolent forms such as athletic competitions and pride in national accomplishment, rather than war, ethnic hatred and xenophobia. If you want to keep a group of people engaged, fueling that group competition is a pretty good method,

and that’s what one observes on social media, often not so benevolently. It’s not so much an echo chamber where groups don’t hear from one another as a football stadium where we bond by yelling at the fans from the other side.

This means that whatever the topic, by design and by algorithm, social media often elevates the worst, most divisive content, paired with “aaaw” and affirming-type content that promotes in-group bonding. Those are two sides of the same coin. It’s like a cafeteria that serves highly processed, fatty, sugary, salty food at every meal, exploiting human weakness to lure and ruin.

To target their ads more precisely, platforms relentlessly collect our data and build artificial intelligence-powered models that predict people’s interests and vulnerabilities. This results in an enormous surveillance infrastructure that can be used to find who’s more likely to be persuaded to change their nutritional supplements, but also to hunt down women who may be pregnant and possibly seek abortions.

This is an infrastructure of authoritarianism, created to deliver ads more effectively. It’s a terrible model for the digital public sphere.

— The New York Times

What politician and AC have in common?

I'll tell you later. In the meantime, in what could be a significant game-changer for the Sultanate of Oman, and the entire MENA region, the Kyung Hee University in Seoul, working alongside the University of Notre Dame in the United States has this week announced the successful development of a highly efficient window treatment, a transparent radiative cooler, that can potentially reduce energy costs by reducing the need for air conditioning units in hotter climates.

This is no overnight discovery, as Professor Sang Hyuk Im and his PhD student researcher Jin Hyuk Heo first published the theoretical possibility for the ground-breaking perovskite solar cell, way back in 2015. The early trials promised so much that even though the research team laboured intensively in the interim, struggled with the limitations imposed by the diminishing efficiencies of single-layered processes, they were always confident, according to the researcher, that they would find a way.

This week's announcement that they have found a way to successfully 'sandwich' dual layered structures within solar cell window coatings has significant energy-saving implications for the region, with the initial research theoretically proven, but without sufficient savings for commercial investment, this multi-layered nanotechnology holds so much promise for Omani society, as air conditioning free environments must be so much healthier. Personally, I wouldn't be throwing out the units just yet, but all things being equal, the writing is on the wall.

Professor Im's team bypassed the initial issue of reduced efficiency through the utilisation of a process that sealed each layer in a laminated coating. He explained that "As the demand for photovoltaic electricity grows in the future, so will the need for higher efficiencies to reduce the overall cost. The new perovskite-perovskite tandem cells will be a great improvement in terms of both a higher efficiency envelope and greater cost-effectiveness."

The second major issue was in maintaining clarity of vision, as initial



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

PROFESSOR IM'S TEAM BYPASSED THE INITIAL ISSUE OF REDUCED EFFICIENCY THROUGH THE UTILISATION OF A PROCESS THAT SEALED EACH LAYER IN A LAMINATED COATING

research indicated a dual-layered technology was possible, in a relatively simple process. However, there was an unwanted change to the ability to see through the initial treated windows which affected their transparency significantly, as in shutting out the light sources, vision through those windows was poor, and would never be acceptable to even the most desperate of purchasers. Fortunately, Dr Tengfui Luo, Wenjie Shang, Seongmin Kim, and their highly regarded team at Notre Dame, were able to perfect a process that used the process without adversely affecting the visual experience, thus opening a plethora of commercial opportunities.

The UK's Daily Mail heralded the breakthrough, writing "The coating lowers the temperature inside buildings, without expending a single watt of energy," and explained that normal windows allow ultra-violet and infrared light through, heating rooms, whereas this new process effectively blocks them maintaining a cooler interior, with predictions of a conservative thirty per cent reduction in daytime temperatures, and equivalent energy savings in hot, dry, environments. Even in their cooler climate, the Mail's science correspondent, Shivali Best, is talking significant energy savings in the region of 30 per cent.

Personally, I've never liked air conditioning a lot, even though they are pretty much an essential in Oman. But they can be noisy and intrusive, and sitting, sleeping, or working under the perpetual motion of an AC unit can't be good for you can it! But worst of all is the environmental change when you leave the house and go outside. Your glasses fog up, and you stumble like a drunkard. The heat hits you like an express train, the change having twice the effect. It can't be healthy; it can't be good for you. In fact, the only place I like the air conditioner is at the gym, where it's my favourite machine.

I genuinely hope this research, this game-changer, can be the 'next big thing, in building and construction in the Sultanate of Oman, because you need to understand that an air conditioner is like a flailing politician... makes a lot of noise but doesn't get much done!

A QUALITY CHECK



A government employee harvests saffron stigma at the India International Kashmir Saffron Trade Centre in Pampore on the outskirts of Srinagar on Saturday. – AFP

From Russia with cash: Georgia booms as Russians flee Putin's war

JAKE CORDELL

As war chokes Europe, a small nation wedged beneath Russia is enjoying an unexpected economic boom.

Georgia is on course to become one of the world's fastest-growing economies this year following a dramatic influx of more than 100,000 Russians since Moscow's war on Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's mobilisation drive to drum up war recruits.

As much of the globe teeters towards recession, this country of 3.7 million people bordering the Black Sea is expected to record a vigorous 10 per cent growth in economic output for 2022 amid a consumption-led boom, according to international institutions. That would see the modest \$19 billion economy, well known in the region for its mountains, forests and wine valleys, outpace supercharged emerging markets such as Vietnam and oil exporters such as Kuwait buoyed by high crude prices.

"On the economic side, Georgia is doing very well," Vakhtang Butskhrikidze, CEO of the country's largest bank TBC, said in an interview at its Tbilisi headquarters. "There's some kind of boom," he added. "All industries are doing very well from micros up to corporates. I can't think

THIS COUNTRY OF 3.7 MILLION PEOPLE BORDERING THE BLACK SEA IS EXPECTED TO RECORD A VIGOROUS 10 PER CENT GROWTH IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT FOR 2022 AMID A CONSUMPTION-LED BOOM

of any industry which this year has problems." At least 112,000 Russians have emigrated to Georgia this year, border-crossing statistics show. A first large wave of 43,000 arrived after the war began February 24 and Putin moved to quash opposition to the war at home, according to the Georgia government, with a second wave coming after Putin announced the nationwide mobilisation drive in late September. Georgia's economic boom — whether short-lived or not — has confounded many experts who saw dire consequences from the war for the ex-Soviet republic, whose economic fortunes are closely tied to its larger neighbour through exports and tourists. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), for example, predicted in March the Ukraine conflict would deal a major blow to the Georgian economy. Likewise the World Bank forecast in April that the country's growth for 2022 would drop to 2.5 per cent from an initial 5.5 per cent. "Despite all expectations that we had... that this war on Ukraine will have significant negative

implications on the Georgian economy, so far we don't see materialisation of these risks," said Dimitar Bogov, the EBRD's lead economist for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. "On the contrary, we see the Georgian economy growing quite well this year, double digits." Yet the stellar growth is not benefiting everyone, with the arrival of tens of thousands of Russians, many tech professionals with plenty of cash, driving up prices and squeezing some Georgians out of parts of the economy such as the housing rental market and education. Business leaders also worry that the country could face a hard landing should the war end and Russians return home.



A man carries a bag on his head as he travels from Russia across the border to Georgia at the Zemo Larsi/Verkhny Lars station. – Reuters file photo

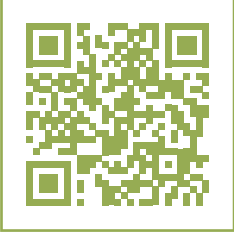
Georgia itself fought a short war with Russia in 2008 over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, territories controlled by Russian-backed separatists. Now, though, Georgia's economy is reaping the benefits of its proximity to the superpower — the two share a land border crossing — and a liberal immigration policy which lets Russians and people from many other countries live, work and set up businesses in the country without needing a visa.

Furthermore, those fleeing Russia's war are accompanied by a wave of money. Between April and September, Russians transferred more than \$1 billion to Georgia via banks or money-transfer services, five times higher than during the same months of 2021, according to the Georgian central bank. That inflow has helped push the Georgian Lari to its strongest level in three years. Roughly half of the Russian arrivals are from the tech sector, according to TBC's CEO Butskhrikidze and local media outlets, chiming with surveys and estimates from industry figures in Russia that pointed to an exodus of tens of thousands of highly-mobile IT workers after the invasion of Ukraine. "These are high-end people, rich people... coming to Georgia with some business ideas and increasing consumption drastically," said Davit Keshelava, senior researcher at the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET). "We expected the war to have a lot of negative impacts," he added. "But it turned out quite different. It turned out to be positive."

— Reuters

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Denmark's Holger Rune plays a forehand return during the men's singles semi-final tennis match between Denmark's Holger Rune and Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime. – AFP

Rune gets revenge on Auger-Aliassime to reach first Masters final

PARIS: Danish teenager Holger Rune defeated the in-form Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-2 on Saturday to reach the first Masters final of his career in Paris.

Rune avenged his loss to Auger-Aliassime in last weekend's final in Basel. He will take on defending champion Novak Djokovic or Stefanos Tsitsipas for the title in the French capital.

The 19-year-old Rune is through to his fourth successive final. He beat Tsitsipas to lift the trophy in Stockholm last month after finishing as the runner-up in Sofia. A quarterfinalist at this year's French Open, Rune collected his fourth straight victory over a top-10 player this week by ending Auger-Aliassime's 16-match winning run.

The Canadian was attempting to become the first man to win four tournaments in as many weeks since Ivan Lendl swept five over a five-week span in 1981.

Auger-Aliassime paid the price for a hesitant swinging volley after a gentle looping return from Rune as he conceded the lone break in the third game of the opening set.

Rune then broke the eighth seed

twice in succession to start the second set, inflicting a first defeat on Auger-Aliassime since his first-round loss at the Astana Open a month ago.

Having arrived in Paris with just three match wins at the Masters level, Rune began his run to the final this week by beating three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka in the first round.

He then took down Hubert Hurkacz followed by Andrey Rublev before seeing off Carlos Alcaraz as the world number one retired with injury while trailing by a set on Friday.

Rune is set to climb to a new career high of 12th after reaching the final. He will break into the top 10 for the first time if he wins the title.

Djokovic is bidding for a record-extending seventh Paris crown and 39th Masters triumph.

He has won the past seven meetings with Tsitsipas, who is making his first semifinal appearance at this event. The Greek fifth seed has a tour-leading 60 wins this season. He has reached seven finals in 2022 which is joint most alongside Alcaraz. — AFP

Omani duo finish runners-up

Chinese pair of Likejiang and Jiaxin clinch title of Oman Beach Pro Tour Future

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Chinese pair HA Likejiang and Wu Jiaxin defeated Oman's duo Mazin al Hashmi and Hood al Jalbobi 22-24 and 16-21 to clinch the Men's Oman Beach Pro Tour Future title in Suhar late on Friday.

Latvian players Tocs and Fokertos managed to earn third place award after they beat Czech Republic's Dumek and Sedlak 2-1 (18-21, 22-20 and 11-15).

The four-day event concluded in Suhar after registering a huge success in the organisation of this world-class event.

The final day of the championship was under the auspices of Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA, in presence of Ali al Kawari, Chairman of Qatar and West Asian Volleyball Federations, Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, Chairman of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA), and top dignitaries.

After completion of the concluding match, the chief guest and chief of OVA

handed over the awards, medals and trophies to the top winners. Later, they took some group photos with the winning teams and organising committee members.

Oman's stars in beach volleyball secured their final match ticket as they edged Czech pair of Dumek and Sedlak 21-16 and 21-12 while the Chinese pair beat Latvian duo of Tocs and Fokertos 16-21, 21-18 and 15-12.

The Oman Beach Pro Tour Future recorded a huge crowd during all days of the tournament. The event took place in the Suhar municipal park and was under the organisation of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) in coordination with FIVB, the international governing body of volleyball.

As many as 28 teams took part in the event representing 15 countries across the world including: Latvia, Turkey, Lithuania, Brazil, Bolivia, Denmark, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, China, Austria, Australia, Czech, Gambia and Japan.

Chief guest Abdulsalam al Murshidi affirmed that hosting of these sporting

international events have different positive values to the country. "It was a strong tournament which featured attendance of top teams from different parts of the world. The event was attended by a good crowd and was managed under perfect organisation. It was a successful international volleyball tournament in Oman," he ended.

A FIVB technical representative appreciated the organisation of the event.

"The organising committee managed successfully the event and this reflects Oman's capability to host global sporting events at different levels specially the beach volleyball championships which featured attendance of good crowd," he said.

Commenting on a query about the technical performance of Oman Beach Pro Tour Future, the FIVB representative responded that the event featured very tough competitions among the participating teams. "As many as 28 teams took part in the event including some Olympic players like Martiniz and Tocs besides other top players," he said.





Players from Yokohama F Marinos celebrate after taking Japan's professional J-League football title following their 3-1 victory over Vissel Kobe to put them at the top of the standings, in Kobe on November 5, 2022. – AFP

Yokohama secure J1 League title with final day win

TOKYO: Yokohama F Marinos clinched the J1 League title for the first time since 2019 on Saturday when Kevin Muscat's side notched up a 3-1 win over Vissel Kobe on the final day of the season to keep defending champions Kawasaki Frontale at bay.

Takuma Nishimura and Teruhito Nakagawa earned Marinos the victory and took Muscat's team onto a title-winning total of 65 points from 34 games, two more than Frontale.

Kawasaki, who needed to win on Saturday and for Marinos to slip to a loss against Kobe to claim

a fifth league title in six seasons, registered a 3-2 win over FC Tokyo.

Yokohama's title win is the club's first under Australian coach Muscat, who succeeded compatriot Ange Postecoglou at the helm last year when he left Japan to take over at Scottish side Celtic.

Both clubs will qualify for

the 2023/24 edition of the Asian Champions League, which is due to kick off in September next year.

Marinos took the lead against Kobe when Elber's header looped over Yuya Tsuboi in the 26th minute but former Newcastle United striker Yoshinori Muto glanced his header home three

minutes into injury time as the teams went in level at half-time.

Nishimura struck from close range after Tsuboi spilled Kota Mizunuma's free kick eight minutes into the second half and Nakagawa put the result beyond doubt with 17 minutes remaining when he slotted in Mizunuma's

cut-back from the right.

Frontale picked up their win over FC Tokyo despite playing for more than an hour with 10 men when goalkeeper Jung Sung-ryong was sent off, with Ryoma Watanabe's own goal 15 minutes from time sealing Kawasaki a 3-2 victory.

— Reuters



Ibri crowned U-18 TT champions

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Ibri Club won the title of the Under-18 Youth Table Tennis Championship 2022 after surpassing Seeb Club 3-1 in the final match at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

In the individual level competitions, Ahmed al Riyami from Seeb succeeded in winning the championship in the singles category, after he succeeded in overcoming Mohammed al Mutawa from Saham Club 3-0 in an exciting match. Badr al Jasasi from Ibri Club came in third place after he beat Luqman al Farsi from Ibri Club in the play-off match to determine the third and fourth places.

Ibri, Saham and Masirah clubs were able to reach the semifinal stage of the team competition category, after they came in the top four places in the group.

Ibri were able to eliminate



Saham, while Seeb beat Masirah.

In the match to determine the third and fourth places, Saham Club managed to win the third place after defeating Masirah Club, while Ibri Club won the title after its important victory over Seeb Club.

At the individual level of the quarter competitions, Ahmed al Riyami won the championship after he started in the round of 16 by defeating Mohammad al Jassasi from the Ibri Club. Al Riyami beat Munther al Ghassani from Seeb

Club in the semifinal and won the crown after overcoming Luqman al Farsi from Ibri Club in the final.

At the end of the final match, Abdullah bin Mohammad Bamakhalaf, Chairman of Oman Table Tennis Association, and Mohammed bin Humaid al Jassasi, member of the board of directors, honoured the clubs that won the top three places.

Ibri players received the gold medals, Seeb got silver medals and Saham players earned the bronze medals.

Ronaldo has last chance to shine on World Cup stage in Qatar

PORTUGAL: Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo, who has been named the best player in the world five times, will arrive in Qatar with a mission to prove that he can still make a difference.

It is indisputable that Ronaldo is one of the greatest forwards of all time but his latest struggles with Manchester United and Portugal have raised many questions about whether his brilliant career is nearing a bitter end.

Ronaldo is the leading scorer in the history of men's international football with 117 goals in 191 official matches.



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo. – Reuters

Between his first Portugal goal versus Greece at Euro 2004 and his most recent, a double against Switzerland in June 2022, 18 years have passed, making him a model of longevity.

He has scored 818 goals in his career and holds the record for the most Champions League goals in the competition's history with 140.

However, for a model athlete who got used to breaking records playing for some of the biggest clubs in the world, like Real Madrid, Juventus and Manchester United, his current form and attitude have been under the spotlight.

His brace versus the Swiss in the Nations League were his only goals in the 10 games Portugal have played in the last year.

With United he has scored just three times this season and his problems with manager Erik ten Hag have made headlines, with

Ronaldo struggling to get into the starting team and expressing his dissatisfaction over the lack of minutes.

He was United's top scorer last season with 24 goals in all competitions after joining them from Juve. His contract is due to expire in June 2023, though United have an option to extend by a further year.

In his fifth World Cup, Ronaldo will arrive captaining a team of standout players who are widely seen as among the world's best but who have arguably underachieved on the biggest stage.

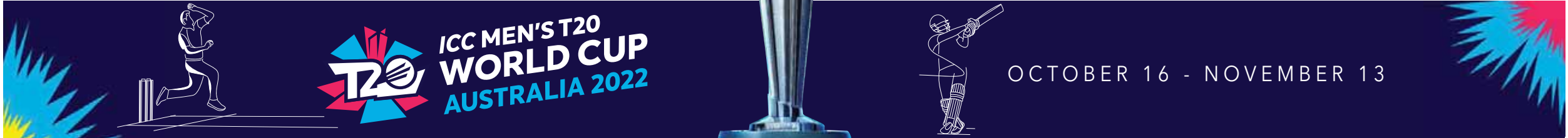
After reaching the World Cup

semifinals in 2006, they were knocked out twice in the last 16 (2010 and 2018) and at the group stage in 2014.

But even though the impression is that Ronaldo's brilliant path is coming to an end, he begs to differ.

"There is still a little more of Cristiano left. I'm part of a young team, I want to be in the World Cup but also in the next Euros," Ronaldo said at an event in Portugal in September.

A relentless mentality that could be the key to him making a statement with his country in Qatar against all odds. — Reuters



India, South Africa eye T20 World Cup semifinal slots

MELBOURNE: South Africa and India will look to seal places in the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals with regulation wins over cricketing minnows as the Super 12 phase wraps up with a flurry of matches on Sunday.

South Africa suffered their first major setback with a 33-run defeat to Pakistan in Sydney on Thursday but Temba Bavuma's team will aim to restore normal service against the already-eliminated Netherlands in the early match at Adelaide Oval.

A win would ensure South Africa finish in the top two of Group 2 and advance to next week's semis, but defeat would see them miss the knockout rounds for a third T20 World Cup in succession while opening the door for Pakistan and Bangladesh.

STRONG FAVOURITES

India, who lead the group with six points, one ahead of the Proteas, will be strong favourites to fend off Zimbabwe in the evening match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and sew up top spot.

"We need to be as clinical as possible," all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin told reporters on Saturday.

"We know no team is a brush-over... We can't go in there and expect them to crumble."

Third-placed Pakistan play fourth-placed Bangladesh in the second leg of the Adelaide Oval double-header and will be cheering on the Netherlands before taking the field.

With both Asian sides on four points, one less than

South Africa, the winner will reach the semifinals if the Proteas slip up.

However, if South Africa advance, only Pakistan would likely still be in contention given Bangladesh's net run rate (-1.276) is well behind India's (+0.73).

With victories in their last eight completed T20 matches against Bangladesh, Pakistan will be expected to keep the semifinal race alive until at least the final match and pray Zimbabwe can do the unthinkable against Rohit Sharma's India.

"You don't need any motivation, whether it's the World Cup or not," said Pakistan batsman Shan Masood.

"Just playing for your country, putting that shirt on, I think for every individual in this camp, it means a lot."

Zimbabwe played giant-killer by beating Pakistan in their Super 12 clash but crashed out of the tournament with a deflating defeat to the Netherlands.

Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine said the chance to take the wicket of India's talismanic batsman Virat Kohli should be motivation enough for his bowlers.

"How often do you get the opportunity to put Virat Kohli in your pocket?" he asked.

"I'm pretty sure that our fast bowlers will be raring to go come tomorrow."

"Obviously with the win against Pakistan, it's given us a huge amount of belief that we can beat any side in the tournament."

"I don't think that will change going into tomorrow's game." — Reuters

Stokes takes England into semis as Australia dumped out

SYDNEY: Ben Stokes hit a gutsy unbeaten 42 as England reached the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals on Saturday with a tense four-wicket win over Sri Lanka — and ended Australia's title defence. England needed to win to make the last four from Group 1 alongside already qualified New Zealand and they achieved the feat in a nail-biting finish with two balls to spare at Sydney Cricket Ground.

If they had lost, hosts Australia would have gone through.

Sri Lanka looked on track for a big total when they reached 80-2 after 10 overs, but the aggressive Pathum Nissanka was out for 67 and the Asian champions crumbled to 141-8, with Mark Wood taking 3-26.

England raced to 75 without loss in reply and looked on track for an easy win. But they collapsed to 111-5 under pressure from the Sri Lankan spin attack and it went to the wire.

"Didn't enjoy that match, how close it was," admitted skipper Jos Buttler. "We just had to find a way to win that game."

"These situations are built for him (Stokes)," he added. "He can play a lot of roles for us in this T20 setup."

Man-of-the-match Adil Rashid, whose spin kept Sri Lanka's batsmen at bay, was also full of praise for Test skipper Stokes.

"It was a tight game, it happens in T20 cricket," he said. "They bowled well and created pressure but Stokesy played magnificent so we got over the line."

The victory was not enough to dethrone New Zealand at the top of the table with England settling for second and a semifinal in Adelaide. The fate of Group 2 will be determined on Sunday.

Sri Lanka's defeat ended Australia's stuttering tournament, with their title defence never recovering after losing heavily to New Zealand on the opening day, then having to share the points



with England due to rain.

"I think the wicket played a part in this game, even the English batters struggled in the second half," said Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka.

"I think we played good cricket in patches, but we had a few injuries which cost us the tournament."

RUNS FLOWING

Sri Lanka, who have not beaten England in a T20 since 2014, won the toss and asked England to field, conscious that all five previous games at the SCG during the World Cup had been won by the team batting first.

Nissanka pulled Stokes for an authoritative six off the second ball and two more sixes in the third over, off Wood, signalled their intent. But an aggressive 39-run opening stand came to an end when Kusal Mendis (18) attempted another boundary from Chris Woakes and Liam Livingstone held a catch near the ropes. Nissanka kept the runs flowing but his new partner Dhananjaya de Silva (9) slogged at a slower Sam Curran ball and was caught by Stokes.

Sri Lanka reached 80-2 at the halfway point, but then Livingstone took a simple catch to remove Charith Asalanka (8).

Nissanka brought up his second

50 of the tournament and ninth overall, but tight bowling from Rashid slowed the run rate and he eventually accounted for Nissanka, who heaved to substitute fielder Chris Jordan at long-on after a 45-ball knock. Sri Lanka never regained momentum, making just 25 off the last five overs.

In reply, Alex Hales and Buttler plundered 70 off the six-over powerplay, smashing 11 boundaries in the process.

Sri Lanka gave themselves hope when Buttler (28) and Hales (47) were out in the space of three overs, with the spin of Wanindu Hasaranga accounting for both of them. — AFP

Pakistan 'lost sleep' over losses but bounced back: Masood



ADELAIDE: Pakistan batsman Shan Masood on Saturday praised his team's character in battling back to stay in the hunt for a semi-finals spot after losing their first two matches at the Twenty20 World Cup.

Captain Babar Azam's side need to win their final Super 12 match against Bangladesh in Adelaide on Sunday -- and for other results to go their way -- to grab a place in the final four.

Pakistan suffered heartbreaking losses to arch-rivals India and Zimbabwe before finding form and drubbing South Africa on Thursday in a dramatic, rain-affected match in Sydney.

"The timing of the losses proved costly for us because we are still not in that top two position," Masood told reporters.

"But we haven't lost hope. Life teaches us harsh lessons and this was one of them. The way it affected the boys, they lost sleep, their morale went down. And how

we responded after those setbacks showed our character and it was a big thing.

"The best to come out of failure is that you learn from your mistakes. If we look at it from a balanced point of view, then we see the team has responded well since the loss to Zimbabwe."

Pakistan, currently third in the wide-open Group 2 table, can advance if India lose to Zimbabwe in the last league match on Sunday. They are also in if South Africa lose their clash against the Netherlands or the match is a washout.

Masood said the way Pakistan fought back to post 185-9 against South Africa, after being in trouble at 43-4, and then winning by 33 runs via the DLS method had lifted the morale of the team.

"Mood is good. South Africa dominated the early stages of the game, but the way we came back and bowled well, even after the rain break, we kept up our momentum," said Masood.

"So we will focus on taking two points from the Bangladesh game and that is in our hands. Hope will always be there till the last ball is bowled in this group."

Bangladesh, who had narrow wins over the Netherlands and Zimbabwe, also have a slim chance to advance if they win against Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval.

The Tigers gave India a scare in their previous match — decided by the DLS method — and are level at four points with Pakistan, but with a far inferior run-rate.

But technical consultant Sridharan Sriram said he is proud of the show his boys have put on in this tournament.

"This is the best tournament Bangladesh has ever had in a T20 World Cup," Sriram told reporters.

"We've never won two games in Super 12s in the history of Bangladesh cricket, so we've done that, so I think the boys should be proud of themselves." — AFP



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business



Competitive profit rates starting from
4.95%

DRIVE THE CAR OF YOUR DREAMS
with Maisarah Auto Finance

Offer is valid till 31 December 2022 and is applicable for new, additional finances. Not valid for takeover of auto finance from other banks.

2477 5777 | www.maisarah.om

[/MaisarahOman](#) [@MaisarahIslamic](#) [@Maisarah.Islamic](#)

To know more



MAISARAH

OPAZ unveils vision to position the Sultanate of Oman as investment destination of choice

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) launched its vision and mission, as part of its annual strategic plan for 2022 aimed at enhancing the investment environment in OPAZ affiliated zones, which contribute to boosting the national economy through attracting investment in various economic sectors to all zones.

OPAZ employees contributed to developing the vision and mission, which translate OPAZ competencies stipulated in the Royal Decree No. (105/2020), establishing the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and defining its roles and objectives, and with

reference also to the Royal Decree (53/2022) transferring the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to OPAZ.

These four key roles include planning and regulation, facilitation and operation in some cases. OPAZ vision promotes its affiliated zones as “the investment destination of choice”.

This is reflected in its mission “developing and regulating the zones affiliated with OPAZ and providing an attractive and sustainable investment environment” that attracts investors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. On the other hand, OPAZ has approved its values that enable employees, customers and investors to support achieving the vision. These values are “Responsibility, Cooperation, Transparency and Creativity”.



Such remarkable values reflect employees’ belief in the significance and worth of performing their duties and shouldering the responsibility to serve their country and ensuring satisfaction for investors, businesspersons and all those benefiting from the services provided by OPAZ and all its affiliated zones.

Speaking on the occasion,

“**Involving employees in developing the vision, mission and values marks a real partnership between OPAZ and its employees to bring a plan on which all depends to implement OPAZ competencies, set policies and perform their tasks in the different affiliated zones**

HUDA BINT ABDULLAH AL HABSIYAH
Board Member, OPAZ

Huda bint Abdullah al Habsiyah (pictured), OPAZ Board Member

and supervisor of the team managing the vision and mission project, explained that the vision, mission and values of OPAZ were developed by a team of employees through different well-planned phases. These phases attracted around 100 employees of OPAZ, the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and other free zones affiliated with OPAZ. Having them all in this project mirrors the confidence of OPAZ Board of Directors in the employees and their important role as a key partner in working on OPAZ mission and achieving its vision.

“The vision and mission are of great importance and regarded an essential pillar upon which OPAZ directions, plans and strategy are based towards the development, regulation and supervision of the special economic zones, free and

industrial zones.

Further, involving employees in developing the vision, mission and values marks a real partnership between OPAZ and its employees to bring a plan on which all depends to implement OPAZ competencies, set policies and perform their tasks in the different affiliated zones.”

OPAZ was established as per the provision of the Royal Decree No. (105/2020), issued on August 18, 2020. It oversees the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, free zones in Sohar, Salalah and Al Mazunah and any other special economic zone or free zone in the Sultanate of Oman. OPAZ also oversees the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) as per the provision of the Royal Decree No. (53/2022), issued on June 28, 2022.

Foundation stone laid for new iron ore pelletising project in Oman

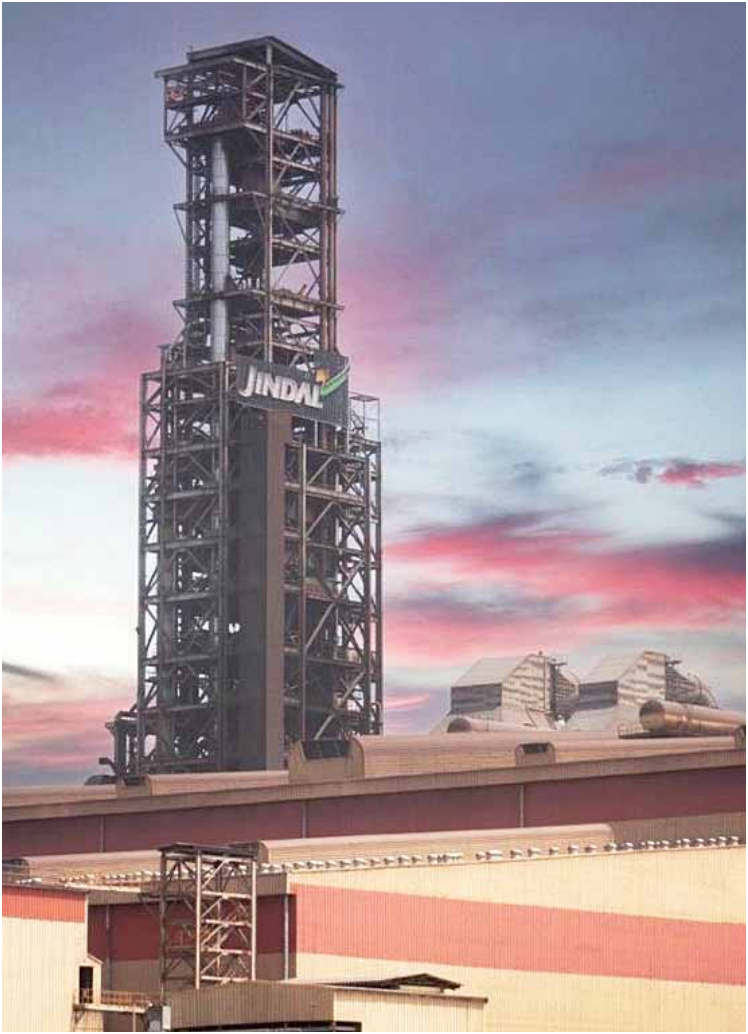
CAPTIVE PROJECT: Output from the 6 MTPA capacity mill meet the raw material requirements of Jindal Shadeed’s integrated steel mill in Sohar Port

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel (JSIS), which operates a major integrated steel complex at Sohar Port and Freezone, has announced that its affiliate Vulcan Pelletizing LLC has commenced construction work on an iron ore pelletising plant on its premises.

In a post on its social media account over the weekend, Jindal Shadeed said the project, when fully operational, will be the largest single kiln pelletising plant in the Gulf region. The 6 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) capacity plant will provide the required feedstock for Jindal Shadeed’s steel manufacturing operations in Sohar. As a captive project, its output will be wholly dedicated to meeting the raw material requirements of Jindal’s steel mill at the industrial port.

The foundation-stone laying ceremony was led by V R Sharma, Vice Chairman of India-based Jindal Group, who also underlined the significance



of the pelletising plant to ensure reliable and sustainable raw material supplies to Jindal Shadeed.

Pellet quality is also key to ensuring the smooth functioning of the steel mill complex, he noted.

Also present was Sanjay Anand, Managing Director of Vulcan Group, which acquired

a significant stake in Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel following the exit of its previous owner — India-based conglomerate Jindal Power & Steel.

Speaking at the ceremony, Anand said the project will feature the highest capacity kiln supported by all the latest technologies. The project will also generate employment

opportunity and contribute to in-country value (ICV) development, he stated.

Harssha Shetty, CEO - Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel (JSIS), also shared his views on the importance of pellet quality in iron-making in terms of better productivity at optimised cost.

Earlier this year, the Helsinki-headquartered machinery manufacturer Metso Outotec said it had won a contract worth around \$31 million for the manufacture and installation of a grate kiln-type pelletising plant. Grate kilns produce pellets of more consistent quality at a lower cost than other types of pelletising systems.

In addition to the core machinery, the hardware will also include the travelling gate, rotary kiln and annular cooler. When operational in early 2024, Vulcan’s plant will be the second such iron ore pelletising project to be in operation in Sohar Port & Freezone.

The industrial port is also home to a giant pelletising project of Vale Oman Pelletising Company, an Oman-Brazilian joint venture majority owned by Vale, one of the world’s largest mining companies. In addition to a pelletising plant of 9 MTPA capacity, Vale Oman also operates a giant stockyard and distribution centre with a throughput of 40 million tonnes per year.

Oman’s oil exports to Japan records 127% growth



JOMAR MENDOZA
[@JmObserver](#)

Oman’s oil exports to Japan recorded a remarkable growth of 172.1 per cent to reach 9.21 million barrels until the end-September, compared to the same period last year. It increased by 801,500 barrels compared to until end-August 2022 with 8.41 million barrels.

Meanwhile, oil exports to South Korea increased by 42.5 per cent during this period. Until end of August 2022, oil exports to South Korea increased by 68.7 per cent.

Oman’s total oil exports witness an increase of 14.6 per cent until the end of September, compared to the same period last year.

The Sultanate of Oman’s production of crude oil and oil condensates increased by 10.4 per cent until the end of September, to reach 289,785,600 barrels, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Until August 2022, Oman’s total crude oil and oil condensate production reach 257,034,700

barrels.

Crude oil production alone recorded an increase of 14.1 per cent during this period, while production of oil condensate decreased by 2 per cent until the end of September compared to the same period in 2021.

The average price of Omani crude oil also recorded a 58 per cent increase until the end of September 2022 to reach \$96.2 per barrel, compared to \$60.9 per barrel at the end of September 2021. The average daily oil production increased by 10.4 per cent until the end of September 2022 compared to the previous period. Same from last year.

On the other hand, natural gas production (including imports) in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of last September witnessed an increase of 16.4 per cent to reach 39.2 billion cubic metres.

Data issued by NCSI indicated an increase in natural gas consumption in industrial areas by 28.6 per cent, industrial projects by 19.3 per cent, oil fields by 12.5 per cent and power plants by 11.9 per cent.

Bank Nizwa’s positive growth demonstrates its excellence in Islamic banking

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, has recorded a positive trajectory of growth as reflected in its financial results in the third quarter of 2022. As a testament to its progress, Bank Nizwa has turned in a commendable financial performance by registering an 18 per cent growth in net profit.

The bank’s total assets also increased by 7 per cent, reaching RO 1,487 million in September 2022 from RO 1,384 million

in September 2021. The gross financing portfolio improved by 8 per cent to RO 1,217 million, whilst the total customer deposit portfolio rose by 13 per cent to RO 1,209 million. The increase in financing and deposit portfolios in retail and corporate businesses has provided the bank with the impetus to maintain its growth.

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalili (pictured), Chairman of Bank Nizwa said: “During the year, your bank has turned



in a commendable financial performance by registering

eighteen per cent growth in net profit. This is the result of our ability to adapt to the economic realities, including the competitive environment in which we operate and a resilient balance sheet”

He added: “After the re-opening surge in 2021, growth in 2022 has created a positive sentiments in the global economy. Supported by significant pent-up demand and rising prospects of continued government reforms programmes to help sustained economic

recovery. We expect an accelerated pace of growth in the coming months to drive a robust economic recovery through 2022, resulting in economic growth.

According to the IMF, Oman’s economy is expected to grow by 4.3% in 2022 and 2.5% in 2023. The revenue and spending efficiency are expected to rise while the public debt is projected to decrease in the medium term.”

As a result of healthy activity across its wholesale and retail

businesses and cost control, the Islamic bank reported a 2 per cent boost in shareholder equity and a 16 per cent increase in operating income.

As a result of the successful implementation of its 2025 strategic plan for growth, the bank will continue to cultivate its balance sheet in a controlled manner. It will diversify revenue streams, control expenses, improve margins, enhance its digital capabilities, and expand its customer base.

The Sustainable City — Yiti wins two awards



MUSCAT: The Sustainable City - Yiti (TSC - Yiti), Oman’s first fully sustainable city and the largest sustainable community in the Middle East, bagged two prestigious awards at the 10th edition of the Dossier Construction Awards & Summit (DCIAS). The project won both the ‘Best Sustainable Project’ and ‘Best Sustainable Development’ accolades for providing the highest standards of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

This includes clean energy production, recycling, vertical farming, and the adoption of clean and sustainable transportation, as well as other solutions that improve residents’ quality of life and reduce their carbon footprint. The project was launched earlier this year, as a joint venture between Diamond Developers, the leading company

in developing sustainable communities, and Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), as phase 1 of the Yiti Integrated Tourism Development Masterplan.

Bringing together the leading names and recognising the top performers across construction, infrastructure, real estate, manufacturing and design & engineering consultancy, the Dossier Construction Awards & Summit is renowned and established as a mark of international excellence.

The award ceremony was held in Sheraton Oman hotel in the presence of Dr Khalfan al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning and leaders across various industry. Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group received the awards on behalf of The Sustainable City - Yiti.

Al Aufi to deliver keynote address at Green Hydrogen Oman Summit

MUSCAT: Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, will present the keynote speech at the opening of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 (GHSO), which will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Muscat, during December 5-7, 2022.

The keenly anticipated opening address will shed light on, among other issues, Oman’s newly unveiled strategy for the development of a world-scale green hydrogen industry to support the decarbonisation of the Omani economy, as well as cater to the energy transition goals of other nations.

An overview of this ambitious vision was shared recently by officials of the ministry, joined by representatives of Oman Vision 2040, Energy Development Oman and the newly established hydro-centric energy firm Hydrom. At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to reducing Oman’s climate-warming CO2 emissions to Net Zero by 2050 – a goal that envisions investments of an estimated \$140 billion in a full-fledged domestic green hydrogen industry over the next several



decades.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the 3-day GHSO Summit & Exhibition has been organised by Birba Energy Services with the support of a number of prominent local and international energy-related organisations.

Underscoring its appeal and reach, the forum will be attended by a distinguished gathering of energy ministries representing hydrogen producers and importers, as well as policymakers,

energy pundits and CEOs of international energy companies, technology providers and energy think-tanks.

High-level representatives from the International Energy Agency (IEA) will be in attendance as well. Over the course of the three-day forum, a total of 12 strategic sessions will be held, focusing on nine strategic themes: Oman Green Hydrogen Economy and Strategy; Global Hydrogen Review; Oman as a Global Player in the Hydrogen Space; Oman as

a Green Hydrogen Hub; Oman Green Hydrogen Infrastructure; Green Hydrogen Value Chain (In-Country Value); Partnership and Investment; Green Hydrogen Projects’ Finance & Bankability; and Green Hydrogen Projects in Oman.

Additionally, a Technical Conference will take place in parallel with the main conference. In addition International experts representing key segments of the hydrogen value chain will conduct a series of masterclasses on December 5 covering with four categories Green Hydrogen Technology, Green Hydrogen Application, Green Hydrogen Regulations & Policy and Green Hydrogen Safety.

Prefacing the Summit is an exclusive VIP session scheduled to take place at Kempinski Hotel Muscat on December 5, 2022. A number of ministers representing leading energy producing and importing nations will be in attendance, joined by policymakers, experts and CEOs from leading energy companies from Oman and around the world. Al Aufi will also address this ‘by-invitation only’ event.

Bank Muscat offers Asalah and Al Jawhar customers exclusive offers

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to offer outstanding benefits to its Asalah Priority Banking customers and Al Jawhar Premier Banking customers, in line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and its continued commitment to customer service excellence.

A number of offers are currently available for customers to enjoy during their travel with family and friends to various local and international destinations.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager — Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “We are thrilled with the high level of customer interest in taking advantage of various travel offers, from Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their confidence in Bank Muscat’s range of products and services, and urge everyone to take maximum advantage of the value-added benefits currently on offer.



Furthermore, we promise our customers that they can look forward to new offers and services that will keep pace with their aspirations and needs in the future.”

Exclusive benefits available to Asalah customers include access to more than 50 lounges worldwide including the Prime Class and Majan lounges at Muscat International Airport and the Khareef lounge at Salalah Airport. Asalah customers can also access a range of premium benefits at over 900 prestigious properties from the Visa Luxury Hotel Collection.

Other lifestyle benefits include the complimentary Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 “Buy 1, Get 1 Free” offers in Oman and at international destinations as well as rewards of

indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments.

The Asalah Visa Signature Credit Card on the other hand facilitates 12 complimentary visits to over 1,000 airport lounges worldwide including those at Muscat and Salalah. The Credit Card also offers 1% cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members.

Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport. A complimentary Dragon Pass facilitates airport dining offers at more than 200 restaurants globally while a 25 per cent discount is available on Meet

and Greet services at 450 global destinations.

It is also worth noting that Asalah customers have access to a 24/7 global concierge service through a variety of channels including telephone, email, digital and WhatsApp. The 24-hour concierge provides a personal service to Visa Signature cardholders, taking care of all the details so they can simply focus on enjoying their restaurant, travel or shopping experience.

Similarly, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food; entertainment and shopping that are available through the ‘Xperience with the Entertainer’ app on their smartphones. They have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 800.

Meanwhile, the Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Card offers access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to lounges at Muscat airport. Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a ‘Meet and Greet’ service with 15 per cent discount at over 450 global destinations.



Do more than you expect with the powerful Ford Ranger Wildtrak

MUSCAT: Ford’s powerful and capable Ranger Wildtrak is engineered to take you places and help you get more out of your journey. From varied off-road terrains to on-road roles, the Ranger Wildtrak offers the finest experiences.

The Ford Ranger Wildtrak is built for adventure. Its high-strength steel frame ladder chassis, its tough steel body and versatile cargo box make it an ideal companion for unplanned outings. The tough exterior design incorporates a high beltline, a raked grille and slanted windshield which give Ranger its athletic appearance and superb aerodynamics

which helps cut wind noise and improve fuel economy.

Off-road, Ranger’s short front and rear overhangs mean impressive approach and departure angles for tackling steep terrain, while its ample ground clearance allows it to clear obstacles easily. Ranger is also able to navigate watery obstacles up to 800mm deep, allowing drivers to push through conditions that may stop its competitors in their tracks.

The powerful Ranger Wildtrak is equipped with a 3.2-litre turbodiesel engine that produces 196 hp and 470 Nm of torque. This is paired to a six-speed auto transmission.



How difficult is it to start a manufacturing business?

STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association

WHETHER YOU HAVE GOT A BETTER MOUSETRAP, NEW ORGANIC FACE CREAM, OR AN ECO-FRIENDLY BAMBOO RANGE, THIS COLUMN WILL WALK YOU THROUGH THE BASICS ON STARTING A PRODUCTION COMPANY.

Recently we talked about the main opportunities and challenges in opening a fully remote digital marketing agency. Today we go back to something more concrete, discussing the inception of a manufacturing business.

Whether you have got a better mousetrap, new organic face cream, or an eco-friendly bamboo range, this column will walk you through the basics on starting a production company.

We put this guide together to help your new business be successful, whether you are wondering how to set up a home-based manufacturing company, or have already secured enough capital to begin purchasing production equipment.

The ideal scenario is to have a modern machine that can produce the product that you want to sell. Imagine how easy it would be if you could just insert raw materials and output a finished product. But manufacturing is more complex than that. A rightly so. If it was so easy to produce, you would face endless competition.

That is why it is useful to have some sophisticated steps in your production that are hard to replicate. Especially manual labour that could add an artisan element to the production.

Those are hard to replicate and could add significant value. When it comes time to apply for financing for your business, or bring on any partners, you are going to want to present a

business plan that answers all of the most pressing questions related to how to start a manufacturing company. To answer the questions with reliable answers, you will need to create a detailed business plan that makes a case for your new manufacturing company.

Once you narrow down your niche, start by deciding what types of marketing activities will make the biggest difference for your new company, then use your plan to create a list of skills that you will need to implement those.

Ideally, you want to ensure that before starting a business, you are familiar with, and able to tap into, the resources that are available to support your production company's endeavours.

The manufacturing sector is one industry that requires significant amounts of research prior to starting your business. Every successful manufacturing business must begin with a little bit of market research. Clearly, the manufacturing sector is not in great shape after the global pandemic disruption to supply chain... but there is still plenty that can be done to help you head off problems.

That said, the challenges inherent in the manufacturing sector makes it a promising sector for budding entrepreneurs: since starting a manufacturing company is challenging, and since the manufacturing sector is still highly sought after, you can minimise the competition that you might face, and ultimately earn plenty.

Sometimes, the best manufacturing businesses to start with are offering products or services that already exist, as they will already have a market for it. While the domestic economy looks promising as a low hanging fruit, it is quite important that you keep an open mind in exporting your products.

Oman is a great country, but a relatively small market compared to countries with larger population. Seeking partnerships for sales and distribution in other geographies is a great strategy to ensure expansion.

Lastly, seek government incentives for setting up your manufacturing business. The Sultanate of Oman offers many incentives designed for ambitious entrepreneurs.

an acceleration in government investment projects. Headwinds, however, remain for the real estate sector but there are some emerging signs of market stability."

During 2020, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the decline of the expatriate population that started in 2017 with around 230,000 expatriates leaving Oman over the course of the year. Last year saw expatriate numbers reduce further but in H1 2022, the expatriate population grow by approximately 10 per cent, driven almost exclusively by an influx of expatriate workers rather than professionals.

OFFICE RENTAL

Recent years have seen the introduction of a significant supply of new office space which has exceeded demand. Savills estimates

Use of 3D printing technology underway at Duqm SEZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

The capabilities of 3D printing technology are being harnessed to construct new structures at the Fishermen's Village coming up in the Tourism Zone at Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

According to the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), 3D printing has been deployed to construct a housing unit with annexes, alongside a café, in the Tourism Zone.

Eng Saif bin Nasser al Busaidi, Director of the Projects Department, said the housing unit and café are being 3D printed on 101 square metres plots at Al Sayadin Village.

Each structure is being constructed in record time spanning a handful of days, in contrast to the traditional construction timeframe.

In addition, 3D printing based construction does away with the need for concrete columns — a typical time-consuming



requirement. 3D printing technology converts the cement material into an integrated structure.

Last year, OPAZ's Board of Directors had approved the use of 3D printing based construction technology as part of a wider

effort to deploy more technologies and innovations to speed up the implementation of projects at the SEZ.

Italian bio and agro-food research excellence presented at SQU

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Sultan Qaboos University hosted Professor Francesco Canganella of Tuscia University in Viterbo for two seminars on dual agrobiology and biomedical issues for human space exploration as well as on the role of microbial ecology and industrial applications.

The lecture highlighted the latest researches conducted by his lab at Tuscia University on applied microbiology and highlighted new opportunities for academic and industrial collaboration on sustainable development, such as biodegradation of agrofood waste and use of microbial biomolecules for industrial purposes.

"The Embassy of Italy welcomes the initiative as an enabler for further bilateral collaboration between Italy and Oman.

"As a key player in Italy for advanced studies in agriculture



and agrofood, Tuscia University is leading research on sustainable issues and its centre of excellence for agrofood, forestry, environment and biology, providing state-of-the-art facilities and laboratories for innovation.

"Sharing this know-how with Oman can be beneficial to support the expansion of the agriculture in the Sultanate," commented Alessandro Garbellini of the

Embassy of Italy.

Professor Canganella added: "Tuscia University is ready to work together with Omani researchers and students on new technologies for sustainable farming in areas with water scarcity.

"The scholarships just granted under the current Erasmus+ programme will soon provide opportunities to study and work together."

MSX30 Index ends week marginally higher

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week up by 0.01 per cent. The Financial Index ended the week higher by 0.34 per cent. The Industrial Index ended the week up by 0.54 per cent. However, the Service Index ended the week lower by 0.67 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index was up by 0.87 per cent.

Oman Fisheries Company has announced to its shareholders that it has signed a sales agreement with Saudi Fisheries Company on Wednesday, November 2, 2022. The agreement shall enter into force from the date of its signing for a period of 3 years. The agreement aims to export 1,200 metric tonnes of fish as a first stage, with revenues of not less than one million Omani rials annually.

Bank Muscat, HSBC Oman and NBO and Ahli Bank have a provision cover > 100 per cent, indicating prudent provisioning norms. HSBC Oman has the lowest NPL ratio while Bank Dhofar has the highest.

ECL Stage-wise data indicates that over 70 per cent of total of each bank's exposure is in Stage 1 of impairment or in simpler words, is performing, with the remainder being in Stage 2 and Stage 3.

The highest exposure in Stage 3 is for NBO and Bank Dhofar (at about 6 per cent each), while the lowest exposure in Stage 3 is for HSBC Oman and Ahli Bank. Within exposures in Stage 3, Bank Muscat has the highest provision cover, followed by NBO and Ahli Bank, while Sohar International and Bank Dhofar have relatively lower coverage. Ahli Bank and Bank Dhofar have the highest per cent of restructured loans; however, for Ahli Bank, more than 50 per cent of restructured loans are in Stage 3.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Oil price boost helps stabilise real estate market

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 5

Leading global real estate adviser Savills released its latest research analysing Oman's real estate market performance. The report provides a comprehensive snapshot of the Sultanate's macroeconomic environment whilst focusing on the residential and commercial real estate sectors.

Swapnil Pillai, Associate Director, Middle East Research, said, "Oman's economy has recovered well from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and weak oil prices. The government's financial position is much stronger now than it has been for several years, despite the pandemic, due to a prudent fiscal approach. Recent months have also witnessed



that there is currently around 400,000 sqm of mid to higher grade office space for the rental market in Muscat with a further roughly 100,000 sqm of office space under construction, although much of this is lower to mid-end.

Due to tepid demand relative to supply, there has been downside pressure on occupancy with only

a limited number of buildings currently achieving occupancy levels in excess of 70 per cent.

Realistically, achievable rental values dropped by 5 to 10 per cent over the course of 2021 and are currently 25 to 40 per cent lower than 2015 with the Shatti Al Qurum submarket showing the greatest resilience.

The notable recent upswing in oil prices, if sustained, is likely to have a positive impact on the commercial sector and could help to drive demand and occupancy.

Matthew Wright, Head of Consultancy at Savills Oman, said, "We expect market conditions to remain challenging over the remainder of 2022 in terms of both demand and achievable rental values but high oil prices, if sustained, are likely to provide a boost for commercial activity."

Recent years have seen extensive development of residential units — particularly of low to moderate grade residential apartments with limited to no facilities — for the rental market across Muscat, which has resulted in a significant oversupply relative to diminished demand.

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

شوبين جفت Shoppinggift

GET FREE SHOPPING VOUCHER with every purchase of TallyPrime single user

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

ASIA SOLUTIONS
TALLY GOLD PARTNER
TALLY FOR VAT

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdhi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

LAMASAT BUSINESS CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Accounting Services, VAT and Consultancy Services

Contact: **24571454** GSM: **95392251**

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female (M Tech Civil Structural Engineering) having 7 years experience as Quantity Surveyor cum Quality Control Engineer, looking for suitable position. Contact: 96154505.

GENERAL manager with 16+ years experience in Oman, MBA — BE, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 94008034.

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact: 79256679.

PLANNING engineer, PMP. Indian male Civil Eng. Around 10 years experience in construction projects. Softwares: Primavera P6, MS Office, ERP, having Oman driving licence. Ready to join, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com, Call: 78002582.

INDIAN Male, 17 years of Oman Marketing experience in Multiple Industry (FMCG Trading, Media, Digital Printing, Events, & Hospital) with own car is looking for suitable placement with/without visa; Call/whatsapp +968 99803006.

GRADUATE Engineer (B.E. Civil, Indian) with over 20 years of experience (13 years in Oman). Previously served as Project Manager, Manager - Operations and Dy. GM. Looking for suitable placement Contact: 92850419 Email: joikykyk@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

FINANCE manager, M.Com, 17 years expereince in Oman, valid D/L. looking for suitable placement. Contact: 71702324, email: abdulrasheedlulu@gmail.com

QUANTITY surveyor/ civil engineer, Sri Lankan, bachelor degree in civil, diploma in QS and AutoCAD with 5 years experience. Certificate in design of electrical installation. Contact: 77045881, email: aazam5181@gmail.com

النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA • BANGLADESH
NEPAL • SRILANKA • INDONESIA
PHILIPPINES • AFRICA • EUROPE
USA • ALL GCC

TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766
www.alnamanicargo.com

FREE PICK UP 24/7

Branches : Ruwi, Hamriya, Ghala, Seeb, Barka, Suwaid, Sohar

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

URGENTLY REQUIRED SALES ENGINEER

- ◆ One of the leading Omani Organisations is seeking to hire multiple sales engineers in their Oil & Division.
- ◆ Preference is given to candidates who have at least 3-4 years of experience in Trading of Instrumentation, Electrical & Mechanical Products to all the Oil & Gas industry in Oman. He must possess an Omani / GCC driving license.
- ◆ Salary is among the best in the best in the industry with fixed and variable components. Annual bonus and Incentives are provided against good performance.

Kindly send your CV's at
Recruit.oman4@gmail.com

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: **24501568, 24502479** • Fax: **24503566**
Email: **sales@samaalkhadra.com**
Website: **www.samaalkhadratradingco.com**

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: **24787606, 24787503**
Direct Line: **24786077**
GSM: **99382355, 99172309**
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SERVICES

AUTOCAD/ REVIT ARCH MEP, part/full-time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

FOR RENT

FLATS 2bhk and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

BUILDING of 1.500 sqm 3 stories, accommodation, store and office at Misfa. ☎99432177, 99010964.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car
AMAZING OFFERS
○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

REQUIRED

URGENT REQUIREMENT - MARKETING EXECUTIVE

A REPUTED MEI (Mechanical, Electrical & Instrumentation) contracting company based in Sultanate of Oman looking for experienced marketing executives. Candidates with minimum 5 years relevant field experience in Oman with valid Omani driving licence may forward the CV to directrecruit2022@gmail.com



For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdhi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com





Al Qabil: A hidden gem in the desert — is now ready to welcome tourists

During Al Qabil's Saturday souq, kids and adults alike dress up in their best clothes. Villagers bring all their wares and sell them along the main village street. There is so much to discover in this small village that Fahar bin Hamood al Farsi's effort to put it on the tourist map deserves appreciation... **P20**

UNESCO: One-third of World Heritage glaciers to disappear by 2050

GLACIERS IN THE DOLOMITES in Italy, Yellowstone National Park in the United States and on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania will likely vanish by 2050, according to the United Nations Cultural Organization UNESCO.

A third of all glaciers listed as

UNESCO World Heritage areas will disappear by then as the result of global warming, according to a report issued on Thursday by Paris-based UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Those glaciers are already losing 58 billion tonnes of ice every year.



There are about 18,600 glaciers spread across 50 different World Heritage sites around the world, according to UNESCO. Together, the glaciers cover roughly 66,000 square kilometres and account for about 10% of the world's glacier area.

The glaciers have been melting faster since 2000 because of higher CO2 emissions.

Two-thirds of the remaining World Heritage glaciers could still be saved if efforts to combat global warming limit rising temperatures to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times.

Experts, however, contend that only radical measures and major global political commitment could keep rising temperatures below the 1.5-degree target.

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay described the report as "a call to action" for the world to combat climate change ahead of the international COP27 climate conference in Egypt.

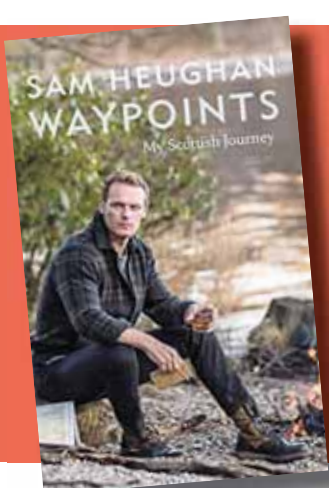
"Only a rapid reduction in our CO2 emissions levels can save glaciers and the exceptional biodiversity that depends on them," Azoulay said. — dpa

READ

WAYPOINTS

BY SAM HEUGHAN

The Scottish actor travels along West Highland Way to connect with moments that shaped his views.



FASHION TREND

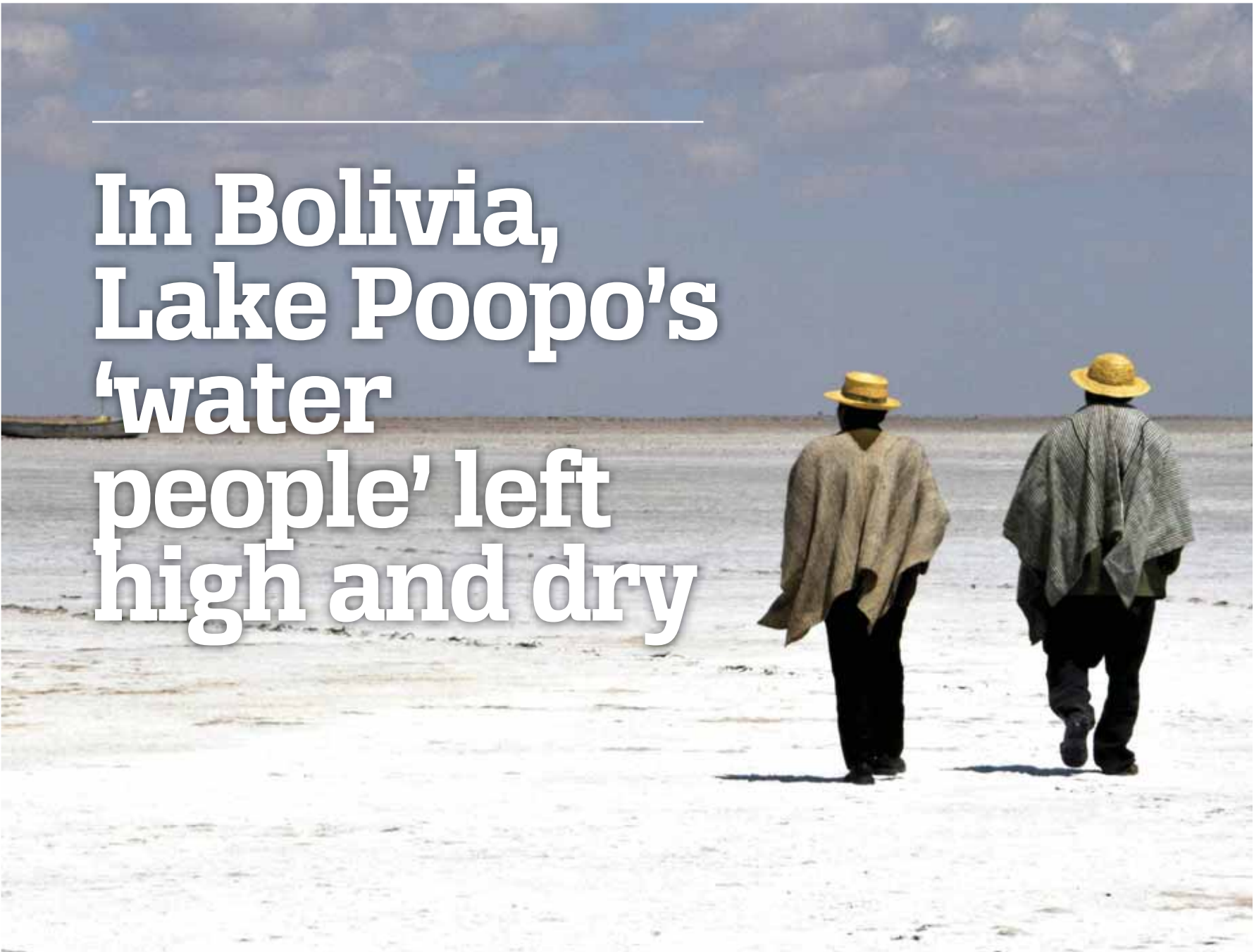
Models present creations by Rinaldy Yunardi during the 2022 Jakarta Fashion Week in Jakarta. — AFP



ART ATTACK

Visitors are reflected in a mirror as they look at The Creation of Jesus on the Cross by Rembrandt on display at Museum Bredius in The Hague. The museum discovered that the oil sketch was by Rembrandt, despite the claim by several art historians that it must have been by an imitator. — AFP





In Bolivia, Lake Poopo's 'water people' left high and dry



AN ABANDONED BOAT rests on the cracked earth where formerly it floated. Lake Poopo, once Bolivia's second-largest, has mostly disappeared — taking with it a centuries-old culture reliant entirely on its bounty.

Felix Mauricio, a member of the Uru Indigenous community, used to be a fisherman. Now 82, he gazes over a barren landscape and chews coca leaf to suppress the hunger pains.

"The fish were big. A small fish was three kilos," he recalls of the good old days.

At its peak in 1986, Lake Poopo

Mauricio has always lived in Punaca Tinta Maria, a village in the southwestern region of Oruro.

His grandparents settled in the area in 1915 at a time when the waters of Lake Poopo lapped at doorsteps and intermittently flooded huts.

- NO LAND EITHER -

Mauricio's is one of only seven families left in Punaca Tinta Maria, which used to have 84 of them, according to a 2013 survey.

There are only about 600 members left of the Uru Indigenous community —



small crops.

A major problem is that the Uru have little access to land.

Their villages are surrounded by members of another Indigenous community called the Aimara, who jealously guard the farmland they occupy with property titles from the government.

The state has announced plans to distribute land to the Uru as well, but the community claims most of it is infertile and useless.

- 'WE HAVE BEEN ORPHANED' -

What is left of the lake is largely an

"Who thought the lake would dry up? Our parents trusted Lake Poopo... It had fish, birds, eggs, everything. It was our source of life," lamented Luis Valero, the spiritual leader of the Uru people of the region.

As his five children chased each other around an unused canoe grounded outside the family's mud hut, the 38-year-old mused: "We have been orphaned."

But Mauricio, wearing a traditional poncho and a hat made of totora — an indigenous reed from which boats used to be fashioned, still holds out hope that things will go back to how they were.



spanned some 3,500 square kilometres (1,350 square miles) — an area more than twice the size of Greater London.

But by the end of 2015 it had "fully evaporated" according to a European Space Agency timeline of satellite images tracking the lake's decline.

Scientific studies have blamed a confluence of factors, including climate change and water extraction for farming and mining in the area on the Bolivian high plains, some 3,700 metres above sea level.

"Here was the lake... It dried up quickly," Mauricio said, kneeling in the dry bed and playing with a miniature wooden boat he had carved himself — pushing it around with a wistful look, like a kid lost in an imaginary world.

which goes back thousands of years in Bolivia and Peru — in Punaca Tinta Maria and the neighbouring settlements of Llapallapani and Vilaneque, according to a 2013 survey.

"Many lived here before," said Cristina Mauricio, a resident of Punaca Tinta Maria who guesses her age at 50.

"They have left. There is no work." Since 2015, rainfall has returned a shallow film of water to parts of the lake, but not enough to navigate or to hold the fish or water birds the Uru — who still call themselves "water people" — used to catch and hunt.

With none of the lake's natural offerings left, the Uru have had to learn new skills, working today as bricklayers or miners, some growing quinoa or other

evaporated bed of salt the village's remaining residents had hoped would be Poopo's last gift to them.

They banded together and invested what little they managed to raise into equipment for a small plant to mine the salt and refine it.

But they hit an unforeseen snag: they could not find the \$500 needed to buy bags to package the salt in.

The business has stalled.

"The Uru will disappear if we do not heed the warnings," senator Lindaaura Rasguido of Bolivia's ruling MAS party said on a visit to the community in October.

She and her delegation were met with traditional dancing and poems in a language very few still speak.

Staring at the bare soil where he once navigated through waves and wind, he said the lake "will return. In five or six years' time, it will be back," he insisted, with more hope than confidence.

A 2020 study in the journal Nature Reviews Earth & Environment said global annual mean lake evaporation rates are forecast to increase 16 per cent by 2100.

And according to the UN, the number of people living in water-scarce areas will rise to between 2.7 and 3.2 billion people by 2050 from 1.9 billion in the early- to mid-2010s.

Natural disasters displaced 30.7 million people within their own countries in 2020, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. — AFP

TRAVEL TALES

French Alps village says goodbye to ski lift of winters past



OLDER RESIDENTS of Saint-Firmin can recall learning to ski on slopes served by one of the first lifts above the village, one that will now be seen only in pictures of days when winter meant abundant snow.

Wearing hard hats and T-shirts in the bright autumn sunshine, volunteers recently gathered to pull down the pylons that had been rusting unused for the past 15 years.

Sparks flew as saws cut through the eight columns that crashed like trees onto the grass of the Valgaudemar valley, the pieces then dismantled and lugged or dragged to the bucket of a waiting tractor.

"We no longer have the climate that produces constant snow, and we can't install snow cannons here," said local councillor Didier Beazon, who enlisted the help of the NGO Mountain Wilderness.

The old lift at Saint-Firmin tops out at 1,550 metres (5,100 feet) and mostly faces south — a situation that effectively dooms its chances to remain a winter sports destination as temperatures have risen across Europe.

The lift, installed in 1963 as newly prosperous post-war generations were flocking to the slopes, will end up in a local scrapyard.

It was the 70th operation to remove obsolete installations, including nearly two dozen abandoned ski lifts, orchestrated by Mountain Wilderness, created in Italy in 1987.



Around 3,000 such installations are rusting across French mountain ranges, it estimates, and the goal is to encourage local authorities to remove them and return the landscape to its pristine state.

"The ultimate goal is to have each developer, each agency, take responsibility for the dismantlement, without the intervention of an NGO or volunteers," said Nicolas Masson, an administrator at Mountain Wilderness's French arm.

"Removing a structure and putting things back in their natural state should be the norm, it's a fundamen-



tal part of sustainable development," he said. "Unfortunately that doesn't always seem so obvious."

- ALTERNATIVE FUTURES -

Other leftover relics include installations, rubble and trash from forestry and agriculture operations such as logging cables or disused gates, or from military or industrial activities.

Some pose dangers, like World War II barbed wire barriers that can injure sheep flocks or deer.

"We know that we won't be able to remove it all ourselves," said Carmen Grasmick, one of the Mountain Wilderness volunteers.

For the NGO, the clean-up campaign also aims to nudge other communities to consider alternatives to focusing almost exclusively on skiing, and develop outdoor activities more in tune with a changing climate.

It notes the high costs in terms of resources for operating a resort, especially as more stations turn to artificial snow-making machines to ensure slopes are available all winter.

French villages in lower altitudes of the Alps as well as the Pyrenees mountains are already confronting the new reality of lifts that may never be turned on again.

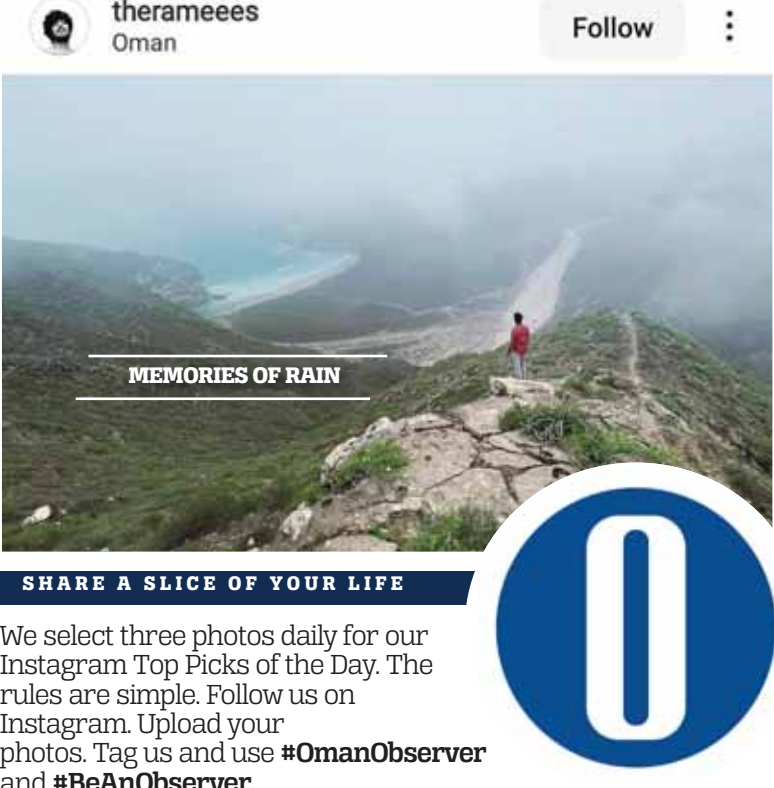
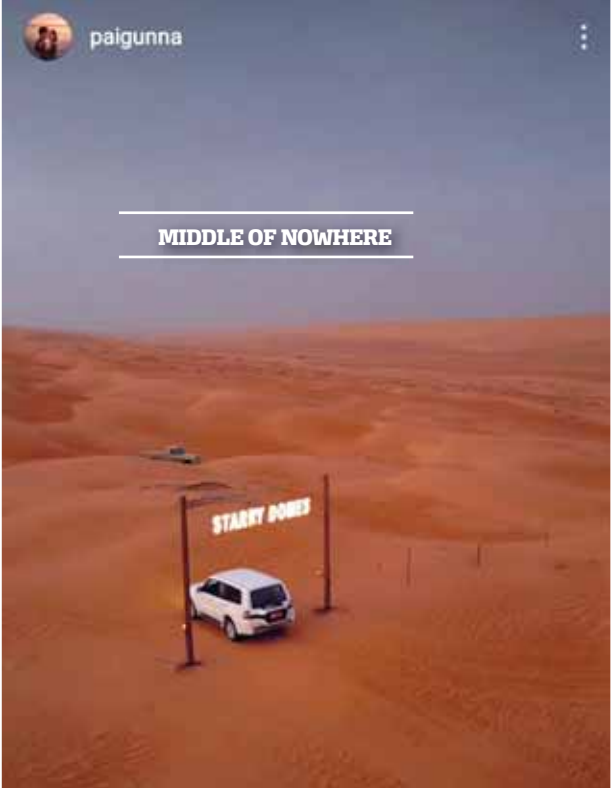
"There will always be people who are sad because it's where they learned to ski, it happens each time," Grasmick said.

"But there are places like here where they have the courage to turn the page. Because in any case, there's nothing else to be done." — AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

AROUND THE WORLD

SCIENCE

It Takes a Lot of Elephant Brains to Solve This Mystery



AN ELEPHANT'S TRUNK has 40,000 muscles and is strong enough to uproot a tree yet sensitive enough to suction up fragile tortilla chips. But how does an elephant's brain help accomplish these feats? That has been difficult to study, according to Michael Brecht, a neuroscientist at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Weighing in excess of 10 pounds, the elephant's brain degrades quickly after death. Brecht and his colleagues were fortunate enough to gain access to a trove of elephant brains from animals that had died of natural causes or were euthanised for health reasons and ended up either frozen or in a fixative substance at the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin. In a recent study in the journal *Science Advances*, the researchers reported elephants had more facial neurons than any other land mammal. The study also helped to pinpoint major differences between the neural wirings of African savanna elephants and Asian elephants. Using the brains of four Asian elephants and four African savanna elephants, the researchers homed in on the facial nucleus, a bundle of neurons concentrated in the brainstem. In mammals, these neurons serve as the control centre for facial muscles. The researchers divided the facial nucleus into regions of neurons that controlled the elephant's ears, lips and trunk. African elephants sported 63,000 facial neurons, while their Asian cousins had 54,000. Brecht's team expected both African savanna and Asian elephants to possess massive stores of facial neurons. While the animals look similar, they have major facial differences. African elephants have much larger ears, which they fan out when they charge. The researchers found a neurological correlation — African elephants devoted roughly 12,000 facial neurons to controlling just their ears. This not only dwarfs the amount of neurons controlling Asian elephant ears, it is nearly 3,000 more neurons than are needed to operate the entire human face. Another major difference is how each elephant wields its trunk, which requires nearly half of the elephant's total facial neurons to operate. African elephants utilise two fingerlike projections on the tips of their trunks to pinch objects. Asian elephants have only one fingerlike projection and grasp objects by wrapping their trunks around them. The researchers pinpointed two neural regions in African elephants that probably correlated to fine finger control at the tips of their trunks; those regions were less defined in Asian elephants. — **NYT**

CHANGING WORLD

Ancient Greek artifacts go on display for first time, amid protests



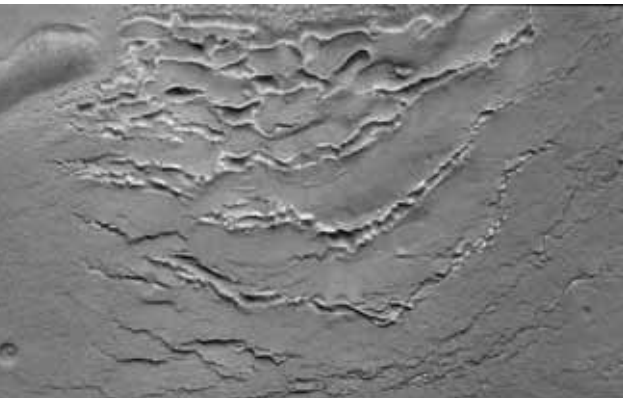
FIFTEEN ANCIENT GREEK artifacts from the private Cycladic art collection of a US billionaire went on display for the first time on Wednesday in Athens, under an agreement which has stirred controversy in Greece. The Cycladic antiquities, which Greece says are "masterpieces of unique archaeological value," travelled to Athens following a deal between Greece and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art for the repatriation of 161 artifacts collected over the years by Leonard N Stern, a businessman and philanthropist. Speaking at a ceremony on the eve of the exhibition's opening to the public, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said it was "truly a special day for the cultural life of the country," describing the works as "priceless antiquities of rare beauty which are returning to their home." After being displayed for a year at the Cycladic Museum in Athens, the 15 works — the most significant of the collection — will be displayed in New York from early 2024 for 25 years. They will gradually be returned to Greece.

The Stern collection features some 161 works made in the Cyclades cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea, primarily in the early Bronze Age. Greece's culture ministry says many of the objects in the collection, which includes figurines and vases, are considered to be "extremely rare" or unique examples of the art and technique of the Cycladic civilisation. The deal between Greece and The Met, which was ratified by Greek lawmakers in September, has stirred controversy in Greece, where the opposition as well as many archaeologists and conservators have called for their immediate, permanent return. Five unions of archaeologists, conservators, and ministry

employees called the agreement "a scandal" in a statement ahead of the opening. "These objects have not been checked legally as to whether they are authentic or fake, nor how they got from the Cyclades to the collection of a multimillionaire in New York," they said in the statement. A small group of protesters held a white banner outside the museum during the event on Wednesday reading, "They're stolen." Mitsotakis defended the deal as "a blueprint for other solutions to come", hinting at the "Elgin Marbles", as they are often known — 75 metres of Parthenon frieze, 15 metopes and 17 sculptures — which Greece has campaigned for since they were removed by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 19th century when he was ambassador to the Ottoman Empire then ruling Greece. The British Museum, custodian of the marbles, has ruled out returning them. — **Reuters**

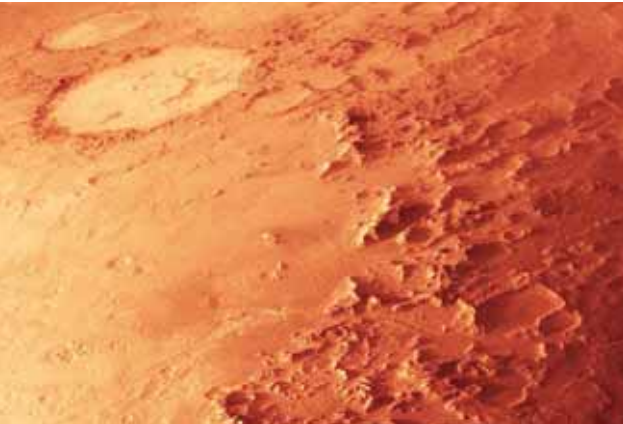
SPACE

House-Hunting on Mars Has Already Started



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is a wild card, and moving there is bound to be expensive. But one of the best options for shelter when humans finally make it to the red planet will be subterranean caves. These rocky hollows, which exist in droves on both Earth and the moon, are natural buffers against the harsh conditions of Mars. At the recent Geological Society of America Connects 2022 meeting in Denver, researchers pinpointed nine leading cave candidates worthy of future exploration. All of these grottos appear to extend at least some distance underground, and they're close to landing sites accessible to a lightweight

ing two criteria. First, they required that a cave be within roughly 60 miles of a suitable spacecraft landing site. Second, they stipulated that high-resolution imagery be available. Bardabelias and her collaborators defined a suitable landing site as one below an elevation of roughly 3,300 feet. The team required that top-shelf imagery be available for each cave candidate. That honour belongs to HiRISE, or the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment camera aboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. There were 139 apparent caves that satisfied the



rover. These structures would offer a respite from the challenging Martian environment, said Nicole Bardabelias, a geoscientist at the University of Arizona. "Everything at the surface is subject to harsh radiation, possible meteorite or micrometeorite bombardment and really large day-to-night temperature swings," she said. To home in on Mars' most sought-after real estate, Bardabelias and her colleagues consulted the Mars Global Cave Candidate Catalog. This compendium, based on imagery collected by instruments aboard the Mars Odyssey spacecraft and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, inventories over 1,000 candidate caves and other peculiar-looking features. The researchers narrowed the catalog by impos-

team's criteria, and Bardabelias and her collaborators manually examined images of each one. After disregarding features such as bridge-shaped rock formations that obviously weren't caves, the team analysed the remaining pitlike features. The researchers homed in on only those that appeared to extend some distance underground, which yielded a sample of nine leading cave candidates. These potential caves are worth a closer look, Bardabelias said. But none of the rovers operating on Mars are close enough to explore any, so that task falls to spacecraft orbiting the red planet. Follow-up HiRISE images taken from different angles and in different lighting conditions will reveal new details about these caves, Bardabelias said. — **AFP**

art & life

Local Scene

f t i y v @omanoobserver

SUNDAY | NOVEMBER 6 | 2022



Al Qabil: A hidden gem in the desert — is now ready to welcome tourists

By Rumpa Mitra
Insta: @rumpa_mitra

There are many surprising things about Al Qabil. This agricultural village in the Al Sharqiyah Governorate is a hidden gem that remains to be unknown to a lot of people but taking a stroll during its Saturday morning souq unveiled many interesting facts.

Having been invited by Fahar bin Hamood al Farsi, the young Omani running the Instagram account @Generations_oman, we left Muscat at 4 am without expectations of what was awaiting us in the area.

Fahar has been investing his time to put both Al Qabil and his home town Mudhairib on the tourist maps that part of his effort is to extend invites to media and influencers to shed light on the area.

Fahar shared that as of today, they are organising a local morning souq in the village at least once a month.

"Winter is coming and the villagers are planning to organise regular souq meets every Saturday with different themes. It will be an ideal place to showcase the handcrafted items by the locals and sell them," Fahar shared.

He added, "Also they are trying to create a place where the locals and the tourists can come and meet each other to exchange the culture and tradition more conventionally."

During the souq market day, kids and adults alike dress up in their best clothes that mirror

how their ancient souqs used to do.

Jihan al Harthiyah, the souq leader looked very determined to convert this Village souq day into a festival day for Al Qabil.

"I have been to different villages and weekend markets but the vibes at Al Qabil were a different experience than any of my previous ones. It was 7 am when we reached near to the souq area, the villagers were busy preparing their stalls and decorating and arranging their products. It felt heartwarming to us when they approached every tourist visiting the souq to greet and accompany them," she said.

"Overall it felt like all the villagers merged like a huge family celebrating their weekend together, spreading their deep-rooted culture and showcasing the crafts at the same time. It was more like a family-oriented gathering welcoming international tourists to be part of it," she added.

Villagers came with homemade items to sell and some of them were exhibiting the process in front of your eyes.

Rabae al Maskari, who was making the Mandoos using palm leaves was catching everyone's attention though. Instead of making the flat mats or regular items that we see, he was preparing different household items using palm leaves.

Other villagers were selling traditional dress materials having intricate handwork on them, not to mention spices honey, and date stalls are mandatory in any souq you visit.

There were also ladies making wristbands and key chains using goat wool. Surprisingly I have never seen these items except in the mountain areas. A teenage girl was showcasing her drawing talent, also some small toy stalls were there with kids around them. The smell from the different food stalls was creating an aroma around the entire place.

Mostly when we visit any souq it is all about the shops and the items but Al Qabil Village souq was providing a different experience to add to your memory. It was kind of a festival among the villagers where the tourists were allowed to blend smoothly.

Every villager was interacting with the tourists and noticed that most of them were explaining the culture, craft, food or lifestyle and some were busy attending to the buyers who wanted the items to take back to their own country as perfect souvenirs. Generations_oman and the leader of the souq Jihan Al Harthiyah were thoughtful enough that they even organised some entertainment for the people attending the village souq. To entertain the crowd they organised a dramatic entry of blogger Amelia, who promotes the Omani villages and villager's life, craft, and products through her Instagram page. The horse and donkey ride was stealing the show, not only the kids but witnessed many tourists taking the short rides to take pictures. Here want to mention, no animals were harmed and villagers take care of them.

