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QUARTARARO ROMPS TO FIFTH VICTORY AT BRITISH GP



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OPEC+ COULD RECONSIDER OUTPUT INCREASE KUWAITI MINISTER



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DATE PALMS: THE TREES THAT KEEP ON GIVING EVEN FOR ART



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Shaikha Badriya Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Mubarak al Sabah. In his cable, Shaikh Nawaf expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty against all harms. — ONA

TOP SAUDI BUSINESS DELEGATION ARRIVES

A business delegation from Saudi Arabia arrived on Sunday on a several day visit to the Sultanate. The delegation is headed by Khalid Abdulaziz al Falih, Minister of Investment. The Saudi guest and his delegation will meet with public and private officials, besides visiting the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and the Special Economic Zone in Duqm to explore the available investment opportunities and familiarise with incentives offered to investors.

READ IN

OPINION P9

Watch before pressing the button

Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami

Like a mountain bird...

Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi

INSIDE



MACRON VISITS IS FORMER STRONGHOLD MOSUL

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GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN HEATS UP

P8

Royal Decree amends provisions of Civil Status Law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 59/ 2021 amending some provisions of the Civil Status Law.

Article (1) introduces the amendments attached (to this Decree) to the aforesaid

Civil Status Law.

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of

publication.

Royal Decree No 60/ 2021 amending some provisions of Foreigners Residence Law.

Article (1) introduces the amendments attached (to this Decree) to the aforesaid Foreigners Residence Law.

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA



1804 US SILVER DOLLAR SOLD FOR \$7.68M

An 1804 US silver dollar was recently sold for \$7.68 million at a Stack's Bower's Gallery auction. "The silver dollar coin originally gifted to Sultan Said bin Sultan of Oman, fetched over \$7 million in an auction recently, mentioned Shaikh Khalifa al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, recently on social media.

DETAILS ON P2

Vaccines likely to aid return to normalcy

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The Sultanate has made a remarkable recovery from the raging Covid-19 pandemic after a successful vaccination drive, with only 348 cases reported in three days. Only 13 people were admitted to hospitals in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 138, including 60 in intensive care units.

Individuals and establishments in the country are preparing to return to normalcy from September 1 with mandatory vaccination for entry into government and private establishments and lifting of travel ban.

At the current rate, the country would have vaccinated nearly 70 per cent of the population with two doses in October. Nearly 3.4 to 3.8 million doses have been administered in the country till date.

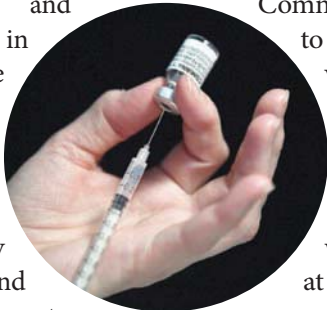
Heads of government and private units will be responsible for necessary measures to

implement these decisions, a statement from the Supreme Committee said.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) have already issued notifications that visitors to their offices will have to present vaccination certificates through Tarassud application.

"We will follow the Supreme Committee's guidelines to allow entry only to vaccinated visitors from September 1. We have formed a dedicated team for this purpose who will be placed at all entry points of our outlets", said a senior executive of a hypermarket group.

While the Ministry of Health has expanded the vaccination campaign, it expects "Every citizen to receive the second dose by mid-September, following which it will start implementing the measures issued by the Supreme Committee."



TO ENSURE HIGH GROWTH AND SHIELD SMES FROM COVID IMPACT

8 STEPS TO BOOST SMALL ENTERPRISES

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The Ministry of Economy in partnership with Riyada unveiled eight new multipronged initiatives on Sunday to help small enterprises to recover from Covid-19 impact and revitalise their business through training, counselling and other support.

The aim of the package is to achieve high growth rates outlined in Oman Vision 2040 blessed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The eight initiatives which were announced were as follows.

E-Commerce support

The aim of this initiative is to support SMEs' access to local and international digital platforms, which can help them market their products and services globally. It is expected to cover about 100 SMEs and promote e-commerce. A contract will be inked with a well-known IT company to

These initiatives are aligned with the fifth strategic objective of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan to support SMEs

DR NASSER BIN RASHID AL MAAWALI
Under-Secretary

implement the initiative under Riyada's supervision.

Winter Nights Festival

The initiative is an interactive annual event organised during special occasions and holidays. During these occasions, SMEs' products and services will be displayed in night markets. The aim is to promote Omani talents

and encourage entrepreneurship. The events will be organised by specialised event management companies.

Creative industries incubator

The initiative targets entrepreneurs in creative industries. It is expected that about 25 SMEs will benefit from this initiative. The initiative also includes providing them technical support, guidance, counselling and consultations. They will also be encouraged to provide job opportunities for Omani youths.

Manufacturing incubator

Under this initiative, a manufacturing industries incubator will be established for the manufacturing sector, which is one of the pillars of Oman's economic diversification. The initiative targets SMEs and owners of manufacturing industries through innovative ideas that will empower SMEs. **TURN TO P3**





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Coin once gifted to Oman
Sultan sold for \$7.68 m

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 29

An 1804 US silver dollar, which was gifted to Sultan Said bin Sultan (1791-1856), was recently sold for \$7.68 million in an auction at New York-based Stack's Bower's Gallery.

"The silver dollar coin originally gifted to Sultan Said bin Sultan of Oman, fetched over \$7 million in an auction recently, said Shaikh Khalifa al Harthy, the Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, on social media recently.

The Class I silver dollar, which has been graded Proof-68 by Professional Coin Grading Service, was offered from the collection of the late coin connoisseur D Brent Pogue.

The front of the silver dollar is emblazoned with Liberty's bust and inscribed with the date "1804" and the word "liberty." The reverse side, meanwhile, features an eagle and 13 stars that represent the original colonies. It was minted at the request of President Andrew Jackson to serve as a diplomatic gift for fellow world leaders.

This particular coin was struck in 1834 and presented



to Sultan Said bin Sultan, the Sultan of Muscat and Oman, one year later in 1835, according to the auction house. In its history, the rarity has graced just four private numismatic collections, including those of Charles A Watters, Virgil M Brand, the Child's family, and the Pogue family. It has also sold at auction only once, in 1999, when Pogue, who died in 2019 at age 54, bought the coin from the Child's family for the then-record price of \$4.14 million."

The coin, which eclipsed its original estimate of \$7 million, now ranks as the second priciest silver dollar in existence.

ODB loans grow in first half of 2021

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Oman Development Bank (ODB) will continue to support and finance small, medium and micro enterprises and corporate projects, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The period of the pandemic saw announcing many financing packages and incentives to these enterprises.

The move comes to mitigate the repercussions of the pandemic and its direct effects on the business sector worldwide, including the Sultanate. During its fifth meeting for 2021, which was held on Sunday, the ODB Board of Directors was briefed on the bank's results during 2021. The results reflected the beginning of the recovery and growth of economic activities in the Sultanate. This is evident in the growing lending activity of the bank, which grew by 1.7 per cent to date compared to the same period in 2020.

The number of approved development loans reached 3,073 covering various economic sectors. The ODB Board of Directors explained that despite the bank's achievement, the net profit exceeded RO 4 million during the first half of 2021. However, the developmental impact of lending activity on the stability of economic activities and assisting these activities in mitigating repercussions of the pandemic was the major challenge that the bank sought to achieve during the last period.



ODB loan portfolio continued to grow during 2021 to reach RO 173 million, registering an increase of 1.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2020, which is a good indication of the robust financial status of the ODB.

Among the most prominent positive indicators achieved by the bank during the last period of 2021, the collection of loan instalments grew by 7.9 per cent compared to 2020; a clear contributor that the non-performing loans (NPLs) index fell to 7.2 per cent.

The total number of loans granted by the ODB during the first half of 2021 reached 2521 with a total value of more than RO 26 million, constituting an increase by 45 per cent in the number of loans compared to the same period in 2020. ODB has strengthened its lending activity to the professional and public services sector as the value of loans granted to this sector exceeded RO 11.2 million distributed over 586

development loans.

The Bank continued its interest in the promising fisheries sector, which ranked second in terms of the value of financing that amounts to about RO 6 million. It is the largest in terms of the number of loans during the first half of 2021 with a total number of 960 development loans.

The manufacturing activity is one of the most profitable economic activities as it contributed to increasing the volume of exports and reducing imports. ODB funded setting up and developing projects in industrial areas and various governorates across the Sultanate. The number of projects funded during the first half of 2021 was 473 with a total value of RO 3 million.

Although the tourism sector has taken the brunt of the pandemic, the bank continues to finance this sector, especially those existing and profitable projects.

ODB approved 114 tourist loans, with a total value of up to RO 2.6 million.

The bank has increased its lending activity to the agricultural and livestock sector by providing 315 development loans during the first half of 2021 with a total value of nearly RO 2 million.

ODB also continued to support the educational and health service sectors, which contributes to raising the efficiency of these two vital sectors and helping the government to fund those two sectors. The number of funded projects in the two sectors reached 72 with a total value of more than RO 2 million.

ODB is pressing ahead in supporting the logistics and mining sectors and other promising economic sectors by offering diverse incentives. The move reflects the bank's keenness to partner with the government to effectively entering the private sector and thus benefiting the private sector from financing products provided by the bank. With regard to the category of loans, micro-enterprises had the largest share in terms of the number of funded projects and the financing value.

The number of funded loans reached 1897 during the first half of 2021 and their value of financing surpassed RO 8.2 million. The bank targets to finance self-employed young Omanis of this category. — ONA

Tender Notice

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2021

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
15/2021	WAN Optimization Solution	29 July 2021	12 August 2021	75 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E.Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scanned copy of bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value validity for (120) days from the deadline for the tender bids and addressed to the Public Authority for Social Insurance. And original document of the same should be submitted later directly to the Administration Department - Purchase and General Services Section / Third Floor, PASI Head Office in Bawshar.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : +968 24166670 , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

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8 initiatives to boost small enterprises

FROM PAGE 1

The initiative also seeks to create a group of emerging companies with high technical and administrative manufacturing capabilities, providing them with technical support, advisory and marketing services. The initiative will be implemented through Sohar University under Riyadh's supervision.

Agricultural SMEs

Under this initiative, emerging SMEs in agriculture will be established in cooperation with Haya Water. Aimed at supporting and developing SMEs in the agricultural wealth sector (oils and aromatic plants), the initiative will find sites for SMEs near water treatment plants in various wilayats for easy access to water. The initiative also seeks to market agricultural products in local and international markets.

Dairy products and livestock

The initiative aims to provide business opportunities by Mazoon Dairy Company in areas including manufacturing packaging materials, dairy boxes, reefer trucks to transport ice-cream and dairy products, processing and packaging plant for fertilisers, manufacturing and sale of fertilisers, raising and selling livestock, making biodegradable spoons, and package labelling.

The initiative targeting SME owners, will contribute to provide direct and indirect job opportunities for Omanis, promote economic diversification, develop entrepreneurs and finance for the implemented projects.

Entrepreneurship education

Targeting entrepreneurs and craftspeople across Oman, this initiative focuses on creating a specialised digital training platform to develop their skills. The digital platform will train craftspeople in



We expect these initiatives to reduce risks to SMEs, help them actively contribute to Oman's economy, harness technology and innovation to improve their products and services

DR NASSER BIN RASHID AL MAAWALI
Under-Secretary, MoE



Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of Riyadh

business administration and teach global best practices. As much as 80 per cent of the training will focus on practical skills while the rest will cover theoretical aspects.

Consultation to support SMEs

This initiative includes a series of quick advisory sessions for SMEs

affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It targets entrepreneurs in different governorates, and is expected to benefit 100 SMEs through advice and legal counselling. Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Economy, said these initiatives are aligned with the fifth strategic objective of the tenth Five-Year Development Plan to support SMEs. "We expect these initiatives to reduce risks to SMEs, help them actively contribute to Oman's economy, harness technology and innovation to improve their products and services, and create an integrated local market for their products and services through marketing."

Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, said, "The Ministry of Economy (MoE)'s initiative to support the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector comes as a continuation and translation of the efforts made to enhance the growth of the national economy. It is also part of the economic stimulus plans that the government has embarked on to support and enhance the sustainability of SMEs that have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Al Zariyah said these initiatives took into account a number of aspects, including but not limited to, improving the regulatory environment to ensure that it encourages the growth and development of SMEs.

They also sought to develop the required protection measures and orchestrate the support provided to SMEs. These initiatives are also part of the Riyadh's mandates, be it those related to providing financial, technical, administrative and legal advice to SMEs, developing them or enhancing their competitiveness and enabling them to provide high-quality products.

Riyada disburses over RO 900,000 for SMEs

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Riyada (The authority for SME development) on Sunday said it has approved emergency assistance worth over RO 900,000 to more than 160 small and medium enterprises affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The authority said it selected the eligible candidates from more than 3,000 applications, which were evaluated by a specialised committee.

It confirmed that it started disbursing the emergency loan to eligible owners of small and medium enterprises most affected by the Corona pandemic Covid-19 on July 29.

Until August, it arranged more than 500 consultations to support of small and medium enterprises to guide the owners of small and medium enterprises towards the right path and taking the appropriate decisions.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in particular, have been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic. They require support in the form of direct government aid, legislative reforms, and

economic stimulus to recover, reduce their economic costs, and ensure their market viability.

Countries around the world have introduced direct measures to protect SMEs and aid their economic recovery. These include financial support packages, emergency loans, and making SMEs' access to government support easier.

The measures also include exemptions from certain fees, deferring loan repayments, boosting the culture of entrepreneurship and increasing their competitive advantage. Other steps have been to direct the SMEs sector towards sustainability through alternative plans and actions to face risks, and helping work environments to adapt to the volatile conditions created by the pandemic.

Oman's Council of Ministers, headed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, in March 2021 approved a stimulus plan to accelerate the pace of economic recovery of various sectors from the pandemic.

The plan is also targeted at achieving the high growth rates outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The plan, blessed by His Majesty the Sultan, has five core themes. The first covers incentives linked to taxes and fees, the second covers measures to further improve Oman's business and investment environment, the third is aimed at SMEs, the fourth is related to incentives for the labour and employment market, and the fifth theme covers banking incentives that support government efforts to mitigate effects of the pandemic on Oman's economy.

Several banking initiatives have been introduced to revitalise economic activities, to attract more foreign direct investment and to sustain existing local investments and projects.

Many SMEs have benefited from these measures. There income tax rate has been reduced from 15 per cent to 12 per cent for the 2020 and 2021 financial years. SMEs' instalments against loan from the Al Rafd Fund have been deferred till the December 2021, and public procurement tenders whose value not exceeding RO 10,000 have been earmarked for SMEs whose owners have a Riyadh card.

Lifting of travel ban delights stranded expats

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvyp

For the stranded expatriate employees and their families, the long exasperating wait is finally over with the Sultanate's decision to lift air travel restrictions.

The relief was visible when the news was flashed in different websites and WhatsApp groups that Oman will be lifting the travel ban on fully vaccinated travellers from South Asia and many other countries, which earlier featured on the Red List.

The decision was welcomed by expats who expressed their relief to be reunited with their family members stranded abroad.

"I travelled home in an emergency following my father's admission to hospital. I never thought that I would be stuck for so long. I am relieved that I can now return to Muscat," said Salim Mohamed, who has been in India since mid-April.

What thrills Samad Sainuddin, a Bangladeshi national, is that he doesn't have to go in for quarantine as per the new announcement.

"I am so relieved not only that I can travel back exactly two days before the expiry of my resident card but also that I do not have to undergo quarantine. I have

I am so relieved not only that I can travel back exactly two days before the expiry of my resident card but also that I do not have to undergo quarantine. I have already taken two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech

SAMAD SAINUDDIN
Bangladeshi national

already taken two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech", he told *Observer* in a WhatsApp reply.

Starting September 1, vaccinated travelers can enter Oman provided they carry a certificate containing QR code stating that they have received the two doses of Covid-19 vaccination that are approved by the Sultanate.

And expatriates who have valid residency visas, but are outside the Sultanate for more than six months, can travel back on a request from their employers/sponsors.

Ashiq Mirza, a Pakistani

national said his family has been stranded in Karachi for the last five months. "I am so happy about this news. My wife received both doses of the vaccine and my children are below 15 years of age. So, they qualify to travel. I can't wait to see my wife and kids."

But the rising air fares have dampened the joy of the expats. Since the announcement, the fares, especially from cities in major South Asian countries have skyrocketed.

An economy class ticket from the southern India cities of Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi now costs above RO320 for the first week of September. Tickets from the Indian capital New Delhi to Muscat are also in the same range while tickets from Mumbai are hovering around RO 220.

Ticket rates from three of Pakistan's major cities – Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi — are all priced at about RO 230 and above.

Lifting of the travel regulations will be effective on countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Argentina, Ethiopia, Colombia, Iran, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Libya, Philippines, Nigeria, Sudan, Singapore, Thailand, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, Tunisia and Vietnam.

Al Najd Agriculture Development Company

شركة النجد للتنمية الزراعية

Al-Najd Agricultural Development Company looking for a General Manger responsible for managing the overall performance of Al-Najd Agricultural Development Company, developing strategic plan to fulfil Company's vision and mission. The responsibilities will also include achieving the strategic objectives, performance, and expansion targets, promoting revenue, and profitability.

The position holder will be accountable to the Board of Directors for fulfilment and implementation of all plans and policies. Represent the Company to Government and stakeholders.

Key Result Areas

- Preparation and achievement of business strategy and business plan for the Company;
- Top line and Bottom line of the Company;
- Efficiency and sustainability of Company operations;
- Effective integration of all functions;
- Company finance and administration;
- Customer satisfaction, and
- Employee's management and development.

Key Tasks

- Oversee day-to-day operations
- Determine the overall direction, strategy and goals of the Company.
- Formulate the long-term objectives, plans and targets of the Company.
- Translate the business plan into budget, goals and targets for the Mangers. Direct and coordinate their efforts and monitor achievement not the same.
- Review activity reports and financial statements regularly and monitor farms performance continuously to ensure approved business plans are executed successfully.
- Direct the growth and business development initiatives of the Company, ensuring adequate resources allocations.
- Set out specific performance standards in key areas.
- Guide and assist Mangers in all operational issues involving planning, coordination, adherence to target/work schedule, etc.. to improve sustainability and increase profitability, consumer reach and productivity.
- Evaluate performance of Mangers for compliance with approved policies and objectives of the Company and required performance goals and standards.
- Coordinate with the Board of Directors for the evaluation of feasibility of new projects.
- Develop and maintain contacts with stakeholders and competent authorities and major customers to further business interests.
- Manage selection, development, measurement, motivation, cooperation, and termination of team staff.
- Any other responsibilities entrusted by the Board of Directors.

Education Level – Minimum Requirement

- Bachelor's degree in Agriculture
- MBA or Master Degree in Agri-business or related fields is an added advantage.

Work Experience

Overall experience of at least 20 years in agribusiness of which a minimum of 6 years working experience as a Manger or 4 years as General Manger in crop production in the private sector (mandatory).

Skills

- knowledge of fodder, bulb vegetables and grain sustainable production in hot dry climate;
- Cultivation under central pivot irrigation and drip irrigation system over large areas;
- Practical knowledge of mechanized farming.
- Business acumen and commercial orientation
- Strong management and business background
- Knowledge of finance/production/operations management, quality assurance and control, familiarity/comfortable with using statistical tools
- Strategic planning and implementation
- Examining and re-engineering operations and procedures
- Develop technical, marketing, and financial plans, analyze, and interpret all related data
- Knowledge of profit and loss, balance sheet and cash flow management and general finance and budgeting.
- Knowledge of corporate governance and general management best practices
- Excellent leadership, project management and people management
- Financial awareness to understand and interpret numbers
- Excellent written & verbal communication / presentation skills
- Excellent written and spoken skills in English.

Generic Skills

- Strong Character
- Integrity and loyalty
- Good understanding of labour, environment and business law
- Solid judgement qualities
- Self motivated
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability

Please send the cv's to email address : soaad@alnajd.com.om, the last day Sunday 5/9/2021

RECHARGE BODY WITH YOGA



We can get angry, desperate, sad or nervous. These bad energies could affect human organs causing diseases without them knowing. Yoga relieves the body from all the negative energies by doing postures, breathing techniques and meditation

GAITHA AL MUAINIYAH

yoga trainer

SUNDUS YOUSUF

YOGA brings together body and mind. It basically involves breathing exercises and meditation. In fact, it is a good exercise to practice during lockdowns because it relieves stress and helps your mind to heal. It helps you to rejuvenate soul and body.

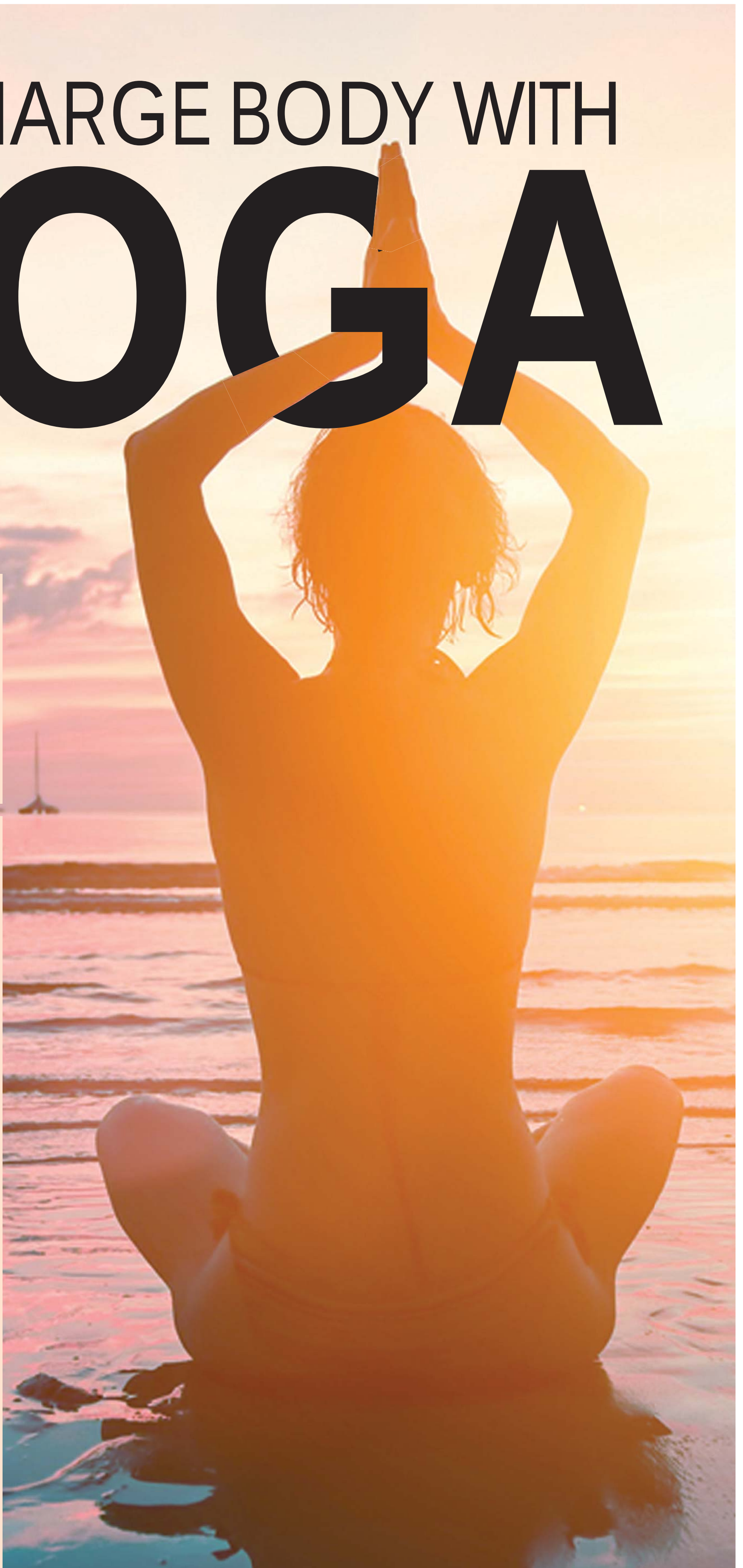
Yoga is an effective exercise to tackle mental and physical problems. Some people prefer to practice yoga to fight depression and boost self-esteem. Others use it to manage lifestyle diseases like blood pressure, diabetes and migraine.

Gaitha al Muainiyah, an Omani yoga trainer, mentioned that the body gets affected by the surrounding environment or by the status of energy, positive or negative. "It is hard to separate these energies because we are living in vital environments. We can get angry, desperate, sad or nervous. These bad energies could affect human organs causing diseases without them knowing. Yoga relieves the body from all the negative energies by doing postures, breathing techniques and meditation."

Gaitha, who attended her first yoga class in 2015 and became a trainer on her own in 2018, said, "The body gains positive energy that gives life to the body, so the body's energy becomes balanced. Yoga helps to increase the breathing level that helps you to feel unexhausted all the time in exercising any sport. I was having problem in breathing but yoga helped in making my life easier that I can do all sports without feeling tired".

Gaitha mentioned that she is interested in self-healing because she believes that human body and mind are strong and powerful. "My health comes first before everything so I practice yoga that combine sport and science", she said. "I prefer to practice yoga in nature or in a closed, cozy place so I could focus more."

New generations are addicted to video games, which make them averse to exercises. "Yoga can be a solution for children to get rid of excessive energies by controlling their breathing. It helps children become more creative and physically strong".





An opportunity for green recovery

MUSCAT: While struggling to overcome the economic and social effects of two years of a global pandemic, the world cannot forget that it continues to face the intensifying impact of climate change. Recovery plans are the opportunity to strengthen the global response, and every country, government, business and part of society must embrace their responsibility to protect our planet.

In November 2021, the UK will chair — in partnership with Italy — the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, COP26. World leaders will meet to agree how to tackle the climate crisis, choosing more ambitious climate solutions, raising investments in clean technology and divesting from polluting industries. Delivering on these goals will make our recovery from Covid-19 one that builds a better future — one with green jobs, cleaner air and increasing prosperity, without harming the planet.

Oman is taking welcome steps to increase the protection of environment and to support a green recovery. The ban on plastic bags since January 1, 2021 is a milestone in the fight against ocean and beach pollution. Investment in renewable energies, with new programmes and initiatives to increase the use of solar panels in residential units as well as the launch of solar parks for power generation, are a clear indication of the positive commitment to shift from traditional fossil fuels to more sustainable models.

There is increasing focus given to hydrogen power generation, with the recent announcement of a global alliance for hydrogen and the institutional support to new investments and long-



term projects to develop this source. The move away from dependence on hydrocarbons is a positive step for climate action, while also supporting Oman's Vision 2040 goals to diversify the national economy. The recent announcement of the intention to provide Muscat with a metro line under the Oman National Spatial Strategy also helps to promote sustainable means of transportation.

In the run up to COP26, the UK and Italy have launched initiatives aimed at raising the awareness and social involvement on the key issues at stake at the conference. The British Council's "Climate Connection" brings people around the world together to meet the challenges of climate change through arts and culture, education and the English language.

The "Together for our Planet" campaign shines a light on the steps being taken across the UK, showing how people, communities and business are making a difference and inspiring others to do the same. With a focus on kids, the Embassy of Italy proposes a

virtual exhibition and a videogame based on the creative universe of the Italian digital film animation "Trash", highlighting the topics of waste disposal and recycling.

Ahead of COP26, from September 28-30, Milan will host the Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition event: an opportunity for young delegates to put forward ideas and concrete proposals on some of the most pressing issues on the climate agenda. We look forward to the positive contribution of Noor al Hamdan as a participant from the youth of Oman, with her ideas and proposals.

The UK and Italy are committed to putting climate change and the reversal of biodiversity loss at the heart of the multilateral agenda in 2021, including through the UK G7 and Italian G20 Presidencies. Securing a brighter future for our children and future generations requires action from all of us, and we welcome all the efforts made by the Sultanate in supporting this shared goal.

Federica Favi is the Ambassador of Italy to the Sultanate and Hamish Cowell is the British Ambassador to Oman.

2 CITIZENS DROWN IN SUHAR

MUSCAT: Two citizens drowned in a dam in Suhar. Following the incident, the rescue teams have urged people to avoid swimming in undesignated spots.

Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority said: "Rescue teams at the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in North Al Batinah Governorate responded to the drowning of two citizens in Wadi Al Khad Dam in the Wilayat of Suhar, where their bodies were pulled out." The authority calls on citizens and residents not to swim in unspecified places, in order to avoid tragic drowning accidents.

OVER 300 JOBS FOR NORTH AL BATINAH

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour, represented by the General Directorate of Labour in North Al Batinah, announced the launch of the second package of 327 vacant jobs in a number of private sector institutions operating in the governorate.



SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders :-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-112/2021	Supply of Surgical Items (Spinal Implants)	09/September/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 29/September/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-113/2021	Supply of Surgical Items (Rehabilitation, Orthotic & Prosthetic)	09/September/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 29/September/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-114/2021	Supply of Reagents and Consumables for Molecular Genetics Laboratory at The National Genetic Centre at The Royal Hospital	09/September/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 29/September/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-115/2021	Supply and installation of CCTV IP System for Oman College of Health Science in Muscat Governorate	09/September/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 29/September/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-116/2021	Supply of Surgical Items (Bipolar Hip Replacement)	16/September/2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 06/October/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Purchase and Tenders one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24166670
Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MAZOOON ELECTRICITY COMPANY (MZEC) INVITES THE FOLLOWING LOCAL TENDERS:

Tender No	Description	Last Date of Purchasing	Last Date for Submission	Tender Board Grade	Type of Participation	Tender Price R.O
RE-TENDER MZEC/31/2021	CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSED MZEC BRANCH OFFICE AT WADI TAYEEN	06/09/2021	28/09/2021	FOURTH	LOCAL	75.000
	THE SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 08/09/2021 AT 10:00 AM IN WADI TAYEEN OFFICE					

- Specialized companies registered with the DCRP and the Tender Board and their valid registration can subscribe and obtain technical specifications and tender conditions by submitting an application with all company documents attached via e-mail: scm.tenders@mzec.co.om during working hours. The official time is from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. In return for paying the amount specified above for one copy (non-refundable) via bank deposit to the company's account.
- The tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of tender price valid (90) days as a bid bond and addressed to the chairperson of the (Internal Tender Committee) of Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C and **any offer is not including the bond will be rejected immediately.**
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, offers will be submitted by sending offers to the e-mail: mzec-offerssubmission@mzec.co.om and that the offers are valid for a period of not less than (90) days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids must be sent before (10:00 am) from the date specified as the last day for bid submission.
- The priority of the awarding will be given to those bidders who assure recruitment of the maximum numbers of Omani staff and utilizing Omani products.
- All Clarifications are to be sent to the email address: MZEC-Clarification@mzec.co.om and the Last date for receiving vendor's clarifications will be on 23/9/2021.**
- Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C. is not bound to accept the lowest tender.
- We would like to inform you that above documents prices do not include VAT 5% and it will be charged if purchase invoice issued.

(WE LIGHT...WE CARE)

Tenders & Contracts Section : (+968) 72722787 / 97292777 / 92858543



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

TENDERS NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
469/2020/MAF/HQ-44 (Re-tender)	Construction of Goat Pens at Sur	28/500	Fourth	Sunday 5/9/2021	Tuesday 14/9/2021
300/2021/MAFWR/HQ-33	Maintenance works at Car Shed in the Ministry Building	25/-	Third	Sunday 12/9/2021	Monday 4/10/2021
302/2021/MAFWR/HQ-34	Providing vaccination service for livestock in Dhofar by providing workers to implement the vaccination	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 12/9/2021	Monday 4/10/2021
303/2021/MAFWR/HQ-35	Rehabilitation and Maintenance works at Ministry Headquarter - Second Floor	25/-	Third	Sunday 12/9/2021	Monday 4/10/2021

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24166670** or etenderhd@ita.gov.om
- Note: Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources





Macron visits IS former stronghold in Iraq’s Mosul

MOSUL: French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday visited the IS group’s former Iraqi stronghold Mosul, a day after vowing to keep troops in the country.

In a speech at the devastated city’s Church of Our Lady of the Hour, which the UN’s cultural agency Unesco is working to restore, Macron urged Iraq’s religious communities to “work together” to rebuild the country.

“We will bring back a (French) consulate and schools,” he pledged, while criticising the pace of reconstruction in Mosul, where IS fought its last urban battle, as “too slow”.

The was recaptured from IS in 2017 after three years. Macron made the commitment for France to stay put in Iraq during a regional summit in Baghdad largely devoted to the fight against terrorism and the impact of the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan as

the US withdraws.

“No matter what choices the Americans make, we will maintain our presence in Iraq to fight against terrorism,” he told a news conference on Saturday.

His visit to Mosul, a melting pot of Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities, symbolised France’s support for Christians in the Middle East. France, which finances French-speaking Christian schools in the region, aims to highlight the plight of Christians in the Middle East, as well as other minorities.

“This message is civilisational but also geopolitical. There will be no balance in Iraq if there is no respect for these communities,” the French president said ahead of his visit.

Macron also made a stop at the site of Mosul’s Al-Nuri mosque, where IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had declared the establishment of a “caliphate” in 2014. — AFP

Israel strikes Gaza after fire balloons, border clashes

GAZA CITY: The Israeli air force attacked two sites in Gaza on Sunday, the army said, after Gazans clashed with forces on the border and launched incendiary balloons into southern Israel.

The latest escalation came as Israel and Egypt continued to relax restrictions on commerce and travel imposed on the Gaza Strip, largely cut off by both countries since Hamas came to power in the Palestinian enclave in 2007.

Israeli “fighter jets struck a Hamas military compound used for training as well as an entrance to a terror tunnel adjacent to Jabalia,” the Israeli army said.

“The strikes were in response to Hamas launching incendiary balloons into Israeli territory and the violent riots that took place yesterday,” it said in a statement.

The army said both incidents were “examples of how Hamas continues to employ tactics and target civilians.”

There were no reports from the Gaza Strip of any casualties caused by the Israeli strikes.

Speaking in Washington, where he had met with US President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said he held Gaza’s rulers Hamas responsible for any unrest from the Palestinian enclave.

“As I have already said, our actions in Gaza will serve our interests,” he told reporters before



Palestinians wait their turn to cross into Egypt through the Rafah border crossing from the Gaza Strip on Sunday. — AFP

boarding a plane back to Israel.

“As far as I’m concerned, the address (of those responsible) has been and remains Hamas.”

On Saturday evening, two wildfires broke out in the Eshkol region near the Palestinian enclave, Israeli firefighters said.

Protests erupted later in the day, with the Israeli army firing tear gas and stun grenades as Palestinians burned tyres on the border between Gaza and Israel, an AFP reporter said.

The health ministry in Gaza said 11 Palestinians had been hurt in the clashes, three of them by live fire.

Hours earlier, Gazans laid to rest Omar Hassan Abu al Nile, 12, who died of his wounds a week after being shot by Israeli forces during border clashes.

In 2018, Gazans began a protest movement demanding an end to Israel’s blockade and the right for Palestinians to return to lands they fled or were expelled from when the Jewish state was founded in 1948. The often-violent weekly demonstrations backed by Hamas sputtered as Israel killed some 350 Palestinians in the territory over more than a year.

Hamas and Israel then fought a devastating 11-day conflict

in May, the worst between the two sides in years, which ended with an informal truce. Incendiary balloons from Gaza have continued in the following months, with Israel blaming Hamas.

Israel has at the same time been easing restrictions on civilian life and commerce for the territory it has blockaded since 2007, when Hamas took power. On Sunday, Egypt reopened the Rafah crossing with the Gaza Strip to allow Palestinians to exit, after having partially reopened on Thursday for travel into Gaza.

— AFP

Iraq’s Mosul struggles to rebuild without funds

MOSUL: Iraqi shopkeeper Ahmad Riad is busy again serving customers at a Mosul market four years after the city was destroyed in battles against the militants, but he still awaits war reparations.

“Life has gradually resumed,” said Riad, who runs a shop selling rice, pasta and tins of tomato paste in the Corniche market, along the banks of the Tigris river.

“But we have not received any compensation from the government.”

Mosul, the country’s second city in Nineveh province, was the last major Iraqi bastion of the IS group’s failed “caliphate” between 2014 and 2017.

The city was retaken by the Iraqi army and a US-led coalition after intense bombardment and fighting that left it in ruins.



A general view of the Old City of Mosul as boys swim in a makeshift outdoor pool built by swimming coach Mahmood Muafiq, in Mosul, Iraq. — Reuters

The market was “devastated” in the battles, Riad said, with shopkeepers using their limited savings to rebuild.

“We are the ones who paid,” he said. Of the 400 stalls that once crammed the market, just a tenth have returned to business, he

added.

According to official sources, the cost of reconstruction for Nineveh would top \$100 billion,

a staggering sum for a country mired in an economic crisis.

It outstrips the total annual budget of oil-rich Iraq, which stands at nearly \$90 billion in 2021. Many buildings are still in ruins, their facades dotted with bullet holes and piles of rubble lie strewn all around.

When Pope Francis visited Mosul last March, he held a mass with the partially collapsed walls of the centuries-old church behind him.

On Sunday, French President Emmanuel Macron is expected to visit Mosul, a day after attending a regional summit in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, some 355 km to the south.

Mosul, capital of Nineveh province, is a melting pot of diverse ethnic communities and

was once one of the key cities on the Middle East trade route, lying close to both Turkey and Syria. Ammar Hussein runs a restaurant.

“The government should compensate the merchants who suffered damage so that they can rebuild their stores and the market can return to its former glory,” he said.

The list of claims is long. Some 100,000 claims have been filed by those who suffered damage during “liberation operations”, according to Mahmud al Akla, director of Nineveh’s compensation department.

Not even three per cent have been paid: while more than 65,000 files have been examined, just 2,600 claimants have received cash, he said.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

ADEN

Yemen gets first batch of J&J COVID-19 vaccines

Yemen received its first shipment of Covid-19 vaccines made by Johnson & Johnson on Sunday, roughly 151,000 doses, the health ministry said.

The desperately poor country, where health infrastructure has been devastated by six years of war, received 360,000 doses of AstraZeneca’s vaccine in March through COVAX. This shipment is the first batch of a total of 504,000 doses it is set to receive from the United States.

The single-dose vaccines



arrived as the United Nations warned early this month that Yemen, where only roughly 1 per cent of the population is vaccinated, faces a third wave of Covid-19.

TEL AVIV

Injured Palestinian boy dies in Gaza

A 12-year-old Palestinian boy shot last week by Israeli soldiers during clashes along the border with Gaza has died of his injuries, the territory’s health ministry said. Omar Hassan Abu al-Nile was hit during clashes last Saturday on the sidelines of a demonstration near the border fence separating the Gaza Strip and the Jewish state, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said.

He “succumbed to his injuries,” Gaza’s health ministry said in a statement.



Around 100 mourners attended his funeral in the afternoon. The August 21 unrest left around 40 people wounded, according to Gaza’s Hamas rulers, including a 32-year-old Palestinian man who died on Wednesday.

ATHENS

Freighter sinks after hitting Greek islets

A Togo-flagged cargo ship sank after hitting Greek islets in the Aegean Sea but all 16 crew were rescued, the Greek coast guard said.

The freighter Sea Bird, which sailed from Ukraine and was bound for Tunisia, sent a distress signal after sailing into rocky islets in the southwestern Aegean Sea, the coast guard said in a statement. Nearby vessels rescued all 16 Syrian crew, a coast guard official said.

It was not immediately clear



what caused the accident. Three anti-pollution vessels have rushed to the scene to check whether there was any leaking from the freighter, the coast guard added.

In brief

■ MANILA



DUTERTE LIFTS CASINO BAN IN TOP TOURIST ISLAND BORACAY

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has lifted a moratorium on casino operations in the country's top holiday island to generate taxes for its Covid-19 pandemic response, the presidential spokesperson said.

The firebrand leader has had a longstanding opposition to gambling, halting the construction of new casinos in the Philippines, one of Asia's fastest-growing gambling markets before the pandemic.

"The president has given his go signal allowing the operation of a casino in Boracay," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

■ NUR-SULTAN



KAZAKHSTAN ARMS DEPOT BLAST DEATH TOLL UP

The death toll from explosions at an arms depot in southern Kazakhstan climbed to 13, authorities in the ex-Soviet country said, adding that three people were still missing.

The blasts occurred at a defence ministry ammunitions depot in the southern Jambyl region, leaving dozens injured and forcing the evacuation of more than 1,000 people from nearby villages.

The Central Asian country's emergencies ministry said on Saturday that a 13th body was recovered at the site but had not been identified. "The search for three missing (persons) continues," the ministry said in a statement.

■ TOKYO



JAPAN DETECTS MORE MODERNA VACCINE CONTAMINATION

Japan's Okinawa region suspended the use of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine on Sunday after another contamination was spotted, the local government said.

It comes a day after the Japanese health ministry said it was investigating the death of two men who received shots from tainted Moderna batches — though the cause of their death is unknown.

The Okinawa prefecture, in southern Japan, said Sunday's vaccination programme was partially postponed.

"We are suspending the use of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccines as foreign substances were spotted in some of them," it said in a statement.

US in final phase of Kabul evacuations, Taliban prepares government

KABUL: US forces were in the final phase of pulling out of Kabul, ending two decades of costly involvement in Afghanistan, as the country's new Taliban rulers prepared to take control of the airport.

Just over 1,000 civilians remained at the airport on Sunday to be flown out before the troops finally leave, a Western security official said.

"We want to ensure that every foreign civilian and those who are at risk are evacuated today. Forces will start flying out once this process is over," said the official, who is stationed at the airport.

US President Joe Biden has said he will stick by his deadline to withdraw all US troops from Afghanistan by Tuesday. A US official said on Saturday that fewer than 4,000 troops remained at the airport.

US and allied forces have mounted a massive two-week effort to ferry foreign nationals and tens of thousands of vulnerable Afghans out of the country.

The airlift — one of the biggest such evacuation operations ever — marked the end of a 20-year Western mission in Afghanistan that began when US-led forces ousted a Taliban government that had provided safe haven for the perpetrators of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

The final chapter came quickly after the United States and the Taliban made a deal to end the foreign involvement.



Afghan nationals walk at the Dowqarun border crossing between Iran and Afghanistan, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran, on Sunday. — Reuters

The Western-backed government and Afghan army melted away as Taliban fighters swept across the country and took control of Kabul on August 15.

The United States and allies have taken about 114,400 people out of Afghanistan in the past two

weeks, but tens of thousands who want to go will be left behind.

"We tried every option because our lives are in danger. They (the Americans or foreigners) must show us a way to be saved. We should leave Afghanistan or they should provide a safe place for

us," said one woman outside the airport.

A Taliban official said the group had engineers and technicians ready to take charge of the airport.

"We are waiting for the final nod from the Americans to se-

The Taliban have both communicated privately and publicly that they will allow for safe passage

JAKE SULLIVAN

Biden's national security adviser

cure full control over Kabul airport as both sides aim for a swift handover," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Britain's last military flight left Kabul on Saturday night after a chaotic two weeks at the airport that was plunged into a bloodbath on Thursday when an IS suicide bomb attack outside the airport gates killed at least 90 Afghans and 13 American troops. Biden headed on Sunday to Dover Air Force Base to honour members of the US military killed in the attack as their remains were returned to the United States.

A top US official said the Biden administration expects the Taliban to continue allowing safe passage for Americans and others to leave Afghanistan after the US military withdrawal is completed.

"The Taliban have both communicated privately and publicly that they will allow for safe passage," said Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, in a CBS TV interview set to be broadcast on Sunday.

— Reuters

Thailand to allow local flights to resume in Covid-risk areas

BANGKOK: Thailand will allow some domestic flights to and from Bangkok and other high risk areas for Covid-19 to resume from September 1, the country's aviation authority said on Sunday, to help boost economic activity.

The announcement follows the easing of tough restrictions in 29 high-risk provinces from next month, including allowing more provincial travel and the reopening of shopping malls, as the government tries to revive a struggling economy hit by the outbreak.

Local fights can fly at up to 75 per cent capacity and passengers will have to follow travel conditions at destinations such as presenting proof of vaccinations and Covid-19 testing results, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) said in a statement. Flights related to areas under a tourism reopening scheme will also be allowed, it said.

Airlines, including Asia Aviation and Bangkok Airways, have announced the resumption of some local flights from next week.

The relaxed curbs come

Thailand started its mass vaccination drive in June, but so far only about 11 per cent of its more than 66 million population has been fully vaccinated

as Thailand's biggest wave of infections shows some signs of easing after a daily record high of more than 23,000 new cases earlier this month amid an outbreak of the highly transmissible Delta variant. On Sunday, it reported 16,536 new cases and 264 deaths.

While new cases remain high, they are likely to drop further as authorities ramp up vaccinations, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said on Sunday.

The government expects to have 140 million doses of vaccines this year, he said.

Thailand started its mass vaccination drive in June, but so far only about 11 per cent of its more than 66 million population has been fully vaccinated. — Agencies

Afghan refugee says he is 'lucky to be alive' on reaching Germany



Soldiers from German Bundeswehr arrive at the airport in Wunstorf, northern Germany at the end of a military evacuation operation. — AFP

KARLSRUHE, Germany: In the image, women waded knee-deep in filthy water, avoiding a roll of barbed wire while soldiers look on from behind a fence. The photograph was taken by an Afghan translator as he boarded a flight at Kabul airport, fleeing his country following the takeover by the Taliban.

The 29-year-old spent a decade working for Germany's Bundeswehr in Kabul, Kunduz and throughout the country.

"Wherever they needed me," says the man, who did not want to be named for security reasons.

He and his wife have just reached Karlsruhe, Germany, where they are staying in

temporary accommodation for refugees.

"I am lucky to be alive," he said. However, he feels unwell, having barely slept for the past weeks, fearful of the Taliban and reprisals for aiding the German armed forces.

He had been trying to organise his escape from the country, like thousands of others who worked supporting Western forces.

Here in Karlsruhe, he is going to try and relax a bit, he said. "And then we'll see what happens."

He has not received any medical or psychological support, he said, after his life-or-death efforts to gain safe passage.

He said he was given a visa in

Afghanistan by the Bundeswehr and had documents from all the years he worked with them. However, when he tried to reach his contacts in the German army after the Taliban takeover, he was either unable to reach them, or they put the phone down.

He doubts technical problems were to blame, saying he and his friends had tried repeatedly to get through.

He, his wife and friends hid in a sewer where they stayed overnight, hoping that the soldiers at the airport would keep them safe from the Taliban. He said he feared they would kill him if they found his German documents. — dpa

Louisiana braces for dangerous Hurricane Ida

IDA COULD BE WORST DIRECT HIT IN 170 YEARS

NEW ORLEANS: Hurricane Ida was expected to make landfall in the United States on Sunday as an “extremely dangerous” Category 4 storm that could plunge much of the Louisiana shoreline underwater as the state grapples with a Covid-19 surge already taxing hospitals.

The storm intensified faster than officials had predicted on Saturday, as residents of the Gulf Coast evacuated and businesses shut down, and gathered more strength overnight.

Southern Louisiana is still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Laura from a year ago. The state also has the third-highest incidence of Covid-19 cases per 100,000 people in the US over the past seven days.

By early Sunday Ida was a Category 4 hurricane on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said. At 4 am CDT (0900 GMT) it was located about 120 km south of the mouth of the Mississippi River, carrying top sustained winds of 220 kph. Ida could inflict

a life-threatening storm surge, potentially catastrophic wind damage and flooding rainfall, the NHC said. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said on Saturday that the storm could be the state’s worst direct hit by a hurricane since the 1850s.

Louisiana was also devastated 16 years ago this week by Hurricane Katrina, which killed more than 1,800 people.

The state is not planning to evacuate hospitals now strained by an influx of Covid-19 patients, Edwards said.

“The implications of having a Category 4 storm while hospitals are full are beyond what we normally contemplate,” Edwards said at a news conference on Saturday afternoon.

There were more than 3,400 new infections reported on Friday, and about 2,700 people are hospitalised with the virus.

“We have been talking to hospitals to make sure that their generators are working, that they have way more water on hand than normal, that they have PPE



A man places plywood in front of a store in preparation for Hurricane Ida, in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Saturday. – Reuters

on hand,” Edwards said.

Officials ordered widespread evacuations of low-lying and coastal areas, jamming highways and leading some gasoline stations to run dry as residents and vacationers fled the seashore.

“This is a powerful and

dangerous storm - it is moving faster than we had thought it would be, so we have a little less time to prepare,” said Dr Joseph Kanter, Louisiana’s chief medical official. “There is a lot of Covid out there - there are a lot of risks out there.”

Utilities were bringing in extra crews and equipment to deal with expected power losses. President Joe Biden said he has coordinated with electric utilities and 500 federal emergency response workers were in Texas and Louisiana to respond to the storm.

US energy companies reduced offshore oil production by 91 per cent and gasoline refiners cut operations at Louisiana plants in the path of the storm. Regional fuel prices rose in anticipation of production losses and on increased demand due to evacuations. Coastal and inland oil refineries began to cut production due to the storm. Phillips 66 shut its Alliance plant on the coast in Belle Chasse, while Exxon Mobil Corp cut production at its Baton Rouge, Louisiana, refinery on Saturday.

Jean Paul Bourg, 39, was planning to ride out the storm in Morgan City, about 70 miles west of New Orleans. His wife’s brother was recently released from the hospital after contracting Covid-19 and secured a generator to ensure access to oxygen if needed.

“You can’t necessarily pile in with family members during Covid,” Bourg said, after trimming trees and putting up plywood on his house.

“More people than you’d think are sticking around.” — Reuters

German election campaign heats up as Merkel’s conservatives slide

BERLIN: The campaign over who will replace German Chancellor Angela Merkel heated up on Sunday after an opinion poll showed the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) opening up a bigger lead over Merkel’s conservatives.

Support for the SPD rose two points from last week to 24 per cent, their highest result in four years according to the INSA poll conducted for the Bild am Sonntag newspaper. The conservatives slipped one point to 21 per cent, their lowest ever polled by INSA.

Germany goes to the polls on September 26 when Merkel steps down as chancellor after 16 years in office and four straight national election victories. Merkel’s imminent departure has weakened support for her conservative alliance.

It was the second survey in the last week that has put the SPD ahead. Support for Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), has been falling steadily in recent weeks. The



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Finance Minister Olaf Scholz arrive for the weekly cabinet meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin.

– Reuters file photo

bloc’s candidate for chancellor, CDU chairman Armin Laschet, has been under fire since he was caught on camera laughing during a visit last month to a town hit by floods.

In a hypothetical direct vote for chancellor, the INSA poll showed that the SPD’s candidate, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, would take 31 per cent of the vote, compared with 10 per cent for Laschet and 14 per cent for the Greens candidate, Annalena Baerbock. The three candidates are due to hold a

televised debate on Sunday evening. Despite the SPD’s lead in the polls, they would still need to team up with two other parties to govern, prompting a discussion about which possible coalition partners would be acceptable.

Scholz declined to rule out teaming up with the far-left Linke in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, although he said any government must commit itself to Nato membership.

— Reuters

As recall looms, California governor aims to galvanise Democrats

SACRAMENTO, California: California Governor Gavin Newsom and his supporters are stepping up their fight against a Republican-backed recall with a barrage of door knocks, text messages and outreach to communities of colour as opinion polls show the Democrat in danger of losing.

The group Voto Latino exclusively told Reuters it plans to spend about \$1 million ahead of the September 14 recall vote to try to persuade 600,000 young Latinos to cast ballots for Newsom, highlighting his need to spur more enthusiasm among Black and Latino voters.

Democrats outnumber Republicans in California more than two-to-one. President Joe Biden won the state by nearly 30 percentage points last year. Half of the state’s registered voters and 91 per cent of Democrats said in a July 27 poll by the University of California, Berkeley, Institute for Governmental Studies that they want to retain the first-term governor.

But a perfect storm of issues energising Republicans — and complacency among Democrats who think the governor has it in



Signs are shown at a rally for the recall campaign of California governor Gavin Newsom in Carlsbad, California. – Reuters

the bag — has the recall election looking much closer than expected.

Like Democrats across the country, Newsom has taken heat throughout the Covid-19 pandemic from opponents of public health shutdowns, mask mandates and school closures. He also is grappling with a rise in cases of homelessness and homicides, extreme drought and devastating wildfires.

A successful recall would serve as a wake-up call for Democrats already facing the threat of losing

their majorities in Congress in the 2022 US midterm elections, said Democratic strategist Steven Maviglio.

Maviglio served as press secretary for Democrat Gray Davis, ousted as California’s governor by Hollywood action star Arnold Schwarzenegger in the state’s last recall in 2003.

Maviglio said Democrats must take the election seriously to avoid the same fate for Newsom, a former lieutenant governor and mayor of San Francisco.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

LONDON

UK’s Johnson defends Kabul airlift

Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended Britain’s airlift from Kabul on Sunday following growing criticism that ministers had been “asleep on watch”, potentially leaving thousands of eligible Afghans behind in the country.

Britain, like the United States, has been criticised for failing to predict how quickly the Afghan government would fall, meaning it had not made sufficient preparation for the chaos that would follow when the Taliban seized power. Britain’s last military flight



left Kabul late on Saturday, ending a chaotic two weeks in which soldiers helped to evacuate more than 15,000 people from the crowds who descended on the capital’s airport, desperate to flee the country.

PRISTINA

Kosovo opts for curfew, delayed school

Kosovo will delay the start of the school year by two weeks and introduce a night-time curfew, the government said on Sunday, as coronavirus infections soar. The government said the curfew will take effect on Monday from 10 pm until 5 am while the school year will begin in mid-September instead of September 1.

Daily cases of Covid-19 have risen from several hundred at the start of August to some 2,000 a day currently. Kosovo, a 1.8-million-strong country,



has registered around 140,000 infections since the start of the pandemic and 2,500 deaths. Health Minister Arben Vitia said the number of children infected had risen, “particularly those aged 10 to 19.”

NEW DELHI

India attracts \$22.5 bn in FDI: govt

India attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows of \$22.53 billion during the first three months of the fiscal year starting on April 1, 90 per cent higher than the April-June period last year, the government said.

India’s automobile industry accounted for 27 per cent of the total FDI equity inflow, emerging as the brightest sector in Asia’s third-largest economy, followed by computer software and hardware and the services sectors which accounted for 17



per cent and 11 per cent of the inflows respectively, the trade ministry said. “Measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms and others have resulted in increased FDI inflows,” the statement added.

London’s City finance hub mulls post-Covid future

JEAN-BAPTISTE OUBRIER

London’s once bustling City finance district is grinding back to life, but it bears the scars of the deadly pandemic, sparking fresh questions over the future of the so-called “Square Mile”. The Covid-19 health crisis erupted in April last year, sparking a nationwide lockdown that turned the global financial hub into a ghost town.

City workers were forced to work remotely and some have since adopted hybrid or flexible work that splits time between home and the office.

Britain fully exited lockdown last month, buoyed by speedy vaccination, but many workers appear in no hurry to return to the office amid fears over the Delta Covid variant.

“There remains an underlying reluctance of many to risk exposure to the virus, either in the workplace or on the journey to work”, Remit Consulting’s corporate real estate specialist Lorna Landells said.

School holidays and the government’s Covid policy have impacted the return to office life, but fully vaccinated Britons are no longer required to self-isolate after coming into contact with an infected person.

Nevertheless, central London office occupancy is just 10.3 per cent of its total capacity in the week ending August 20, according to data compiled by Remit.

“When I’m looking out of my office window, the streets look fairly empty”, said Nigel Wilson, the head of insurer Legal & General, in a recent interview with *The Guardian* newspaper. “We are still very early days into (the reopening) and I do expect more people to be back in September.”

In contrast, Howard Davies, Chairman of NatWest Bank and a former head of London’s financial watchdog, believes that the City has changed forever.

“The days when 2,500 people walked in through our office door... at 8:30 am and walked out again at 6:00 pm, I think that is gone”, he told Bloomberg.

“It will look quite a lot different during the day and central London will not go back to the footfall that we had before — people are concerned about the risks of travelling and they’ve discovered they can do things in a different way.”

British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak, however, wants office workers to return, arguing it helps the careers of young people. — AFP

“There remains an underlying reluctance of many to risk exposure to the virus, either in the workplace or on the journey to work

LORNA LANDELLS
Real Estate Specialist



FOR THE AFGHANS

A woman holds up a placard as protesters hold a demonstration challenging the evacuation process from Kabul Airport and the United States commitment in Afghanistan, in front of the White House in Washington, DC, on Saturday. — AFP

Watch before pressing the button



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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As the world is witnessing the digital age today, millions of people are using technology every single moment of their life! They could control and manage various devices with just a press of the button. To tell the truth, many aspects of people’s lifestyle have changed as being impacted by technology in one way or another! Basically, technology has attacked the day-to-day life activities and people became more connected digitally nowadays. Almost everyone is attached to at least one type of technological advancements.

With such a strong connection, can anyone imagine how life would look like without technology! Would people get comfortable and decent living as they have today?

Would people be more socially connected with each other? Would there be many scientific advances? Definitely, without technology the world would be totally a different place. But, one has to think that the world becomes better with or without technology? Probably, what everyone is sure about is that every change has its price to be paid sooner or later!

On the other side, with the emergence of various new technological applications, people get much busier than before. Case in a point, with the social media becoming a trend among people of all

ages, you hardly find a person without being connected on a social media platform. You cannot imagine how people are getting addicted to these platforms. Children as well are getting more fascinated by technology and social media. Commonly, they are having accounts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook too.

Having all these social media platforms accessible on mobile is what really encourages people to get addicted. People are more connected to their devices than with each other. Their socialisation with one another is becoming much easier via social media and technology and even more than direct social interaction. It is really a frightening phenomenon!

Among the most commonly used social media platforms, which is at everyone’s reach today is the WhatsApp. The broadcasts, messages and chats shared on WhatsApp are becoming talk of the town and everybody’s source of interest.

It is becoming the most important application that everyone has to have on the mobile phone. People are spending not just their free time on WhatsApp, but they never disconnect their attention from it while at work or home.

Continuous chatting, either on WhatsApp or other platforms, is the common addiction among many people.

They are twitting and instagraming on every single thing that happens to them regardless its significance. Despite how personal the thing is or not, what matters to them is getting their things publicised among friends and social media fans. What is worrying more is when employees waste their working hours on chatting rather than focusing at work.

Eventually, they will be losing their sense of responsibility and devotion at work. What is really worse is the negative influence of technology overall on people’s social life. It affects their values and habits unfortunately! Although, it helps creating friendships and partnerships, it can break relationships and destroy careers too especially when one gets into others’ business.

If better understood, Technology is a sword of two edges; either to make life or break it! Although it offers better means to man’s day to day living, it also has unwanted results and impacts on one’s life. With social media, for instance, it is up to one what to post or communicate. One has to think twice before putting anything that might fires back. Otherwise, you have only got yourself to blame for what you posted. Thus, one shall be very cautious when pressing the button of any social media platform for what sometimes what goes out could not be recalled back again.

Like a mountain bird...

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

IF ONLY MEN
WERE MADE OF
SEA HAZE
BEFORE THE
SUNSET
IF ONLY THEY
WEREN’T MADE
OF CLAY

The following are translations of poems by the Omani poet Hilal al Hajri (1958) from his collection titled: “Like a Mountain Bird Watching the Collapse of the World”, (Beirut 2013).

A Wish
If only men were made of sea haze
Before the sunset
If only they weren’t made of clay!
The Interior of Oman
Even the storms that hit Oman
Had a colonial bent:
They’d lop off noses and ears
From Mosera to Qalhat and Muscat
And the Indian Ocean would devour them
They certainly read the map

of Albuquerque
Though the Interior was fortified by
Its mountains and sorcerers
Feared by empires and storms!
The Literati
The bowels of a hypocritical whale
On the beach
The seagulls scramble for
With style and character
Are better than a mouse’s carrion
The literati bite
Their saliva flowing to their knees!
The Strange Woman
I love you
I yearn for you
O strange woman
I’ve no way to reach you
To give you a birthday gift or

flower
But I won’t hesitate a moment
To pluck my soul
And send it by post
A sacrifice to your sacred love.
A Letter to Federico Garcia Lorca
O Lorca
My tear
Descended on the drinking table
Who fathoms it?
Who weighs it?
Give me a splinter
From the bullet that pierced your betrayed heart.
I want to die
With the taste of revolution
And the sweetness of outburst on my tongue.
In the Last Part of the Night
Glory to you O crescent

I see you between curtain and wall
Just like a scythe
About to cut this pale sky.
Lost Bedouin
O clouds
Flock together
Quench this heart, thirsty since Adam
I seek your help
Here
In the black sinews of this wasteland
Let your tears rain
With pity and mercy
On this lost Bedouin
Who’s burning on the embers of loss
A single drop
A single drop might moisten his throat

To start screaming again
Amidst this chaos.
Believer
I’m but a bullet in the heart of this darkness
I trace the light of revolution and the impossible
But I may hit against a fort or lighthouse!
My love
Let the light of your face
Be the Mecca of this believer!
A Letter from Cambridge
Arabia is the land of fault
Where the prophets were sent
Their followers fight with bells and minarets
But here in Cambridge
There’s but
River
Flower
And salvation!



Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrates on the podium after winning the British MotoGP. – AFP

QUARTARARO

ROMPS TO FIFTH VICTORY AT BRITISH GP

FRENCHMAN CLOSES IN ON HIS FIRST MOTOGP WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

SILVERSTONE, United Kingdom: Yamaha’s Fabio Quartararo stormed to victory at the British Grand Prix at Silverstone on Sunday to claim his fifth win of the season and extend his lead at the top of the MotoGP world championship standings.

The French rider, who started from third on the grid, took the lead on lap five and opened up a three-second gap on the chasing pack before cruising home in style to tighten his grip on this season’s championship.

The victory extended Quartararo’s lead over Suzuki’s reigning world champion Joan Mir, who finished ninth, to 65 points at the top of the standings.

Quartararo dedicated his victory to the supporters who had turned out in force to watch the race.

“It’s great to see the fans and share the victory with them,” he said. “I can take more risks now, what I want to do is fight for victories. With a 65-point lead I don’t need to think about the championship.”

“It’s great to see the fans and share the victory with them. I can take more risks now, what I want to do is fight for victories. With a 65-point lead I don’t need to think about the championship

FABIO QUARTARARO

Yamaha rider

Mir’s Suzuki team mate Alex Rins came second for his first podium finish of the season, with Aprilia Racing Team Gresini’s Aleix Espargaro holding off Jack Miller on

the final lap to come third and claim his team’s first-ever MotoGP podium.

“It’s like a dream. I’m super happy,” Espargaro said. “I always believed in the project. I want to enjoy the moment but, believe me, I want more and more. Now that we’re in a good moment, we have to keep working hard.

Pole-sitter Pol Espargaro took the lead at the start of the race, with his brother Aleix close behind in second, before Quartararo made his move and began pulling clear. Pol finished in fifth place.

Honda’s six-times premier-class winner Marc Marquez crashed out in the first lap along with Pramac Ducati’s rookie rider Jorge Martin after a collision between the two.

“I want to apologise to Martin because it was completely my fault,” Marquez said. “It was the first lap and I was too optimistic. I apologise to Martin and the Pramac team, but races are sometimes like this and today it was my mistake.” — Reuters



Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrates winning the British Grand Prix at Silverstone circuit in Northamptonshire, central England. – AFP

BRITISH GRAND PRIX RESULTS AND STANDINGS

1. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha) 40min 20.579sec, 2. Alex Rins (ESP/Suzuki) at 2.663, 3. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia) 4.105, 4. Jack Miller (AUS/Ducati) 4.254, 5. Pol Espargaro (ESP/Honda) 8.462, 6. Brad Binder (RSA/KTM) 12.189, 7. Iker Lecuona (ESP/KTM-Tech3) 13.560, 8. Alex Marquez (ESP/Honda-LCR) 14.044, 9. Joan Mir (ESP/Suzuki) 16.226, 10. Danilo Petrucci (ITA/KTM-Tech3) 16.287, 11. Johann

Zarco (FRA/Ducati-Pramac) 16.339

Selected

14. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati) 20.913, 18. Valentino Rossi (ITA/Yamaha-SRT) 29.758

DNF: Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)

MOTOGP STANDINGS (AFTER 12 RACES)

1. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha) 206 points, 2. Joan Mir (ESP/Suzuki) 141, 3.

Johann Zarco (FRA/Ducati-Pramac) 137, 4. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati) 136, 5. Jack Miller (AUS/Ducati) 118, 6. Brad Binder (RSA/KTM) 108, 7. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Yamaha) 95, 8. Miguel Oliveira (POR/KTM) 85, 9. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia) 83, 10. Jorge Martin (ESP/Ducati-Pramac) 64

Selected

12. Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda) 59, 21. Valentino Rossi (ITA/Yamaha-SRT) 28



Yashasvi powers Mumbai to easy win over Oman

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Prolific scorer Yashasvi Jaiswal hit a sparkling 82 to power Mumbai to a comfortable four-wicket victory against Oman in the first of four-match one-day series here at Oman Cricket Academy Ground One in Al Amerat on Sunday.

Chasing a modest target of 197 to win, Mumbai got off to a brilliant start as openers Jaiswal and Aakarshit Gomel put on a 60-run opening partnership in less than nine overs. Jaiswal continued to bat like he had been throughout the tour of Oman for a superb 82 off 79 that included 5 big hits over the ropes. Hardik Tamore's brilliant 51 not out kept Oman at bay before the tourists sealed the win in the 44th over, scoring 199 for 6.

Oman had another ordinary day with the bat as nobody except opener Khawar Ali and number four Kail Khalid batted really well. Seven of Oman players failed to reach a double-figure score. Well-placed at 116 for 2 halfway

“We have WCL Division 2 starting in September followed by the ICC T20 World Cup in October. It may sound strange but I really want my side beaten so that they know they have a job to do and do it well over a period of time. There is no time to relax and the team must hit the top form before the big assignments

DULEEP MENDIS
Oman head coach

through the innings, Oman lost the advantage due to some inept batting and were dismissed for 196 in the 48th over.

Oman coach Duleep Mendis



Yashasvi Jaiswal of Mumbai.

said he wanted his side to be beaten so that they could find the mistakes and correct them before the big tournaments in the next few weeks.



Kail Khalid of Oman bats against Mumbai.

“We have WCL Division 2 starting in September followed by the ICC T20 World Cup in October. It may sound strange but I really want my side beaten

so that they know they have a job to do and do it well over a period of time. There is no time to relax and the team must hit the top form before the big assignments,” added

Mendis. Khawar, leading the team in the absence of regular captain Zeeshan Maqsood who had been rested along with a host of other main players, made a fluent 52 off while Kail left a strong impression in his first outing for Oman with a solid 76 off 84.

Mumbai captain Shams Mulani was once again the pick of bowlers, claiming 3 for 45 whereas Aman Khan and Shashank Attarde bagged two wickets each.

The two teams will lock horns for the second game on Monday. Oman, who won the T20 series 2-1, are expected to field a full-strength squad to give their boys maximum match practice before the ICC World Cricket League (WCL) Division 2 starts in September.

Brief scores: Oman 196 all out in 47.1 overs (Kail Khalid 76 – 4x4, 1x6, Khawar Ali 52 – 4x4, 2x6, Shams Mulani 3-45, Aman Khan 2-26, Shashank Attarde 2-27) lost to Mumbai 199 for 6 in 43.4 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 82 – 5x4, 5x6, Hardik Tamore 51 not out – 4x4, Shakeel Ahmad 2-46, Rafiullah 2-33) by 4 wickets.

DJOKOVIC CHASES CALENDAR-YEAR GRAND SLAM

NEW YORK: Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam in 52 years and become the all-time men's leader in Slam titles by capturing the US Open.

Not since Rod Laver in 1969 has the feat been achieved and the chance at tennis history has fueled Djokovic's fire to finish the 2021 sweep.

“I know how big of an opportunity is in front of me,” the Serbian star said. “I’m very motivated to play my best tennis. I’m hugely inspired and motivated by that, no doubt.”

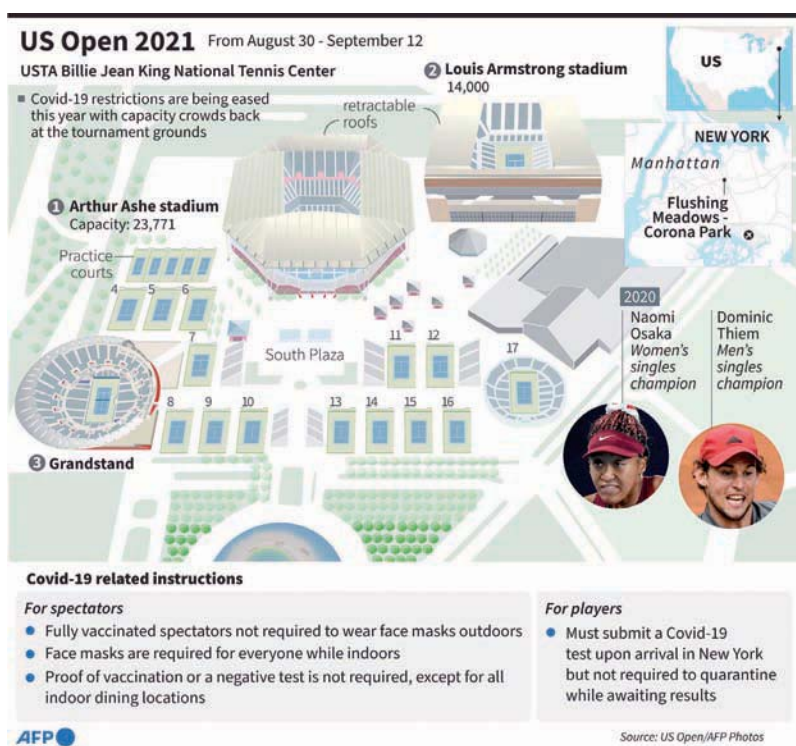
Five past champions won't be in the field when the showdown begins Monday on the hardcourts at Flushing Meadows, with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Juan Martin del Potro and 2020 winner Dominic Thiem absent due to injuries.

That leaves the main obstacles in Djokovic's path to a 21st career Slam crown as a set of rising 20-something talents trying to build their trophy hauls — Russia's second-ranked Daniil Medvedev, Greece's third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas and fourth-ranked Olympic champion Alexander Zverev of Germany.

The roots of Djokovic's amazing 2021 run were in last year's US Open, where he was defaulted out of the tournament in the fourth round against Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta when he struck a ball and it accidentally hit a line official in the throat.

The 34-year-old has not dropped a Grand Slam match this year, beating Medvedev in the Australian Open final, Tsitsipas in the French Open final and Italy's Matteo Berrettini in the Wimbledon final.

“It's really fortunate for me and incredible that it's all coming together in the same year,” Djokovic said. “That's something that I didn't expect but I always



dream of achieving the biggest things in the sport.”

The men's Slam has been done only by Australian Laver in 1962 and 1969 and American Don Budge in 1938.

“What he achieved this year is something amazing,” Nadal said. “I definitely believe that he can do it, without a doubt.”

After opening against a qualifier, Djokovic could face sixth seed Berrettini in a quarter-final, Zverev in a semi-final and Medvedev or Tsitsipas in the final.

Djokovic briefly has held all four Slam titles at once, winning his fourth in a row at the 2016 French Open to complete a career Grand Slam. In his career, Djokovic has won nine Australian Opens, six Wimbledon crowns, two French Opens and 2011, 2015 and 2018 US Opens.

He has spent a record span at world number one, more than 335 weeks, and comes into the US Open not having played since losing the Olympic bronze medal match to Carreno Busta.

“Well, he already won three. So when you win three, you can win four, without a doubt, no? He did 75 per cent of the way. He is going to be playing on hard court, probably his best surface, so why not?” Nadal said.

RIVALS READY FOR NOVAK

US Open 2019 runner-up Medvedev, who won a tuneup title at Toronto, sees Djokovic as a clear favourite.

“Definitely Novak is going to be the highest contender,” Medvedev said. “He is the man under pressure, but I think he likes it.

“I’m going to try to do my best. If I manage to keep the level I’m playing at right now, I have good chances to go far. I just want to play good.”

Tsitsipas is proud of his ranking and his Roland Garros finals run.

“Three is a number that's very significant,” Tsitsipas said. — AFP

Osaka defends crown with Barty leading top rivals

2021 US Open

Women to watch

Ashleigh Barty
25 years old
Australia
Ranking: 1

Naomi Osaka
23
Japan
3

Aryna Sabalenka
23
Belarus
2



Grand Slam titles:

Australian French Wimbledon US
2020 SF (best result)
2018, 2019 R4

4
2016, 2018, 2019 R3
2017, 2018 R3

0
2021 R4
2020, 2021 R3
2021 SF
2018 R4

NEW YORK: Defending champion Naomi Osaka seeks her third US Open title in four tries as the year's final Grand Slam begins on Monday with top-ranked Wimbledon winner Ashleigh Barty leading a host of rivals.

What's uncertain is whether New York will see Osaka rediscover the dominant form that saw her win the past two Grand Slam events she played to the finish.

The 23-year-old Japanese star lit the flame in the Olympic cauldron at the Tokyo Games, but has played only two matches since Japan ahead of the Open.

“I know I haven't played that many matches. I know that I haven't even gotten to a quarter-final,” Osaka said.

“Actually I feel pretty happy with how I'm playing... I feel pretty confident with where I am right now. Of course I'm not declaring that I'll do amazing here. I'm the one-match-at-a-time like person.

“Hopefully it will work out in the end.”

Osaka pulled out of the French Open after being fined for not talking to reporters after her first match, saying it hurt her mental health. She then skipped Wimbledon but spoke with the media after matches in her US

Open tune-up at Cincinnati.

“I felt like it was something I needed to do for myself,” Osaka said. “I'm proud of what I did and I think it was something that needed to be done.”

Osaka captured last year's US Open title by defeating Victoria Azarenka in the final, becoming the first woman since 1994 to rally from a set down to win the US Open final.

At this year's Australian Open, Osaka saved match points against Spain's Garbine Muguruza in the fourth round and beat 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams in the semifinals before defeating Jen Brady in the final.

Osaka, ranked third, has won her first four Grand Slam finals, trailing only Roger Federer's run of seven and six by Monica Seles for the best Slam final start in the Open Era (since 1968).

She will open this year in New York against Czech Marie Bouzkova. Osaka could meet Coco Gauff in the fourth round, Ukraine's fifth-seeded Elina Svitolina in the quarterfinals and Belarus second seed Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals.

Barty, in her 83rd consecutive week atop the world rankings, has rolled to wins at Wimbledon and Cincinnati, putting her on best form entering the Flushing Meadows fortnight. — AFP



Russian Paralympic Committee's Denis Gnezdilov competes in the men's shot put F40 final of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo. – AFP



Britain's Hannah Cockcroft reacts after competing in the women's 100m-T34 final of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo. – AFP

BRITS LIGHT UP SUPER SUNDAY

AFGHAN PARALYMPIANS IN TEARS AS THEY ARRIVE FOR GAMES

TOKYO: Afghanistan's athletes were in tears when they finally arrived at the Tokyo Paralympics, officials said, as Britain's wheelchair rugby team won one of 63 golds up for grabs on Super Sunday.

Afghanistan's Zakia Khudadadi and Hossain Rasouli were evacuated to France last weekend from the Taliban-controlled country in a "major global operation", the International Paralympic Committee said.

"The meeting at the athletes' village was extremely emotional. There were lots of tears from everyone in the room," said IPC spokesperson Craig Spence.

Spence said the Afghanistan flag appearing at Tuesday's Opening Ceremony had been the "first step to keep the door open" to the athletes and their arrival was "a very strong message of hope to many others around the world".

Khudadadi will compete in the women's -49kg K44 taekwondo

on Thursday. Sprinter Rasouli will take part in the men's T47 long jump on Tuesday having arrived too late for his favoured T47 100m.

"As you can imagine after a very turbulent week, both athletes were exhausted following their flight last night," added Spence.

Day 5 of the Games brought a first-ever wheelchair rugby gold for Britain, who beat the United States 54-49 in the final.

The Brits had never previously won a medal in the event, but a heroic effort edged out the Americans, who were looking to improve on the silver they claimed five years ago in Rio.

"What an amazing shift that was — that was one to remember," said Britain's Jim Roberts, who led the scoring with 24 tries. "I play to win every game I go into, so that's what I wanted to come for."

Japan beat Australia 60-52 to take the bronze, leaving the Aussies — who went into the competition looking for a third straight gold — going home



Silver Medallist Lauren Parker of Australia, gold medallist Kendall Gretsche of the United States and bronze Medallist Eva Maria Moral Pedrero of Spain celebrate on the podium of Women's PTWC Triathlon in Tokyo. – Reuters

empty handed. "It's going to hurt watching every other team receive a medal and not us, but that's just what happens when you're not the best," said Australia captain Ryley Batt.

The day began with American Kendall Gretsche snatching triathlon gold right on the line in a dramatic finish after Australia's Lauren Parker had led almost the

entire race at Odaiba Marine Park on Sunday.

Parker was hampered by backmarkers on the final lap, with the crucial seconds lost enabling Gretsche to reel her in to win by less than the length of her wheelchair.

"I couldn't see her in front of me until halfway through that lap," said Gretsche.

"As soon as I saw her, I was like,

'Hey! You just have to do it. You have to give everything you can.'"

SIXTH GOLD FOR COCKROFT

There were 20 finals at the athletics stadium on Sunday and the first gold there went to world record holder Oksana Zubkovska of Ukraine in the T12 long jump with a leap of 5.54 metres as records began to tumble.

British great Hannah Cockcroft smashed her own women's T34 100m world record as she won a sixth Paralympic gold medal and third in a row in this event, with fellow Brit Kare Adenegan following her home for silver. "I honestly didn't know that time was within me," said Cockcroft.

And there was a stunning conclusion to the F40 men's shot put final when Iraq's defending Paralympic champion Garrah Tnaish broke the world record with 11.15m on his final attempt to leapfrog the RPC's Denis Gnezdilov into gold medal position. But the Russian still had

one attempt remaining and he astonishingly bettered Tnaish's mark by just one centimetre at 11.16m to snatch back the gold.

"It's gorgeous," said a jubilant Gnezdilov. "It's the best mood possible. These are the Paralympic Games. I won them and with a world record on top of everything. This is the best thing to happen in my life."

Wheelchair racing legend Tatyana McFadden claimed a silver in the women's T54 800m final — the 19th Paralympic medal of her career.

In the swimming pool, 14 more gold medals were decided, with Japan's Naohide Yamaguchi setting a new world record of 1min, 3.77sec in the men's 100m breaststroke SB14.

Two athletes have tested positive for Covid in the Paralympic village, the IPC announced, among 11 new Games-related cases.

It brings the total coronavirus cases detected in the village to 15, including seven athletes. — AFP

Mashaykhi registers season best in Tokyo Paralympics

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 29

Oman's Paralympics star Mohammed Jameel al Mashaykhi registered his season best record in Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at men's club throw — F32 as he cleared 30.59 metres in ninth place on Saturday at Olympic Stadium. The gold medal was claimed by Chinese Li Liu as he cleared 45.39 metres and achieved a world record. Greece parathlete Athanasios Konstantinidis won the silver medal with a 38.68 metres and registered a national record. The Algerian parathlete Walid Ferhah bagged the bronze medal with 35.34 metres with a national record.

The silver medalist at the 2017 world championships in London in shot put — F32 class, enrolled his best result (35.59m) in the third attempt. The first and second attempts were not successive while he registered 26.15 metres and 23.95 metres in the fourth and



Mohammed Jameel al Mashaykhi al Mashaykhi

fifth attempts respectively. The result of sixth and last attempt was 30.29 metres.

The Sultanate's forthcoming

action at Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be through parathlete Taha bin Abdullah al Harassi who will compete in T36 category



Iman al Shamsy

of long jump competition on Monday.

On Tuesday, Al Mashaykhi will take part in shot put for the F34

class competition, while Iman al Shamsy will make her debut in the shot put — F34 class. Al Harassi will compete in the 100 metres

The Sultanate's forthcoming action at Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be through parathlete Taha bin Abdullah al Harassi who will compete in T36 category of long jump today

sprint qualifiers on September 3. The final of 100m is scheduled to take place on September 4.

The Sultanate delegation at Paralympic Games is headed by Dr Mansour Sultan al Touqi, Chairman of Oman Paralympic Committee (OPC).

As many as 4,400 parathletes from 160 countries are taking part in the Games which will conclude on September 5.

Oman's Paralympic stars are aiming to show top performance and raise the Sultanate's flag in this global prestigious event.



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SOHAR Port signs bunkering pact with Hormuz Marine

SUHAR: SOHAR Port and Freezone and Hormuz Marine have signed a bunkering agreement which will see the launch of bunkering services at Sohar Port.

The agreement comes in response to the growing need for offshore refuelling, allowing vessels to bunker efficiently and speed up global shipping times at the port.

The flexible service from Hormuz Marine will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide and operate a 8000 MT tanker capable of delivering several grades of marine fuel to ships in port each day, planning to start by mid of September.

By signing this agreement, SOHAR Port is able to meet the demands of a time-sensitive industry in order to improve the efficiency of the port.

Batti al Shibli, Harbour Master at SOHAR Port and Freezone, said, “We are delighted to welcome Hormuz Marine to the Port of Sohar. Their expertise in providing an essential service will be vital to our future growth as we look to attract more vessels taking marine services and increase the cargo traffic visiting Sohar. Bunker quality is essential to maintaining

efficiency and enabling vessels to meet regulations and tight timeframes. The new service is an incredibly valuable addition to the Port’s one-stop-shop marine services available to all visiting ships.”

Sulaiman al Hadhrami, CEO of Hormuz Marine, said, “Our experience in managing a crucial element of the marine supply chain

will allow the Port of Sohar to increase its level of service for vessels of all sizes. We’re able to deliver VLSFO, HFO, MGO and LSMGO at competitive rates to manage the fuel requirements of ships as they unload or pass through Sohar without the need to remain in port. The Port of Sohar is one of Oman’s most important industrial gateways and this service will enhance its reputation as an attractive port of call and add to the Sultanate’s position as a word renowned shipping location.

TURN TO P15

Oman’s Ghuzayn copper project offers paradigm for engagement with local community

CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT: One per cent of value of annual mining output to be spent on development projects in host communities under new Mineral Wealth Law

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Efforts to get Oman’s first industrial-scale underground copper mining project off the ground at Ghuzayn in North Al Batinah Governorate are making headway with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals confirming that progress has been achieved in addressing the reservations of local communities living nearby.

Local Omani firm Mawarid Mining plans to invest initially around RO 43 million in unlocking Ghuzayn’s huge copper reserves – estimated at 6.5 million tonnes of mineable ore – in what will be the first modern underground copper project to be implemented in the Sultanate.

In its newly published 2020 Annual Report, the ministry has credited interventions by government stakeholder bodies, as well as the mining firm, in engaging with the local communities in reducing friction points holding back the implementation of the project.

In addition to complying with health, safety, social and environmental safeguards stipulated under Omani law, mining firms are also called upon to commit to creating

employment, economic and commercial opportunities that flow to local communities in the vicinity of the projects.

Significantly, the Mineral Wealth Law enacted by the Oman government in 2019 requires mining companies to set aside one per cent of the value of their annual output towards developmental initiatives in support of host communities. The measure is seen as key to securing the support and goodwill of local communities that are otherwise wary of potential adverse impacts from mining to their habitats.

Located in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah, the Ghuzayn copper mining project initially languished for want of the requisite approvals from various government ministries and agencies, in addition to push-back from local villagers.

The erstwhile Tanfeedh programme – a national initiative to fast track government approvals and permits for strategic economic projects

– had formed a high-level committee encompassing several ministries and stakeholders to help intervene in tackling some of these challenges. Those efforts continued when the Implementation Support & Follow-up Unit (ISFU) assumed responsibility for the speedy facilitation of approvals – an effort that is now being shouldered by the Implementation Follow-up Unit of Oman Vision 2040.

Commenting on the progress made thus far in advancing the Ghuzayn project, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals said: “Al Ghuzayn project is considered one of the vital projects with an added value (potential). It is one of Tanfeedh Mining Labs’ outputs that was followed up by the Implementation Support and Follow Up Unit.

The initial cost of the project is RO 43 million and it will contribute with 50 direct employment opportunities to Omanis in the first phase.

TURN TO P15

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Petroleum Development Oman

Energy meet to focus on green hydrogen, transition

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 29

The 2nd MENA Energy Meet — a two-day virtual expo and summit — begins today, August 30, 2021, under the auspices of Oman’s Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The event, organised by Muscat Expo in association with White Paper Summits, will cover a broad array of topics encompassing, among other themes, green hydrogen, energy transition and energy security, digital transformation, critical infrastructure protection and cyber-security, wind energy and floating solar, storage technologies, decarbonisation and GHG emissions accounting, carbon capture utilisation, circular carbon economy, and low carbon refining.

A distinguished roster of speakers, representing some of the most prestigious energy-related

A distinguished roster of speakers, representing some of the most prestigious energy-related institutions, will be presenting during the two-day forum.

The line-up includes: Anna Shpitsberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary — Bureau of Energy Resources, US Department of State; Dr Abderrezak Benyoucef, Head — Energy Studies Department, OPEC; Dmitry Sokolov, Head of Energy Economics and Forecasting, Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF); Eng Wael Hamed Abdel Moati, Gas Industries Expert, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting countries (OAPEC);



and James Grabert, Director — Mitigation Division & Acting Director — Communication and Engagement Division, United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Presenting from Oman are Abdulrahman al Yahaei, CEO —

OPAL; Nasser bin Saif bin Nasser al Mahrouqi, Petroleum Digital Center Manager, Petroleum Development Oman; and Claudia

Vergueiro Massei, CEO — Siemens Oman; and Hassan bin Abdul Ali, General Manager, Service Delivery & PMO, Oman Data Park.

Leading organisations from the wider region will be represented as well.

The list includes Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (APICORP), OPEC Fund for International Development, IHS Markit, ENGIE, Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy (Masen), OGCI Climate Investments, Energy Industries Council, Dubai Council for Marine & Maritime Industries (DCMMI Emirates), Dii Desert Energy, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC), Port of Rotterdam, World Ocean Council, Marsh, OSGP Alliance, 247Solar, Inc, TotalEnergies, and Wartsila Gulf FZE, among others.

Bank Muscat’s Floosi account improves financial inclusion, excellent response

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat’s Floosi account, which was launched earlier this year, in line with its commitment to improving financial inclusion across the Sultanate continues to receive excellent responses from its customers.

The new account was launched in line with the bank’s vision of “Serving you better, every day” and after extensive market research in response to customer feedback requesting an account that can help the youth learn personal finance skills. Targeted at youth in the 15-17 age group, it is becoming highly popular with both Omanis and expatriates.

The Floosi account helps young people to make savings a regular habit in their lives. The linked debit card comes with a daily limit of RO 50 per transaction and a monthly cumulative limit of RO 200 for Point of Sale (PoS), e-commerce transactions and ATM withdrawals.

Youth in the 15-17 year age group may apply for a Floosi account by visiting their nearest branch along with their parent (or legal guardian) and submitting their application and copies of



important documents like their National ID card (for Omani citizens) or Resident Card and Passport (for expatriates).

The parent or guardian must sign the form and will be the authorised signatory. Floosi accounts can be converted into Shababi accounts when they turn 18, following which young people can operate the account independently.

The new Floosi account comes with some great offers, special

events, and opportunities for young customers to win attractive prizes. A great advantage of the Floosi account is that young customers are not penalised for not maintaining a minimum balance. However, the bank tries to encourage good saving habits and rewards Floosi customers by entering them into Al Mazyona monthly draws when a minimum monthly account balance of RO 50 is maintained. Every month, 100 prizes of RO 100 each are given to

The special account, which is meant for youth in the 15-17 age group, is getting excellent customer response

the lucky winners of this draw.

Bank Muscat has been delighted with the feedback from parents who are happy that this new account is of great help to their children in learning the importance of sound personal finance management.

The bank’s flagship Al Mazyona savings scheme has succeeded in instilling strong saving habits among people in Oman over the last three decades. The scheme will offer RO 11 million to 7,470 winners throughout 2021. Bank Muscat continues to work to improve financial inclusion in Oman by introducing a number of innovative financial products and services.

Please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/accounts/Pages/details.aspx#floosi> or call 24795555 for more details.

OAB announces winners of Hasaad Savings Scheme

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank recently announced the names of the most recent round of draw winners for its Hasaad Savings Scheme for July. The draw saw 101 customers winning prizes of RO 500 each. As for Elite account holders, two customers won RO 10,000 each from Khasab and Al Amerat branches.

Commenting on the results of the draw, Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, “Our fundamental belief as a financial institution is to be able to encourage the benefits of saving habits amongst our customers, to help them fulfil their dreams and aspirations. With the different categories of the Hasaad scheme, regular saving is an easy practice for all individuals. In turn, we look forward to rewarding them for their efforts.”

The Hasaad Savings Scheme 2021 will see 101 lucky winners each month from the 53 branches winning RO 500 each. This is in addition to a Big Prize draw which will see two winners of RO 10,000 each, every quarter.

The Elite Draws will see two winners every month of RO 10,000 each. This is replaced by an Elite grand prize draw conducted every three months with one lucky



winner of RO 25,000.

“I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the winners and urge everyone to continue saving, especially in these unprecedented times, to increase their chances of winning in the remaining draws for the year,” Rashad added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate.

Today, the Bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 150 ATMs spread across Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

Toyota Fortuner known for its sleek styling, engineering prowess

MUSCAT: Toyota Fortuner stands out with its sleek styling, impressive capability and engineering prowess that goes beyond expectations.

The legendary powerhouse is the perfect four-wheel drive SUV to take you places both on-road and off-road too.

The Fortuner makes its bold presence felt with its stylish appearance. On the inside, its detailed and thoughtful appointments make every drive in it comfortable and exciting too.

The Fortuner is available with Petrol Engines that include a 2.7 Litre Four-Cylinder Engine producing 164 HP & 25.0 Kg-m of Torque. The 4.0 Litre V6 Engine churns out 235 HP along with 38.3 Kg-m of Torque.

The 6-speed Automatic Transmission, available as a standard option, provides thrilling

acceleration.

The Fortuner is equipped with Comprehensive Safety Systems to protect its occupants. These include Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) that prevents the tyres from locking during braking.

The Fortuner is equipped with SRS Driver Airbag, SRS Front Passenger Airbag, Side Airbag, Curtain Airbag and SRS Knee Airbag (driver only). In terms of seatbelts, three-point Emergency Locking Retractor (ELR) seatbelts are equipped. When an impact is experienced during a collision, the Seatbelt Locks to restrain the passenger. Other reassuring safety features include the Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and the Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS).

Rugged and adroit, the Fortuner also is known for its high standards



on the inside. Premium Leather Seats, Leather and Wood finished Steering Wheel with Paddle Shifts, Cool Glove Box, Cruise Control and a whole bunch of other goodies augment its interior ambience.

Toyota Fortuner has a powerful Air Conditioner.

Other innovative touches include a Navigation System. The Rear View Camera ensures peace of mind when Reverse Parking. The 6-speaker Audio System enhances its harmonious ambience. And to add to the convenience, there is a Power Back Door System which adds to the sheer convenience.

Specifications of vehicles imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions

and fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to the fitment of dealer-installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

In Oman, the nationwide parts and service network of Saud Bahwan Automotive supports Toyota’s outstanding product quality. No wonder that today, Toyota is one of the most trusted and well-known brands.

For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman or www.facebook.com/toyotaoman, instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/.

For any further details and to ascertain the availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom.



In brief

■ NEW YORK

**KRAFT HEINZ TO MANDATE VACCINES FOR OFFICE EMPLOYEES**

Kraft Heinz Co said all US employees will need to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 before returning to offices in January, as the fast-spreading Delta variant batters the United States.

The packaged-food maker's announcement comes days after the US Food and Drug Administration granted full approval to the Pfizer Inc / BioNTech SE vaccine, a certification that public health officials hope will convince unvaccinated Americans that the shot is safe and effective.

The resurgence of Covid-19 cases in the United States and new regulatory guidance have led companies to change their plans on vaccinations and masking.

■ BERLIN

**GERMAN CONSUMER MORALE DROPS HEADING INTO SEPT**

The mood among German consumers darkened heading into September as accelerating inflation and rising Covid-19 cases made them more hesitant to buy, a survey showed last week. The GfK institute said its consumer sentiment index, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, dropped to -1.2 points for September, from a revised -0.4 points a month earlier. The reading compared with a Reuters forecast for -0.7.

"Prices have been rising rapidly since the middle of this year. This has a dampening effect on the consumer mood", GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl said in a statement.

■ BERLIN

**LUFTHANSA PLANS MORE FLIGHTS TO WOO BUSINESS TRAVELLERS**

German airline Lufthansa aims to win back business travellers by increasing the number of flights and improving catering, an executive board member was quoted as saying.

Lufthansa is carrying about 50 per cent of the passengers it flew before the coronavirus crisis in 2019 and flying to 88 per cent of pre-pandemic destinations. "Daily frequencies will increase on many connections", Christina Foerster, Lufthansa board member for Customer, IT & Corporate Responsibility, told the Funke media group on Sunday.

"This is important for business travellers who want to fly there and back on the same day." — Reuters

Opec+ could reconsider output increase, says Kuwaiti minister

KUWAIT: The increase in oil output agreed last month by Opec+ nations could be reconsidered at its next meeting on September 1, Kuwait's oil minister said on Sunday.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and allies including Russia, collectively known as Opec+, will meet on Wednesday to discuss the previously agreed increase of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) for the next several months.

"The markets are slowing. Since Covid-19 has begun its fourth wave in some areas, we must be careful and reconsider this increase. There may be a halt to the 400,000 (bpd) increase", Mohammad Abdulatif al Fares told Reuters on the sidelines of a government-sponsored event in Kuwait City.

Economies of East Asian countries and China remain affected by Covid-19 and caution must be exercised, Fares added.

US President Joe Biden's administration has urged Opec and its allies to boost oil output to tackle rising gasoline prices that it views as a threat to the global economic recovery.

Asked about the US call, Fares



said Opec+ members had different views on the matter.

"There are meetings with Opec countries, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and so far there are different views on how to handle this issue", Fares said.

Opec+ last year implemented a record output cut of 10 million bpd, equating to about 10 per cent of world demand, when energy demand plunged because of travel restrictions and national lockdowns to counter the spread of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, energy companies

on Saturday had cut 91 per cent of US Gulf of Mexico crude oil production, or 1.65 million barrels, according to regulator Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), as Hurricane Ida churned through offshore oil fields.

The "extremely dangerous" hurricane was about 610 km southeast of Houma, Louisiana, and driving north towards a late Sunday US landfall on the Gulf Coast, the National Hurricane Center said.

The storm is expected to become a category four hurricane

on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, generating winds of 140 miles per hour (225 kph).

Oil and gas companies on Saturday evacuated 290 offshore facilities and shut in 91 per cent of their usual offshore production ahead of the storm's arrival.

They also moved 11 drill vessels out of harm's way by midday on Saturday, the offshore regulator said. More than 1.89 billion cubic feet of natural gas production, or 85 per cent of their output, according to a BSEE tally of reports from offshore producers.

— Reuters

Oman's Ghuzayn copper project offers paradigm for engagement with local community

FROM PAGE 13

The company (Mawarid Mining) is willing to contribute in the development of the local community as the Mineral Wealth Law stipulates the allocation of 1 per cent of the annual (revenue) as the contribution to the local community."

The Ministry credited "continuous engagement" between the mining company and

other stakeholders, on the one hand, and the local community on the other, in helping smooth the way for the project's implementation.

"This project has economic and social dimensions due to its location near some villages, therefore all stakeholders shall be engaged in all the phases of the project", the Ministry noted.

"The engagement started

through discussions on the project with the competent authorities, and holding some of the company's meetings with locals. The company has also planned to actively engage the citizens before implementing any activity on the ground."

Mawarid Mining plans to utilise an advanced underground mining method to extract the ore. Given its location below the

surface, gaining access to the ore will take about two years or less, paving the way for the mining of the resource over the next seven years or more.

Project milestones slated for completion in 2021 include Phase 2 of a geotechnical and hydrogeology study, environmental baseline study, engagement of mining contractor, and approvals for project funding.

Afghanistan's banks brace for bedlam after Taliban takeover

LONDON: Afghanistan's banks, critical to the country's recovery from crisis, are facing an uncertain future say its bankers, with doubts over everything from liquidity to employment of female staff after the Taliban swept to power.

Banks were expected to reopen imminently, a Taliban spokesman said on Tuesday, after they were closed for some ten days and the financial system ground to a halt as the Western-backed government collapsed amid the pullout of US and allied troops.

Yet there has been scant evidence so far of a reopening or of banking services returning to normal, with large crowds thronging the streets outside banks in Kabul on Wednesday.

"The banks continue to be closed — with no clear signs of reopening, they have run out of money", said Gazal Gailani, trade and economic adviser at the Afghan Embassy in London.

"Afghanistan's banking system is now in a state of collapse, and people are running out of money."

Many rural areas get by largely without banks. But in the cities,



A youth walks along a street in Kabul. — Reuters

where government worker salaries are often paid into bank accounts, closures are causing hardship in a mostly cash-based economy.

The outlook for lenders looks precarious, with looming questions about the Taliban's

grasp of finance and its ability to restart an economy shattered by 40 years of war.

With no significant exports apart from illegal narcotics bringing in cash, one immediate

obstacle is liquidity in a country

that is heavily dollarised and relies on regular physical dollar shipments that have been halted, according to former central bank chief Ajmal Ahmad.

The Afghanistan Banks Association (ABA) had reached

SOHAR Port signs bunkering pact with Hormuz Marine

FROM PAGE 13

Hormuz Marine is based in Muscat and specialises in assisting shipping companies across the globe via full physical supplies in Sohar, Duqm and Salalah and bunker trading solutions in several other key regional ports, including Muscat, Khasab, Suwaiq, Shinas and Sur. For more information about the opportunities and advantages available at SOHAR Port and Freezone, please visit soharportandfreezone.com.

As one of the fastest-growing ports in the world, SOHAR Port and Freezone continues to leverage on its strategic location and enhance its services, positioning itself as a key logistics hub within the region and across the world.

A powerful combination of the expertise of the Port of Rotterdam and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by ASYAD, it is earmarked as one of the Sultanate's mega-projects, home to logistics, petrochemicals and metal clusters, as well as the region's first dedicated agro-terminal.

Today, after 17 years of operation, it serves as the main gateway for import and export in Oman, contributing 2.8 per cent of the country's GDP and almost 26,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities. With a focus on sustainable development and cutting-edge technology, it is leading the development and modernisation of the Sultanate's logistics infrastructure and supporting the economic diversification objectives of Oman's Vision 2040.

out to the central bank to coordinate steps on a return to normality, said Syed Moosa Kaleem Al Falahi, Chief Executive and President of Islamic Bank of Afghanistan (IBA), one of Afghanistan's three largest banks.

Commercial banks had collectively decided to suspend services until the central bank confirmed liquidity and security arrangements, he said.

"It would be rather difficult to control the rush if banks reopen immediately", he added.

Liquidity had already been an issue in the run-up to the bank closures as people scrambled to withdraw cash.

Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), the central bank, provided financial support to banks during last week's cash squeeze, said a banker at one of Afghanistan's largest lenders, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But its ability to continue to do so appears uncertain, with DAB's roughly \$9 billion in foreign reserves looking largely out of Taliban reach.

— Reuters

features

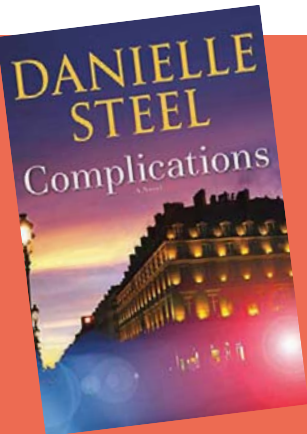
Date Palms: The trees that keep on giving even for art

One of the many people who can attest to the many uses of dates is Omani artist Ghalib al Sawafi who has been creating different artwork from the trunk of these prized palm trees. Here's why he prefers working with this medium... **P20**



ANIMAL PLANET

READ



COMPLICATIONS BY DANIELLE STEEL

On a September night, guests at the reopening of an exclusive Paris hotel experience love, tragedy and political intrigue.

Snail sprint: German gastropods give it some gas for film festival

AROUND 20 snails are set to compete against each other in a race in the north-western German city of Oldenburg on Saturday to promote a film festival. The gastropods aim to cover a distance of 33 centimetres, according to a spokeswoman for the Oldenburg International Film Festival. According to the state-

ment, the fastest snail wins a salad in a cup and a season ticket for the festival under the motto "Fast and Furious – Back to Culture." Following the snail race, the organisers plan to show the 2013 computer animated film "Turbo," about a garden snail named Theo. The film festival, which focuses on independent

film, starts on September 15 and has world premieres and debut films in its programme. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, seats in the cinemas are limited, films can also be watched via a streaming service from the comfort of your living room at home. Interested parties need tickets. — **dpa**





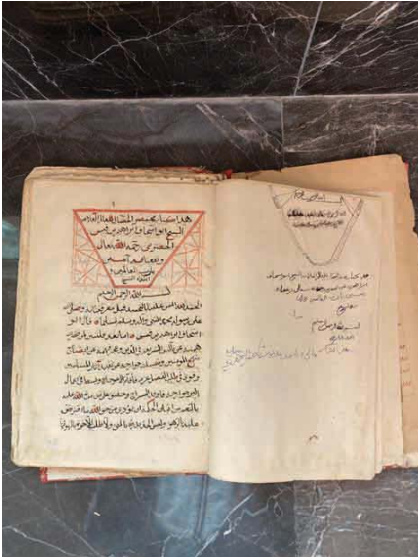
The long journey of acquiring historical mementos and manuscripts

PASSION AND LOVE for acquiring and owning collectables and ancient heritage manuscripts are just some of the interests of engineer Harith bin Saif al Kharousi from Al Awabi in the South Al Batinah Governorate.

Al Kharousi says, "My passion for collectables and heritage manuscripts began since I was young influenced by my father who was a historian and writer. My attention was drawn by ancient coins, manuscripts, and other tools and productions of human civilisation. I continued to collect them with the aim of studying them and providing cultural material for those interested, especially at the present time, where modern means of communication have brought people of interest closer to each other.

Regarding the method of his acquisition of these holdings, he says: The method differs, as part of the holdings belong to the family, we have inherited it from one generation to another. Some of the holdings were purchased from traditional markets or through modern means of communication, which brought the distance closer and provided easier and faster ways. Studying these holdings takes time and effort and I also don't have enough references that would help me to study and classify these holdings.

Regarding the oldest and most important holdings he has, Al Kharousi said that the holdings are varied between ancient coins, the oldest of which belonged to Emperor Khosrow I, some Arabized coins dating back to the first century AH, the coins of the



Kingdom of Hormuz that were circulated in the region, in addition to a number of manuscripts dating back to different eras and centuries. All the holdings I own are important because each piece has a uniquely human story and is an important human product.

I participate in exhibitions inside the Sultanate. I cooperated with a number of private

educational and academic institutions in order to provide information to the community and also to obtain correct scientific information about these holdings and provide them to researchers and those interested in this field.

Concerning his future ambitions, Engineer Harith says, "I aspire in the near future to inaugurate my own

museum, which is a long-awaited dream. But there is great hope that it will see the light soon, especially since I have obtained approval from the competent authority in the Sultanate. I would also like to point out that I receive continuous moral support from the Memory of Oman project, which is a special cultural project.

LOCAL SCENE

The healing benefits of the sulfur spring of "Qa'bat"



MANY PEOPLE IN the Sultanate tend to visit hot springs because of their power of healing and treating many problems. There is at least one hot spring in each governorate in the Sultanate that receive visitors the whole year through for healing.

The Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate is an attraction for tourists from inside and outside the Sultanate. Due to its environmental and geographical diversity in terms of terrain that combines foothills, mountains, valleys, and fresh springs suitable for drinking, or those that contain varying proportions of salts that are suitable for treatment and healing.



Ayn Qa'bat is a sulfur spring, located in the village of "Mis" in Dima W'attayeen and it is one of the springs that attract tourists, adventurers and lovers of hiking, the road leading to Ayn Qa'bat passes between valleys and mountains and through some slopes.

It takes a 45-minute walk full of suspense and excitement, where the tourist passes some cliffs, running water and rocky nature to eventually reach Al Ain.



There are some water pools with blue and green water scattered in the area. They contain a large amount of sulfur, and some solid pieces of sulfur collect at the top of the water and can be touched by the visitor. The sulfur spring is characterised by its attractive colours and the formations of water ponds emanating from it to reflect an attractive aesthetic. This diverse terrain environment contributes to the tourism and environmental sectors in the Sultanate and helps to attract tourists to this calm location.

Ayn Qa'bat's healing benefits include treating skin irritations and infections such as rashes and eczema. Sulfur-rich hot springs are also thought to help treat dry scalp, arthritic pain and internal problems such as menopausal symptoms and digestive disorders.



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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

DNA from skeleton found in Indonesia reveals unknown group of humans



ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE discovered the remains of a 7,200-year-old skeleton from a female hunter-gatherer in Indonesia that has a "distinct human lineage" never found anywhere in the world, according to research published this week.

The relatively intact fossil, which belonged to a teenager aged 17 or 18, was buried in the foetal position inside Leang Panninge, a limestone cave in South Sulawesi.

It was found among artefacts from the Toalean people, an early culture of hunter-gatherers in the region. The remains are the first known skeleton of a Toalean.



The study, which was published in the journal *Nature* on Wednesday, was a collaboration between Indonesian and international researchers. Excavation began in 2015.

"This is the first time anyone has reported the discovery of ancient human DNA from the vast island region between mainland Asia and Australia," Adam Brumm, archaeologist at the Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution at Griffith University in Brisbane, who co-led the research, said on Friday.

Brumm was referring to an area stretching from Kalimantan and Lombok to the western tip of Papua that is known to scientists as Wallacea.

Researchers found the excavation to be particularly challenging because DNA can be easily degraded in the tropical climate.

"It is very rare to find ancient human DNA in the humid tropics — that's why this is such a lucky discovery," Brumm said.

Analysis of the DNA revealed that the woman was part of a population group related to modern day Papuans and Indigenous Australians.

However, the genome is also linked to a previously unknown divergent human lineage not found anywhere else in the world.

The research challenges previous theories about the arrival times of different groups of humans in the region.

"This shows how little we understand about the early human story in the Wallacean islands of Indonesia," Brumm said. — **AFP**

LIFESTYLE

Chanel buys up more jasmine fields to safeguard famous No. 5



WARY OF DISAPPEARING flower crops used in its best-selling perfumes, fashion and beauty firm Chanel has bought up more land in southern France to secure its supplies of jasmine and other varieties, harvested by hand in a delicate annual ritual.

The luxury group said it had bought up an extra 10 hectares (100,000 square metres) of land, adding to the 20 hectares it already exploits in partnership with a local family near the town of Grasse, known for its surrounding flower fields.

On a sunny late August morning before the heat reached a peak in nearby Pegomas, dozens of workers were busy with this year's jasmine harvest, the key ingredient for Chanel's 100-year-old No.5 perfume, created by late designer Coco Chanel.

Chanel struck a deal with the Mul family in the late 1980s to anchor its production of five flowers in the region. Some local producers began selling their land at the time, drawn in part by property deals in the region close



to Nice and the French Riviera.

"There was a time when there was a threat because jasmine production was starting to move to other countries," said Olivier Polge, who followed in his father's footsteps to become Chanel's head perfumer in 2013.

The jasmine grown in Grasse has a specific scent. The region became a flower and fragrance hub in the 17th century, when local leather tanners began to perfume their wares.

Fabrice Bianchi, who

runs the Mul family's production, said operations were not overly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with pickers able to work outside. The virus causes some sufferers to lose their sense of taste and smell — a particular problem for perfumers, known as "noses" in the business.

"For sure, it was a pretty peculiar year," Polge said. "But in many ways it was the same for me as for everyone, even though I'm a nose — we all tried not to get it."

— **Reuters**

ENTERTAINMENT

Tom Cruise shows off latest daredevil 'Mission: Impossible' stunt



TOM CRUISE ON Thursday presented what he called his most dangerous stunt ever in a clip from his upcoming "Mission: Impossible 7" movie.

Cruise, known for doing his own stunts, takes a motor-bike ride down a ramp and off a giant cliff in Norway and lets go in mid-air before his parachute is released.



The clip, and a featurette of Cruise and director Christopher McQuarrie talking about the feat, were shown at the CinemaCon gathering of movie theater operators and Hollywood studio executives in Las Vegas, entertainment media reported.

"This is far and away the most dangerous thing I've attempted; we've been working on this for years," Cruise said in the video, according to Deadline Hollywood. "I wanted to do it since a little kid."

"Mission: Impossible 7," in which Cruise returns as suave spy Ethan Hunt, is due for release in May 2022 after a coronavirus-disrupted shoot in Italy, Norway and the UK of more than a year.

Cruise, 59, said he trained for more than a year to perfect the stunt, including making 500 sky-diving sessions and 13,000 motor-bike jumps, the *Hollywood Reporter* said. The stunt was filmed six times.

In past movies, Cruise has hung off the side of a plane as it takes off, piloted a helicopter through narrow mountain ravines, scaled the 2,717-foot high (828 metres) Burj Khalifa skyscraper in Dubai, and performed a sky dive from almost five miles high. — **Reuters**

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Date Palms: The trees that keep on giving even for art

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Dates are some of nature's best gifts to Oman. Everything about the different parts of a date plant can be utilised for different purposes making it a close competition to coconuts as a tree of life for its many different uses from roots to fruits.

One of the many people who can attest to its many uses is Omani artist Ghalib al Sawafi whose main medium for his work usually involves a portion of these prized trees. Growing up in one of Oman's villages with access to these trees, he has a connection with these palm trees that he considers them his dear friends — an important part of his childhood.

His latest artworks involve tapping the core of the palm trees and using them into different pieces that can be displayed beautifully in homes, galleries and everywhere else that art is the centrepiece.

"According to my experience, it is possible to take advantage of the core of palm tree to produce products such as chairs, tables, bookholders, plant pots and many others", Ghalib said.

With palm tree trunks as his medium, Ghalib combines his passion for art and his love for crafts. While he may not have a fancy degree in art given by a university, he has great experience from the university of life which taught all he needs to be able to convert things into something awe-inspiring. Multi-skilled in arts and crafts, his mission is to help conserve Omani heritage through his art.

"Work-wise, I have lived in many parts of Oman during my career. I learned and gained many experiences that had a good impact on developing myself. I have always adored the Omani environment and was inspired by the beauty around me and have its impact obvious on my works", he shared.

The quality of the product recycled

from the wood of the palm tree depends on the age of the stem.

"The older the palm tree, the better the quality of the wood. If the palm tree is young, the quality is low. Although the types of palm trees are similar in terms of shape, the quality of their wood depends on many factors. The most important is the type of palm from which the wood is extracted", he said.

He added, "For example, there are types of palms whose wood had been used in the construction of Omani castles and forts, and which were able to withstand very difficult environmental factors such as Al Naghal, Al Barshi, Al Khasab and many more of them", Ghalib said.

"There are other factors besides age, which play a role in the quality of the product, like the place of cultivation, care and nutrition, the type of soil, the weather and availability of water directly affect the type of wood. And don't forget that the method of drying wood or dealing with it after the tree has been cut plays an effective role in the hardness and quality of wood", he said.

Just like any art process, creating something out of palm trunks start with an idea. Ghalib's wild imagination has led him into creating the most intricate of accessories, the most detailed of window frames, the most elaborate of decors and even the simplest of benches and home furniture. Some craft products take one day and some need more effort and time that it takes him two weeks or a month to finish a project.

"The methods of working with palm wood are mostly similar to the methods of working on the other types of wood, but the palm wood needs more care due to the nature of its fibre formations and the possibility of product damage in the advanced stages if some steps were neglected or exceeded", he shared.

The carving and formation of the palm wood product differ from those of the products of other types of wood. Unlike palm wood, timber imported from outside

the Sultanate is widely used in various industries and comes in multi-size ready panels which doesn't need much effort to work on. Palm trees wood requires working from scratch, starting with choosing the best types of trees, and then many very stressful stages. Also, palm wood needs expenses that do not ultimately lead, and in most cases, to reach satisfaction with a modest financial return compared to the effort expended in producing any craftwork.

He said there are several materials to work with. He prefers using many mechanical tools to execute piercing, screwing, polishing and snapper tool because they give a quick result during the work.

The differences between carvings on palm wood and other types of wood are that each type of wood has many advantages and disadvantages that are long to be counted. To clear it up, for example, the date palm wood, in particular, is a soft-wood that contains longitudinal fibres of low density and is hard relative to its fibres. The fibres are of low density and thickness, but they are solid as a formation, capable of cohesion and withstand external conditions of heat, rain and other hard conditions.

"Our forefathers in the past used palm trunks, that give constant and continuous heat unlike the other types of wood, to make plaster which is used in construction. This was a challenge for firefighters because a fire on palm wood wouldn't extinguish easily and the fire remains alive for days", Ghalib said.

For Ghalib, it is important to also look into caring for the arts and crafts that use date trees.

"In the Sultanate, we do not have an industry or a real investment for this wasted wealth, which can supply the national economy and support the tourism sector if it is optimally invested. Coordination with experienced Omani after investing in this project would support tourism greatly", he said.