

The Ministry of Labour issued an indicator on the performance of the 'employment and replacement of expatriates' for the third quarter of 2022, in addition to an indicator on training. As many as 31,354 Omanis got jobs during the third quarter of 2022, constituting 90 per cent of the target number of 35,000. **DETAILS ON P5**



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ARAB SAILING CHAMPIONSHIP 2022 GETS UNDER WAY AT AL MUSANNAH



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PHASE 1 OF MIXED-USE MASTERPLAN PROJECT IN AL HAJAR MOUNTAINS NOW COMPLETE



P20

SERB SEASON AS SEEN FROM THE LENS OF A PHOTOGRAPHER



Oman Post, Tanzania Post issue joint stamp



Oman Post, a subsidiary of Asyad Group, announced the issuance of a post stamp jointly with Tanzania Post. The stamp, the first of its kind, represents the depth of historical and fraternal relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tanzania. It is an indicator of promising cooperation in postal fields and logistic solutions. The event saw the participation of representatives of the two countries' governments. The stamp highlights cultural and social aspects of friendship. An oil painting by Omani artist Sami al Seyabi constitutes an overall graphic design for the joint stamp. **DETAILS ON P3**

MUSCAT

OMAN SCIENCE FESTIVAL OPENS

The third edition of Oman Science Festival 2022 kicked off under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. The six-day event is themed "Together we live the Passion of Science". The opening ceremony included an introductory film of the Oman Science Festival, and a tour of the chief guest of the ceremony and the attendees around the corners of the festival which includes 70 corners. **DETAILS ON P3**

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RUSSIA LAUNCHES BIGGEST AIR STRIKES

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Before HM, ambassadors take oath



Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a number of ambassadors took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Monday morning. The oath taking ceremony was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. **DETAILS ON P2**

‘Wosool’ project provides safe, secure digital content transfer



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said presided over the ceremony to launch ‘Wosool’ project. – ONA

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over a ceremony to launch ‘Wosool’ project on the management of electronic documents. The ceremony was held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel on Monday. The project constitutes a significant component of Oman’s national digital transformation strategy and embodies the e-government

The project seeks to set up a system of digital document exchange featuring all properties needed for the management of a document, right from the moment of its creation till its final stage

approach towards the realisation of Oman Vision 2040. The project seeks to set up a system of digital document exchange featuring all properties needed for the management of a document, right from the moment of its creation till its final stage. The process involves optimum handling of documents that is compatible with the national procedures’ manual for management of electronic documents. **TURN TO P3**

Second edition of Bilarab bin Haitham Award launched

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said on Monday launched the second edition of Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design. This step comes after the success of the first version and the completion of handing over the project which won first-place to Muscat Municipality for the implementation and development of the project. HH Sayyid Bilarab in a statement said that he was honoured to receive a Royal order from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik that the second edition of the award shall adopt a project to create the design of a museum for maritime history. The museum will be set up in the Wilayat of Sur, Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah. HH Sayyid Bilarab expressed his gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty



the Sultan for the confidence accorded to the award. HH Sayyid Bilarab urged Omani youth targeted by the award to harness all their technical capabilities and architectural skills to participate in this version of the award, and to present innovative and creative models and designs in line with the project’s mission and objectives. **TURN TO P3**



Before HM, ambassadors take oath



Badr bin Mohammed al Manthri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.



HH Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda bin Majid al Said, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic.



Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany.



Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federative Republic of Brazil.



Hilal bin Abdullah bin Ali al Sinani, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia.



Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Lebanese Republic.



Abdulghafar bin Abdulkarim al Balushi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



Saif bin Nasser al Bada'ei, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.



Ahmed bin Said al Rashdi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.



Mahmoud bin Hamad al Hassani, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Swiss Confederation.



Mohammed bin Abdullah al Nahdi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Cyprus.



Hamoud bin Salim al Tuwayah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation.



Irma bint Said al Kathiriyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Brunei Darussalam.



Ru'aa bint Issa al Zedjaliyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Belgium.



Sayyid Faisal bin Hareb al Busaidy, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.



Omar bin Said al Kathiri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Spain.

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a number of ambassadors took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Monday.

They were: — Badr bin Mohammed bin Badr al Manthri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

— HH Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda bin Majid al Said, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic.

— Maithaa bint Saif bin Majid al Mahrouqiyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany.

— Talal bin Sulaiman bin Habib al Rahbi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

— Hilal bin Abdullah bin Ali al Sinani, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia.

— Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed

bin Said al Saeedi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Lebanese Republic.

— Abdulghafar bin Abdulkarim bin Issa al Balushi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

— Saif bin Nasser bin Rashid al Bada'ei, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

— Ahmed bin Ali bin Said al Rashdi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

— Mahmoud bin Hamad bin Nasser al Hassani, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Swiss Confederation.

— Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Awadh al Nahdi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Cyprus.

— Hamoud bin Salim bin Abdullah al Tuwayah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation.

— Irma bint Said bin Mohammed al Kathiriyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Brunei Darussalam.

— Ru'aa bint Issa bin Ashraf al Zedjaliyah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Belgium.

— Sayyid Faisal bin Hareb

bin Hamad al Busaidy, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

— Omar bin Said bin Omar al Kathiri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Spain.

The oath taking ceremony was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs.

— ONA



Oman Post, Tanzania post issue joint stamp

DAR ES SALAAM: Oman Post, a subsidiary of Asyad Group, on Monday announced the issuance of a post stamp jointly with Tanzania Posts Corporation.

The stamp, the first of its kind, represents the depth of historical and fraternal relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Tanzania. It is an indicator of promising cooperation in postal fields and logistic solutions.

The event saw the participation of representatives of the two

countries' governments.

The stamp highlights cultural and social aspects of friendship.

An oil painting by Omani artist Sami al Siyabi constitutes an overall graphic design for the joint stamp.

The stamp features architectural and cultural landmarks in the Republic of Tanzania where Omanis left their mark, as well as a drawing of Zanzibar coastline "Corniche of Zanzibar" and adjoining government buildings.

The stamp also portrays

the House of Wonders, a key historical and cultural landmark in Zanzibar depicting the deep-rooted fraternal relations between the two countries.

The stamp comprises other buildings that document Oman's contribution to Zanzibar's heritage and economic development which saw the transformation of small settlements into major cities that played a great role in the rise of East African centres, notably Zanzibar, that later became lighthouses for Islamic and Swahili cultures. — ONA

E-document management project 'Wosool' launched

FROM PAGE 1

It also helps in unifying policies of fast e-document management and exchange.

Hisham bin Khalid al Roshedi, Director of Electronic Management System at the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), said that 'Wosool' project constitutes a shift forward in the documents sector,

so that it could be transformed into a modern sector that keeps pace with the requirements of the future.

'Wosool' will connect government departments with each other and empowers the exchange and management of documents in an electronic manner. It cuts down costs and manages them electronically without going through the process

of printing.

A project will provide systems that protect digital content and prevents unauthorised access to documents. It enhances security so that only authorised personnel could view and deal with a document through a set of properties and specifications associated with the comprehensive management of an establishment's informational content. — ONA

Second edition of Bilarab bin Haitham Award announced

FROM PAGE 1

He also pointed out that the award will invite Omani youth to submit their artistic perceptions of the museum for maritime history. The museum's project will be implemented in the Wilayat of Sur, overlooking to the sea.

HH Sayyid Bilarab said that the rich heritage enjoyed by the Wilayat of Sur tells many stories of maritime glories, taking the name of Sur to fame. As such, the award will revive these maritime glories and will work to document them, and pass them on to future generations.

Moreover, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has worked to provide and select the land plot designated for the project, which is located in the coastal area (14,154 square metres).

The Award's Office held meetings with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on the project's details and the ministry will implement the winning project in the future.

Necessary conceptions of the project in terms of its facilities and other technical details have been prepared and they will be available to participants through the award's guide.

HH Sayyid Bilarab added that it is hoped that the award will contribute to developing, modernising and renewing this important sector. This contribution will add a pleasant visual experience, and reduce any distortion and urban noise that does not correspond to the nature of the place, the urban identity and cultural heritage of Oman.

He affirmed that the award aspires to highlight the Omani architecture featuring innovative nature and contemporary view, and enjoying a presence regionally and internationally.

Through the first edition and according to the interaction witnessed through various platforms of the award, we can say that the beginning was successful, he added.

This, he said, was reflected in the youth's keenness to participate. Moreover, their proposals and



the participants' different design methods, confirm that the award's message reached a wide category.

Through the previous experience with the award, it can be said that the award initiated a dialogue with the youth. The papers and designs they presented undoubtedly reflect their ideas, perceptions and aspirations. This proves that the youth are capable of creating architectural designs they aspire to see in Oman, as well as their artistic perceptions in developing architecture in the country, he said.

He said that when the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design was launched in its first edition, it strived for development and renewal and it works to achieve an added value for Oman and the participants. The second edition will run for four months which is two times longer than the first edition.

The award's programme will include technical workshops for the participants who qualify from the first stage. The award will also include two qualifying stages to accommodate more candidates. Through the first stage, 30 participants will be qualified out of the total applicants, while in the second stage 10 participants will qualify out of the 30 participants (individuals or work teams), HH Sayyid Bilarab added.

On the criteria for participation in the second edition of the award, HH Sayyid Bilarab said that the general criteria are in accordance with what was announced at the launch of the first edition. The award targets Omani youth who are specialised in the fields of architecture, design and urban

planning and they must be no more than 35 years of age. However, as for the technical standards, they will be in line with the target project, and they will be announced in the special technical guide.

Regarding the jury that will sort and evaluate the works submitted for the award in its second edition, HH Sayyid Bilarab indicated that the jury panel comprises specialists in Oman. He pointed out that the panel also includes young people to meet the demands put forth during the first edition.

HH Sayyid Bilarab said that the award is keen to develop and enhance the capabilities of the participants. There will be technical workshops for thirty teams qualifying for the first stage. In addition, all participants will be provided with dialogue spaces through the award's account on Twitter hosting architectural specialists, with the aim of enriching their knowledge. He added that participants must also strive for self-development of their architectural skills and capabilities through educational platforms or social media that provide lessons and relevant information.

HH Sayyid Bilarab added that Omani architecture enjoys rich details, inspiring ideas and capable of responding to development, in addition to its diversity from one governorate to another.

He pointed out that those who work in the sectors of architectural design can contribute to innovating and creating new Omani architectural designs capable of reaching global standards, while at the same time preserving the spirit of Omani originality.

HH Sayyid Bilarab concluded his statement by underscoring the importance of creativity for Omani youth who work in the field of architectural design. He also encouraged them to work on more modern designs which keep pace with futuristic developments. He underlined his confidence of the Omani youth's capabilities. — ONA

Students throng first day of Oman Science Festival

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Oman Science Festival is open for visitors after it opened under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the presence of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

The festival aims to make pace with global trends based on the dissemination of science and technology, future changes and developments.

In its third edition, the Oman Science Festival aims to deliver science to students and community members in an easy and interactive way to inculcate creative thinking and encourage them to realise science's importance in life.

Haitham al Furqani, the first innovation specialist in the Food Security Corner, said, "The festival is a non-profit festival, as it is not for marketing



a product, but all participants work to highlight their work and innovations in terms of benefiting everyone, and the food security corner receives a crowd of those interested not only as a technology issue but as a vital topic and humanity. Also, where the festival contributed to highlighting the sectors due to the demand of visitors in its previous edition."

Another corner presented

Education which included the latest findings of the education sector and contains 20 participants from 20 different participating parties except in the private and government sectors. What distinguishes the corner is that it contains interactive programmes and targets of all ages except school students, parents or researchers," said Ghanim al Saadi, Senior Scientific Innovation Specialist



at the Ministry of Education.

Student projects and simulated environments in the field of cybersecurity in the cyber security corner. In addition, the festival will include a scientific exhibition, open theatres, interactive workshops, practical experiments, and panel discussions that promote dialogue among the participants, in addition to organising competitions that include

different scientific disciplines.

The festival also witnessed the participation of the private sector, like PDO, which is also supporting the event. Visitors can be seen enjoying the planetarium with a series of scientific films, such as the hour of the sky, the forms of space, the dawn of the space age and others, shown throughout the festival.

The festival includes scientific discussions on important global

issues such as climate change, cyber security and others. Its importance lies in the dynamism of the dialogue and solutions proposed, resulting from the expertise and experience of the presenters of the working papers.

In addition, the discussion sessions provide decision-makers and officials with the opportunity to view the latest developments in the topics presented and listen to the views of interested groups in society in a positive and stimulating environment. Among the most prominent topics of the discussion sessions include food security, cyber security, climate change and its effects, and astronomy and space sciences.

Let's live together the passion for science with 452 different activities, interactive scientific workshops, scientific exhibitions of innovations, scientific experiments, scientific competitions, lectures and discussion sessions, and science theatre.



ELECTRIC PLANES FOR FUTURE?

ELECTRIC
PLANES
WILL BE THE
FUTURE
'MANTRA' TO
ACHIEVE

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KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

WITH THE WORLD moving towards environment-friendly and sustainable development initiatives, hopes are high that electric planes will be the future 'mantra' to achieve the 'Zero-Emission' target of the aviation apostles.

Expectations are high after the approval of the first electric cargo plane, which will operate on completely clean electric energy without any dangerous emission level.

Considered an important move towards contributing to changing the future of the transportation sector and its environmental impacts, it will just be a matter of time before the world embraces completely electrified air travel and, eventually, planes flown on solar energy.

"Although technology is not matured enough to run aeroplanes on solar energy per cent, the future will hold a bright picture as far as alternative energy in aviation is concerned," said an aviation expert.

Globally, electric and hybrid-electric propulsion is rapidly revolutionising mobility technologies across industries, from automotive to marine, and the aviation industry is no exception.

"Electric planes will offset huge carbon emissions which high-speed aviation fuel used to emit, and with electricity, it will be zero-carbon emissions. In addition, it will help the environment recover faster, and greenhouse gases will be reduced drastically," said Sunil D'souza, CEO of Travel Point conglomerate.

The first all-electric plane was successfully tested in Seattle, which landed safely just 8 minutes after it took off last week.

An Israeli company Eviation conducted the test of 'Alice'; an indigenously built, larger than other electric planes, which can carry nine passengers and two crew members, or up to 1.1 tons of cargo, recently.

While Eviation's planes are meant to travel no more than 460 kilometres, they are expected to excel in their mileage and speed in the future; their range is expected to grow to 900 kilometres once the battery technology improves.

Meanwhile, Airbus, the leading manufacturer of aircraft, has already begun to lay the groundwork for

future industry-wide adoption and regulatory acceptance of alternative-propulsion commercial aircraft and urban air vehicles.

However, efforts to build electric planes started a decade ago, and in 2010, Airbus embarked on its electrification journey, developing the world's first all-electric, four-engine aerobatic aircraft, CriCri.

Since then, the aircraft manufacturer has made significant progress in the electrification of flights, and the all-electric, twin-propeller E-Fan successfully crossed the English Channel in 2015.

The company's electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) demonstrator projects, Vahana and CityAirbus, have completed many hours of rigorous and comprehensive flight testing programmes to ensure safety and high performance. E-Fan X, the successor to E-Fan that is 30-times more powerful than its predecessor, has provided invaluable insights into serial hybrid-electric propulsion.

As the world is aggressively moving to decarbonise air transportation, the only certified all-electric aeroplane today is a tiny two-seater, the Velis Electro, built in Slovenia.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has charted out a route map towards achieving its target of 'Net-Zero by 2050', which was agreed upon by the aviation industry to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050 in 2021.

The topmost channel through which the target will be achieved is through Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) which ranks at 65 per cent, while 13 per cent is from hydrogen and electric propulsion, 3 per cent from more efficient operations, and 19 per cent through offsets and eventually through carbon capture.

D'souza further said that the quality of the air that we breathe will be improved in a great way by positively impacting our health and our environment at the same time.

"It's a way to go and sustain our ecosystem," D'souza adds.

EMISSION
TARGET
OF
THE
AVIATION
INDUSTRY



Stars of Science: Call to support innovator Sumaya

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Ministry of Information held a press conference for the Omani researcher and innovator Sumaya bint Said al Seyabi to shed light on her participation in the 14th Stars of Science programme through her scientific innovation 'Bio-analysis of microplastics in a new way of biology and nanotechnology'.

The conference was held on Monday at the ministry's headquarters in the presence of Mohammed bin Said bin Mohammed al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority and a number of media representatives.

Sumaya al Seyabi competes with three other inventors in this final stage. However, she obtained the highest, 91 per cent, from the jury, while the remaining percentage will be calculated based on the public's vote. Voting for the Stars of Science competition ends on Thursday at 7 pm, and the winner will be announced on Friday. The winner will get \$300,000 to apply his/her project in practice.

In his speech, the Under-Secretary stressed the great importance of the participation of the researcher Sumaya and the role of her innovation in protecting



the environment in an innovative and creative way. He confirmed the importance of supporting young Omani innovators and supporting Sumaya by voting.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri expressed his appreciation to the ministry for holding the press conference, as well as the role of other authorities and institutions in supporting Sumaya since the beginning of her participation in the programme.

He said, "We are confident that the scientific material presented through this innovation and research of the innovator is a strong and advanced scientific material that employs traditional sciences and modern technology to improve research efficiency".

From his side, Badr bin Ahmed al Habsi, Head of the Media Campaign of the Researcher, expressed in his speech his



thanks to all the sponsoring and supporting institutions of the innovator, Sumaya al Seyabi, "the only woman from GCC countries qualified for the final stage in Stars of Science". He said that if Sumaya al Siyabi won, she would be the first woman in the Arab world to win the title during the 14 seasons of the programme.

During the conference, Sumaya said she spent two years working on this innovation

at SQU. "Through the plastic invasion that threatens our health, I have provided this solution to treat the problem safely and environmentally friendly. This scientific innovation offers a promising solution to eliminate and safely dispose of microplastics using microbial mats and a nano-ZnO catalyst".

She explained that her project allows the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab world to make their mark in science.

"There is societal awareness about the aggravation of the problem of plastic infestation, which poses a great threat to the lives of living organisms, as it causes cancerous diseases to humans, and can lead to the extinction of some animals. This innovation represents a sustainable and environmentally friendly solution."

31,354 Omanis employed in third quarter of 2022

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Monday issued an indicator on the performance of the "employment and replacement of expatriates" for the third quarter of 2022, in addition to an indicator on training.

The indicators reflect the ministry's keenness on employment, on-the-job training and the localisation of jobs — an ultimate objective that is accorded great attention by the government.

As many as 31,354 Omanis received jobs during the 3rd quarter of 2022, constituting 90%

of the target number of 35,000.

In the government sector, the localisation of jobs stood at 9,657 and comprised 96% of the target number of 10,000.

In the private sector, as many as 13,544 received jobs, comprising 84% of target number of 16,000.

In the government sector, training soared 273% over the target number of 2,000. Employment opportunities resulting from training stood at 5,460. In the private sector, on-the-job training stood at 2,693 and comprised 38% of the target number of 7,000. — **ONA**

ITHCA showcases Oman's technological advancements at GITEX Global

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCTOBER 10

The ITHCA Group and affiliates are participating in the world's largest and most comprehensive tech show GITEX Global 2022. The five-day (October 10 to 14) event will attract major start-ups at the Dubai World Trade Centre. For the 2022 edition, the show will feature an unprecedented 5,000 participating tech companies.

More than 800 exhibitors from 60 countries and 600 investors in the entrepreneurial sector will participate in GITEX Global Dubai.

Launched in 2016 as GITEX Future Stars, the event's name changed in 2022 to GITEX Global to reflect the continuous development of the global start-up sector and to celebrate the important role that start-ups play in driving innovation and international cooperation in business and industry.

Speaking on ITHCA Group's participation, Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO ICT Group said: "ITHCA Group will be part of GITEX Global 2022 as part of the North Star Dubai exhibition for start-ups, which is the largest gathering for Unicorn companies this year in Dubai — with 35 Unicorn companies from 15 countries. We look forward to exploring new opportunities at this landmark event and to further expanding into one of the world's fastest-growing markets.

In brief

■ MUMBAI



GENERAL CONSUL OF OMAN TO MUMBAI HANDS OVER PATENT

Jamil bin Haji al Balushi, General Consul of the Sultanate of Oman to Mumbai, handed over the consular patent to Manisha Mhaikar, Chief Protocol Officer of Maharashtra Government.

Al Balushi expressed his best wishes to the government and people of India in achieving further progress and prosperity.

On her turn, the Chief Protocol Officer of Maharashtra Government expressed her best wishes of success for the General Consul in carrying out his duties.

■ CAIRO

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN RC69 HEALTH MEETING

The Sultanate of Oman took part on Monday in the 69th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC69), which is hosted in Egypt till October 13.

Oman's delegation in the meetings is headed by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

The meetings discussed a spectrum of topics, namely addressing strategic issues, annual reports, technical papers on the private sector's engagement in advancing universal health coverage, eradication of poliomyelitis and digital health.

■ MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE CONDUCTS SEA DRILL



MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation Asyad Group and a number of military, security and civil departments, the Maritime Security Centre carried out a security drill at Al Batinah maritime zone. The drill was aimed at enhancing coordination among military, security and civil authorities concerned to keep up their readiness to tackle challenges during crises and catastrophes that might threaten the marine environment, as well as unauthorised fishing. — **ONA**

Firms urged to update data before OCCI elections

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

All companies and commercial establishments have been urged to update data and pay off pending fees to exercise their electoral right for the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Board of Directors elections to be held end of October 2022.

The OCCI Election Committee has approved the election mechanism for its branches and opened candidacy for membership

in the Chamber's BoD and its branches from September 25 to 29 through its website www.omanchamber.om.

"Elections to the OCCI BoD are aimed at giving all companies the right to participate in the success of the process and help achieve its future goals. The Royal Decree No 56/2022 regarding the elections of the directors emphasises the fact that OCCI is the official representative of the private sector and the voter or candidate must meet a set of terms and conditions

to cast their ballots," a spokesperson from the OCCI said.

The candidate should be an Omani national except for those nominating for membership of the OCCI Board from among the representatives of public shareholding companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSE), and foreign investors holding investor residency. The candidate should be a member of OCCI for a period of not less than 5 five years. Other conditions include that the age of the candidate is not less than

30 years, and he should not be an employee of one of the units of the state's administrative apparatus and other public legal persons, or a paid worker in the private sector inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman — with the exception of the nominees from among CEOs in public shareholding companies.

OCCI new system also states that in order for the registered member to cast his vote at OCCI elections, he must have paid OCCI annual subscription fees and should have at least one Omani

worker in his company, or be a holder of a Riyada card from the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development.

"The Royal Decree No. 56/2022 issuing the OCCI System is an evidence that the Sultanate of Oman is moving steadily towards achieving Oman Vision 2040 goals and are themed namely 'Man and Society', 'Economy and Development, governance and institutional performance,' he said.

"With regard to the theme 'Economy and Development,' the

Sultanate of Oman has been keen to enhance the participation of the private sector in the economic growth and development by giving it the opportunity to express its voice, views and proposals and communicate them through the right channels to decision-makers," he added.

This democratic event is expected to play a major role in accelerating economic growth and progress and contribute to achieving the goals of Oman's Vision 2040.



N Korea says missile tests were ‘tactical nuclear’ drills

SEOUL: North Korea’s recent missile tests involved “tactical nuclear” drills to simulate hitting the South, and were overseen by leader Kim Jong Un in response to US-led joint military exercises in the region, state media said on Monday.

Kim made acquiring tactical nukes — smaller, lighter weapons designed for battlefield use — a top priority at a key party congress in January 2021, and this year vowed to develop North Korea’s nuclear forces at the fastest possible speed.

The country revised its nuclear laws last month to allow pre-emptive strikes, with Kim declaring North Korea an “irreversible” nuclear power — effectively ending the possibility of negotiations over its arsenal.

Since then, Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up combined military exercises, including deploying a nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier to the area twice, infuriating Pyongyang, which sees such drills as rehearsals for invasion.

In response, North Korea “decided to organise military



A woman walks past a TV showing a news broadcast with a photo of a Hokkaido missile launch training test by the North Korean People's Army Tactical Nuclear Operation Unit in Seoul. — AFP

drills under the simulation of an actual war” that gamed out hitting South Korea’s ports, airports and military command facilities, KCNA said.

North Korean army units involved in “the operation of tactical nukes staged military drills from September 25 to October 9 in order to check and assess the war deterrent and nuclear counterattack capability,” the report said.

Kim “guided the military drills on the spot,” it said, adding he had dismissed the idea of restarting



North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un oversees military drills at an undisclosed location in North Korea. — Reuters

talks, saying North Korea “felt no necessity to do so”.

The report also said that North Korea’s October 4 missile

launch, which flew over Japan and prompted rare evacuation warnings, involved a “new-type ground-to-ground intermediate-

range ballistic missile”. That test aimed to “send more powerful and clear warning to the enemies”. North Korea’s claim its missile

launches are a “response” to US-South Korea drills is part of a “familiar spiral dynamic” on the Korean peninsula, said US-based security analyst Ankit Panda.

“I worry that this is the start of a dangerous dynamic on the Korean Peninsula, where we have two states in a bitter rivalry and each faces strong incentives to fire first in a serious crisis,” he said.

“We also have no real measures of negotiated restraint or hotlines to manage crises,” he added.

“The North Koreans haven’t yet defined what exactly they consider to be a tactical nuclear weapon or mission ... but we’re starting to see a picture that suggests any nuclear weapon they’d look to use early in a conflict can be defined as a ‘tactical’ capability,” he said.

North Korea also released multiple photographs of the recent missile launches, tests and exercises showing Kim Jong Un overseeing them all, giving orders and posing with smiling soldiers.

It is significant that North Korea is not framing the recent launches as tests of the missiles themselves, but of the units that launch them, analysts said. — AFP

Japan reopens to tourists after Covid with shuttered souvenir shops

TOKYO: As Japan throws open its doors to visitors this week after more than two years of pandemic isolation, hopes for a tourism boom face tough headwinds amid shuttered shops and a shortage of hospitality workers.

From Tuesday, Japan will reinstate visa-free travel to dozens of countries, ending some of world’s strictest border controls to slow the spread of Covid-19. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is counting on tourism to help invigorate the economy and reap some benefits from the yen’s slide to a 24-year low.

Arata Sawa is among those eager for the return of foreign tourists, who previously comprised up to 90 per cent of the guests at his traditional inn.

“I’m hoping and anticipating that a lot of foreigners will come to Japan, just like before Covid,” said Sawa, the third-generation owner of the Sawanoya ryokan in Tokyo.

Just over half a million visitors have come to Japan so far in 2022, compared with a record 31.8 million in 2019. The government had a goal of 40 million in 2020



Pedestrians wearing protective face masks, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, are seen behind artificial cherry blossom decorations at a shopping district in Tokyo. — Reuters

timed with the Summer Olympics until both were upended by the coronavirus.

Kishida said last week the government is aiming to attract \$34.5 billion in annual tourist spending.

But that goal may be too ambitious for a sector that has atrophied during the pandemic. Hotel employment slumped 22 per cent between 2019 and 2021, according to government data.

Spending from overseas visitors will reach only 2.1 trillion yen by 2023 and won’t exceed pre-Covid levels until 2025, wrote Nomura Research Institute economist Takahide Kiuchi in a report.

Flag carrier Japan Airlines Co has seen inbound bookings triple since the border easing announcement, president Yuji Akasaka said last week, according to the Nikkei newspaper.

Even so, international travel

Prime Minister Kishida says the government is aiming to attract \$34.5 billion in annual tourist spending

demand won’t fully recover until around 2025, he added.

Narita Airport, Japan’s biggest international airport some 70 kilometres from Tokyo, remains eerily quiet, with about half of its 260 shops and restaurants shuttered.

“It’s like half a ghost town,” said 70-year old Maria Satherley from New Zealand, gesturing at the Terminal 1 departure area.

Satherley, whose son lives in the northern island of Hokkaido, said she would like to return with her granddaughter this winter but probably won’t because the child is too young to be vaccinated, a prerequisite for tourists entering Japan.

Amina Collection Co has shut its three souvenir shops at Narita and is unlikely to reopen them until next spring, said president Sawato Shindo. — AFP

China moves to stamp out Covid outbreaks

SHANGHAI: China recorded more than 2,000 Covid cases on Monday, its highest level for a month, as officials imposed new lockdowns and restrictions to stop outbreaks from spreading to the capital ahead of the Communist Party Congress.

Although the latest case numbers are small by global standards, Beijing’s strict zero-Covid policy means any outbreaks must be immediately eradicated.

President Xi Jinping, who is expected to secure a historic third term in office, has championed the policy, and any significant outbreak ahead of Sunday’s Congress opening would prove

highly embarrassing for the party.

In Shanghai, tens of thousands of people were under lockdown on Monday, after multiple neighbourhoods were suddenly closed off over the weekend, following the discovery on Friday of 23 new infections.

Over 2,100 households in the financial hub were affected because of just one infection on Sunday, according to a government briefing.

Residents reacted in shock as green fences were erected around buildings, recalling the city’s harsh two-month lockdown in spring, which saw widespread complaints over shortages of food and medical treatment. — AFP

UAE president to visit Putin in Moscow

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates’ president will on Tuesday visit his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, state media reported, one of the few leaders to make the trip to Moscow since the Ukraine war started.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan “will discuss with President Putin the friendly relations between the UAE and Russia along with a number of regional and international issues and developments of common interest,” the UAE’s state news agency WAM said on Monday. — AFP

TUNIS

Tunisia has only one week of petrol supply

Tunisia only has enough petrol to last a week, a senior official in the labour union said, but the energy minister said a new tanker was unloading and that big queues at fuel stations had been caused by a rush of consumers hoarding supply.

Long lines of cars jammed roads as they wait to fill their tanks around Tunis in what critics see as another sign of an unfolding crisis in public finances. The petrol tanker now unloading at Bizerte will give



Tunisia an extra few days of supply, taking it to 10-14 days in total, down from the usual 60 days of strategic reserves, said a senior official in the oil section of the UGTT union. — AFP

DHAKA

4,000 Bangladesh activists charged in crackdown

Thousands of party activists in Bangladesh have been hit with ‘fake’ charges of violence in a widespread crackdown by authorities, the opposition said on Monday as an international rights group expressed concerns.

Opponents of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have held protests across the country in recent months over power cuts and demanding a poll under a neutral caretaker government.

A spokesman for the opposition Bangladesh



Nationalist Party (BNP), said police had charged at least 4,081 named party supporters and leaders in what he called trumped-up or “fake” cases over the violence. — AFP

COLOMBO

Aeroflot returns to crisis-hit Sri Lanka after spat

Russia’s national carrier Aeroflot returned to crisis-hit Sri Lanka, ending a four-month suspension after one of its aircraft was seized in Colombo.

Before it attacked Ukraine, Russia was the Indian Ocean island’s biggest source of visitors and tourism minister Harin Fernando welcomed the resumption of direct Moscow-Colombo services as a much-needed boost to the bankrupt island’s hospitality industry.



“This is good news,” he said yesterday and adding that he hoped tourists “from Russia’s neighbouring countries” would also use the twice-weekly service. — AFP



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In brief

■ STOCKHOLM



RESEARCH ON BANKS WINS TRIO ECONOMICS NOBEL PRIZE

The Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences has been awarded to three researchers in the United States, including former Fed chairman Ben Bernanke, for their work on banks and financial crises, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences announced. Bernanke, Douglas Diamond and Philip Dybvig will share this year's award, nearly \$900,000. An academy statement said the three have "significantly improved our understanding of the role of banks in the economy, particularly during financial crises. An important finding in their research is why avoiding bank collapses is vital." — dpa

■ LONDON



UK NURSE ON TRIAL FOR MURDER OF NEWBORN BABIES

A neo-natal nurse went on trial in Britain on Monday, charged with the murder of seven babies in her care and the attempted killing of 10 others. Lucy Letby, 32, has denied murdering five boys and two girls, and attempting to murder another five boys and five girls between June 2015 and June 2016. She is allegedly to have carried out the killings at the Countess of Chester Hospital, in Chester, northwest England, where she was working. Opening the prosecution case, lawyer Nick Johnson said that neo-natal mortality at the hospital had been comparable to other units around the country. — AFP

■ PARIS



NO RELIEF FOR FRENCH MOTORISTS AS PETROL STRIKE HARDENS

Filling stations across France were low on petrol on Monday as a strike by workers at energy giant TotalEnergies entered its third week despite government pressure to negotiate. According to official estimates, around 30 per cent of service stations were out of all or at least some fuel types, causing long queues for increasingly desperate motorists. There had been hopes that the pay-related strike action at TotalEnergies, among the world's biggest energy multinationals, would end rapidly after management on Sunday agreed to bring forward salary talks in return for workers resuming service. — AFP

Russia launches biggest air strikes

KYIV: Russia launched its most widespread air strikes since the start of the Ukraine war on Monday, raining cruise missiles on busy cities during rush hour and knocking out power and heat, in what President Vladimir Putin called revenge for a blown up bridge.

Missiles tore into busy intersections, parks and tourist sites in the centre of the capital Kyiv.

Explosions were reported in Lviv, Ternopil and Zhytomyr in western Ukraine, Dnipro and Kremenchuk in central Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia in the south and Kharkiv in the east. Ukrainian officials said at least 10 people were killed and scores injured, and swathes of the country left without power.

Thousands of residents raced to bomb shelters as air raid sirens rang out through the day. The barrage of dozens of cruise missiles fired from air, land and sea was the biggest wave of air strikes to hit locations away from the front line, at least since the initial volleys on the war's first day, February 24.

"The Kyiv regime, with its actions, has put itself on the same level as international terrorist organisations. With the most odious groups. To leave such acts without a response is simply impossible," Putin said in a televised address.

The Russian leader said he had ordered "massive" long range strikes and he threatened more strikes in future if Ukraine hits Russian territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the attacks were deliberately timed to kill people, as well as to knock out



A Ukrainian soldier stands as a 2S1 Gvozдика self-propelled howitzer fires a shell on the front line in Donetsk region. — AFP

Kyiv residents shocked

KYIV: The missiles that sowed death and destruction in the Ukrainian capital for the first time in almost four months came in frightening roars early on Monday.

The explosions smashed and shook buildings, burst water mains, left craters and torched automobiles — jarring Kyiv's nearly three million people, including jolting some out of their sleep, as the city began its work week.

"I'm very shocked," said 22-year-old Ivan Poliakov sitting on a park bench where he was so angry he struggled for his words.

"I arrived in Kyiv this morning. I was walking in the street... when there were the

explosions," he said. "I saw children and women cry. I love Kyiv. The people are good, they are courageous. But in an instant... it's death."

In the wooded Taras Shevchenko park in central Kyiv a missile gouged out a huge crater next to a child's playground after renting asunder the air above it. A small trail of white smoke was still rising. Branches were shorn clean off trees.

Shortly after 8 am on Monday, two missiles hit this upscale neighbourhood, less than a minute and 300 metres apart. In the streets by the park, apartment block windows have been blown out and glass shards litter the ground. — AFP

Ukraine's power grid.

His prime minister said 11 major infrastructure targets were hit in eight regions, leaving swathes of the country with no electricity, water or heat.

"They are trying to destroy us and wipe us off the face of the earth," Zelenskiy said.

The body of a man in jeans lay in a street at a major Kyiv intersection, surrounded by flaming cars. In a park, a soldier cut through the clothes of a woman who lay in the grass to try to treat her wounds. Two other women were bleeding nearby.

The Kremlin was humiliated two days ago when a blast damaged Europe's longest bridge, which it had built after it seized and annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014.

Ukraine, which views the bridge as a military target sustaining Russia's war effort, celebrated the blast without officially claiming

Attacks across Ukrainian cities during Monday rush hour in apparent revenge for explosion on Crimea bridge as power, water, heat knocked out in swathes of country

responsibility.

With troops suffering weeks of setbacks on the battlefield, Russian authorities have been facing the first sustained public criticism at home of the war, with commentators on state television demanding ever tougher measures.

Ben Hodges, a former commander of US army forces in Europe, said the scale of the strikes suggested Russia's plan to escalate may have been drawn up before the bridge was attacked.

Monday's strikes tore a huge crater next to a children's playground in one of central Kyiv's busiest parks.

The remains of an apparent missile were buried, smoking in the mud.

More volleys of missiles struck the capital again later in the morning. Pedestrians huddled for shelter at the entrance of Metro stations and inside parking garages.

Germany said a building housing its consulate in Kyiv had been hit in Monday's strike, though it had not been used since the war started on Feb. 24. The European Union condemned Monday's "barbaric and cowardly attacks" on Ukraine, among a chorus of denunciations from Western countries. — Reuters

Storm Julia emerges over Eastern Pacific after crossing Nicaragua

MEXICO CITY: Tropical storm Julia emerged over the Eastern Pacific on Sunday evening after pummeling Nicaragua with rain and winds that damaged hundreds of homes but left no reported casualties in that country, according to government officials.

Local authorities attributed three deaths in Honduras to the storm, including a young woman and a four-year-old boy who died after a boat capsized near the border with Nicaragua on Saturday night and a 22-year-old woman who was swept away by flood waters on Sunday in the north.

The storm made landfall on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua early on Sunday near Laguna de Perlas and by 6 pm local time its center was over the Pacific around 220 kilometers southeast of El Salvador's capital, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

It is expected to move north along the coasts of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala on Sunday and Monday, according to the NHC.

About one million residents of Nicaragua's coastal region lost power and internet due to fallen lines as well as a decision by the government to cut electricity for safety reasons, said Vice President Rosario Murillo, according to



Residents look at the Chamelecon river that threatens to overflow in the municipality of La Lima, Honduras, due to the rains left by Tropical Storm Julia. — AFP

local media.

The Nicaraguan National Disaster System said in a tweet on Sunday that the entire country was under "red alert," after heavy rains caused multiple rivers to flood.

Guillermo Gonzalez, director of Nicaragua's disaster system, told a press conference that Julia had not caused any fatalities in the country but that more than 13,000 families had been evacuated, more than 800 houses had been flooded and many roofs had been damaged.

"The event is not over," Gonzalez said.

The NHC maintained its warning of the "risk of life-threatening flash floods and

mudslides across Central America and Southern Mexico" through Tuesday.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on social media early on Sunday that Julia had left "light damage" in San Andres and Providencia, Colombian islands off the coast of Nicaragua.

In San Andres, heavy winds pulled tin roofs off houses, according to police captain Octavio Gutierrez.

On Sunday, streets rang with the sound of handheld saws that police and locals used to clear fallen tree trunks and branches.

In high-risk zones in Honduras, authorities declared a red alert and called on residents to evacuate. — Reuters

What do we do to contribute?



Eng Azza Sulaiman Al Ismaili

The writer is the former Minister of Technology and Communications

Whatever we do in life, we know that the success we gain will be linked to the effort and the preparedness that we bring to the activity.

Planning and getting the necessary time and resources, and then executing with conviction and energy are the route to achievement.

I think it is fair to say that anyone would see that as an obvious statement. But the attitude that we bring along with us, in the classroom or the workplace, says a lot about how seriously we take these principles.

Quite a few years ago, I applied to join a management learning course at Harvard Business School. It is a famous institution, and so the course was popular.

But, I had completed my MBA, and started or co-founded businesses that were doing well, and had years of experience behind me. Also, the course was not cheap. I had no doubt at all that my application would be accepted.

I have to admit that I was surprised when the detailed application forms came back to me, and I was asked a question I did not expect.

Not about my experience or qualifications exactly, but something harder to define: what, they asked, would I be bringing to the course?

The question made my eyes widen. I would be paying for the course – surely it was for them to convince me that it was worth it?

IT IS ALWAYS WORTH REFLECTING HUMBLY ON WHAT WE ARE BRINGING ALONG TO EXCHANGE WITH OUR PEERS

All of us have an ego to some extent, and after achieving certain things in life, perhaps we no longer expect to have to justify our worth.

But this question was an important and sudden reminder of the importance of humility. In professional training, higher education and other areas of learning, there is a great opportunity to benefit from the experiences of your classmates. The academic

cohort is a resource that can be just as important as the course materials and the professors. My place was not just for my benefit, but should benefit all.

It didn't take long to find some business experiences and consider the cultural context also of my participation in the course, that others might find interesting or useful.

I joined the course and benefited from it greatly – including from my fellow participants. But the lesson that stuck in my mind most readily was from that first application: what do you bring?

It is a question now I ask myself often. Is there someone I can help; something I can share? Not as someone who knows it all, but as a

contributor to a broader discussion that can lead to new understanding. Sometimes just to start a train of debate that will prove me wrong!

Maybe just as importantly, this experience made me think about the less useful things we do.

Posting on social media, forwarding a WhatsApp message, gossiping perhaps. What is it we are bringing and contributing? Is it honest and authentic, and the best we can do?

In these trivial things, maybe the most useful thing is to skip it!

Wherever we work or study, or in our social groups, we affect those around us. It is always worth reflecting humbly on what we are bringing along to exchange with our peers.

Heat-resilient Red Sea reefs offer last stand for corals

BAHIRA AMIN

Beneath the waters off Egypt's Red Sea coast a kaleidoscopic ecosystem teems with life that could become the world's "last coral refuge" as global heating eradicates reefs elsewhere, researchers say.

Most shallow water corals, battered and bleached white by repeated marine heatwaves, are "unlikely to last the century," the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said this year.

That threatens a devastating loss for the hundreds of millions of people worldwide who depend on the fish stocks that live and breed in these fragile ecosystems. Even if global warming is capped within Paris climate goals of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, 99 per cent of the world's corals would be unable to recover, experts say.

But Red Sea coral reefs, unlike those elsewhere, have proven "highly tolerant to rising sea temperatures," said Mahmoud Hanafy, professor of marine biology at Egypt's Suez Canal University.

Scientists hope that at least some of the Red Sea corals — five per cent of the total corals left worldwide — could cling on amid what is otherwise a looming global collapse.

"There's very strong evidence to suggest that this reef is humanity's hope for having a coral reef ecosystem in the future," Hanafy said.

Eslam Osman from the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia said: "It is crucial that we preserve the northern Red Sea as one of the last standing coral refuges, because it could be a seed bank for any future restoration effort."

The impacts of coral loss are dire: they cover only 0.2 per cent of the ocean floor, but are home to at least a quarter of all marine animals and plants, helping sustain livelihoods for half a billion people worldwide.

Global warming, as well as dynamite fishing and pollution, wiped out a startling 14 per cent of the world's coral reefs between 2009 and 2018, according to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network.

Graveyards of bleached coral skeletons are now left where once vibrant and species-rich ecosystems thrived. Recent studies have shown the northern Red Sea corals are better able to resist the dire impact of heating waters.

"We have a buffer temperature before the coral sees bleaching," Osman said.

"One, two, even three degrees (Celsius) of warming, we're still on the safe side," Osman said one theory explaining the corals' apparent resilience to heat is due to "evolutionary memory" developed many thousands of years ago, when coral larvae migrated north from the Indian Ocean. — AFP

The monsoon is becoming more extreme



Henry Fountain

The writer has been a reporter, editor at NYT for two decades

Like all of India's tens of millions of small farmers whose lives depend on the annual monsoon, Bhagwat Gagre keeps a firm eye on the sky.

At his village in the shadow of the Western Ghats mountain range, the rainy season usually starts in June. Winds over the subcontinent reverse, as they have for millennia, carrying clouds ripe with water from the Arabian Sea up over the Ghats, soaking Gagre's tiny farm in Kumbharwadi and ensuring that the crops he and his wife sow will have the rain they need.

Now, however, across South Asia, climate change is making the monsoon more erratic, less dependable and even dangerous, with more violent rainfall as well as worsening dry spells. For a region home to nearly one-quarter of the world's population, the consequences are dire.

At Gagre's farm in late August, dryness was the problem — the monsoon had begun to feel all but absent. "If we don't get rain in the next 15 or 20 days," he said, gesturing to his fields, "productivity will go down 50 per cent."

In other parts of South Asia, the problem was too much rain, too quickly. Pakistan, to India's northwest, was struck by relentless downpours, leaving much of the nation underwater and killing at least 1,500 people. In Bengaluru, India's tech capital, devastating rains in early September forced workers to use boats instead of cars in the streets.

Scientists blame global warming from the burning of fossil fuels for the changes in the monsoon. Computer models suggest that as this warming continues, the monsoon will strengthen, with more rain overall.

But the scientists also see what farmers like Gagre are experiencing: greater uncertainty.

"The heavy rainfall events are increasing at a rapid pace," said Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune. "That is a very, very clear shift that we see in monsoon patterns."

The monsoon season is defined by patterns.

It begins on India's west coast with a springtime reversal of winds, pushing moisture-laden air from the Arabian Sea toward land. Then, from the Bay of Bengal to the east, winds start carrying



Shewantabai Murlidhar Bhangre, a day labourer, at a farm in Purushwadi, India.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS MAKING THE MONSOON MORE ERRATIC, LESS DEPENDABLE AND EVEN DANGEROUS, WITH MORE VIOLENT RAINFALL AS WELL AS WORSENING DRY SPELLS

more rain across the subcontinent.

Through July and August, the rains march northward in fits and starts. In September the monsoon retreats for another year.

The monsoon is becoming more erratic because of a basic bit of science: Warmer air holds more moisture. The moisture accumulates in the atmosphere and can stay there longer, increasing the length of dry spells. But then, when it does rain, "it dumps all that moisture in a very short time," Koll said. "It can be a month's rainfall or a week's rainfall in a few hours to a few days."

Gagre farms in a drylands region. Because he lives in the shadow of the Ghats, the monsoon brings less rain — the mountains wring most of the moisture from the clouds before it can reach his farm. For him, longer dry spells are a big threat.

To cope, villagers have dug long,

meandering trenches by hand along the hillsides, the better to catch the rain that falls, prevent it from running off into streams and give it time to soak into the ground. That has helped keep local wells from drying up after the monsoon is over.

And if the trenches and other water-conservation efforts had not worked? "Nobody would be living here today," Gagre said.

In the 1870s, Sajjan Singh, the teenage ruler of the Mewar region in western India, ordered the construction of a marble palace on a rugged hill above the lake city of Udaipur. The monsoon for him was a source of fascination, and the new palace would be a fine place to watch the clouds roll in.

Sajjan Singh didn't live to see it finished — he died at 26, perhaps, it's been said, of drink — but the building was completed by his successor. Tourists, mostly from India's burgeoning middle class, are drawn to it today, cramming into taxis for the winding, bumpy ride up the hill.

Known as the Monsoon Palace, its eastern side offers a sweeping view of Udaipur and its glistening waters. But in summer the view from the opposite side is equally spectacular: the approach of moisture-laden monsoon clouds, scudding across the sky.

Those clouds are borne on winds from the southwest. And for a long time, that was most of what was known about the monsoon — it was caused by a shift in the winds that occurred in late spring and continued through summer. — *New York Times*

Keep moving for mental health

The sea has always been a fascination along with what it brings back to the shores. It does not stop moving. Childhood also meant reading books and the concept of letter in a bottle was indeed a thought for imagination even in this day of Wi-Fi and staying connected. As a child walking along the shores of sea in Oman, in addition to collecting shells was the lookout for anything that could have drifted away from a ship. Suppose it is a fascination with stories. Then there were the beautiful drift woods that would remain as untold stories.

A walk along the beach this weekend I did come across two bottles. Neither did they have letters in them nor were they made of glass. They were 1.5 litre mineral water bottles label less - one filled with water and the other completely empty. The waves continued to play with them at the same time attempting to push them back to the shore. There were bread bags and other plastic bags that were partially buried in the sand. Remnants of picnics and get-togethers. They were not pretty sights next to the shells.

STAY HEALTHY

As the world celebrates ‘World Mental Health Day’ on October 10 as every year one of the ways to stay healthy mentally is to stay close to nature. It is not going to be too great for mental health when we are so effortlessly hurting the life of the marine creatures and in turn our own health.

In other words at least for selfish reasons we ought to be keeping our environment clean. Waiting for others to clean our mess is not going to make sense in the long run, and has not until now. So it has to be a built in culture to feel responsible not just for our home, our possessions but our earth too. It was the long weekend and families came to enjoy the sun, sand and the sea.

Enjoying walking with the waves was a crane which quickly searched the sand as soon as the waves retreated. The crane looked vibrant with the available



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

AS THE WORLD CELEBRATES ‘WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY’ ON OCTOBER 10 AS EVERY YEAR ONE OF THE WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY MENTALLY IS TO STAY CLOSE TO NATURE

opportunities until it decided to fly away just before sunset. These are the lives that are equally important as us.

The earth is well balanced when all species are protected and are thriving. Even our own mind needs balancing of both the hemispheres of the brain. The World Federation for Mental Health Day has set the theme of 2022’s World Mental Health Day as ‘Make Mental health and well-being for all a global priority.’

But most importantly the objective is to get help if someone is struggling with mental health.

However I suppose if one is physically strong it need not necessarily mean one can also be mentally strong. Our mind and thoughts are influenced by so many factors varying from emotions to surroundings, words to actions, chemicals to hormones. But moving can make a difference. It seems the best way is to increase awareness about ourselves - our thoughts and feelings and at times accept the fact that it is okay not to be okay and find a way to talk about our struggles. This month we are talking about the various causes of stress that have an impact on our mental health on our podcast called GreenMent with Dr Hamed al Sinawi.

We are looking at the benefits of sports and mental health, impact of competition in schools to workplaces and stress of urban lifestyle.

Interestingly Dr Hamed pointed out the impact of pollution on Alzheimer’s patients. Goes on to prove how environment has an impact on our mind like a friend who could not bear a squeaky chair during a meeting until she explained so to the other person. The chair was silenced and she was not annoyed anymore but how often would we express ourselves to find our peace?

What we have to remember is also that at times we can be the cause of other people’s mental health issues. So we must try harder to practice empathy while we are focusing on mindfulness.

A URAL OWL



A Ural owl (Strix uralensis) looks on during a bird show at the Kuwait University College of Education in Kuwait City on Monday. – AFP

The west’s role in the global food crisis

Actions speak louder than words. That adage explains why Russian President Vladimir Putin’s depiction of his war in Ukraine as a noble fight against Western imperialism comes across as farcical. It should also inform Western leaders’ response to the crises that war has fuelled – including the food crisis that looms over vulnerable populations in Africa.

While climate change and the pandemic were undermining food security well before Russia’s war on Ukraine, the situation is even more dire now, particularly in low-income African countries that depend on food imports from Russia and Ukraine. Globally, a staggering 345 million people face acute food insecurity, with hundreds of millions more going to bed hungry every night. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned last month, there is a real risk of multiple famines this year.

Lack of access to food exported from Russia and Ukraine is only part of the problem. Fertiliser is vital to grow staple foods such as wheat, maize, and rice. And both Russia and Ukraine are major producers of fertilisers and suppliers of the raw materials used to make them. Russia’s war, together with its squeeze on natural gas (a key fertiliser input), has thus contributed to severe shortages.

With prices soaring, supplies have largely gone to the highest bidder, causing supply to collapse in many African countries, such as Ghana, neighbour to fertiliser producer Nigeria. Shortages threaten to reduce the value of the continent’s food production by \$11 billion this year.



ANA PALACIO

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

CONTRARY TO THE KREMLIN’S CLAIMS, THE WEST IS NOT TO BLAME FOR CURRENT FOOD SHORTAGES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. BUT IT DOES HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP ADDRESS THEM

Dozens of countries have put in place restrictions or even total bans on the export of both food and fertiliser.

There is some good news: the Moroccan phosphate and fertiliser giant OCP Group has launched an initiative to boost food security across Africa, which includes a commitment to local capacity-building and innovation and a pledge to channel 20 per cent of its production toward the continent. But much more must be done to avert a catastrophic food crisis.

Any optimism arising from the United Nations-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative – which was supposed to get Ukrainian food and fertiliser back on world markets – has long since faded. But last month’s Global

Food Security Summit, held on the margins of the UN General Assembly this year, offered new reason for hope. Departing from the traditional “single-issue, single-crisis” approach, leaders took a holistic view of the current crisis, which they approached with a sense of urgency and an emphasis on multilateralism.

Alas, action from Europe was hardly coordinated. Mere hours apart, France launched its Save Crops Operation (with Lebanon, the European Commission, the African Union, and several multilateral institutions), and Spain issued its Declaration of Leaders’ Summit on Global Food Security (with the AU, the EU, and the United States).

More recently, the European Commission allocated €600 million

(\$582 million) from the European Development Fund to finance immediate humanitarian food aid, bolster food production, and support interventions to boost food-system resilience in the most vulnerable countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. But this is also woefully inadequate, especially since the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-27 lacks sufficient support for food security and sustainable agriculture.

The EU must amend the Multiannual Financial Framework next year. Moreover, it must renounce protectionism in agriculture, which has, for example, impeded the ratification of the EU-Mercosur trade agreement (in this case, to protect French and Austrian interests). The notion that the EU’s

Common Agricultural Policy would be extended to Ukraine if the country joined the Union has already ruffled feathers.

EU policy toward Africa must also be rethought. Home to more than 65 per cent of the world’s arable land, Africa needs financial and technological investment, as well as incentives to support local manufacturing. This includes, as European Council President Charles Michel noted at this year’s UN General Assembly, sustainable projects for fertiliser production on the continent.

In addition, the EU must revise its cherished Green Deal, updating its financing, responding to grievances, and addressing blind spots such as the scheme’s implications for critical raw-materials demand, or the risk that agricultural standards could act as non-tariff barriers for African exports. More broadly, the EU needs to chart a clear and convincing course that recognises the urgency of the food crisis.

Contrary to the Kremlin’s claims, the West is not to blame for current food shortages. But it does have a responsibility to help address them. It must not leave developing countries to fend for themselves, as it largely did during the Covid-19 pandemic, not least because, with their credit ratings sliding, beleaguered African governments are facing increasingly steep borrowing costs. This is jeopardising subsidy programmes at a time of surging living costs.



Lack of access to food exported from Russia and Ukraine is only part of the problem.

sport

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ARAB SAILING CHAMPIONSHIP 2022 GETS UNDERWAY AT AL MUSANNAH

MUSCAT: Eleven countries from across the Middle East and North Africa

have arrived at Barceló Mussanah Resort for the Arab Sailing Championship 2022. Back after a three-year hiatus, 120 sailors will compete over five days from 11-15 October 2022 in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, RS:X and iQFOiL windsurfing and RS Venture para sailing classes with the winners and best performing country taking home the trophies.

A team of 23 sailors from Oman will join their counterparts from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq,

Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and the UAE.

Hamed al Yahmadi, Event Project Manager, said, “This is an incredibly exciting opportunity for our young sailors to test themselves against their peers from across the Arab world.



Being held for the first time since Egypt 2019, it is an honour to bring the championship to Oman and the Barceló Mussanah Resort for the premier youth sailing competition in the region and we are delighted to welcome all of the sailors and coaches to Oman.

“We are looking forward to seeing how our sailors perform on

home waters ahead of a busy period for the teams. This is the start of a long journey that could lead to the Olympic Games in the future. We are also very pleased to include para sailing, and the para sailors from Oman, Iraq and KSA, as the sport makes progress towards inclusivity and demonstrating the opportunities in sailing for all.”



Tuesday 11 October has been designated the official arrival and practice day. The first day of racing will take place on Wednesday 12 October with further racing throughout the week until the final day on Saturday 15 October when the prizes will be awarded.

The Arab Sailing Championship is proudly supported by the Barceló

Mussanah Resort, Oman Air, National University of Science and (International Maritime College), National Mineral Water Company (Tanuf), and environmental partner the Environment Society of Oman.

Taking place alongside the Arab Sailing Championship 2022 will be the next leg of the Oman Sailing



Hamed Al Yahmadi

Festival, also taking place in Al Musannah. Running from 12-14 October, the festival offers free Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing sessions to visitors, as well as showcasing local SMEs and encouraging the local community to join in with a beach clean-up event to help preserve the local environment.

Oman win silver and bronze in Pan Arab junior golf

MUSCAT: After a wait of three years the Pan Arab Junior Golf Championships made a welcome return when they were played at Golf Citrus, Hammamet, Tunisia from October 6 to 8.

The event, featuring the strongest teams from the Pan Arab region, was played over three days with five divisions, Oman fielding teams at Under 18, Under 15, and Under 13 level. The team scores were made up of the best two gross scores each day from the team of three, individual performances were also awarded.

At Under 13 level, Oman were represented by Yousef al Rumhy (9) and Mohib al Kathiri (12), for both players it was their first experience of national team golf. They carried themselves very well finishing a creditable 15th and 11th in the individual standings over the two rounds.

Oman team manager Peter Bailey said: “This years’ Pan Arab Championships provided an ideal opportunity to give some of our younger players their first taste of national team golf. While representing your country for the first time at any age is undoubtedly



very daunting, events such as the GOJuniors Tour and the work that we have been doing in preparation for this event are key in preparing our young golfers so that they are not overwhelmed and can both enjoy and benefit from the experience of events like this. Mahir, Mohib and Yousef have deservedly earned their place on the team and I am sure that this will be the first of many events that they play in.”

The Under 15 team was made up of Adam al Barwani, Faris al

Busaidy, and Mahir Sampat. With Adam and Faris having played for the national team on several occasions, hopes were high for a strong performance. The team did not disappoint, narrowly missing out on a bronze medal and ultimately finishing in fourth place over the three rounds. In the individual event, Adam also secured fourth closing with a 77 on the final day, his best score of the week. The gold team prize was won by hosts Tunisia, with Egypt taking silver and the UAE bronze.

In the Under 18 age category, Oman were represented by Ahmed al Wahaibi, Ayman al Busaidy, and Al Munthir al Hinai. Both Ayman and Al Munthir had been part of the Oman team at the 2022 GCC Championships held earlier this year where they secured a team silver medal, and Ahmed has been very active participating in the high-profile Asia Pacific Championships at the end of 2021.

In the individual tournament the standard of golf was very high, a handful of players scoring in the



70’s in each of the three rounds, this included Ahmed al Wahaibi who saved his best round for last, closing with a 75 to claim third individually and win the bronze medal.

With the team format being the best two scores each day from the team of three, it was key for the players to combine well. Ahmed’s scores of 77, 78, and 75 counted each day and were supported by Al Munthir’s round 1 score and Ayman’s round 2 and 3 scores, the last of which was a 77, his best of the week. Their three rounds total

was enough to finish in second place winning the team silver medal, again Tunisia claiming the gold and Egypt finishing in third.

Munthir al Barwani, Chairman of the Oman Golf Association said: “We are very proud of all of our players for their performance in this year’s Pan Arab Championships, especially those playing in their first national team event. We must thank our hosts the Tunisian Golf Federation and the Arab Golf Federation for organising a great tournament. Junior development is one of our key areas of focus and it is rewarding to see that players who have come through this process are now representing their country and performing at a high level.”

“On behalf of the players, I extend my thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth and to our partners and sponsors, Oman LNG, Sohar Aluminium, Shell, and Moore Stephens for their support. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Ahmed al Wahaibi for his individual bronze medal and the Under 18 team of Ahmed al Wahaibi, Ayman al Busaidy, and Al Munthir al Hinai for their well-deserved silver medal.”



High competition at school athletics championship in Dhofar Governorate

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The school athletics championships for boys and girls in Dhofar Governorate, organised by the General Directorate of Education in the Governorate of Dhofar represented by the School Sports Committee, concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture. The championship included athletics competitions for 100m, 400m, 600m races, shot put, long jump, high jump, Balkan relay along with chess, badminton, table tennis and tri-basketball. In the boys 100m race, Mishal bin Moneim Fael from Salalah Al Sharqiya School won the first place, Ali bin Saeed Bait Saeed from the Kaftat School came in second, and Saud bin Mohsen from the Sultan Qaboos School came in the third place.

In the 400m race, Hazza bin Khalifa from Salalah Al Sharqiya School came in first, the second place was Raed bin Saeed al Mashali from Raysut School and in third place was Hashem bin Salem al Rawahi from Salalah Al Sharqiya School.

In the 600m race, Abdullah bin Adel from Sultan Qaboos School snatched the top spot, Ahmed bin Juma al Hamdani from the Osama bin Zaid School came second and Raed bin Hassan Beit Saeed from the Raysut School finished third.

In the shot put competition, Faisal al Balushi from Hittin School came on top, Muslim Ghawas from the Al Qantara School was second and Amer Rafeet from the Osama bin Zaid School claimed third.

In the long jump competition, Salem Beit Saeed from Raysut School won the first place, Mohammad Mustahil from Hittin School came in second, and Kyrlos Milad Fouad from Salalah Al Sharqiya School finished third. In high jump, Ali Al Jafali from Osama bin Zaid School came first. Ali Bait Saeed from Kaftat School took second place and Saeed Bait Saeed from Raysut School took third place.

In the relay race, the Salalah Al Sharqiya School team won the first place, the Raysut School team came in second, and the third place was won by the Osama Bin Zaid School team. In the girls 100m race, Dima Salah from Al Raya School came in first place.

In the 200m race, Ritaj bint Saeed from Al Sayeda Maison bint Ahmed School came first. In the 400m race, Heba Tariq from Al Raya School won first place.

In girls long jump, Suhaila bint Salem bin Nassib from Jawharat Al Alam School came first.

In high jump, Tawaf bint Salem Al Shib from Umm Salim Al Ansari School came first.

The shot put competition was won by Fatima bint Masoud Jaaboub from July 23 School.

Pedri strike gives Barcelona 1-0 win over Celta Vigo

BARCELONA: Pedri's first-half goal gave Barcelona a 1-0 win over Celta Vigo at Camp Nou on Sunday to move them back to the top of LaLiga but they had to battle for the victory against determined opponents.

Barca are level on 22 points with Real Madrid after eight games but have a better goal difference before the pair face each other next Sunday in El Clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu.

It was the seventh consecutive league win for Barcelona, who started well with Gavi and Raphinha running the channels and creating several scoring opportunities.

Celta's Argentine goalkeeper Agustin Marchesin made an incredible save in the 10th minute with the tip of his left hand to keep out a brilliant long-range shot from Raphinha.

However, he was beaten seven minutes later by Pedri's close-range strike from a rebound after capitalising on an error by defender Unai Nunez who tried to clear Gavi's cross.

Teenage sensation Pedri was again on hand to find the net, having scored eight goals from 16 shots on target in LaLiga, scoring with each of his last four.

Celta looked much better after the break, taking control of the ball and creating several chances, but were denied by goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

The German international extended his clean-sheet streak in LaLiga to six games, while he has not conceded a goal in seven of Barca's eight league games this



Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Pedri celebrates scoring the opening goal during the Spanish League football match between Barcelona FC and RC Celta de Vigo at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

season.

Celta made a late push but Ter Stegen made three brilliant saves to deny Celta an equaliser - two of them late on.

First he stopped a one-on-one strike from Iago Aspas with his right foot and then, in added time, deflected a close-range header by Carles Perez moments before Gonzalo Paezencia smashed a thundering strike off the right post.

"We need to be self-critical today, we have to be much better than we were today," Barca coach Xavi Hernandez told DAZN.

"Our team played well in the first 30 minutes, could have scored more goals, but they were better than us in the second half.

"But soccer is like this, it's hard to win and important to win games like this, when you are not at your best and the rivals give you a hard time."

After Celta's good start to the first part of the season, they have lost three of their last four league games and are 11th on 10 points, four above the relegation zone.

"I think we deserved more than just one point, we deserved to win," Celta captain Aspas told DAZN. "We had a great second half, had five or six great scoring chances, but the usual is to lose here." — Reuters

Saka's brace sees Arsenal to the top

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, OCT 10

Arsenal put themselves back at the top of the Premier League after a thrilling encounter which saw them emerge victorious, 3-2, against Liverpool. It was their eighth win in nine matches in their impressive campaign for the title.

Gunner's manager, Mikel Arteta said: "I have never seen an atmosphere like this and you can't imagine how much it helps the players. When you twice concede

and keep coming back against Liverpool, the win is so powerful."

He would not discuss the title chase despite occupying the top position. "I'm not going to mention it," he said. "We are happy where we are so let's try to continue to be there."

Liverpool had the better of the first half although Arsenal started and ended the half well. They went into the lead after just 58 seconds. Darwin Nunez lost possession and it enabled Bukayo Saka to surge deep into Liverpool's half before

passing to Martin Odegaard who then put the ball to his left where Gabriel Martinelli went past Trent Alexander-Arnold to hit inside the far post. Liverpool then took control of the game and in the 26th minute Nunez forced a good save from Aaron Ramsdale. But the visitors found the equaliser eight minutes later. Nunez received a long pass from Alexander-Arnold and passed to Luis Diaz before moving into the six-yard box to meet Diaz's return pass and stroke the ball home.



Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Oman miss out of AFC U17 Asian Cup finals

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Oman's hopes to seal a berth in the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2023 ended after a goalless draw against Iraq on Sunday night.

Qatar progressed into the Asian finals after securing a 4-1 triumph over Lebanon and emerging Group C winners on Sunday. Qatar topped the group with 10 points while Oman ended in second place with seven points. Iraq finished in third place with five points. Bahrain and Lebanon are in fourth and fifth places respectively with four and one points only.

At the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Oman boys entered the game with a situation of ending the game on a victorious note knowing

that a win will boost their hopes of advancing among the six best runners-up. However, the national team player's several chances went away from the net as the fixture ended in a goalless draw.

Oman opened their campaign with a perfect start as they registered a 2-1 victory over Lebanon and then they defeated Bahrain 2-0 to record their second consecutive win before going down 2-1 against Qatar. In the concluding round, Oman played out a goalless draw against Iraq. Oman's absence in the forthcoming edition of AFC Asian finals in 2023 will be the first since 2010.

Group toppers Qatar, began the match against Lebanon with an aim of clinching the winning points which confirm their spot in



the finals. Tahsin al Hagri, Ahmad Nasir Mahmood, Ali Mohammad Shahabi and Esmail Musaed Alahrak scored the winners' goals in the game while an own goal by Rashid Muneer Mazeeq gave Lebanon a consolation goal.

Exiting from the Asian finals in 2023 is the third disappointing event for the Oman national U-17 team. The boys were very eager to make a competitive return in the Asian qualifiers after a disappointing show by the team in the Arab Cup U-17 Championship in Algeria and West Asian U-17 Championships in Jordan. A comprehensive analysis is required to investigate the significant setback of the junior national team and finding the proper solutions for better show in the upcoming assignments.



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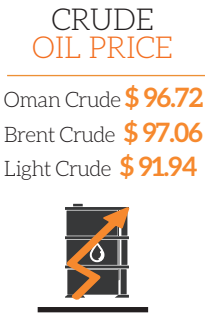


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Digital economy accounts for 2% of Oman’s GDP

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The digital economy of the Sultanate of Oman accounted for 2 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, according to Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani (pictured), Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology. He said this during his presentation on the official session of talks between Oman’s Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

Dr Al Shidhani said that there are 4,502 companies operating in the digital economy sector, employing about 30,000 in which 18 per cent are university graduates with degrees related to the field.

The talks, held at W Muscat Hotel, was headed by Eng Said



bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

and Information Technology, Abdullah bin Amer al Swaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology in Saudi Arabia.

Based on the memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Communications

and Information Technology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that was signed in November of 2021, an executive programme was signed to create a joint working environment between the two countries and enhance cooperation in the field of digital transformation.

An executive programme in the field of skills qualification was also signed with the aim to implement

initiatives in the field of building national digital capabilities in the areas of modern technologies related to the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and to keep pace with the requirements of digital transformation.

As part of the agreement, the first batch of 120 Omanis completed their training programme in specialised courses in the fields of cybersecurity, the Internet of

Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) and programming, which included programmes to develop technical skills and enhance competitiveness for advanced technical jobs in the digital labour market.

The second batch of 240 Omani trainees will start their programme this October and it includes courses on networking, electronic games development, cybersecurity, network development and protection, the Internet of Things (IoT) and business analysis.

It may be noted that three agreements were signed between Omani and Saudi companies and seven more partnerships will be signed during the coming period. During the meeting, the two sides stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation and accelerating the implementation of joint projects and initiatives in light of the distinguished relations that bring together the two brotherly countries at various levels.

Phase 1 of mixed-use masterplan project in Al Hajar Mountains now complete



JOMAR MENDOZA
[@jmobserver](https://www.instagram.com/jmobserver)

The phase one of the mixed-use masterplan project in Al Hajar Mountains of Oman is now complete, this was announced yesterday by Stirling Hospitality Advisors (SHA).

The four-phase project launched in June 2022, with SHA spearheading the development across the tourism and hospitality sectors to optimise the destination’s economic potential and attract further investment.

The mixed-use project encompasses an overarching strategy to develop an attractive, profitable

destination, appealing to domestic and international travellers.

Working together with governmental agencies, local investment groups, internationally-renowned master planners, and infrastructure and sustainability advisers, SHA — one of the leading boutique advisory institutions in the region — is now initiating the second phase of the project.

This includes the development of one of the ridges of the Hajar Mountains into a holistic tourist destination, highlighting Oman’s highest terrain and unique history and artisanry.

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Central Bank of Oman issues fresh warning over crypto, Ponzi risks

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has once again urged citizens and residents to exercise caution when engaging in transactions involving the use of crypto-currencies, among other crypto assets, given the significance risk of fraud being uncovered in this decentralised finance space globally. The warning comes amid a flurry of scams targeting cryptocurrency investors around the world.

Just last week, Binance — the world’s largest cryptocurrency exchange — may have potentially lost hundreds of millions of dollars after a hack of its network, prompting the exchange to temporarily suspend transactions.

Earlier, in August, hackers siphoned off around \$200 million in cryptocurrency from Nomad, a tool that lets users swap tokens from one blockchain to another.

More recently, the US Treasury Department sanctioned Tornado Cash, a cryptocurrency anonymisation service after it was reported that hackers used the service to launder billions in stolen cryptocurrency. Industry losses linked to scammers and hackers have so far totalled around \$2 billion this year, according to experts.

“Be cautious of using cryptocurrencies, as well as other deceptive investment schemes



that warn huge profits (Ponzi schemes),” Oman’s apex bank warned in a recent tweet.

In repeated advisories to the general public, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has been warning that it has not licenced any agency or bank to trade in cryptocurrencies in the Sultanate of Oman.

Protections granted to investors under the Banking Law 112/2012 do not cover any digital or virtual currencies, as well as activities involving their usage, the banking sector regulator has frequently advised.

But given the explosive growth of crypto and virtual assets globally, regulators in the Sultanate of Oman are taking steps, albeit with a great deal of circumspection, to support the eventual legalisation and regulation of some aspects of

decentralised finance based products and services.

Earlier this year, the Capital Market Authority (CMA) said it was preparing to appoint a consultancy firm to advise the Authority on the drafting and implementation of a ‘Regulatory Framework for Virtual Assets (VAs) and Virtual Assets Service Providers (VASPs)’.

The goal, it said, is to support the establishment of a legislative and regulatory framework for the regulation of Virtual Assets and the licensing, supervision and regulation of service providers.

Last year, the Central Bank of Oman announced that it had set up a high-level task force to study the complete gamut of issues encompassing the economic advantages — as well as risks — associated with any decision to authorise the use

IN REPEATED ADVISORIES TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN (CBO) HAS BEEN WARNING THAT IT HAS NOT LICENCED ANY AGENCY OR BANK TO TRADE IN CRYPTOCURRENCIES IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

of cryptocurrencies in Oman. Nevertheless, some leading government agencies have already taken bold steps to venture into the crypto space.

Earlier this year, Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman, took an equity stake in Crusoe Energy Systems Inc, a US firm that helps energy companies cut flaring by using stranded natural gas to power cryptocurrency mining instead.

More recently, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) and Digital Digits (Easy Coins) signed Memorandums of Understanding with Connected Chains to trial the use of cryptocurrency for payments. As part of the pilot, a cryptocurrency pegged to the value of the Omani Rial will be used for payments of dues from customers at select customer care centres of OWWSC, as well as online using EasyCoins’ Hasalah Digital Wallet.

Samsung, MHD-ITICS launch partnership in Oman

MUSCAT: The Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD-ITICS), along with partner Samsung Gulf Electronics, held a channel partner meet on October 6, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Muscat, to formally announce their association.

Attended by a very large number of dealers from all over Oman, the event saw Samsung and MHD-ITICS jointly present their plans to further grow their leadership position in the residential air conditioning and home appliances market.

As the official Samsung distributor in Oman, MHD-ITICS, with their proven track record of a strong country-wide distribution network, in-depth knowledge of the consumer market, unparalleled customer service, and exceptional logistics capabilities, will work



with their dealer and channel sales partners to ensure widespread distribution of Samsung air conditioners and home appliances all over the country.

Samsung took this opportunity to present to the gathered audience the range of futuristic products with efficient, energy saving and ease-of-use features built into each

of them, that would be introduced into the market in the coming months.

Present at the event were Mohammed bin Abdallah al

Kharousi, Chief Investment Officer, MHD-ITICS, Jayaprakash Menon, CEO, MHD-ITICS, Mohsin Talal Bahrani, Director, MHD-ITICS and Gokul Praveen, Deputy Director, Consumer Division, MHD-ITICS. The Samsung Gulf team was represented by Ashley Kocherry, Head of Marketing, Samsung Gulf, Vinu Chandy, Country Manager, Oman, Samsung Gulf and Hussain Mohammed, Samsung Product Trainer.

Jayaprakash Menon, CEO, MHD-ITICS said, “Our strategic partnership with Samsung is a significant milestone for us in our mission to enhance the value we deliver to our customers. MHD-ITICS is driven by an inherent sense of responsibility and an unwavering commitment to deliver best-in-class product solutions for our customers.

Our company’s core value

of customer service, driven by innovative products, and contemporary technology is what lead Samsung to partner with us. This also reaffirms the belief Samsung has in the vast growth potential of Oman.”

Speaking on behalf of Samsung Gulf, Ashley Kocherry commented, “We consider Oman as one of the key strategic markets. We have partnered with MHD-ITICS due to their sales and service strengths, as well as their fantastic distribution infrastructure. Our commitment towards maintaining a strong presence in the region is evident in our partnership with MHD-ITICS.”

Carrying forward the legacy of the MHD Group’s reputation and trust earned over the previous six decades of business in Oman, MHD-ITICS is strongly aligned with the diversification goals underlined in Oman’s Vision 2040.

Alizz Islamic Bank opens nominations for 2nd Hiyya awards for women

MUSCAT: In conjunction with the approach of the Sultanate of Oman celebration of Omani Women’s Day, which falls on October 17, Alizz Islamic Bank announced the opening of nominations for the ‘Hiyya’ awards for women in its second edition.

These awards were are a gesture of gratitude and appreciation for the role of Omani women for their contribution to the nation with an aim to showcase the ambition, determination, strengthen & confidence of women in the society and with an aim to inspire and recognise women leaders, now and in the future.

The announcement of ‘Hiyya’ award augurs well for the growing number of women in the business stratum and reflects rightly on the country’s stand towards empowerment of women in general. As per the set protocol, Alizz Islamic Bank has adopted rigorous steps to maintain



transparency and credibility to the selection of nominees and short-listing of winners. Beginning with a 10-day nomination period followed through by opening the voting process on its website.

The nomination process will be available for everyone, with the option of self nomination or nomination of other women deemed worthy of ‘Hiyya’ awards.

Winners will be selected from the final tally of the public vote and the awards will be distributed during the Banks Omani Womens Day celebration.

Designed to recognise and

felicitate women, the ‘Hiyya’ awards come as an expression of appreciation and gratitude for the pioneering role played by women in building the nation; it is a formal acknowledgement of their contribution in various fields as they continue to demonstrate their expertise and experience in the social and economic arena.

Mohammed al Ghassani, AGM — Chief Consumer Banking Officer at Alizz Islamic Bank, said: “Women have, since the beginning of the Renaissance, partnered with men in building our beloved nation. They have taken strong and steady strides to ensure that the nation runs smoothly on all levels. This devotion is pronounced in all the development projects that have started and are still growing to this day. They have been a part of all-round development and have received equal rights, which has ensured their place alongside men in all departments.”

Malabar Gold & Diamonds gears up to usher the festive season

MUSCAT: With a strong retail network of over 285 outlets spread across 10 countries, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer in the world, has announced the much-awaited festive season offers to add more sparkle to customers’ celebrations.

Customers can get assured gold coins with gold & diamond jewellery purchases, in line with the festive tagline, ‘With you in all your celebrations’, that the brand unveiled in their latest festive film. Malabar Gold & Diamonds will also be showcasing a stunning array of festive jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems, designed to be an alluring attraction to customers.

The limited period offer can be availed across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets in the Middle East, Far east and the USA from October 6 to October 23.

For every diamond or precious gem jewellery purchase worth RO



500, customers will get free 1 gm gold coin and for diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth RO 300, they will be eligible for ½ gm gold coin.

Embracing the spirit of the season, the Festive jewellery collection that the brand has unveiled puts forward an exquisite collection of gold & diamond jewellery designed to enthrall jewellery lovers.

The special design has been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix and Divine, comprising of 22k gold, diamonds and precious gem jewellery. Elegant designs crafted in contemporary fashion have

also been introduced in the 18K gold category. To top it all up, the brand will also be hosting Special Buy counters at all showrooms that offer an exclusive range of jewellery at amazing discounts.

“It is the festive season and as communicated in our latest film, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is with our customers in all their celebrations. As part of this, we have made all possible efforts to incorporate the design preferences of all our customers while launching our Festive collection. This is a strong testament to our commitment to ensuring that our customers get to indulge in their celebrations with all the pomp and vigour they can muster. Furthermore, we are providing our customers with even more reason to celebrate as they get to take home free gold coins with each jewellery purchase,” said Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Oman Avenues Mall launches football promotional campaign

MUSCAT: Oman Avenues Mall announced the launch of ‘Football Unites’ promotional campaign as a prelude to the upcoming world cup to be held in the region for the first time in history. The mall launched various promotional campaigns starting from October 6 and running until December 31, aimed at curating a world of happiness and excitement for families, shoppers, and mall visitors to immerse themselves in.

The campaign is intended not only at celebrating the season but also at showcasing the rich history of the world cup in an informative display at the new welcome court of the mall.

A slew of promotions across categories are included in the promotion to incentivise the visitors apart from the several gaming led events that will be held at the mall.

The promotion under the title of ‘Spend & Win’ entitles



customers who make a combined purchase of RO 15 from the outlets at the mall to take part in multiple raffle draws that will pick up 24 winners of the Al Saada Mall Gift Cards worth RO 100 each during the promotion period spanning 12 weeks.

Apart from this, customers with a single purchase of RO 15 can also participate in the Mega Draw to be held on December 31, 2022 to win the sporty Jeep Wrangler

Gladiator.

Gogi George, General Manager, Development & Leasing, Lulu Group International, comments: “The football season is a time of great fun and excitement and the world cup coming to the region for the first time is a major boost. The season really is an expression of unlimited verve and borders on our theme “Football Unites”; one in which friends, families and communities are drawn closer.

We want to spread seasonal cheer and create a reason to celebrate everyday. Oman Avenues Mall has led the transformation landscape in Oman and has been able to appeal to the larger populace of Oman and we will continue in our quest in the future too.”

In addition to the ‘Spend and Win’ campaign, there are a plethora of activities at the Oman Avenues Mall lined up this season. Another first for the mall would be the human foosball competition in which visitors can take part and win attractive prizes. Human foosball is the same as regular foosball, but humans take the place of the plastic players instead.

The game aims to get the ball into each team’s goal while players are being restricted by the handheld rod. For the skilled, there would be several gaming activities at the 2nd level of the Mall, with a chance to win exciting prizes for the participants.

Phase 1 of mixed-use masterplan project in Al Hajar mountains now complete

FROM PAGE 13

The sectors SHA is currently covering includes looking at creating all types of accommodation; from wellness escapes and luxury hotels to more standardised 3- and 4-star offerings, as well as family-run B&Bs, which maximise the local community’s involvement.

SHA is also looking into the potential development of niche products such as lifestyle boutique hotels, glamping solutions, container camps and farmhouses, catering to diverse customer needs and raising the destination’s competitive edge, enhancing overall tourism in the country.

Stretched along the northern coast of Oman, from southwest of Muscat to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Al Hajar

Mountains are a six-hour drive away from Dubai, making for the ideal getaway destination for travellers looking for an adventure in the wild terrains or a luxurious and relaxing weekend in the mountains.

Tatiana Veller, Managing Director of Stirling Hospitality Advisors said: “We are delighted to be working on Oman’s stunning Al Hajar Mountains and developing world-class real estate and hospitality projects with internationally renowned groups. We have successfully finished the first phase of the project and we look forward to continuing working alongside our partners in driving new opportunities to attract investment and connect experiences with assets to ensure overall success.”



Oil slips as China demand concerns fuel recession fears



An Opec flag is seen in Opec headquarters in Vienna. – Reuters

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Monday, ending five days of gains, as investors looked to slowing economic activity in China, the world's biggest crude importer, which revived concerns about a global recession and falling global fuel demand.

Brent crude futures for December settlement fell by as much as 1.1 per cent and was down 40 cents, or 0.4 per cent, at \$97.52 a barrel by 12:40 GMT. West Texas Intermediate crude for November delivery declined by as much as 1.1 per cent and was last at \$92.29, down 35 cents, or 0.4 per cent.

Services activity in China during September contracted for the first time in four months as Covid-19 restrictions hit demand and business confidence, data showed on Saturday.

The slowdown in China, the world's second-largest oil consumer behind the United States, adds to growing concerns over a possible global recession triggered by numerous central banks raising interest rates to combat high inflation.

"Oil is getting hit with the triple whammy of China's economic weakness, US monetary policy tightening and Biden administration SPR intervention," Stephen Innes, managing director at SPI Asset Management, said in a note.

Innes was referring to the possibility of additional releases from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) next month in response to the decision last week by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, together known as Opec+, to lower their output target by 2 million barrels per day. — Reuters

Green Hydrogen: A future prospect for Oman's dominance in energy market



MARYAM AL NOFLI

Globally, there is increasing emphasis on economic impact of decarbonisation, and a faster transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources to mitigate the emerging risks posed by anthropogenic interventions in climate systems. This issue started escalating from the beginning of the first industrial revolution.

As the political determination to deploy and scale up clean energy technologies (CETs) increases worldwide, there is an urgent need to facilitate the technological transition by inventing new CETs or optimising existing ones.

Solar energy appears to be the most sustainable of all the renewable energy sources known to mankind (including hydroelectric, wind, geothermal, biomass, tidal, and others) as it is unlimited, globally distributed and unconstrained in price, unlike fossil fuels.

As a result, renewable energy technologies (RETs) that use solar energy as the primary driver will continue to attract research and development activities. One of such RETs is the solar driven Integrated Photovoltaic Fuel Cell System (IPVFC), which produces electricity and hydrogen primarily through photovoltaics and fuel cells.

Many government and private organisations throughout the world are seriously involved in implementing this system.

Recently, the nine Arab Nations have made significant contributions to green hydrogen production as part of their commitment to environmental protection and reduction of carbon emissions that cause global warming and climate brutality.

According to a study published by the Egyptian Centre for Strategic Studies (ECSS), the Middle East countries, namely, Oman, United Arab Emirates,



Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania could influence the future of green hydrogen production.

Further, these nine countries have signed memoranda of understanding on green hydrogen production and use, besides, bringing 34 green hydrogen projects in the region. Globally, there are more than 500 green hydrogen projects with a total investment of more than \$530 billion, and 40 nations are interested in developing national policies and development plans for its production.

According to International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates for 2021, the annual rate of hydrogen production (from natural gas and fossil coal) has exceeded 120 million tonnes. At present, this technology accounts for more than 95 per cent of global hydrogen production, however, the clean hydrogen production is expected to reach 700 million tonnes by 2050.

The world has a right to be more optimistic about green energy as modern technologies accelerate the hope for a full-scale clean energy transition. Oman can be one of the most ideal countries in the Middle East to serve as a hub for the production and export of green hydrogen. The abundant availability of the main components for green hydrogen production such as solar energy, wind energy and extensive land area, Oman aspires to be among the world's leading producers of green hydrogen,

Moreover, its extensive experience in energy production and export, centralisation in markets, proximity to global trade routes and global relationships could contribute to build Oman as a major hub for the production

SOLAR ENERGY APPEARS TO BE THE MOST SUSTAINABLE OF ALL THE RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES KNOWN TO MANKIND (INCLUDING HYDROELECTRIC, WIND, GEOTHERMAL, BIOMASS, TIDAL, AND OTHERS) AS IT IS UNLIMITED, GLOBALLY DISTRIBUTED AND UNCONSTRAINED IN PRICE, UNLIKE FOSSIL FUELS.

and export of green hydrogen.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) in the Sultanate of Oman is working with necessary parties such as government agencies and competent companies to build a robust green hydrogen economy.

The Ministry has taken several steps in this regard, the most important one is the formation of a ministerial committee with technical teams, specialised in coordinating the efforts to develop renewable energy and hydrogen sectors. Further, it aims to launch a programme consisting of specialised pathways towards emerging a system of governance that ensures sound planning and effective implementation in accordance with policy.

According to the Oman News Agency, the study of the National Energy Plan, which outlines the strategic directions of the energy sector for the Sultanate of Oman in the light of global trends and national potentials, has recently been completed.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals has stressed the work on conducting necessary studies to develop renewable energy and hydrogen sector. Further it has developed specialised expert houses through a series of tenders. Some of the tenders have been

submitted and the rest are expected to continue in the coming period.

The focus is on the preparation of regulatory and legal framework for the sector, besides, the preparation of the national policy for the energy transition.

Planning of consequent policies to use the available studies, involve stakeholders, incentives, facilities, and tender evaluation models are also in the process. Investments in the renewable energy industry related to hydrogen generation are introduced and appropriate government revenue models are proposed for each phase.

The ministry sponsored the establishment of a national green hydrogen alliance known as "Hy-Fly" in August 2021 to put the Sultanate of Oman on the map of promoting clean hydrogen production and consumption. The alliance includes 13 major institutions from the public and private sectors.

On March 13, 2022, while presiding over the Cabinet meeting, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued a high directive to speed up the procedures for regulating the green hydrogen sector. The major aspects of the directive are development of legal framework and policies on allocation of technical sites, preparation of necessary studies, and establishment of a directorate for clean energy and hydrogen energy within the organisational structure of the MEM.

One of the Sultanate of Oman's most important initiatives at the moment is the Hyport Duqm project, which intends to produce green hydrogen from renewable energy in line with the global shift to replace traditional fuels with clean fuels or renewable energy.

Hyport Duqm Green Hydrogen Production Project, which is one

of the strategic projects being developed in partnership between the OQ Group and the Belgian Deme Group. The project is to be located in part of the designated alternative energy area of the Duqm Special Economic Zone, in an estimated area of 150 square kilometres.

A 1.3 GW wind power plant with combined solar power plant will be built in this zone, with implementation in scalable phases. The Hyport Duqm project has now completed the installation and operation of 4 wind meteorology masts and two on-site solar meteorology stations to identify Duqm's promising and outstanding potential for year-round solar and wind power generation potential.

After the initial studies, the construction of the facility to produce green hydrogen and green ammonia will start. The project fits in with the Sultanate of Oman's strategy to develop Al Wusta Governorate in general and the Duqm Special Economic Zone in particular, as well as to contribute to the achievement of the renewable energy targets in accordance with Oman Vision 2040.

This initiative will play an important role in accelerating projects and investments in the Duqm Special Economic Zone besides, encouraging many companies to switch to green energy. In the first phase of the project, a 500 MW hydrogen production plant using water electrolysis technology will be built.

The unit will produce 330,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually, and it is scheduled to start operating in 2027. Once the operation starts, it can contribute to meet global demand for green hydrogen. Further, the project will be developed and expanded to promoter the Duqm region, a hub for green hydrogen production in Oman and Middle East.

The use of green hydrogen in the industrial, logistics and infrastructure sectors is vital and it will be a driving force for strategic investments in the Sultanate of Oman. *(The author is a lecturer at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Shinas. She can be contacted at alnoflimaryam@gmail.com)*

Oman – Australia Cable lights up

JOMAR MENDOZA

@JmObserver

Australian-based submarine cable development specialist SUB.CO announced, through its account, the start of the live broadcast of the Oman-Australia cable. The Oman-Australia Cable (OAC) — a 9,800 km cable which lands in Barka, Sultanate of Oman — was completed earlier this month, as it neared entry into service.

This cable is the world's first diversified cable between Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. SUB.CO is building the cable, connecting Muscat with Perth in Australia, via a route that avoids areas within Asia that are affected by regional conflicts or extreme natural events.



Bevan Slattery, the founder of the company, said in a statement that there is another month of testing, and the commercial movement is being passed, expressing his appreciation to the team members who participated in this work since the first day of starting the project.

He said: "I am extremely

excited about this achievement, and I know the finish line is very close, with the most extraordinary and challenging times I have seen in the industry.

With all the landings completed, we are now moving towards a final stage and then final testing and commissioning. SUB.CO said the decision to

connect the cable in Oman was driven by investment from cloud, networking and data centre providers. In June, Oman

Telecommunications Company (Omantel) revealed that it had concluded an agreement with the Australian company SUB.CO to enable it to access the main call centres in Europe through Omantel's extensive network of submarine communication cables.

Under this agreement, Omantel will provide high capacity connections to SUB.CO from Muscat to London, Milan and Marseille through the Oman-Australia Cable (OAC), which is one of the longest direct submarine communications cables in the world.

Two Omani students raise \$1 million for an app

MUSCAT: An App called Fasco, launched by two Omani students — Ahmed al Kharousi and Maarak al Maeraki — has raised more than \$1 million. Fasco provides easy solutions in the hospitality and food sectors.

The two students invested in the electronic application that they designed during their studies in the Netherlands, where they established a company after their return to the Sultanate of Oman. In its first year, the @fascano_om app received more than one million online order transactions and its market value is currently estimated at \$1.2 million.

The app is currently heading to cover important aspects in other sectors and is expanding further in the Netherlands, the European Union and other countries in the future.



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Company Name Change Announcement

Vision Asset Management Company (SAOC), which is registered in the Commercial Registry Secretariat under No 1244920, announces that its legal name has been modified from Vision Asset Management Company (SAOC) to Vision Capital Company (SAOC). Therefore, it is necessary to inform those who have an interest in this matter.

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BREAKING NEWS

86 new Covid-19 cases in Oman, Muscat crosses 1,000-mark

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Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
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Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

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Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com



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Serb season as seen from the lens of a photographer

For many residents in Salalah, the season of Serb is the best season to be out and about enjoying the gifts of nature. It is when camels and other animals graze through different pastures exploiting different wadis and grasslands in an event the locals call “Al Khatla” ... **P20**

Omani students invent 100% natural water filter

ZULAL STUDENT COMPANY from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat has created an ecologically friendly filter that revitalises water instead of imported filters that remove a major percentage of the salts required by the human body. “What makes Zulal special is that it is the first Omani company in the field of creating 100 per cent natural water filters that revitalise water,” explains CEO Samia al Riyami. The team’s journey spanned 12 months, beginning with the idea, two months of planning and ending with implementation. The project is significant because of

the Sultanate of Oman’s waste of natural resources, and it will result in a qualitative jump in the Omani market. “the team worked on the product alongside the Luna Star Laboratory, Anotek, Sultan Qaboos University, Salem al Shaqsi Pottery Factory, and Al Adawi Factory”, she explained. It is worth noting that this 12-person team got the award of Best Sustainable Product for 2022 at the university and college level. The team was also nominated for three categories in the “Injaz Oman” competition, including “Best Visual Presentation” and “Best Student Company.”

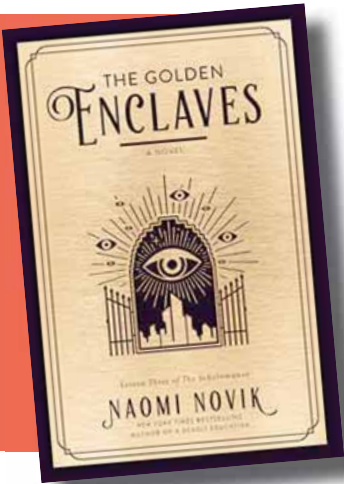


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THE GOLDEN ENCLAVES

BY NAOMI NOVIK

The third book in the Scholomance series. Life after graduation turns out to be dangerous.



THE PHILOSOPHER

French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour has died at the age of 75, his publisher Les Éditions La Découverte has said. Latour, who was considered one of France’s greatest contemporary intellectuals, died in Paris in the early hours of Sunday — dpa.

TRAVEL TALES

Customers queue to have food and drinks at an eatery in Omoide Yokochi, a group of small alleys filled with restaurants and bars usually packed with tourists and locals alike, in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo. Japan announced in late September it would lift tough Covid restrictions on foreign tourists on October 11, reopening the borders after two and a half years due to Covid-19, with the hopes of giving the economy a huge boost, helped by a weak yen. — AFP



At the gateway to the Arctic, a world in turmoil

SLED DOG BREEDER David Daley lives at the gateway to the Canadian Arctic, occupying a front-row seat to the march of global warming, and he senses calamity ahead.

"For all the devastation that we're doing to her, she's not going to sit still, our planet Mother Earth will punish us," Daley says.

Daley's hometown of Churchill is an isolated settlement at the edge of the Hudson Bay where global warming unfolds at triple the pace of much of the rest of the world, causing the Arctic ice to gradually disappear.

A member of the Metis people, one of three Indigenous groups in Canada, the 59-year-old grandfather lives close to nature, surrounded by his 46 dogs, at the point where the tundra ends and the boreal forest begins.

But every year, he fears that the snow will arrive late, and the impact that has on his sled dogs.

"They're just waiting for winter like the rest of us right now," Daley said. "This is like a culture that's dying."

In summer and winter, Daley travels through this region where rocky terrain, moss, tall grasses and black spruce forests prevail. At night, the displays of light known as the aurora borealis often flicker in the high-latitude skies.

Daley has been hunting here all his life and has seen the wildlife change up close, some species vanishing and others arriving.

"There was hardly any moose here when I was a kid. Now there's moose everywhere," said Daley, who uses his Indigenous knowledge to earn money as a tourist guide.

"When I was a kid hunting, fishing and trapping here, there were no pine martens.

"There's sharp-tail grouse moving in now where I've never... harvested one till last year."

His observations echo scientific studies: Global warming is endangering Arctic species, especially by opening the doors to other animals from further south.

Both animals and vegetation are migrating north. For Daley, humans have "no choice," they must "adapt" as animals are forced to do.

PROWLING POLAR BEARS

Adaptation includes a newfound need for closer coexistence with the emblematic predator of the Arctic region: the polar bear.

During the Cold War, a joint Canadian-US military installation in Churchill stood guard against a possible Soviet attack coming over the North Pole. The installation is now deserted, and local concerns today concentrate more on polar bears.

Due to global warming, ice no longer covers the Hudson Bay for as long each winter, forcing the polar bears to spend more time on land and nearer to humans. Often hungry and weak, the bears wander closer to settlements.

Venturing around the town requires

precautions: a gun, bear repellent and the need to walk in groups after dark or in poor visibility.

Everyone in Churchill has a story about a run-in with a polar bear.

"I don't remember feeling unsafe during summertime. No, no. I used to play on the rocks," said Danielle Daley, the 33-year-old daughter of David Daley. "Today, it's different. I won't let my kids play on the rocks."

The slender young woman recounts her fright at seeing a bear run past her house in July, followed closely by the Manitoba Natural Resources bureau patrol vehicle with its sirens wailing.



It's even more complicated in the fall, when the bears are starving after months of failing to find food on land, without a seal in sight.

"We're at the beginning of the busiest time of year for us when the bears will be coming through Churchill on their way north to the first ice on the Hudson Bay," said Ian Van Nest, a wildlife officer.

For Halloween night, October 31, a special set-up is put in place, Van Nest said.

Clad in a bullet-proof vest, with a rifle slung over his shoulder and a walkie-talkie on his belt, the stern-faced Van Nest and his fellow officers go on patrol.

They even deploy helicopters to spot roaming bears and ensure they do not come near children collecting candy.

"Otherwise we could use cracker shells. It's a loud bang and a flash that'll haze the bear away as well," Van Nest said.

The town is also equipped with new radars that can detect polar bears within two kilometers (1.2 miles) of its most outlying homes, even at night or thick fog.

Around Churchill, the polar bear population has been in decline since the 1980s but still hovers around 800, about the same number as human inhabitants

of the town.

'OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE'

Not everyone sees these climate-related changes in a bad light.

"You've got to look for the wins in all of this," said Churchill Mayor Michael Spence, a member of the Cree, the most populous Indigenous group of the First Nations in Canada.

An increase in tourism, along with development of the port, have gone hand in hand with rising temperatures.

"The opportunities are there for local people to have... economic growth," said

back of the gigantic silos, old rail cars rust amid wild grass.

POVERTY

For some residents of Churchill, grinding poverty relegates concerns about global warming to the back-ground.

Dilapidated homes, some hastily patched up, line the streets alongside prefabricated buildings on cinder blocks, seemingly unsuited for winter temperatures that can plunge below -40 degrees Celsius (-40 degrees Fahrenheit).

Abandoned cars, vans, snowmobiles



and quads are a frequent sight, often stripped for spare parts.

In the early period of European colonisation, Churchill was an important outpost of the fur trade. Today, both poverty and the region's Indigenous roots are apparent.

Fully 60 per cent of the population is Indigenous (Inuit, Metis and First Nation groups like Cree and Dene), while in Canada as a whole the number is only five per cent and in Manitoba 18 per cent. Unemployment, substandard housing and discrimination prevail.

About 64 per cent of children here live below the poverty line.

UN climate experts already said in their March report that these people's intimate knowledge must be taken into account in the fight against climate change.

At November's COP27 climate summit in Egypt, some activists will press for policies that take into account Indigenous ancestral practices, since their lands host 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity.

David Daley dreams of an awakening.

"We must, as Indigenous people, lead the reconciliation with our mother, the Earth," he says. — **AFP**

A LOOK INTO THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab al Ajmi
zeinbf@moe.om

Critical Thinking Assessment: Classroom Methods for Building Skills

CONSIDERING THE CHALLENGES teachers face in today's educational environment, one of the responsibilities that teachers face in the 21st century is teaching students to control their (logical) thought processes and critically evaluate the reasoning they find in the content of their academic subjects in various forms. For instance: discussions, informative texts, and activities.

Moreover, teachers may find complex mental skills difficult to implement in real life and teaching them to students is a considerable challenge. In a study conducted by Ocasio& Marzano (2015), the prevalence of different observed content strategies showed that less than (2%) of the actual teaching opportunities include providing opportunities for students to interact with the content of the new material through learning, which is interpreted qualitatively in the highest order.

While it is frequently argued that assessment sits at the heart of the learning process of both types (Summative& Formative), in practice assessment often remains narrowly focused on qualifications and reporting achievements, driven by institutional and societal aspirations and tensions. Yet, the need for assessment to consider balancing the thinking, knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes necessary to equip young people for a changing and increasingly digital world is also increasingly acknowledged. (Burvill et al., 2022).

However, teaching with strict content standards, many academic concepts, and cognitive content that doesn't support thinking in all its forms is one of the challenges faced by the teacher in the presence of insufficient classes.

(Ocasio& Marzano, 2015) stated that there are several teacher actions or behaviours associated with effective implementation of examining reasoning.

They are listed to illustrate the variety and complexity of ways you can show your students how to identify and articulate errors in logic and reasoning or the structure of an argument as well as explain new insights resulting from this analysis: 1. Identifying critical content for examination by students. 2. Teaching students how to examine and analyse information for errors-or informal fallacies in content or in their own reasoning through directly instructing, modelling, and facilitating. 3. Providing ongoing opportunities for students to identify common errors in logic teaching students how to state and support a claim with grounds, backing, and qualifiers through directly instructing. 4. Teaching students how to analyse errors so they can identify more efficient ways to execute processes. 5. Providing ongoing opportunities for students to learn how to support claims and assertions for those claims in relationship to the evidence.

In sum, assessment methods are a continually evolving system. Indeed, it could be said that an institution or society encapsulates its conceptualisation of learning and aspirations for its future citizens by how it creates and uses assessment.

Although, it can be argued that the purpose of assessing thinking should be to support learning, assessment practically is often focused on qualifications.

The growing importance in many countries of so-called 'high-stakes' assessment in recent years as a policy tool to encourage greater competition and accountability between schools and across the education system, has dramatically increased this focus on periodic, summative student performance in terms of overall grades and percentages (Burvill et al., 2022).



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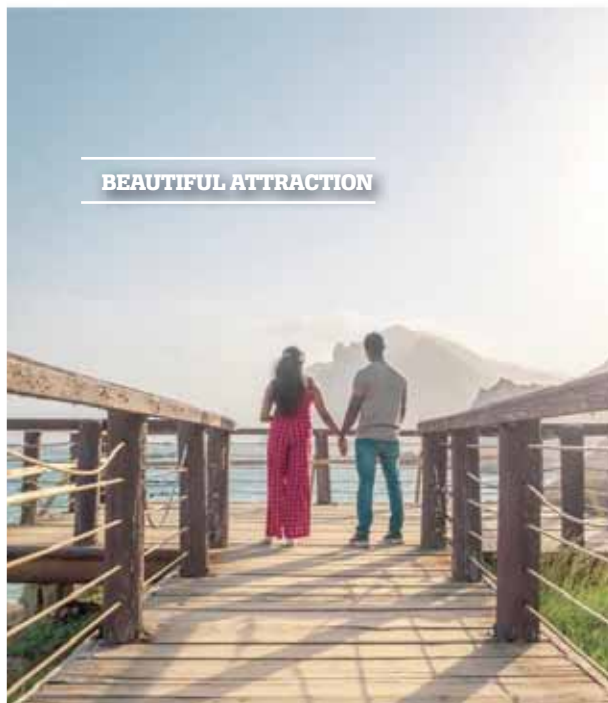
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AROUND THE WORLD

FOOTBALL COMMENTATOR

TIM WITCHER

WHEN a goal is scored in the Qatar Stars League, Khalil al Balushi makes sure viewers feel the full force of the moment as he dials up the decibels to make their TV sets tremble.

"La-la-la-la-lal" he shouts after the ball hits the back of the net in one of Qatar's World Cup stadiums.

Viewers of the Alkass sports channel might not see it, but sometimes the 42-year-old Balushi, one of Qatar's top football commentators, dances a little jig in the press stand after a goal, pointing a celebratory finger towards the pitch.

Born in Oman and based in Qatar for 16 years, Balushi says all Arab football commentators -- inspired by exuberant counterparts in Brazil and Argentina -- "are a little bit noisy".

In the Qatari heat, he tips back a bottle of water at half-time and a technician makes sure he has a constant flow of tissues to wipe his brow.

In a country where multi-million dollar imports such as Colombia's James Rodriguez and French World Cup winner Steven Nzonzi played this year before just a few hundred people, Balushi brings much-needed life to Qatar's football culture.

"Everyone knows me as this person, Khalil, with very high noise," he said. "I will be at the same level for the World Cup."

Oil-soaked soccer

Qatari football will be different after the final on December 18, Balushi and others say -- not least because of the \$6.5 billion spent on building and refurbishing the tournament's eight stadiums.

Foreign oil workers brought football to Qatar in the 1940s, and some of the pitch lines were even drawn with oil.

The national team played its first game in 1970, and Qatar reached the final of the World Youth Championship in 1981.

After shocking many in 2010 by securing this year's World Cup finals, the Gulf state won the Asian Cup in 2019.

Since the 1990s, members of the royal family started pumping some of Qatar's natural gas riches into local clubs, which now vie for the best domestic players and foreign stars.

"The quality of the players that they are bringing to the league is better," Balushi said. "It is also helping to bring more fans to the stadiums."

But "there is still a lot of difference in the football culture here and in Europe," he added.

Clubs Al Duhail -- formerly known as Lekhwiya -- and Al Sadd have dominated the Qatar Stars League, winning 11 of the past 12 titles.

Migrant worker fans

Migrant labourers outnumber Qataris in many stadiums.

At the home grounds of club Al Gharafa, a small army of Algerian workers cheers on a team that boasts several players from the North African country, including top international Yacine Brahimi.

Migrant workers also dominate at the Football Cafe, one of the rare Doha establishments devoted to sport.

"Tunisians, Moroccans, Egyptians and Algerians love football and breathe football," said Mohamad Hilmi Bani, manager of the cafe where watch mainly European games.

Deterred by the Gulf state's often searing temperatures, Qataris prefer to follow the matches from their luxurious homes.

High-octane commentator shakes up Qatar football scene



Omani Khalil al Balushi, a commentator for the Qatari Alkass Sports Channels, is pictured during the Qatar Stars League (QSL) football match between Al Gharafa and Al Ahli at the Al Thumama stadium in Doha. - AFP

BALUSHI SAYS ALL ARAB FOOTBALL COMMENTATORS — INSPIRED BY EXUBERANT COUNTERPARTS IN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA — 'ARE A LITTLE BIT NOISY'

To get more spectators into stadiums, Qatar needs a more competitive league, former national player Mohamed Mubarak al Mohannadi said.



With Qatari national players away preparing for the World Cup, Al Sadd and Al Duhail have stumbled, creating greater competition and bringing more people to matches.

"If my team can come close to a top place, I would be happy and I will take my family to support them," Mohannadi said. "If they are losing, no one wants to go to the stadium."

— AFP

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



Rasha al Raisi

The Visit (Part 3)

MANSOOR WAS curious about the new visitor and tried to make contact from the second day by jumping on the artist's lap. The artist was freaked out by the act and apologised by saying that he still wasn't used to him, to which Mansoor responded with a dirty look wondering how long would it take if not the second day?

Yet he didn't lose hope and kept hanging around the artist's room waiting for him to come out. Slowly, the artist learned to stand still while receiving cat greetings of rubbing against the leg and to pat Mansoor's head. One day when coming back from the vet after surgery, the artist felt sorry for groggy Mansoor who hasn't recovered fully from anaesthesia. Whenever he passed by the old cat, he'd pat his head and look genuinely sorry for him.

The following day, Mansoor started visiting the artist's room and became his friend. He even started communicating with him by meowing and got a free photo session in the course. But being his old moody self, and while being patted by the artist, Mansoor bit him and ran away.

The artist was shocked and wondered loudly what had happened -- and if he needed a Tetanus shot, all in the same breath. I shrugged my shoulders nonchalantly and told him that the old cat had reached his quota of human affection. The artist shot Mansoor a wounded look that was returned with a bored one. For the next few days, the artist and Mansoor exchanged silent looks that Mansoor responded to by fruitive tail movements. The artist tried approaching him from a distance by clicking his fingers and when Mansoor got closer the artist jumped back warily.

Two days later, things got back to normal between them and Mansoor -- being so magnanimously forgiving -- allowed the artist to pat him again. What cemented this friendship even further was when the

artist was watching Mansoor and Sinan playing together. Being young and enthusiastic, Sinan seemed to be abusing old Mansoor and the artist reacted protectively by shouting at Sinan to leave him alone before getting up threateningly.

Sinan ran away and Mansoor gave the artist a weird look as he left the room hurriedly. That evening, Mansoor decided that he liked the artist enough to sit on his lap, while he was watching TV. Mansoor walked up and down his lap before deciding to prop himself up against his thigh.

The artist cried in agony: "Why is he cleaving my thigh?" "To leave his scent. Congratulations! You're officially best friends now!". Despite the pain, the artist was flattered yet wondered again if he needed a Tetanus shot. Mansoor ignored him and with a bored look placed his arm on the artist thigh. The artist patted him and my aunt took a picture of them both and sent it to my best friend Dalia, whose been trying for years to pat Mansoor and failed miserably.

Mansoor kept hanging in the artist room and while napping there he got sketched. Days before the artist left, his feline best friend kept sitting on his lap looking sad.

The artist couldn't believe that cats sensed parting and reacted to it. Other cats followed suit, including Kiki who on his departure day jumped and sat on his lap for a while and so did Naeemo. Mansoor went hiding that day and wasn't found; his way of objecting to long-distance travels and avoiding sorrowful good-byes. Although it was a short visit, the artist learned a few lessons about feline friendship. Different, fun, filled with bites and scratches but truly worth it.

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: *The World According to Bahja*. rasha-books@yahoo.com

art & life

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | OCTOBER 11 | 2022

Serb season as seen from the lens of a photographer

By Baraah al Mujaini

Serb season, the season that follows khareef, is highly anticipated by local and regional tourists alike. Normally, the season starts on September 21. During this season, the fog that covers Dhofar throughout the khareef season is lifted allowing visitors to enjoy the crispy version of the different destinations and wildlife.

For many residents in Salalah, this is the best season to be out and about enjoying the gifts of nature. Also, the camels and other animals graze through different pastures exploiting different wadis and grasslands in an event the locals call "Al Khatla."

During this event, photographers from different places dash through Salalah to document these beautiful events unfolding. Accompanied by fresh relaxing air without fog and rain, families can usually be seen doing picnics outdoors.

Serb season is an opportunity for photographers to come up with novel ideas for taking photos and videos. For Mohammed al Maashani, an Omani photographer, the season is special since he always tries to discover new destinations that have not been documented yet either by photos or videos.

"I go to discover new places, I examine the destination from all its possible angles of documenting, trying to visualise the videos and photos and how the audience would like to see these destinations impressively. I also examine the best time that will make the perfect results of the photos and videos", Al Maashani shared.

This year, the khareef and Serb seasons were very special, according to visitors and residents since there were lots of serious steps toward activating tourism in the region. Many activities, carnivals, festivals, and exhibitions were conducted in all Dhofar regions. Besides, some Wadis have flowed after being dried for over many years, owing to the climate changes that hit the coastal areas of the Sultanate of Oman lately.

For Al Maashani, the photography world is free from any constraints and he aspires to reflect the beauty of the natural landscapes and wildlife here in Oman whether in the Serb season or any other season. He is also looking forward to participating in local or international photography competitions.

Speaking about his journey as a photographer, Al Maashani said, "The mesmerising environment, full of magical scenes, breath-taking

ing nature, and the diversified terrain has inspired me to begin my photography journey. Salalah where every season is manifested differently forms new appealing landscapes that are not found elsewhere. The environment surrounding me has a significant impact on considering photography as my hobby and eventually my passion".

Al Maashani started in the world of photography by purchasing a camera and taking photos of impressive natural destinations in Salalah. The turning point in his journey was when he has taken a photo of the seldom-spotted animal which is the Arabian leopard. There are only around 200 Arabian leopards in the world. From the said experience, Al Maashani decided to take photography seriously. This decision was mainly driven by his desire to bring the people out there close to nature and wildlife, particularly in Salalah.

"Mainly, my inclination in photography is toward natural scenes and wildlife since they are the most two interesting features that characterised the environment surrounding me here in Dhofar", Al Maashani added.

What helped Mohammed to upgrade his skills in photography are several factors, some of which are consistent practising and working with other professional photographers. In addition, consulting lots of international resources via social media has bridged the gap between photographers and others to share their experiences.

"These factors have played a critical role in upskilling me as a photographer, especially when I was just starting," Maashani said.

Mohammed's videos and photos go viral locally and regionally, and social media is a key factor in the fast dissemination besides the quality and essence of the photos that evoke people to share them and express the extent to which they like these photos and videos posted by him. Therefore, some of the videos on his different social media accounts have reached over half a million views.

"What makes me unique is the destinations I choose to document, as well as the angle from which I take photos and videos", he said.

The videos and photos taken by Mohammed which capture the beauty of Omani nature have significantly been fostering tourism in Oman, as many locals and tourists ask about the location of these destinations to visit them personally.

To check out some of his work, you can follow Mohammed on Instagram @almaashani98.

