

Total public revenues climbed 28.7 per cent to reach RO 10.9 billion at end of 2021, up from RO 8.5 billion at the end of 2020, while total public spending fell by 5.9 per cent to RO 12.2 billion for the same period, according to NSCI. In other data released by the NSCI, the value of GDP at current prices increased by about 16.1 per cent by the end of 2021 to reach RO 33 billion. **DETAILS ON P13**



P12

QUEEN'S CHAMPION BERRETTINI INTO SEMIFINALS AS PENISTON'S DREAM RUN ENDS



P13

MEASURES TO ENSURE ADEQUATE AVAILABILITY OF CEMENT



P20

MAKING OF TRADITIONAL CHICKEN MAKBOUS



MUSCAT

MUSCAT AIRPORT WINS SKYTRAX STAR RATINGS

Muscat International Airport has been awarded the "Best Airport Staff Award" in the Middle East, based on the Skytrax Star Ratings. According to Oman Airports, this latest award reflects the excellent work environment that the company provides to its employees, which in turn ensures Muscat International Airport's status as among the best airports in the world. Oman Airports said it remains committed to establishing an attractive and healthy work environment for all its employees at Muscat International Airport. **DETAILS ON P3**

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MILLIONS STRANDED AS FLOODS HIT BANGLADESH AND INDIA

P6



CLIMATE-IMPACT DISCLOSURE IS COMMON SENSE

P9



'SHABAB OMAN II' ANCHORS IN GERMANY

The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel 'Shabab Oman II' anchored at the Port of Kiel in Germany as part of her sixth international voyage dubbed 'Oman, Land of Peace'. The ship will begin its debut participation when she takes part in the Kiel Week which sees participation of sailboats from around the world.

SEE ALSO P2

Europe swelters in record-breaking heatwave as temperatures cross 40

PARIS: Spain, France and other western European nations on Saturday sweltered under a blistering June heatwave that has sparked forest fires and concerns that such early summer blasts of hot weather will now become the norm.

The weather on Saturday was the peak of a June heatwave that is in line with scientists' predictions that such phenomena will now strike earlier in the year thanks to global warming.

The French southwestern town of Biarritz, one of the country's most sought-after seaside resorts, saw its highest all time temperature on Saturday of 41 degrees, state forecaster Meteo France said.

Queues of hundreds of people and traffic jams formed outside aquatic leisure parks in France, with people seeing water as the



An empty deckchair and parasol stand on the sands of Saint-Jean de Luz beach, southwestern France, on Saturday. — AFP

only refuge from the devastating heat.

With the River Seine off limits to bathing, scorched Parisians took refuge in the city's fountains.

Temperatures in France could reach as high as 42 degrees C in some areas on Saturday, Meteo France said, adding that June records had already been beaten

in 11 areas on Friday.

"This is the earliest heatwave ever recorded in France" since 1947, said Matthieu Sorel, a climatologist at Meteo France. With "many monthly or even all-time temperature records likely to be beaten in several regions", he called the weather a "marker of climate change". **SEE ALSO P6**

Oman moves up in global peace index

GLOBALLY, OMAN HAS BEEN RANKED 64

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samuelkutttyp

The Sultanate of Oman moved up nine places to be ranked among the top five Arab countries in the Global Peace Index for the year 2022.

Globally, Oman has been ranked 64 with a score of 1,889 points. Other Arab countries in the Index are Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan and the UAE.

Produced by the international think-tank the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the 16th edition of the annual Global Peace Index (GPI) report, the world's leading measure of peacefulness, reveals that the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.3 per cent in 2021.

"This is the eleventh deterioration in peacefulness in the last 14 years, with 90 countries improving and 71 deteriorating, highlighting that countries deteriorate much faster than they improve", the report says.

The countries were judged on the basis of 23 parameters, including domestic and international conflict, safety and security in society and the degree of militarisation.

Eight countries that appeared among the highest rankings in last year's report remained among the top 10 again this year. Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. Iceland is followed by New Zealand,

The average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.3 per cent in 2021. The levels of political terror, bitter bilateral relations, refugees and internally displaced people are at their worst since the inception of the index in 2008

IEP REPORT

Ireland, Denmark and Austria. Singapore and Japan, which were ranked ninth and 10th, respectively, climbed the rating list this year, pushing Switzerland and Canada outside of the top 10, into 11th and 12th place, respectively. "The average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.3 per cent in 2021", an IEP report says, adding, "the levels of political terror, bitter bilateral relations, refugees and internally displaced people are at their worst since the inception of the index in 2008". The report emphasises that global peace reached its lowest level in 15 years, due to the economic uncertainty after Covid-19 and the Ukraine-Russia war.

TURN TO P2

Missing fishermen found

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabnassri

Two fishermen who were missing at sea in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate have been found after a 10-day search, from beaches near Pakistan.

In a circulated video, one of their relatives, said that Ali and Said were finally found by a Pakistani fishing boat, confirming that they are in a good health. He also said that authorities concerned are coordinating with their Pakistani counterparts to bring them back home.

Sultan al Farsi, Secretary of the Omani Fishermen's Association, earlier told the media that they expect the boat of the missing citizens to have deviated to northeast towards the Pakistani coast, based on the direction of the seasonal winds and sea currents.

The Omani authorities, through the Royal Air Force of Oman, Border Guards and the navy, intensified search and combing operations in the area to find the missing citizens who went for fishing and did not return.

Making fast pace with digital indicators

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

People in the Sultanate of Oman are adapting to the digital economy fast, the digital indicators published by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said.

The preference for Internet banking went up from 38 per cent in 2020 to 53 per cent in 2021, while interaction with government services went from 34 per cent in 2020 to 55 per cent



in 2021. Personal life saw a lot of digitalisation indicated by devices owned and availability of Internet

access in households. Internet usage stood at 94 per cent both the years — 2020 and 2021. Computer device ownership stood at 66 per cent, including desktops, laptops and tablets. When it came to smartphones, it was 95 per cent in both years.

2021 saw 77 per cent participation in social networks, 38 per cent purchasing or ordering goods or services online, 72 per cent uploaded content to a website or blog for others to view such as texts, images,

videos or music, software or using applications for work, studying/ educational purposes etc.

Smartphones saw an increase of almost 10 per cent from 18 per cent in 2020 to 27 per cent in 2021. Internet usage was 95 per cent in 2020 but was 93 per cent last year.

The use of ICT by individual indicators shows that in 2020, 92 per cent were sending messages via e-mail, WhatsApp, SMS and so on, whereas in 2021, the figure remained at 97 per cent.

Oman among best countries to combat overfishing

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkutttyp

The Sultanate of Oman has been ranked among the Arab countries in the IUU Fishing Index for their best practices in combating overfishing, which deprives artisanal fishermen of fish, severely reduces income and food, and destroys marine resources needed to revive fisheries wealth.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the two other countries in the Middle East in the Index, while Estonia and Finland are the best countries in the world.

The IUU Fishing Index was launched in early 2019 to benchmark and rank countries for their vulnerability to, the prevalence of and response to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The 2021 IUU Fishing Index covers all 152 coastal countries of the world, and for each country, a score is calculated based on a suite of 40 indicators. These relate to the prevalence of IUU fishing in each country and the country's vulnerability and response to it, as assessed according to the country's coastal, flag, port and general state

IUU Fishing Index ranks countries on best practices in combating overfishing, which deprives artisanal fishermen of fish, severely reduces income and food, and destroys marine resources needed to revive fisheries wealth.

responsibilities.

China ranked as the worst country in combating illegal fishing, followed by Russia, South Korea, Somalia and Yemen, while Denmark was ranked as the best country in combating illegal fishing, followed by Romania and Belgium.

The Index is developed by Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management, a fishery and aquaculture consulting firm, and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, a Geneva-based NGO network of experts focusing on crime in human rights, democracy, governance and natural resource



exploitation.

According to Tuesday Reitano, Deputy Director, Global Initiative, IUU fishing is a major threat to ocean ecosystems worldwide, undermining efforts to sustainably manage global fisheries and effectively conserve ocean biodiversity.

"IUU fishing is often found to

be associated with many other forms of transnational organised crime, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking and piracy, not to mention the exploitation of weak and corrupt elements of national management regimes", remarks Reitano in his comments in the Index note.

IUU fishing robs economies

and societies of catches worth billions of dollars each year. It has huge environmental impacts on fish stocks by impairing scientific research and fisheries management efforts. It helps prevent governments and regional fisheries management organisations from achieving sustainable fisheries. The elimination of IUU fishing is an internationally

agreed target under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The depletion of fish stocks through IUU fishing threatens global food security, along with the livelihoods of some 40 million people who are employed worldwide in capture fishing alone, plus millions more in associated industries.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IUU fishing activities are responsible for the loss of 11-26 million tonnes of fish each year, which is estimated to have an economic value of \$10 to 23 billion. IUU fishing activities threaten sustainable management of our marine resources, a situation further exacerbated by overfishing.

The IUU Fishing Index consists of 40 indicators, based mostly on published information but also on a short survey. Individual indicators are weighted as low, medium or high, depending on the strength of their apparent link to IUU fishing.

Each indicator falls into four groups of "responsibilities" – coastal, flag, port and general – and one of the three "types" – vulnerability, prevalence and response to IUU fishing.

■ 'SHABAB OMAN II' DROPS ANCHOR AT KIEL PORT



The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel 'Shabab Oman II' anchored at the Port of Kiel in Germany as part of her sixth international voyage dubbed 'Oman, Land of Peace'. The ship will take part in the Kiel Week which sees participation of sailboats from around the world.

Oman moves up in peace index

FROM PAGE 1

According to the report, the decline of terrorism continued to improve, as 70 countries did not record any attacks in 2021. This is the best result since 2008.

"The economic cost of violence globally amounted to \$16.5 trillion in 2021, equivalent to 10.9 per cent of the global gross domestic product, or \$2117 per capita", the report reveals.

The global price hike has led to increased food insecurity and political instability worldwide, with Africa, South Asia and the Middle East being the greatest threat.

Seven of the 10 countries at the top of the GPI are in Europe. Turkey is the only country in this region to be ranked outside the top half of the index.

Two of the five countries that saw the largest deterioration in peacefulness were Russia and

the Ukraine. The report noted that peace across the world had declined to the lowest level in 15 years amid uncertainty over post-Covid economic recovery and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The US, at 129th spot, recorded its lowest peacefulness rank since 2008, with the report citing "civil unrest" continuing to be the "primary driver of the deterioration". The UK is up two positions to rank at 34.

For the fifth consecutive year, Afghanistan is the least peaceful country, followed by Yemen, Syria, Russia and South Sudan. Among South Asian nations, Bhutan topped the peace index securing 19th rank. Bhutan is followed by Nepal with 73 points, Sri Lanka 90 and Bangladesh with 96. While India moved up three places to rank 135, Pakistan has been ranked 147th on the index.

The report said the rise in food and fuel costs had increased food

insecurity and political instability globally, especially in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

While commenting on the report, Steve Killelea, Founder & Executive Chairman of IEP, said, "Last year, we warned about the economic fallout from Covid-19. We are now experiencing supply chain shortages, rising inflation and food insecurity that have been compounded by the tragic events in Ukraine. The political and economic consequences of this will reverberate for years to come".

According to him, the economic value of lost peace reached record levels in 2021.

"There is a need to reverse this trend, and the GPI has shown that those countries that implement the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies, witness an improved economic outcome", he said.

Wadi al Arbayeen attracts adventure lovers of all hues



TEXT & PHOTOS BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Wadi al Arbayeen in the Wilayat of Qurayat crisscrosses the long valley of Al Hajar Al Aswad mountain.

The visitors enjoy the scenic landscape, as it holds water throughout the year feeding falaj, springs and ponds.

The valley is located in the eastern part of the Wilayat of Qurayat, on the road that connects it with the Wilayat of Sur. It is about 15 kilometres from the main street.

It attracts tourists who come here for camping, climbing, swimming and even snorkelling in freshwater.

The valley passes through several small villages like Al Suwayh, Hail Al Qawasim, Al Batha, Al Salifi, Al Fara, and Al Maghra. They depend on agriculture and sheep for their livelihood.

The locals specialise in palm



frond handicrafts and produce mats and some household items made of natural materials.

The water flows through the aflaj in several directions, which speaks volumes about the falaj splitting skills of the residents since ancient times.

Sources indicate the presence of approximately eight aflaj, the most

important of which are Al Batha's Falaj, Al Salifi Falaj, and Al Fara's Falaj.

This valley is famous for many crops including dates, mango, banana, fife, lemon, potato, tomato, eggplant, onion and garlic.

There are many waterfalls on the slopes of this valley including Shieh and Al Nuqta located next

to the springs and pools. The residents depended on themselves to maintain the aflaj to ensure the flow of water throughout the year.

"We ask the authorities to consider the possibility of constructing a dam that helps store this water. There are large amounts of water that end up in the sea. This dam will enhance the flow of water in the water channels and reduce the drought damage that the region suffers from during the interruption or cessation of rainy seasons," locals told the *Observer*.

The residents of the area call for strict measures to ensure cleanliness, as many tourists litter the area.

"Paved paths must be built on the edges of the mountains to avoid accidents like drowning and falls. Also needed are toilets and changing rooms near ponds and waterfalls," they said.



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Oman Airports Company is in talks with airlines to increase the frequency of flights to pre Covid-19 levels.

More new airlines land in Oman's airports

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

Muscat International and Salalah Airports are witnessing significant increase in the number of flights by new airlines. Shaikh Ayman bin Ahmed al Hosani, CEO of Oman Airports Company, said that the company is in talks with airlines to increase the frequency of flights to pre Covid-19 levels and to provide a comprehensive incentive plan for long and short flights to new, chartered and seasonal destinations, and attract new cargo operators.

Al Hosani said that in 2019, Oman's airports witnessed 17.2 million passengers, while in

2021, after the first wave of the pandemic, airports recovered 40 per cent of passenger traffic. The company is working with airlines to increase their flights, which may take another two to three years. He said that thanks to the efforts of all partners in the travel and tourism sectors and the promising economic potential, the numbers will double and support the rate of recovery. He pointed out that after the outbreak of the pandemic, many airlines have taken strict strategic decisions in their operating model, and some airlines still consider Suhar Airport a strong commercial opportunity to resume work or start operating.

Suhar Airport is the gateway to the North Al Batinah Governorate and is one of the drivers of its many investment and tourism opportunities. Shaikh Al Hosani said that Duqm Airport is a gateway to the industrial, commercial and tourism movement of the Al Wusta Governorate.

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm is witnessing the establishment of a number of large economic projects, which will allow international airlines to operate direct flights to and from Duqm. Six weekly flights are operated by Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman.

Muscat airport wins best staff award in Mideast

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

Muscat International Airport has been awarded the 'Best Airport Staff Award' in the Middle East, based on the Skytrax Star Ratings.

Oman Airports said the award reflects the excellent work environment that the company provides to its employees, which in turn ensures Muscat International Airport's status as among the best airports in the world.

Oman Airports remains committed to establishing an attractive and healthy work environment for all its employees at Muscat International Airport. In doing so, the company is ensuring greater employee satisfaction, and helping each of their team members to achieve their specific goals through a flexible and well managed working environment. Oman Airports provides a number of employee services, which reflect the high level of importance they place on the well-being of their staff, and the general well-being of the airports industry in Oman.

The company has consistently worked to meet the aspirations of its individual employees, while providing a number of special services that serve to create a positive spirit and energy in the workplace. This has enabled Oman Airport's staff to deliver the very best service to all travellers and visitors making their way through Muscat International Airport.

Furthermore, Oman



Airports is constantly working on giving their employees the qualifications, training skills and experience to keep abreast with the latest developments in international airports management; and to be future leaders in the operation and management of airports in the Sultanate of Oman. Indeed, the company is proud to be a cornerstone for building an Omani generation that is willing and able to take responsibility for successfully operating and managing Oman's airports.

According to Saud al Hubaishi, Acting COO, "The company provides its employees with a wide range of training programmes in various fields. Most of these are designed in line with the standards and practices recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This

task is carried out in order to support the aviation sector in Oman, and meet the regulatory, operational, and safety and security requirements issued by ICAO and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)."

"Oman Airports' strategy is based on building human capabilities and taking care of them, as part of its endeavour to make Muscat International Airport among the top 10 airports in the world. To achieve this aim – as well as to achieve our aspiration of reaching 20 million passengers – we need qualified staff to contribute to the development of airports in the Sultanate of Oman within an integrated system. This requires having efficient and highly-qualified employees who believe in their crucial role in realising the company's goals," Al Hubaishi added.

OMANLUXURY shares fragrance experience in 12th edition of Fashion Design Week and Esxence Exhibition



This summer, the Italian city of Milan is hosting several international fairs specialized in various fields, perhaps the most prominent of them are Milan's Fashion Design Week and Esxence Exhibition in its twelfth edition. This edition marks the second participation of the Omani luxury fragrance OMANLUXURY. The brand will bear the name of the Sultanate in this international forum in which will include various other luxury brands from across the globe. The previous edition of Esxence Exhibition marked a successful start due to the huge attention and awareness that OMANLUXURY received. In this exhibition, the majority of visitors are categorized in different segments that includes investors, distributors, suppliers and retailers as well as publishing houses, perfume evaluators and enthusiastic consumers. According to the data shared by the event organizers, the number of pre-registered visitors attending this event has reached around 5000 people.

OMANLUXURY aims to present itself, the brand essence, the inspiration and background through an enchanting fragrance experience brought from Oman and also to discuss ways of cooperation and expansion



to new markets. On the international level, the brand's market presence exceeds twenty countries, including the Gulf region, East Asia, Africa, European countries and Eastern Europe with more than one hundred and eighty point of sales.



Campaign to raise awareness about competition protection



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has initiated a nationwide media and awareness campaign titled 'Protecting Competition for a Competitive Economy' at the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre.

The campaign targets to increase awareness about the Centre's work and purview and to introduce the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law and their role in boosting economic growth and enhancing economic competitiveness.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsiyah, Assistant Director-General at



the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, said that the campaign seeks to raise awareness among consumers, traders and investors

and acquaint them with the provisions of the law and the principles of free trade in general with the aim of creating highly competitive market

She added that the Centre seeks to organise training and awareness programmes to introduce fair competition with a view of contributing to economic growth and realising transparency, integrity, neutrality and accountability in the economy.

The Center received 22 complaints related to anti-competitive and monopolistic practices until the end of last year all of which have been redressed, the official said. — ONA



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS ALWAYS EXCELLED IN PIONEERING INITIATIVES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL WORK THAT ACCOMPANIES ACCELERATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH AND IN ITS HIGH RESPONSIVENESS TO THE WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING AT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

BATTLE AGAINST SOIL LOSS



SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samuelkutyvp](#)

The Sultanate of Oman joined other countries to observe the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, which is observed every year on June 17.

The date was chosen as it is the day when the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was signed in 1994 to raise awareness of the presence of desertification and drought and promote actions in this regard.

Desertification is an increasing ecological problem. It occurs when previously fertile land becomes desert through deforestation, drought or improper agriculture.

“Oman’s participation in the day focuses on educating the community to conserve wild plants, combat desertification and increasing green cover”, the Environment Authority said on the occasion.

The Sultanate of Oman has always excelled in pioneering initiatives in environmental work that accompanies accelerating economic and social growth and in its high responsiveness to the world environmental awakening at regional and international levels.

Different governmental institutions cooperate with the private sector and civil society organisations to implement educational and awareness programmes that enshrine the values of preserving biodiversity among the youth and within the society in general.

The country is in the process of increasing its green spaces through establishing tree belts, public gardens and parks and green landscapes whilst preserving agricultural areas and implementing planting and agricultural programmes in different natural sites such as valleys and grazing areas.

As a result, the Sultanate of Oman could make great strides in reducing land degradation and combat desertification by continuously increasing sustainability and reducing overexploitation of land resources.

The Omani authorities have also made efforts to use technologies to prevent land degradation and take advantage of the opportunities available under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in training, capacity building and technology transfer from developed countries.



The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 proposes an Omani National Programme to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation, with the implementation of the project on the Use of Models and Remote Sensing to Monitor the State of Vegetation, Agricultural Land and Water.

Oman has also implemented several projects to alleviate land degradation and combat desertification, in which many scientific and research institutions participated to ensure the quality of implementation and access to reference information at the national level.

The most important projects implemented, as mentioned in

the First Voluntary National Review of SDG Goals 2030, are the fog harvesting project in Dhofar Governorate, the draft land degradation map and the land rehabilitation of areas affected by desertification factors.

“These projects identified degraded areas and lands prone to degradation, the development of a spatial database and a monitoring system based on high-resolution satellite data”, the review report reveals.

The initiatives also include reforestation and tree regeneration projects, in addition to the planting of native plants.

According to a UN report on desertification, over 75 billion tonnes of fertile soil is lost to land degradation globally every year. Similarly, 12 million hectares of land is lost every year to desertification and drought, an area that could produce 20 million tonnes of grain. Additionally, desertification and land degradation cause \$42 billion in lost earnings each year.

Fertile land is being lost through human action and weather-related events, such as flash floods and drought. Put another way, every second, 24 football pitches of fertile land become unproductive due to desertification and drought alone!

“What’s more troubling is the level of ignorance among the majority of the human race. Very few people know that only about 3.3 per cent of the entire earth is productive land. Very few people value it”, points out the report.

Worse, most people assume that the dry lands that make up nearly 34 per cent of the earth are wastelands, land of no value. And yet, a lot of the foods we eat today originated from these fragile soils. In fact, these dry areas make up 44 per cent of all the systems that are cultivated and half of the world’s wildlife lives there!



Request for Proposal (RFP)

19 June 2022

Framework Agreements for Transaction Advisory Services for Public Private Partnership Projects

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) is entrusted with the supervision of implementing Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects to encourage the private sector to participate in offering public services on a commercial basis in partnership with the government. Accordingly, MOF is issuing this RFP for Transaction Advisory Service Framework Agreements for its upcoming PPP Projects in the following Sectors: Health, Education, Transport, ICT, Others.

MOF will enter into Framework Agreements with successful bidders.

Interested bidders who meet the minimum qualifications may request the RFP documents via an email ppp.frameworkagreement@mof.gov.om and must specify the company name, representative, contact details, and targeted sectors. The interested bidders shall meet the following requirements:

- 01 PPP Experience: At least five years’ experience in providing transaction advisory services on PPP projects.
- 02 PPP Projects Value: Experience in providing transaction advisory services on PPP projects with a cumulative value of 40 million Omani Rials per sector.

* Bidders can submit proposals for each Sector

Scope of Work:

The Transaction Advisory scope covers the following disciplines: Technical, Legal, Financial, and Sector specific.

RFP Number	Term of Framework Agreement	RFP Release Date	Last Date to Raise Clarifications	Deadline to Submit RFP
MOF-PPP-TA-RFP-007	Two years (extendable)	4 July 2022 (1 pm)	21 August 2022 (1 pm)	4 September 2022 (1 pm)

* Time zone: Sultanate of Oman



AOU-Oman celebrates graduation of three batches

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

The Arab Open University-Oman has celebrated the graduation of the 8th, 9th and 10th batches which comprised 1,332 students of diploma, bachelor's and master's degrees. The celebration was held on Thursday under the patronage of Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal al Saud, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the AOU, and in the presence of Prof Mohammed al Zakari, President of the AOU in the Arab world.

The celebration began with a visual presentation that included an introduction about the AOU's contributions and the vision of its founder, the late Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz al Saud, towards spreading education in the Arab world, and the university's aspiration to be one of the leading higher educational institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The AOU



adopted an educational system, the first of its kind in the Arab world, the Open Learning system, which utilises modern technologies and digital means of communication and eliminates time and space barriers.

Speaking on the occasion, AOU Rector in Oman, Prof Mohammed bin Hamdan al Badi, referred to the university's vision, its important achievements and research

contributions, besides scientific, academic and professional partnerships with a group of local and international institutions.

Degree certificates to the graduates in Master of Education in Educational Leadership, Master of Education in Instructional Technology, Master of Business Administration and Bachelor and Diploma in Information Technology & Computing were

distributed.

Prof Mohamed al Zakari congratulated the graduates and praised the noticeable role of the AOU in spreading the message of science and knowledge, pointing to the admirable achievements of the graduates.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal al Saud lauded the efforts made to keep pace with digital change in light of the changes that have



occurred in the world as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. He also emphasised the issue of developing curricula and modern educational mechanisms and the work to improve educational services at the university. He commended the academic and administrative staff of the AOU in the Sultanate of Oman for their tireless work to achieve the planned goals.

"We are confident that you

are going to be the leaders of the future. Reflecting the honourable image of the AOU alumni", Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal said.

The second part of the ceremony was the graduation of the Bachelor of Business Administration. And the last part was the graduation of the students of Diploma in Business Administration, and the Bachelor's and Diploma in English Language and Literature.

Training in safety, aggression management

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Mental Health Section in the Department of Non-communicable Diseases, along with Al Masarra Hospital's Training and Staff Development Department, organised a training programme titled 'Personal Safety and Aggression Management' at Al Razi Hall in Al Masarra Hospital recently.

Twenty-seven primary healthcare providers from all governorates of the country participated in the course.

The training programme aimed to create a healthy and safe work environment by building a dedicated team capable of dealing with emergency psychiatric cases and violence using the latest methods.

This will allow for proper response following best practices and patient safety standards.



The programme included two main parts, and the first part represented the theoretical aspect and the definition of professional personal safety, its importance for staff and patients, and how to recognise signs and symptoms of hostile and aggressive behaviour.

The second part focused on the practical application of what was discussed in the theoretical session by demonstrating

proper breakaway technique in a simulated environment and de-escalation techniques as a management of verbal aggression.

The programme comes as part of the mental health section's efforts to enhance the qualifications, knowledge and skills of the primary healthcare providers and eliminate the possibility of workplace violence which will ensure the safety of staff and clients.

Education symposium to be held from June 22

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

The National Education Symposium with focus on comprehensive national consultations for transforming education will be held on June 22-23 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Participants include specialists, decision-makers, researchers, academics and international experts from international organisations Unesco, Unicef and ESCWA.

Titled 'Education in Oman: Towards Sustainable Education to Enhance Future Skills', the symposium explores the reality and future expectations of education and suggests viable ideas to enhance Oman's educational process through the experiences of practitioners, researchers, academics, youth representatives and participants from civil society organisations.

The symposium is an interdisciplinary space to mobilise all parties concerned in the development of education in Oman to establish a roadmap for transforming education through highlighting efforts from all stakeholders involved in the future of education in the country. It also seeks opportunities to invest in education response and innovation, and leveraging lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Mahmood al Abri, Assistant of Secretary-General of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, at the Ministry of Education, stated: "The first day of the symposium includes papers in two academic sessions on the 'Reality and Future of Education in Oman', while the second day is dedicated to conducting national consultations in nine synchronous sessions." "The symposium sheds light on Oman's efforts to develop the education system at all levels (school and higher education, technical and vocational education) and on the best ways to develop education in the Sultanate of Oman".



Sultanate of Oman
Oman Authority for
Academic Accreditation and
Quality Assurance of Education

OAAAQA Announces Relocation to New Premises

Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) would like to announce that it would shortly be relocating to its new premises. As of Sunday 19 June 2022, you can find us at our new premises in Welayat Al Seeb, Al Mawalih South (Building Number 1/420, Complex 310, Street number 1005).

Please note that email services will be temporarily disrupted during and immediately after the move (from Thursday 16 June to Monday 20 June 2022). We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

For further information in this regard, please contact **Tel: 24121600 / 96716171** or E-mail: **info@oaaa.gov.om**.



OAAAQA new building location:



TENDER NOTICE



Minerals Development Oman SAOC (MDO) would like to invite qualified Local and International Companies to participate in the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Closing Date of Selling	Submission Date	Eligibility	Fee
(MDO-TD -2022-05)	Consultancy Service for Geological Exploration and Reserve Estimation of Silica in Wilayat of Guriyat	23-06-2022	05-07-2022	Local Registered and International Companies who are experienced and certified in this kind of service.	OMR 25.00/-Twenty Five Omani Rial (Non-Refundable)

Tender No.	Tender Title	Closing Date of Selling	Submission Date	Eligibility	Fee
(MDO-TD -2022-06)	Provision for Exploration Core Drilling Works for Dolomite in Wilayat of Guriyat	23-06-2022	05-07-2022	Local Registered and International Companies who are experienced and certified in this kind of service.	OMR 25.00/-Twenty Five Omani Rial (Non-Refundable)

● All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value and offer validity for (90) days. Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman, and it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of Minerals Development Oman.

● SMEs with entrepreneurial cards are exempted from payment of the Bid Fee.

● Bid fee shall only be accepted through bank deposit in the following bank account:
Account Name : Minerals Development Oman SAOC
Bank : Sohar International Bank
Branch : Al Qurum
Account : 005020046853
Swift Code : BSHROMRUXXX

** Note: The original copy of the bank deposit receipt shall be handed over to Minerals Development Oman before collecting the tender documents or completing the payment electronically, by submitting a clear deposit receipt via tenders email: **tenders@mdo.om**, along with the company registration documents providing company's name, tender number and contact details. Any payment received after the last date of tender document distribution will not be refunded.

Tender documents can be obtained from the main office of Minerals Development Oman, Contracts & Procurement Department located at the Airport Heights, Bousher, Building No.53, Fourth Floor, Al Seeb, Sultanate of Oman starting from the date of publication of this announcement. (Office Hours: 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Sunday to Thursday).

For more information or clarification, please email **tenders@mdo.om**



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY Advertisement No. (17/2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/008	2022/MM/ QS-4	RFP for Annual maintenance Contract (AMC) of oracle E- Business HRMS & Financial System (Re Call - 2) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	28/06/2022	10/07/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/017	2022/MM/ QS-26	Consultancy Services and Project Management Support for the implementation of Unified Municipal System (Re Call) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	14/07/2022	18/08/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/019	2022/MM/ QS-27	Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision of AL Manoma Sea Front (E- Tender)	Rail 25	09/07/2022	28/07/2022	First
PRE/22/030	2022/MM/ QS-28	Design and Construction of Steel Bridge for Walkway at Bausher (Jalli) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	09/07/2022	28/07/2022	First
PRE/22/042	2022/MM/ QS-29	Protection Work for the Drainage Channel at (Madinat AL Sultan Qaboos) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	09/07/2022	28/07/2022	second
PRE/22/054	2022/MM/ HQ-4	Design and Construction of Storm Water Diversion Channel Near to Muscat International Airport (E- Tender)	Rail 130	09/07/2022	28/07/2022	First

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).



Ukraine plans to resume peace talks with Russia by August

KIEV: Kiev plans to resume peace talks with Russia by the end of August, after counter-attack operations have been carried out, officials said on Saturday amid Ukraine’s attempts to fight off a Russian assault.

The country will be in a better position to negotiate, Kiev’s chief negotiator, David Arakhamia, said in an interview with US broadcaster Voice of America. He believes Ukraine will conduct an operation with counter-attacks indifferent places, he said without giving details.

Peace negotiations have come to a standstill. At the end of March, Kiev proposed talks in Istanbul. Among other things, it was prepared to renounce ambitions for Nato membership in exchange for international security guarantees.

Russia, however, is demanding the demilitarisation of its neighbour and the ceding of territory, including the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited the frontline southern city of Mykolaiv. In a video posted on his Telegram channel, Zelensky is seen inspecting the war-damaged city and handing out medals to the region’s governor and the city’s mayor after receiving a briefing.

According to the video



A Ukrainian serviceman inspects a destroyed Russian tank at an abandoned Russian position near the village of Bilogorivka not far from Lysychansk. – AFP

description, Zelensky discussed “the state of the economy, re-establishment of water supply and the situation of the agriculture.”

Fighting is occurring along the provincial borders of Mykolaiv and Kherson. This is not the first time Zelensky has visited the war’s front line. He had previously visited Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya and the Donbass region in the east of the country.

Meanwhile, in the heavily contested Ukrainian city of Severodonetsk, civilians are likely suspicious about using proposed humanitarian corridors to leave the region, according to British

Zelensky hails EU backing as fierce battles rock Donbas as he visits frontline southern city of Mykolaiv

intelligence.

There are hardly any ways to get out of the city other than the humanitarian corridors unilaterally issued by Russia and its allies.

However, Moscow has previously used such corridors in Ukraine and Syria as a means of gaining battlefield advantage

and forcibly relocating people, the British Ministry of Defence said in its daily report.

The ministry warned that, in case civilians do not take up the offer of exiting via a corridor, “Russia will likely claim justification in making less of a distinction between them and any Ukrainian military targets in the area.”

In other news, a Russian vessel delivering weapons to the strategically important Snake Island has sunk after being hit by Ukrainian missiles, a military official confirmed late on Friday.

— dpa

Europe braces for blistering June weekend heat

PARIS: Spain, France and other western European nations braced on Saturday for a sweltering June weekend that is set to break records, with forest fires and warnings over the effects of climate change.

The weather on Saturday will represent a peak of a June heatwave that is in line with scientists’ predictions that such phenomena will now strike earlier in the year thanks to global warming.

Forest fires in Spain on Saturday had burned nearly 20,000 hectares of land in the north-west Sierra de la Culebra region.

The flames forced several hundred people from their homes, and 14 villages were evacuated.

Some residents were able to return on Saturday morning, but regional authorities warned the fire “remains active”.

Firefighters were still battling blazes in several other regions, including woodlands in Catalonia. Temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius were forecast in parts of the country on Saturday — with highs of 43 degrees C expected in the north-eastern city of Zaragoza.

There have also been fires in Germany, where temperatures topped 40 degrees C on Saturday. A blaze in the Brandenburg region around Berlin had spread over about 60 hectares by Friday evening.

Temperatures in France could reach as high as 42 degrees C in some areas on Saturday, French state weather forecaster Météo France said, adding that June records had already been beaten in 11 areas on Friday.

Farmers in the country are having to adapt. Daniel Toffaloni, a 60-year-old farmer near the southern city of Perpignan, now only works from “daybreak until 11.30 am” and in the evening, as temperatures in his tomato greenhouses reach a sizzling 55 degrees C. — AFP



A farmer pours water on his face as he works in a greenhouse growing tomatoes, in Ortaffa, southern France. – AFP

41 dead, millions stranded as floods hit Bangladesh, India

SYLHET: Monsoon storms in Bangladesh and India have killed at least 41 people and unleashed devastating floods that left millions of others stranded, officials said on Saturday.

Floods are a regular menace to millions of people in low-lying Bangladesh, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency, ferocity and unpredictability.

Relentless downpours over the past week have inundated vast stretches of Bangladesh’s northeast, with troops deployed to evacuate households cut off from neighbouring communities.

Schools have been turned into relief shelters to house entire villages inundated in a matter of hours by rivers that suddenly burst their banks.

“The whole village went under water by early Friday and we all got stranded,” said Lokman, whose

Lightning triggered by the storms has killed at least 21 people around the South Asian nation

family lives in Companiganj village.

“After waiting a whole day on the roof of our home, a neighbour rescued us with a makeshift boat. My mother said she has never seen such floods in her entire life,” the 23-year-old added.

Asma Akter, another woman rescued from the rising waters, said her family had not been able to eat for two days.

“The water rose so quickly we couldn’t bring any of our things,” she said. “And how can you cook anything when everything is underwater?”

Lightning triggered by the



People wade along a road in a flooded area following heavy monsoon rainfalls in Sylhet. – AFP

storms has killed at least 21 people around the South Asian nation since Friday afternoon, police officials said.

Among them were three children aged between 12 and 14 who were struck by lightning on Friday in the rural town of

Nandail, said local police chief Mizanur Rahman.

Another four people died when landslides hit their hillside homes

in the port city of Chittagong, police inspector Nurul Islam said.

At least 16 people have been killed since Thursday in India’s remote Meghalaya, the state’s chief minister Conrad Sangma wrote on Twitter, after landslides and surging rivers that submerged roads.

Next door in Assam state, more than 1.8 million people have been affected by floods after five days of incessant downpours.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters he had instructed district officials to provide “all necessary help and relief” to those caught in the flooding.

Flooding in Bangladesh worsened on Saturday morning after a temporary reprieve from the rains the previous afternoon, Sylhet region chief government administrator Mosharraf Hossain said. — AFP

TEL AVIV

Journalist not shot ‘intentionally’ in West Bank

Israel’s army has rejected allegations of premeditation in the case of Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed in the West Bank, following an internal investigation. “The journalist was not shot intentionally in any way,” the army announced.

According to the army’s account, it is not clear from where the fatal shot came.

The journalist from the TV channel Al Jazeera was killed in May during an Israeli military operation in Jenin in the



northern West Bank. The army later reported that there had been fierce exchanges of fire with Palestinian activists in Jenin. The woman’s death had caused international consternation.

KABUL

1 killed as gunmen storm Sikh temple in Kabul

Gunmen stormed a Sikh temple in the Afghan capital, killing at least one member of the community and wounding seven more, the interior ministry said.

Ministry spokesman Abdul Nafi Takor said the attackers lobbed at least one grenade when they stormed the temple, setting off a blaze in a section of the complex.

Minutes later, a car bomb detonated in the area but caused no casualties, he added.

“One of our Sikh brothers has been killed and seven others



(were) wounded in the attack,” Takor said in a statement.

Two attackers were killed in an operation to secure the temple following the raid, he said, with one Taliban fighter also killed.

LONDON

UK rail, tube strikes to go ahead after talks fail

British union leaders have confirmed that this week’s rail and tube strikes will go ahead after talks failed to resolve a bitter row over pay, jobs and conditions.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) said it had held discussions in the past few weeks at senior levels with Network Rail, train operators and London Underground.

General secretary Mick Lynch said: “Despite the best efforts of our negotiators no viable settlements to the disputes have



been created.” He confirmed that strikes at Network Rail and 13 train operators will go ahead on Tuesday, Thursday and next Saturday, and on London Underground on Tuesday.

Infighting overshadows big plans at ‘TWP’

KATIE ROBERTSON AND BENJAMIN MULLIN

When Sally Buzbee joined ‘The Washington Post’ a year ago this month, she took over a newsroom that had nearly doubled to more than 1,000 journalists under the ownership of Jeff Bezos, who bought it in 2013.

Its coverage regularly won Pulitzer Prizes.

The newspaper has continued growing in the months since.

It has opened breaking news hubs in Seoul and London to become more of a 24-hour global operation. It expanded coverage of technology, climate and personal health.

Its reporting won the Pulitzer Prize for public service this year.

But Buzbee is now on the defensive, yet to completely win over the newsroom and facing internal strife that has eclipsed some of her bold plans.

Internal frustration with Buzbee has spilled into public view. Much of it resulted from two social media storms — one that led to a reporter getting fired, and another that led to accusations that a feature editor’s promotion was unfairly rescinded.

Many journalists at the newspaper say the problems resulted from an outdated policy on how employees should conduct themselves online, and a star system that has led to uneven enforcement of that policy.

Buzbee released a draft of a new social media policy on Wednesday.

Some in the newsroom also feel that Buzbee has not made a priority of meeting with the rank-and-file to address those frustrations. Other workers have chafed over her return-to-office requirements and tensions have flared between the national and metro reporting teams.

In a contentious meeting last week, some staff members told Buzbee that she had not yet earned their trust, according to several people among dozens in attendance.

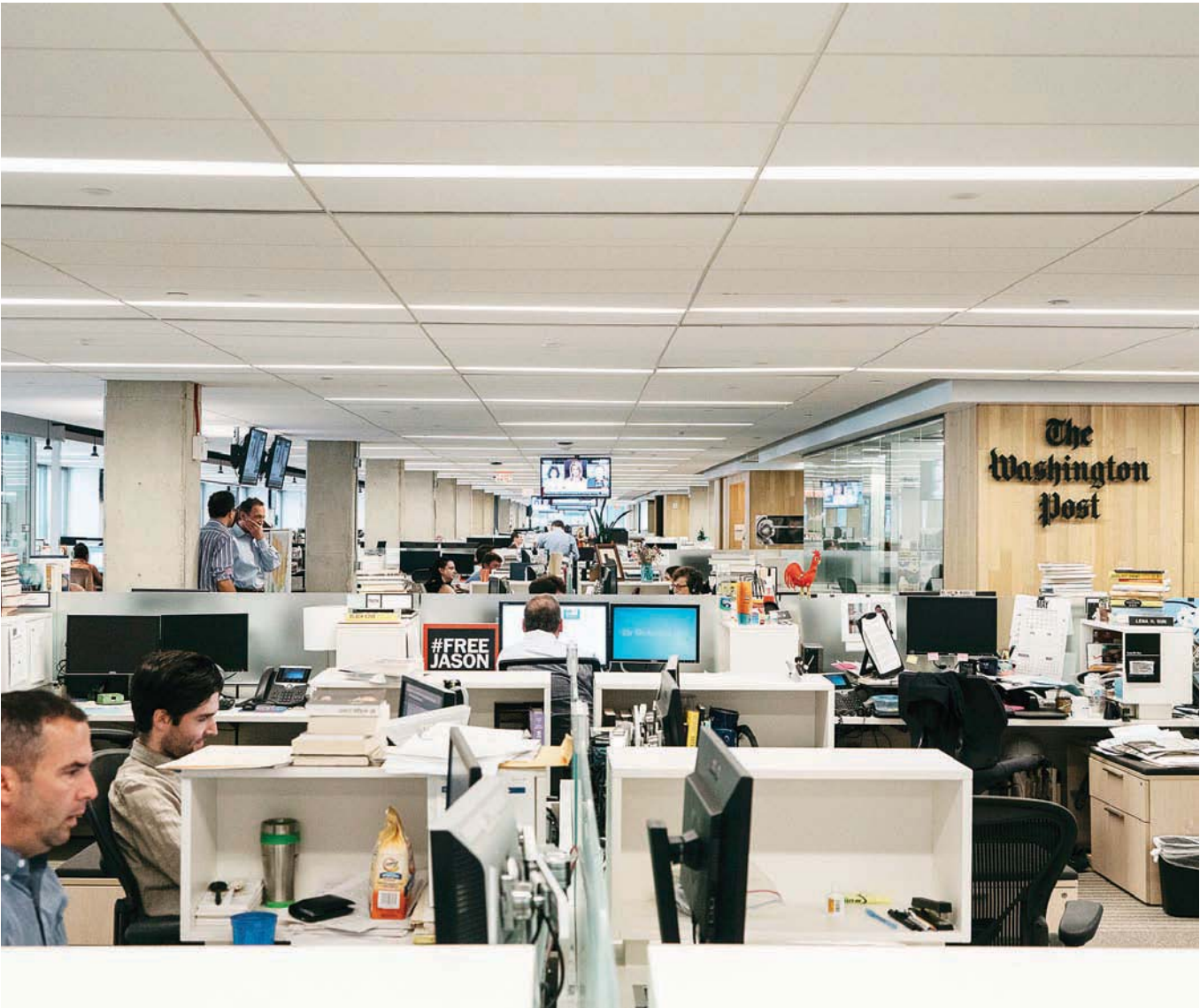
Margaret Sullivan, the newspaper’s media columnist, told Buzbee in that meeting that rescinding the feature editor’s promotion would unfairly damage his career. Many others spoke up with a similar sentiment.

In another meeting with Buzbee, on Tuesday, one editor relayed concerns from his staff that being promoted to an editor role seemed an unappetising prospect at ‘The Post’.

Buzbee responded with an impassioned speech about how an editor’s job was to help people do great work and advance in their careers, according to a person at the meeting.

The sentiment about Buzbee, and details about the meetings, were conveyed in interviews by more than two dozen current and former ‘Post’ staff members. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the newsroom’s inner workings.

Many of the people noted that some of the concerns



The newsroom at ‘The Washington Post’ before the pandemic.

predate Buzbee’s arrival. They also said that her arrival during the pandemic, with most people working remotely, has made her job more difficult.

Buzbee has won many friends in ‘The Washington Post’ newsroom, they said. Numerous influential reporters tweeted in unison last week in support of the newspaper’s direction.

Fred Ryan, ‘The Post’s’ publisher, expressed support for Buzbee, saying in a statement that “Sally has exceeded all expectations in her first year.”

But the recent tumult has distracted Buzbee and a newsroom that has stood out as one of the few to successfully navigate the treacherous economics of modern media.

Cameron Barr, ‘The Post’s’ senior managing editor, said in an interview that a lack of clarity around the company’s social media policies was partly to blame for the recent tumult.

Buzbee declined to comment for this article.

Buzbee, 57, joined ‘The Post’ in June 2021, becoming

the first female executive editor in its 145-year history. She had spent her career at The Associated Press, most recently serving as executive editor.

She replaced Martin Baron, who remade the newsroom over eight years to much acclaim, including 10 Pulitzer Prizes.

Buzbee has told all newsroom employees that they must work in the office at least three days a week. She has highlighted the benefits of collaborating in person rather than punishing anyone for not coming in.

Buzbee inherited a policy about how ‘Post’ journalists should behave online that reporters and editors had repeatedly said was too vague and unevenly enforced.

Baron faced similar tensions under his tenure, including a clash with a star reporter, Wesley Lowery. Baron threatened to fire Lowery for violations of ‘The Post’s’ social media policy, including expressing political views and criticising competitors, according to a copy of a disciplinary letter.

Journalists say the problems resulted from an outdated policy on how employees should conduct themselves online

How founders decide what they should get paid



LORA KELLEY

The first thing Karen Cahn usually says to the founder of a new start-up is “Congratulations, that’s so great.” Then Cahn, who runs a platform that helps fund start-ups, quickly gets personal: “Do you have savings? Are you wealthy? Are you keeping your day job?”

It all leads to an important but sometimes awkward question for people starting businesses now: What are you going to pay yourself?

It’s an especially challenging question as start-ups navigate a moment of layoffs, limited funding and uncertainty after months of riding high.

After all, money founders pay themselves is money that isn’t going back to the company to pay for things such as staff salaries and rent.

“Every founder is trying to make their cash last longer,” said Jenny Lefcourt, a partner at Freestyle, a venture capital firm that typically invests in seed stage companies.

After a company in her portfolio recently laid off some employees, she said she was impressed and surprised to see that the founders volunteered to reduce their pay more significantly than did the remaining staff. To her, that sent the message “We care, we’re believers.”

But founder pay — whether in a downturn or when things are flush — always sends some kind of message.

Fern Mandelbaum, a managing director of venture investing at the Emerson Collective, a

social good organisation, and a lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, said that especially in this uncertain funding environment, it is crucial that founders consider whether their own pay is fair and equitable. “If you’re getting an above-market salary, does it send a message to take a cut? One-hundred per cent,” she said.

One school of thought on founder pay — call it the ramen noodle camp — errs on the side of extreme frugality. If you have only so much runway and want your company to be a success, maybe you should pay yourself a bare minimum, or even not pay yourself at all for a few years.

“There’s sort of this game of chicken that you’re playing as a founder,” said Ethan Mollick, an associate professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, who studies entrepreneurship. “A lot of the reason why founder salaries are low is the symbolic importance of taking a low salary. It’s kind of ritualistic at this point.”

Others suggest that a salary closer to market rates for mid-level tech workers is appropriate and that founders at early-stage companies should be able to devote their energies to building the company without worrying about basic necessities. “You must take care of your needs,” Mandelbaum said, even if you’re optimistic about how the company will grow.

Lefcourt said founders always want to show that they are there for the important milestones, such as an initial public offering or a sale to a large firm. That doesn’t mean going without until then. “You can show that you’re here for the big win and still



Whether in a downturn or when things are flush, the compensation that start-up founders give themselves always sends some kind of message.

be able to eat and pay rent and not wake up in the middle of the night scared”, she said.

Although some founders think paying themselves poorly sets a worthy example, others actually worry that the perception of drawing a low salary could backfire.

Cahn, who said she had built up her personal wealth in her tech career, didn’t want to pay herself a salary when she founded IFundWomen, her startup platform. She wanted to put that money into hiring her team.

But in 2019, she started paying herself a salary of \$75,000, which she reduced to \$45,000 during the pandemic. (She has since reinvested that money into product development.) “I only did it to actually show investors that this wasn’t just some rich lady’s hobby”, she said. “Oftentimes, that’s how investors will look at women who are starting businesses and that are not paying themselves.”

A founder is generally not the only one deciding what he or she will be paid. The board and investors may weigh in, too.

According to an analysis from Carta, a company that collects and analyses data on start-ups’ financials, the median salary for a CEO at a startup with a valuation between \$1 million and \$10 million is about \$162,000. (A spokesperson for Carta noted that start-ups’ CEOs are often, but not always, founders.)

A 2021 survey from Pilot, an accounting firm that focuses on startups, showed that founders of companies that had raised \$1 million to \$5 million paid themselves an average of \$96,700.

Would you eat the marshmallows?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

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

Suppose you have tried to follow a strict diet to lose weight or go to the gym to build your body muscles. In that case, there may be times when you feel that you are losing motivation, perhaps because you need to wait for a while to see the results of your efforts.

For some, this waiting may cause despair, so they stop regularly following the diet or training. This applies to many things in life, such as study, work, or even our social relationships.

As humans, we all have wants and needs, but what makes us different from animals is our ability to think about our needs in terms of long-term consequences rather than short-term pleasures.

From a psychological perspective,

delayed gratification is defined as ‘The act of resisting impulses and urges to indulge in pleasurable activities.’

An excellent example of delayed gratification is saving money instead of spending it all or eating a balanced diet to avoid weight gain.

In 1970, Walter Michel, an American psychologist, called from the University of Stratford conducted one of the most famous experiments in psychology known as the Marshmallow Experiment, where he invited a group of preschool children and placed a piece of marshmallow on a plate in front of them and told them that they had two options: The first option, to eat a piece of marshmallow immediately, the second option, to wait for 15

‘LEARNING TO DELAY GRATIFICATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER CHANCES TO ACHIEVE ONE’S GOALS’

minutes before eating it and they would get another piece.

More than 600 children participated in the experiment, and one-third of them could wait for 15 minutes then get the second piece, which means that most of them could not control themselves and eat their marshmallows before the specified time.

The experiment did not stop there. The researcher tracked the experiment members many years

later and found that the children who ate the marshmallow before the specified time were more likely to have low scores in their school exams.

In contrast, the group that succeeded in holding on to the end had better scores and fewer behavioural problems.

The researchers concluded that individuals who were able to control themselves and make a sacrifice for a better future were able to benefit more as the ability to work for a long time before obtaining results enabled the individual to persevere in achieving his ambitions without withdrawing in front of the first difficulties.

In the marshmallow experiment, the researchers asked how children

who chose to wait 15 minutes could resist the temptation.

The answer was that they used a distraction strategy such as covering their eyes as if they were playing hide and seek or singing, staring at a mirror, covering their eyes or talking to themselves, rather than fixating on the marshmallow.

So what can we learn from the marshmallow study?

One of the most important messages is that to achieve the goals, we must remember to enjoy every detail of the journey instead of focusing on our dreams all the time.

We also need to adopt self-control and not just follow our desires all the time. As the Chinese proverb says, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Secrets vs press freedom: The US case against Julian Assange

PAUL HANDLEY

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, whose extradition to the United States was approved by Britain last week, faces charges of espionage in a case that could prove an unprecedented legal battle pitting national security against fundamental press freedom rights

What charges against Assange?

In 2009 WikiLeaks rocked the world when it published around 750,000 classified US documents and diplomatic cables which exposed possible war crimes, torture and secret military operations, as well as unveiling the often-unseemly behind-the-scenes activities of US diplomacy. A US military intelligence officer, Chelsea Manning, was arrested and sentenced to prison for leaking the files to WikiLeaks.

US authorities allege that Assange directed and abetted Manning in stealing the files, when he tried to help her break a passcode to a Pentagon computer system.

On that basis, on April 11, 2019 the Department of Justice (DOJ) unsealed initial charges against Assange for conspiracy to break into a classified computer system to obtain “national defence information”, and requested his extradition from Britain.

Twelve days later, the department issued a superseding indictment, charging him with 17 counts under the US Espionage Act.

It said that Assange, a citizen of Australia, had stolen US defence and national security information and disclosed it, putting the country, its officials and confidential sources at risk.

Journalist or not?

The charges under the espionage act are particularly troubling to civil liberties defenders and the media. Assange calls himself a journalist, and though WikiLeaks when created in 2006 was a new kind of activity — a website that collected secret documents and published them online for anyone to see — it was not deeply different from traditional media publishing government secrets.

Viewed from that angle, Assange’s publishing activities could be protected by the US Constitution’s First amendment, which explicitly guarantees freedom of the press.

“The new charges focus on receiving and publishing classified material from a government source. That is something journalists do all the time”, the ‘New York Times’ wrote in an editorial on the day the indictment was released.

“This is what the First Amendment is designed to protect: The ability of publishers to provide the public with the truth.” — AFP

A cartoon producer turned war reporter



Natalia Yermak

The writer is a news assistant at NYT

Half an hour before midnight on March 28, the first artillery shell I ever heard screeched above the tiny roof that sheltered my colleagues and me. Our newly formed team had recently arrived in Huliaipole, a small eastern Ukrainian town, to report from the war’s front lines.

A little more than a month earlier, in pre-war Kyiv, my job looked a lot different — and it did not involve air-raid warnings or howitzer shells.

It was Wednesday, February 23, the day before the Russian attack began. I was working as a production coordinator at a company that produced a Ukrainian cartoon series for children called “Brave Bunnies.” The job promised a type of stability that I was ready to embrace after years of on-and-off freelance work in video production.

That day, I was struggling to write an email about an episode in which the brave bunnies meet a koala because nearby my colleagues were discussing the looming Russian presence near our country’s border. “Guys, why worry for no reason?” one of them said. “The news is just feeding communal anxiety. I don’t believe this attack is going to happen.”

Early the next morning, when the sounds of explosions and air-raid sirens filled the air, that anxiety and disbelief quickly turned into terror.

My reality shattered. The “Brave Bunnies” team decided to put production on hold until the next week, a pause that was destined to stretch out. I packed my bag and boarded an evacuation train headed west, to join my family in Lviv.

Once I arrived, I started collecting and documenting stories as a form of volunteerism; I wanted to help share information about the war. Colleagues and friends connected me with various news media outlets. Soon, I was presented with an opportunity to work with “The New York Times.”

About a month after my unexpected last day at “Brave Bunnies”, I became a member of a team of five, including a reporter, Thomas Gibbons-Neff; a photographer, Tyler Hicks; a security adviser, Jon; and our driver and mechanic, Dima. (Jon and Dima preferred to use only their first names for this article.) It was an incredibly supportive group.

We headed to Huliaipole, a town caught in the middle of artillery

battles. Huliaipole used to count 13,000 residents — though at this point, near the end of March, it had about 2,000. Amid constant shelling, many residents fled, although some stayed. We went to find out what life there was now like.

BEFORE THE WAR, NATALIA WAS WORKING IN KYIV FOR A CHILDREN’S SHOW. ONCE THE ATTACK BEGAN, SHE STARTED COVERING THE WAR AS A PART OF A ‘TIMES’ TEAM

My job was convincing people, such as military officials and medics, to let us move about town, gathering stories and translating our sources’ accounts from Ukrainian or Russian into English. (I learned English in high school.)

But that first night in Huliaipole, the sounds we heard — “a high-pitched screech and then a boom”, as Thomas and I would describe it in a ‘Times’ article — needed no translation.

At the end of our first day, at our modest shelter, a house that belonged to an older man who had recently evacuated, I was lying, fully clothed, on the bed — it was still covered by the owner’s sheets. Though I was wrapped in half a dozen blankets and embroidered carpets, my body would not stop shaking.

A few weeks later, I had gotten used to the soundtrack of the war, whether it was the methodic thud of rockets in the distance or an eerie whistle and explosion that seemed just hundreds of metres away.

The premise of “Brave Bunnies” is that a family of bunnies goes on a road trip, meets other animals and learns something new from each encounter.

My journey driving through my war-torn country felt like a surreal allusion to the show. We were there to ask questions, but the people we interviewed had haunting questions of their own for which there were no answers. — New York Times



Sports don't build character, they reveal it



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

Why would you want to play sports? Or for those less active, why would you even want to watch sports? After all, there are plenty who don't watch, don't play, and don't even care about sport. Yet, the great women's tennis player Billie Jean King made this remarkably insightful comment: "Sport teaches you character, it teaches you to play by the rules, it teaches you to know what it's like to win, and to lose: It teaches you about life!"

Character is a remarkable collection of virtues, according to research, that can be developed in most sporting environments. Researchers Weinberg and Gould, (2011), pointed towards compassion, the ability to put yourself in your opponent's shoes, to seek to understand their motivations and decision-making perspectives as being integral to success. Effort, skill, support, development, responsibility, accountability, concern, and empathy all emerge as contributing towards life, as they do in sport.

Almost 25 years ago Shields and Bredemeier (1995) found that athletes, coaches, and supporters felt bound to the formal rules which every sport has, while at the same time they appeared to be honour-bound to the 'unwritten' rules which every sport also has, indicating sincere respect for the sport, for each other, and for 'fair play', which provides a 'level playing field,' so to speak, for all participants. This respect for the game, refers to doing your best whilst upholding an ethical standard of seeking to win, but not at the expense of their good name.

Without enduring sports supporters, fans, most sports could not function at the ultimate level, so contributing so much to sports financially and spiritually, what does the fan get out of their sport? A paper by Victoria Wilkins, of the University of Nevada (2012) pondered this

RESPECT FOR THE GAME, REFERS TO DOING YOUR BEST WHILE UPHOLDING AN ETHICAL STANDARD OF SEEKING TO WIN, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR GOOD NAME

very question, evaluating the emotions that lead to their attachments to 'their' chosen teams. On one level, she found that there is an 'ownership' component. Fans feel that if they are going to games, wearing the apparel, and supporting their teams actively and vigorously, they have moral 'shares' in it.

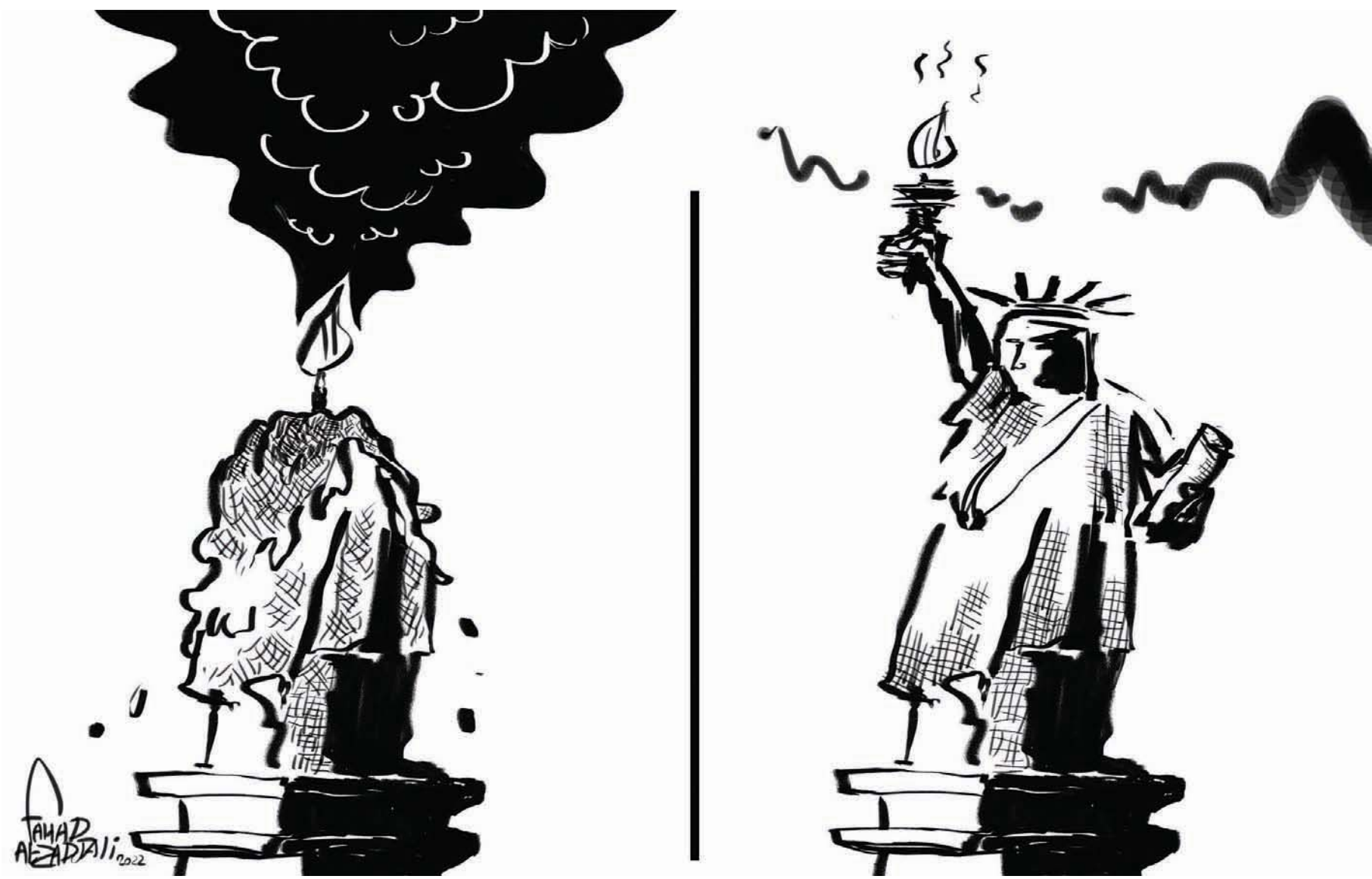
There are, of course, the fun and entertainment factors which lead to unique 'bonding' and fellowship, and shared emotional experiences. Given significant weight

however is the aesthetic appreciation gained from seeing masters of their sport in action and living vicariously through those semi-intimate experiences. Seeing Michael Jordan hit a three-pointer, Tiger Woods sink and impossible putt, David Beckham curl in a stunning free-kick, or Jonah Lomu trample over half a team for an amazing try! Or, in Oman, do you recall the 'high' of being there when the Red Warriors won the Gulf Cup?

A study of shy, withdrawn children and pre-adolescents by Finlay and Coplan (2008), entitled 'Come out and play,' examined the role of sports participation in 355 young people at the outset, and returned a year later were able to follow up with 201 of them to make a comparison of their shyness, aggression, participation, and psycho-social adjustment. The results indicated that sports participation was "positively related to indices of positive adjustment." Shy children reported significantly less anxiety, social interactions improved, self-esteem increased, in what was identified as a "unique protective environment," as the entire peer relationship dynamic assumed a more fulfilling role in the young people's lives.

Sportsmen and women are divided as to whether they are winning, or the taking part that really matters, but a Nike advert once featured the line, "Second place is the first loser." Harsh, but true I guess, and Coach Vince Lombardi famously said, "If winning isn't everything, why keep the score?" Ouch! But one of my favourite quotes was from the inestimable Muhammad Ali, the greatest of all Heavyweight Champions, saying, "If you dream of beating me, you better wake up and apologize!" Now that is that confidence, arrogance, and humour, that speaks to me of sports in all its myriad qualities.

Sport reaches out to us all, rich, and poor, young, and old, men, and women, boys, and girls, big, and small, there is a sport, an opportunity for us all, to learn the life skills, the attitudes, demands, and the rewards for commitment and determination, for dedication and respect.



Climate-impact disclosure is common sense



Ani Dasgupta

The writer is President and CEO of the World Resources Institute

I spend most days advocating for action that could be considered radical. But today, I am advocating for plain common sense. In March, the US Securities and Exchange Commission proposed a new rule that would require publicly traded companies to disclose their climate-related risks and greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Now that the public comment period has ended, the SEC should adopt the new disclosure rule in its entirety.

As written, the proposed rule would require companies to disclose GHG emissions data for their own operations, as well as for the goods they buy and sell. It would apply to all companies publicly traded in the United States, and thus to the \$82 trillion worth of trading that the SEC oversees each year.

The rule may sound sweeping, but it is really just about information. Businesses should be required to share with investors how climate change could affect their returns. Information is the bread and butter of financial regulators, CEOs, investors, and markets generally. Each trade is connected to an investor making decisions based on the best available information. There is nothing radical about wanting more.

The SEC's action comes at just the right time. Businesses bore a stiff share of the \$145 billion in weather- and climate-related costs incurred in the US in 2021. Climate risks are already substantial and can be expected to grow. That's why a bipartisan, business-heavy committee (which included the World Resources Institute) recommended new disclosure rules in a 2020 report to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

How climate change affects business is exactly the sort of information that CEOs need to manage risks and take advantage of new opportunities. Investors and governments around the world are increasingly pushing for greater information transparency. The G20-backed Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) issued its recommendations back in 2017, garnering the support of more than 3,000 companies and 92 countries around the world since then.

Moreover, the International Sustainability Standards Board expects to issue new climate-related rules by the end of the year. China is testing a mandatory disclosure policy. The United Kingdom is phasing in TCFD-style mandatory disclosure rules over the next three years. And the European Union is working out its Sustainable Finance Taxonomy, which

goes further than climate-risk disclosure by categorising economic activity according to clear sustainability criteria. All these initiatives will require corporate GHG-emissions reporting.

For many business leaders, there's nothing new here. Leading companies such as Apple, Best Buy, Coca-Cola, Cargill, Ford, Gap, Hilton, and Starbucks are already disclosing climate-related risks, including those associated with their supply chains. Far from fringe, these companies represent mainstream

UNLESS WE FIND POWERFUL WAYS TO ELIMINATE THE SARS-COV-2 VIRUS, IT WILL REMAIN A SCOURGE. SOME STRAINS ARE ONLY A MUTATION OR TWO AWAY FROM A LEAP IN LETHALITY. TO PREVENT THAT, WE MUST LEARN FROM PANDEMICS PAST

America. Even the oil and gas giants Shell, TotalEnergies, and Equinor have a long track record of reporting on emissions across their value chains.

Savvy CEOs are already using climate-related risk disclosures to identify and pursue new business opportunities. As General Electric Chairman and CEO Lawrence Culp put it in 2020, "We are particularly aware of the engineering challenges still to be solved to make the ambition of net zero a reality... However, we believe those challenges are also key

strategic opportunities for GE." CEOs and investors increasingly understand that the twenty-first-century economy will have to be green, efficient, and resilient. The flow of capital into sustainable-labelled investments surged to a record \$649 billion in 2021.

But the availability and quality of the data remain very uneven. Businesses follow wildly divergent approaches to disclosing their climate risks. Some count their emissions one way, others another way. Some don't report the "scope 3" emissions associated with the use of their products (a problem the SEC rule would rectify). And some are completely opaque, not reporting or managing their emissions at all. As a result, many companies – and their investors – are unaware of the climate risks and opportunities they face. Instead of clarity, we have confusion.

If companies were required to adhere to a uniform set of disclosures, investors would be much more capable of discerning where money should flow. Once investors can see disclosures from all companies, they can make better decisions for their clients, and firms will be on a level playing field, enabling virtuous competition.

The global shift towards mandatory disclosure is well under way. By acting now, the SEC can provide a much stronger foundation for markets to stand on, and the US can remain a global rule-maker, rather than becoming a rule-taker. All financial actors — businesses, investors, governments, and citizens with 401ks — must face up to the risks of climate change, some of which have already materialised. Requiring companies to disclose these risks is not radical; it is prudent.

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Businesses should be required to share with investors how climate change could affect their returns.

Sport

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Oman's Taha al Kishry to attend FINA Extraordinary Congress in Budapest

ABDULMONEIM AL ALAWI TO OFFICIATE AT FINA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

Oman's Taha al Kishry, Chairman of Oman Swimming Association, will take part at the FINA, the global governing body of swimming, Extraordinary Congress 2022 on Sunday as apart of the 19th FINA World Championships occasion which is under way in Budapest, Hungary since Saturday. Al Kishry is a FINA Bureau Member since 2017.

Moreover, the globe swimming event in Budapest will witness attendance of another Omani represented by Abdulmoneim al Alawi, FINA open water referee. Al Alawi selected as focal point for safety and security personnel at the 19th FINA World Championships. His main responsibilities included to secure the safety of swimmers inside and outside the open water in corporation with the relevant government authorities and institutions. Al Alawi had attended in different outstanding profiles swimming events including his role at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics last summer as umpiring official at Open Water swimming competitions. He was the first Arab and Asian chief referee to officiate at Olympic games level.



term till 2025 during the FINA GENERAL CONGRESS 2021 which was held in Doha city. The congress members also had elected Husain al Musallam as a new President of FINA. Al Kishry has more than 30 years of experience in sports management and administration. He endorses many key roles in Arab and Asian sport. He is a member of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Sports Committee since 2008 and the Director General of the Asian Swimming Federation (AASF) since 2009. Al Kishry also holds the position of Chairman of the Arab Swimming Federation. Since February 2009, Al Kishry is the Oman Swimming Association Chairman as well as the Oman Olympic Committee Secretary General since April 2013.

AGENDA
The 2022 FINA Extraordinary Congress will feature discussion of different agenda including election members of the AQUATICS INTEGRITY UNIT (AIU). On December 18, 2021,

the FINA Extraordinary General Congress in Abu Dhabi approved the recommendations from the FINA Reform Committee. In particular, it agreed with the principle to establish an Aquatics Integrity Unit.

With regards to postponement of the FINA World Championships in Fukuoka, the FINA Bureau decided that changes within FINA Rules and appointment of certain FINA Committees will take place at the occasion

of a FINA Extraordinary General Congress to be held in December 2022.

FINA BUREAU MEMBER
Taha al Kishry re-elected as FINA Bureau Member in Doha city last year for another



World Cup record-holder Klose to coach Austria's Altach

VIENNA: Former Germany striker Miroslav Klose, the all-time top scorer at World Cup finals, was on Friday named coach of Austrian Bundesliga club Altach.

This will be the 44-year-old's first role as a head coach having previously been on the coaching staff at Bayern Munich and the Germany.

He is set to sign a contract on Sunday.

The website of Altach briefly crashed Friday after the news broke.

"I am looking forward to my new job here", Klose said in a statement.

"I had a positive feeling right from the start."

Klose retired from international football after helping Germany win the 2014 World Cup.

In Brazil, he netted the 16th goal of his career at tournament finals to break the previous World Cup record of Brazil's Ronaldo.

He is also Germany's record scorer with 71 goals in 137 internationals.

Klose retired from all football in 2016 and was initially assistant coach of Germany under Joachim Loew before taking charge of Bayern Munich's Under-17s team.

In 2020/21, Klose graduated to the senior team where he joined Hansi Flick's back-room staff as assistant coach. — AFP



Sultanate of Oman

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Grade In Tender Board Registration
6/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL SERVICES, CIVIL, CLEANING AND PEST CONTROL SERVICES AT QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX AT BAUSHER FROM 1/1/2023 TO 31/12/2024	Excellent Grade
7/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SEEB SPORTS STADIUM (INCLUDING SPORTS HALL AT SEEB SPORTS CLUB) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
8/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO AL AMAL SPORTS CLUB FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
9/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRA SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
10/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
11/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO KHASAB SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT LIMA) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
12/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SALALAH SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022	Excellent Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 29/06/2022.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 25/07/2022.

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Salim al Amri elected as Vice Chairman of Arab Athletics Association



SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

Salim al Amri, Chairman of Oman Athletics Association (OAA), elected as Vice Chairman of Arab Athletics Association for Asian continent for the (2022-

2025) term while Dr Habib al Rabaan elected as the Chairman of Association. The election of Arab Athletics Association took place in Jeddah city, Saudi Arabia in attendance of Prince Nawaf bin Mohammed, Vice President of the International

Athletics Federation (IAAF) and representatives of other Arabian athletics associations.

"Thanks for the trust and confidence of the association members to be at this position. It is a great pleasure and honour to work

with different leaders at Arab Athletics Association. With forming the new structure of the association, we will work as a team towards development of Arabian athletics in general and in Asian in much focus", the chief of OAA said.



Fraser-Pryce thinks she can run 'even faster', eyes 2024 Olympics

PARIS: Jamaican sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce believes she can run faster than she ever "dreamed possible" and has not given up on appearing at the 2024 Olympics.

"What drives me is I believe I can run faster," the 35-year-old told a press conference in the French capital on the eve of Saturday's Diamond League meet.

"I've been hungry in that regard and I've been focusing on the things that I know will help me to do that, my technique and the different phases of the races. Once I'm able to cement that I definitely think that I will be able to run faster than I ever dreamed possible." Despite her age, Fraser-Pryce has been improving her times with a 10.60sec last year, the third fastest time in history, and 10.67sec in her only 100m this season in 2022 in Nairobi last month.

"This year my races have been limited. I think about making sure I sustain what I have if I'm going to think about going to Paris 2024," she said.

The eight-time Olympic and ten-time world medallist remains the favourite for the world championships in Eugene, Oregon in July where she is the reigning champion over 100m.

"For me after running in Kenya I haven't run a 100 so I want to replicate what I've done before and also focus on what I've been doing in practice," she continued of her hopes for Saturday in the city which hosts the next Olympics.

"Before I wasn't so much thinking about it," she said of her hopes of competing in the Olympics, "but then I ran 10.6 last year and then this year. It all depends on how I feel. If I'm feeling good you'll be seeing me until I'm 40."

"I don't want to be lining up and everybody's like 'why don't grandma go home'. So it depends on how I feel. I would definitely love to be here in 2024."

After Paris, Fraser-Pryce heads to the Jamaican qualifiers for the worlds from July 14-24, where she is also hoping to compete in the 200m. "The main goal is the world championship, I'm already automatically in the 100 (as defending champion) and the 200 I'm also contesting that at my national championships."

"It's not a done decision because it takes a toll, it definitely does, so it's having that option and then when the time comes if I'm ready mentally, physically then I'll take that on as well in Eugene." — AFP

Saudi Arabia to face Uzbekistan in AFC U23 Asian Cup Final today

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan head coach Timur Kapadze and his Saudi Arabia counterpart Saad al Shehri expect nothing less than an intense battle when their teams face off in the AFC U23 Asia Uzbekistan 2022 final on Sunday.

Uzbekistan are on the verge of becoming the first team to lift the continental trophy for a second time while Saudi Arabia are bidding to win it for the first time after twice finishing runners-up, setting the stage for a classic at the Bunyodkor Stadium.

"We are really happy to be in the final. Each step of the competition has been tough for us, but we've reached the final and we hope to lift the trophy tomorrow."

"There are a lot of external worries, but now is not the time to think about it. Both teams will be playing in the same conditions but we've been preparing well and we will show our game tomorrow. We will fight to win," said Kapadze.

There is a lot of history between the teams, with Saudi Arabia defeating then titleholders Uzbekistan 1-0 in the AFC U23 Asian Cup semifinals in 2020, a defeat which ultimately cost the Central Asian side a Tokyo Olympics berth.

They were also pitted together in qualifying for this year's edition, where Uzbekistan played for exposure with the match ending 2-2. They recently met in a friendly tournament in Dubai, with Saudi Arabia winning 2-0.

"Saudi Arabia are a really good team, and showing good results. Both teams have spent a lot of energy to reach the final. Of course we've studied them. Compared to the team two years ago, there's been a lot of changes and they have improved in every position."

"Each match has given us experience and shown us where we need to improve. We know how strong they are but we also know their weaknesses. We will use all that we've learned in tomorrow's match," Kapadze added.

Saudi Arabia will go into the final having not conceded a single goal but Kapadze is confident his team will end that streak.

"In terms of them not conceding a single goal, it is a motivation for my team to find a way to break them, and we will show it tomorrow."



"Every team will want to score more goals in every game but the main thing is to have a balance between attack and defence, as one mistake can be costly. The main thing is to win the game."

Saudi Arabia's Al Shehri finds himself in a familiar situation, having led the young Green Falcons to the final two years ago, only to lose out to Korea Republic.

The 42-year-old tactician, however, is confident Saudi Arabia's wait to lift the trophy will end on Sunday.

"I am very proud of my team for reaching the final," said Al Shehri. "It's my second time in the final and I hope we play a good game and go back home with the trophy. We hope to continue with

this concentration and good luck. This is the final, and anything can happen in the final. They could score tomorrow but hopefully we will have a good reaction, and we're preparing ourselves for all situations."

"This generation is different from the last. We only just started preparing this team in the last six months, and now we're in the final, and it's really good for us. We're thinking more of the future. It's important for us to have a good generation and be in the semifinals or finals (of competitions), this is what we want for our Saudi football."

Given their previous encounters, Al Shehri said there will be no secrets between the two

teams and urged his players to savour the experience of playing in a packed Bunyodkor Stadium.

"Uzbekistan are a strong team, they have a good style of play, but we're ready. They've been preparing this team for a long time. We've played against Uzbekistan twice, they understand us and we also know a lot about them."

"We hope that with good tactics and mentality, we can win the game. It's important for us that we enjoy the game."

"We've come here with pressure, because we want to make our people and country happy. But it (pressure) will be good for us, because this means the players need to be more concentrated, run and fight more." — AFC

Ledecky lays down an early marker at world swimming

BUDAPEST: While other stars conserved their energy on the opening morning of the World Swimming Championships in Budapest on Saturday, Katie Ledecky made a statement in her first qualifying swim.

In the women's 400m freestyle qualifying, the 25-year-old American was the only swimmer to break four minutes, finishing in 3min 59.79sec, 3.40sec ahead of Canadian 15-year-old sensation Summer McIntosh.

Ledecky's greatest rival, Australian Ariarne Titmus, is skipping the championships. Titmus overhauled Ledecky on the final lap in the last worlds in 2019. The first time Ledecky had lost in the event in a major championship. Titmus then edged Ledecky

in the Olympic final last year and ended the American's eight-year grip on the world record in May, with a time of 3min 56.40sec.

On Saturday, Ledecky may have left the field trailing in her wake but she was still more than 2 seconds behind her phantom foe.

Home favourite Katinka Hosszu opened the championships, in the women's 200m individual medley first round. Hungary's 'Iron Lady', who won two world titles the last time the championships were in Budapest, qualified 11th 2.36 slower than American Alex Walsh and five-and-a-half seconds outside her own world record.

At 33, the question remains whether she can shake off the rust.

Other big names also swum unspectacular times while still



USA's Katie Ledecky competes in a heat for the women's 400m freestyle event during the Budapest 2022 World Aquatics Championships at Duna Arena in Budapest. — AFP

ensuring they qualified.

Australian phenom Kaylee McKeown was only seventh while champion Yui Ohashi from Japan

qualified 12th.

CHANCE TO ROAR

Lukas Martens, the 20-year-old

German who this season sliced three seconds off his best time while swimming 3:41.60, the fastest 400m free since 2017, was more than three-and-a-half seconds off that time as he qualified fourth fastest in the event.

Austrian Felix Auboeck scorched through the last 100m in the final heat to lead all qualifiers in 3min 43.83.

Surprise Olympic champion, Tunisian Ahmed Hafnaoui did not race. American teenager Torri Huske led the qualifiers in the women's 100m butterfly, followed by France's Marie Wattel and Zhang Yufei who is chasing China's eighth championship medal in the event.

Dylan Carter from Trinidad, twice a short-course world

championship medallist, beat 23 seconds for the first time in his career to lead the 50m butterfly qualifying in 22.87.

American Caeleb Dressel then won the seventh heat and mustachioed Italian Thomas Ceccon the last, both in 22.88.

World record holder Andrii Govorov from Ukraine was seventh and Nicholas Santos was 13th, but only two-thirds of a second separated the qualifiers in an event decided by fingernails.

With Adam Peaty, the Briton who has dominated the men's 100m breaststroke, absent, perennial runner up, Dutchman Arno Kamminga started his chase for a first gold when he was fastest in qualifying ahead of Nic Fink of the USA. — AFP

McIlroy eyes on fifth major win at US Open

BROOKLINE, United States: Rory McIlroy wants to ride emotional waves of momentum to his first major title since 2014 this weekend at the US Open, feeling a boost from crowds and the course.

McIlroy, a four-time major champion, overcame a double-bogey disaster at the third hole and a shaky middle round with three birdies in the last seven holes to shoot a one-under par 69 Friday, sharing third on four-under 136 after 36 holes at The Country Club.

“I think I ride waves of momentum pretty easily. Certainly whenever you get on the crest of a wave, you try to ride it as long as you can, and I’ve gotten a little bit better at trying not to ride the other ones downwardly”, McIlroy said.

“This golf course, there’s a nice flow to it that you can get on a little bit of a run and start to make some birdies, and if I do encounter that this week, I feel like I’m pretty good at riding those sort of waves of momentum through the course of a round.”

Cheering fans supported third-ranked McIlroy through a roller coaster round, their emotions and his feeding off one another.

“I think I play quite an emotive brand of golf, if there is such a thing”, McIlroy said. “I’ve always



liked having crowds. I like the interaction. I enjoy that part. I like seeing people out there. Maybe that’s part of it.

“I’ve been out here a long time. Maybe they feel like they’ve watched me grow up and they’ve

sort of been on that journey with me.”

It has been quite a tale. From the squandered chance while leading in the final round of the 2011 Masters to bouncing back and winning the next major at

the 2011 US Open, to taking the 2012 PGA Championship and the 2014 British Open and PGA, the Northern Ireland star has captivated fans worldwide.

This weekend, he’s among a host of big names near the top,

including seventh-ranked co-leader Collin Morikawa, second-ranked defending champion Jon Rahm also on 136 and top-ranked Masters champion Scottie Scheffler on 137.

“You want to go up against the

best to try to bring the best out of yourself”, McIlroy said. “And to see Collin and Jon and Scottie and Sam (Burns on 138) up there and whoever else, that’s what major championship golf is all about.

“I want guys to go out and shoot 65 so I have to go and shoot 64. That’s competition, and that’s at the heart of this game. I’m excited to be in that mix going into the weekend.”

‘COULDN’T BE HAPPIER’

Overcoming an early setback helped bolster McIlroy’s confidence as well.

“I stayed patient, and I knew I was going to give myself chances if I just hit the ball the way I’ve been hitting it”, McIlroy said. “Today was a really good example of just having a good attitude.

“I didn’t panic. I didn’t do anything stupid. I didn’t force anything. I was rewarded with that patience by playing a really good back nine.”

While one adrift of US co-leaders Morikawa and Joel Dahmen, McIlroy likes where he’s at for the fight to unfold.

“I’m really happy with my position”, he said. “Came back well today after a tough start and right in the mix. Couldn’t be any happier.” — AFP



Former Wimbledon champion Halep into Birmingham semifinals

BIRMINGHAM: Former Wimbledon champion Simona Halep booked her place in the semifinals of the WTA Birmingham grass-court event with a straight sets win over Britain’s Katie Boulter on Friday. Boulter had been in career-best form at the tournament, defeating Alison Riske in the first round of the Wimbledon warm-up before knocking out former top-10 player Caroline Garcia. But second seed Halep ultimately proved too strong in a 6-4, 6-1 victory. The 30-year-old Romanian, however, did not have things all her own way in a tightly-contested first set.

Boulter, who only returned from nearly three months out with a leg injury at Nottingham last week, kept pace with Halep for the opening eight games. The 25-year-old, to her credit, saved three break points at 4-4 only to double fault on the fourth. That proved to be the cue for Halep to pull away in what is her first grass-court event since a superb straight sets win over Serena Williams in the 2019 Wimbeldon final.

Sorana Cirstea made it a day of double celebration for Romania by also reaching the semifinals after coming from a set down to defeat Donna Vekic 5-7, 6-3, 6-4.

Cirstea will face Zhang Shuai in the last four following the Chinese eighth seed’s 7-5, 6-4 win over Ukraine’s Dayana Yastremska. — AFP

Queen’s champion Berrettini into semifinals as Peniston’s dream run ends

LONDON: Champion Matteo Berrettini booked his place in the semifinals of the Queen’s Club ATP grass-court tournament with a straight sets win over Tommy Paul on Friday as British rookie Ryan Peniston’s dream run finally came to an end.

Berrettini, last year’s Wimbledon runner-up, was 4-1 down in the first set but he rallied to defeat the American 6-4, 6-2.

The Italian will now play Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands in the last four of the Wimbledon warm-up event.

Marin Cilic is also through to the last four, the first time has got this far in a grass-court tournament, after the Croatian beat Finland’s Emil Ruusuvuori 7-6 (7/2), 6-4.

Cilic will play Filip Krajinovic, who finally put an end to Peniston’s remarkable ATP main draw debut, with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory.

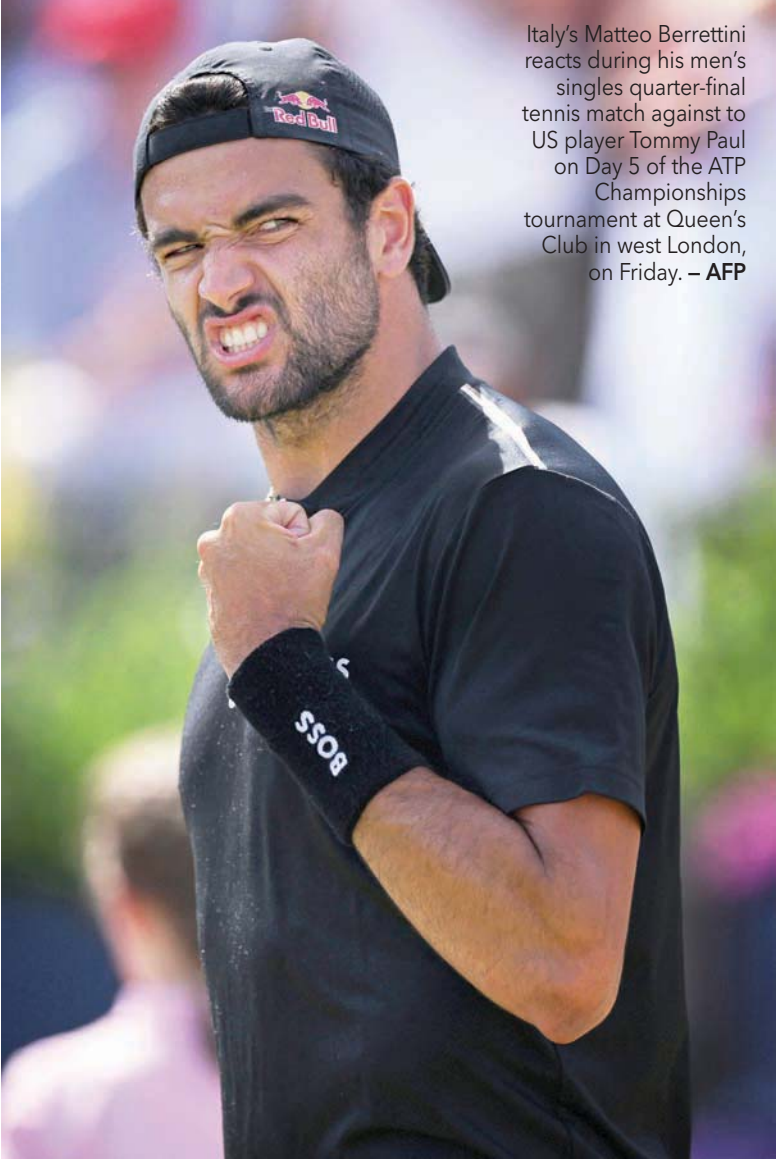
Peniston, a lowly 180 in the rankings prior to this week, had already knocked out world number five and French Open finalist Casper Ruud on Tuesday.

He looked on course to make it into the last four when he took the first set against Krajinovic before the Serbian’s greater experience of match play proved decisive.

Nevertheless 26-year-old left-hander Peniston, who survived cancer as a baby, could console himself with a cheque for £50,000 (\$61,000) — almost double his earnings for the rest of the year — having secured a Wimbledon wild card which guarantees he will earn at least as much again.

“It’s definitely a lot of money”, said Peniston, who will now move up 35 places in the rankings to 145 in the world.

“I was playing on the Futures



Italy’s Matteo Berrettini reacts during his men’s singles quarter-final tennis match against to US player Tommy Paul on Day 5 of the ATP Championships tournament at Queen’s Club in west London, on Friday. – AFP

Tours a couple of years ago and then the Challengers. So it’s definitely going to help my career a lot. I’m just going to reinvest it in myself.

“Just being able to pay for training and travel and now I’m starting to be able to afford a coach to travel with.

“The next step is being able to afford a physical trainer on the road, which I think is super important, and trying to basically improve the team and have them as much with me as possible.”

Peniston, from London, added:

“I’m going to remember a lot from this week I think, for sure.”

A forehand winner which clipped the baseline gave Peniston the first set in 47 minutes on a swelteringly hot day in London, with temperatures on centre court touching 33 Celsius (91 Fahrenheit).

Krajinovic, however, kept his cool sufficiently to level the match with the only break of the second set and edged ahead in the third before Peniston’s overhit forehand gave the world number 48 the match. — AFP



Gauff defeats former number one Pliskova to reach Berlin semifinals

BERLIN: Teenager Coco Gauff reached her first WTA grass-court semifinal after posting a straight sets win over former world number one Karolina Pliskova in Berlin on Friday.

The 18-year-old American, who reached her first Grand Slam final at the French Open earlier this month, sealed a 7-5, 6-4 win over fourth seed Pliskova.

“It took me a while to find my rhythm, the forehand slice isn’t something I use a lot, but I did today”, said Gauff.

“Her shots were pretty low on the grass and sometimes it was enough to change the direction of the point”

In Saturday’s semifinals, Gauff will face top seed Ons Jabeur who defeated Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-2.

Jabeur had to come back from a set and a break down to earn her third win in three meetings against Sasnovich.

Second seed Maria Sakkari also reached her first grass-court semifinal after brushing past Daria Kasatkina for a 6-0, 6-3 victory in just 72 minutes.

Sakkari will face Belinda Bencic after the Swiss Olympic champion rallied to beat Veronika Kudermetova 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 in their hard-fought tie, which lasted just over two hours.

Bencic had to dig deep and despite hitting seven double faults, she held off Kudermetova, who fired down six aces. — AFP



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Hyport Duqm signs land lease pact for downstream component of mega green hydrogen project

New milestone: OPAZ earmarks 793,000 sq metre site near Port of Duqm earmarked for electrolyzer, ammonia synthesis and storage facilities

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a land lease agreement with Hyport Duqm Co for the implementation of the downstream part of the Green hydrogen and Ammonia Production Facility backed by a joint venture of OQ's Alternative Energy Unit and DEME Group of Belgium.

It follows the signing last September of a similar land lease pact for the upstream component of the project, which has since enabled the start of preliminary engineering studies and site data collection linked to the implementation of the mega



green energy project at Duqm SEZ.

Saturday's agreement was signed by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman — OPAZ, with Hyport Duqm represented by Najla bint Zuhair al Jamaliyah, Chairperson — Hyport Duqm (who is also CEO of OQ's Alternative Energy Unit) and Martin D, Vice Chairman and General Manager of DEME Group

(Belgium).

Based on the land lease agreement, Hyport Duqm will develop a green hydrogen production facility with a capacity of 500 MW on a 793,000 square metre site near Port of Duqm.

At the upstream end of the project, covering an area of 200 sq kilometres, a number of solar and wind farms will be developed to provide green electricity for the

venture.

Hyport Duqm will consist of three distinct components: A solar and wind based renewable energy generation component; A green hydrogen production plant consisting of electrolyzers, ammonia synthesis plant and storage facilities; and a high voltage transmission line linking the upstream and downstream components.

Early last year, Hyport Duqm installed and operated four wind speed gauges and two on-site solar meteorological stations to ensure that the data needed by the company was collected as part of a detailed feasibility study for the project.

According to Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, Operational Head of Duqm SEZ, the agreement is an important milestone in the

progress of this project, which will pave the way for various studies to be completed, including soil and topographic studies, in preparation for the detailed feasibility study.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, he said the Authority looks forward to working with the project team and help support the delivery of the first green energy projects in Duqm SEZ.

Availability of green hydrogen will pave the way for investments in a number of green heavy industries, including green iron and steel and green aluminium. DEME Group officials said the project will contribute Oman's goal to become a global hub for green hydrogen production.

Green ammonia output will be exported from Duqm to customers in multiple European destinations and other global markets where the demand for low carbon energy resources is strong. — ONA

Measures to ensure adequate availability of cement



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has announced a series of measures to ensure adequate supplies of cement to cater to the requirements of the domestic market.

The announcement came in a series of posts last week in response to concerns voiced on social media lamenting supply shortfalls in some parts of the country. "The Ministry confirms the continuation of efforts to overcome challenges faced by the market through the implementation of a number of measures to ensure the availability of cement in the local market", it said in a post on its official Twitter account.

"At the same time, we are

working to understand the requirements of the market and study the challenges faced by some Omani cement factories and cement suppliers at the moment", it further noted.

As part of the measures to facilitate adequate cement supply, it will seek a waiver on customs duties on cement imports to encourage shipments from overseas markets.

Additionally, it will work with a number of satellite ports, including Mina Al Sultan Port and Al Suwaiq Port to ensure speedy inflows of imported cement.

The Ministry also stressed the importance of maintaining stable cement prices. It called upon local cement manufacturers to increase their output, and also pledged to facilitate the licensing and establishment of new cement plants.

Oman's GDP grows to RO 33 bn at 2021-end at current prices

MUSCAT: Total public revenues climbed 28.7 per cent to reach RO 10.9 billion at end of 2021, up from RO 8.5 billion at the end of 2020, while total public spending fell by 5.9 per cent to RO 12.2 billion for the same period, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NSCI).

The State Budget recorded a deficit of RO 1.2 billion in 2021, equivalent to 3.7 per cent of GDP at current prices.

In other data released by the Centre, the value of GDP at current prices increased by about 16.1 per cent by the end of 2021 to reach RO 33 billion, compared to about RO 28.4 billion by the end of 2020.

The increase stemmed from a 39.7 per cent increase in the price of oil, from \$46 per barrel by the end of 2020 to \$64.3 per barrel by the end of 2021.

The added value of oil activities increased by RO 2.9 billion, registering about RO 10.5 billion, compared to RO 7.6 billion at the end of 2020, due to the increase in the added value of crude oil by about 46.6 per cent, reaching about RO 9 billion compared to RO 6.1 billion at the end of 2020.

The value added of natural gas increased by about 4.8 per cent by the end of 2021.



THE ADDED VALUE OF OIL ACTIVITIES INCREASED BY RO 2.9 BILLION, REGISTERING ABOUT RO 10.5 BILLION, COMPARED TO RO 7.6 BILLION AT THE END OF 2020, DUE TO THE INCREASE IN THE ADDED VALUE OF CRUDE OIL BY ABOUT 46.6 PER CENT, REACHING ABOUT RO 9 BILLION COMPARED TO RO 6.1 BILLION AT THE END OF 2020.

The total value added of non-oil activities by the end of 2021 increased by 8.4 per cent compared to the end of 2020 to record RO 24 billion, and the added value of industrial activities increased by 13.6 per cent as a result of the increase in the added value of manufacturing industries by about 40.8 per cent, electricity, water and sanitation supplies

increased by 5.7 per cent, mining and quarrying by about 4.3 per cent, agriculture and fish added by 7.7 per cent and the added value of service activities by 6.5 per cent.

As for foreign trade indicators, the report indicates that the value of the surplus in the trade balance increased by the end of 2021, by about RO 1.4 billion, compared to about RO 5.2 billion a year earlier.

Contributing to the increase was a 45.5 per cent growth in the value of commodity exports in 2020. In 2021, it recorded about RO 17.1 billion compared to RO 11.7 billion in 2020, and the value of commodity imports increased by 49.5 per cent, registering about RO 11.9 billion compared to about RO 8.8 billion by the end of 2020.

Value of re-exports was RO 1.3 billion, which was down 22.5 per cent in 2020. However, exports of plastics, rubber and manufactured goods increased significantly by 386.3 per cent in 2021. Non-oil exports increased by about 91.2 per cent. — ONA

Bank Muscat holds media event to celebrate successful partnership, media’s role in socio-economic development

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently hosted a special annual event for officials from media institutions and agencies in the Sultanate of Oman. The event was attended by Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, chief editors and media officials as well as members of the Bank’s Management Team.

The event was an opportunity to extend Bank Muscat’s appreciation for the effort shown by the media in constantly following and covering the bank’s events throughout the year as well as its pioneering role in social responsibility.

The bank also unveiled the logo of its 40th Anniversary celebrations at the event, which saw a documentary about the bank’s journey. Addressing senior media officials gathered at the function, Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, expressed his gratitude for the successful partnership between the bank and the media.



He stressed on the importance of this cooperation to achieve success that benefits the banking sector and the nation. Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar extended his sincere appreciation to all media professionals for their efforts in publicising knowledge about various developments, thereby contributing to socio-economic progress in Oman. The Chief Executive Officer

pointed out in particular, the important role that the media has been playing over the past four decades in enhancing the bank’s communications with society. He thanked the media for effectively conveying to society the bank’s stellar achievements in financial inclusion, economic development and social responsibility. He said that the bank would continue to keep pace with new developments



in the media sector including social media.

Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar added that Bank Muscat would continue its commitment to customer-centricity and sustainable development as part of its efforts to translate the goals of Oman Vision 2040 into reality. Bank Muscat has been a pioneer and trendsetter in Oman’s financial services sector, being the first bank in the country to launch various new products and services, cutting-edge technology and extensive social responsibility programmes and initiatives over the past four decades.

The bank grew from just one branch and a small number of

customers in 1982, to having 174 branches and over 800 ATMs and CDMs catering to more than 2 million customers today. The bank has expanded its regional presence through international branches and representative offices.

It is noteworthy that the bank’s assets have grown manifold from RO 16 million in 1982 to well over RO 13 billion at present. Bank Muscat enjoys outstanding leadership at all levels, achieving over 95 per cent Omanisation and gender equality among its over 3,800 employees.

It prioritises developing Omani human resources by upskilling and enabling nationals to occupy key positions across all aspects of

its operations. The Bank’s various achievements across different spheres are a source of inspiration for many other organisations to both excel, and to do more for society.

Aimed at promoting a partnership in the progress and sustainable development of the nation, Bank Muscat pursues a dynamic communication policy, maintaining strong relations with the media.

The bank frequently interacts with the media to highlight major achievements and developments, which are of interest to the public. Interacting regularly with media partners contributes greatly to the bank’s ability and flexibility to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and enhancing communications and further exchange of knowledge.

As the leading bank in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat strives for continuous improvement as part of its strategy of achieving excellence and maintaining market leadership that benefits the bank’s various stakeholders.

Experience inspiring luxury in the Lincoln Corsair

MUSCAT: Lincoln Corsair’s inspiring luxury and overall driving dynamics, makes it one of the most appealing luxury SUVs in the market. The spacious two-row SUV combines refined power and a wealth of purposeful technologies in a sanctuary from the outside world.



The Corsair is designed to give luxury customers technology to make their drive effortless, such as Lincoln Co-Pilot360 driver-assist features. The horizontal interior design lends a visual calmness to the

space, which is crafted with supple, hand-selected materials. Breaking up the elements, particularly the cantilevered console, emphasises volume and enhances practicality with additional front-row storage.

A specially tuned 14-speaker Revel premium audio system is available for the Corsair.

Placement, tuning, calibration and the number of Revel speakers are all unique to each Lincoln vehicle, designed to ensure audio quality and accuracy for each cabin size and acoustics. Multiple power outlets are located throughout.

Additional technologies are seamlessly integrated through SYNC 3 with AppLink; users simply plug their mobile phone into their SYNC 3-equipped

Corsair to access apps directly from an available 8-inch touch screen. Staying true to its quiet flight DNA, Corsair is engineered to deliver the effortless drive experience and sensation of gliding over the road.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC. Please log on to www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

Shell Oman announces winners of ‘Fuel & Win Big’ campaign



MUSCAT: Shell Oman’s recent ‘Fuel & Win Big’ campaign held its draws on June 7, 2022 and revealed the winners on June 14, 2022, as part of its commitment to enriching its customers’ journeys with exciting offers. The campaign, which was developed in partnership with MG Motors, was well received by the market and attracted a large number of participants. It began on March 20, 2022, and ended on May 20, 2022, covering the holy month of Ramadhan as well as Eid al Fitr.

As per the campaign, customers who fuelled their vehicles with 35 litres or more of Shell V-Power were eligible to enter the grand draw and win one of two brand new MG cars. In addition, customers who opted for Shell Mogas 95 and fuelled with 35 litres or above stood a chance to win Shell V-Power Fuel Cards worth RO 100 each.

With a total of 8 winners reserved for the latter category, the campaign ensured it offered customers more chances to win.

Khalid al Awaisi – Mobility Country Manager, Shell Oman Marketing Company, said: “For us at Shell Oman, the most rewarding part of our campaign is to see our customers celebrating their wins. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the winners and thank them

for their continued trust in Shell.

As a company that believes in meaningful partnerships with leading organisations, our collaboration with MG Motors for the ‘Fuel & Win Big’ campaign was mutually beneficial to both parties.”

Furthermore, Al Awaisi stated, “Innovation forms an intrinsic part of Shell’s strategies. That reflects clearly in our range of products which are designed to offer an unparalleled driving experience with every trip. In addition, with our increasing offers in the convenience retail business such as Shell Select, Shell Café, and Shell Helix Oil Change+, we will remain focused on making life’s journey better for our customers.”

Talking about the campaign, Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE said, “In the last few years, MG Motors has built a strong presence in the Oman market. Our customers have expressed satisfaction across various parameters, fuel efficiency being a common one across segments. As an automobile brand, we understand and believe that fuel efficiency of a car is complemented by the fuel that the customer uses. Our partnership with Shell for such consumer-oriented campaigns is a testimony of this belief.”

MSX closes week lower as global inflation spurs interest rate rise

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.30 per cent. The financial index was the only index ending higher by 0.08 per cent. The Industrial Index and Services index closed lower by 1.71 per cent and 0.17 per cent respectively. The MSX Shariah

Index closed down by 0.71 per cent. Further to the disclosures made by Sohar International Bank, on November 23, 2021, January 19, 2022 and following the recent announcement of Letter of Intent (LOI) sent to HSBC Bank Oman SAOG, the board of directors of Sohar International Bank SAOG (SI) has noted that the proposed merger process with Bank Nizwa SAOG is still in progress, as announced earlier.

Each of the proposed merger transactions with Bank Nizwa SAOG and HSBC Bank Oman SAOG are subject to regulatory and shareholders’ approval, it said.

ahlibank announced during the week that it has launched its first-of-its-kind ‘Tamkeen’ crowdfunding initiative. The crowdfunding initiative is part of ahlibank’s endeavour to support Oman’s small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and bolster the national economy.

This pioneering initiative comes after signing a strategic partnership agreement between ahlibank and Beehive to offer this unique online financial lending solution in Oman, specifically for the SMEs to support their



Source: NCSI Oman

business endeavours and create a sustainable ecosystem.

Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG has successfully completed the Rights Issue of 150,000,000 shares. All shares have been allotted to the successful subscribers following the CMA approval. Further, pursuant to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) Administrative Decision 66/2022, the additional shares were listed on the MSX from Tuesday.

The Company’s issued share capital post Rights Issue will be RO 16 million divided into 250 million shares. In Oman, inflation turned positive in 2021 due to introduction of VAT as well as recovery in consumer spending when vaccination rates started increasing in the country and the economy re-opened.

Recent NCSI data shows that inflation decreased to 2.67 per cent in April 2022 from

3.6 per cent in March 2022. Annual inflation was recorded at 4.0 per cent in February and 4.4 per cent in January this year.

However, consumer price inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages group, which has nearly 24 per cent weight in Oman’s CPI, rose to 5.43 per cent in April 2022 compared April 2021.

Global food prices have been soaring fast since the beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Since Oman needs to import most of the food materials from international markets, rising global prices directly affect the prices in the local market.

On the other hand, prices in the housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels group – which has over 26 per cent weight in Oman’s CPI – increased only by 2 per cent in April this year compared to April 2021.

This could potentially be due to Government subsidies on these items, especially with a ceiling on fuel price. Prices in the transport group – which has more than 19 per cent weight in CPI – increased by 2.4 per cent in Apr’22 compared the same month a year ago.

Oman’s annual inflation rate has first time dropped below 3 per cent level since October last year. Nevertheless, the IMF expects Oman’s inflation to peak to 3.7 per cent in 2022 before falling to 1.9 per cent by 2025.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Omani businesses eye global opportunities

Export potential: Tejarah Talks to highlight importance of international trade to Oman's sustainable economic growth

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

Established and would be exporters from across Oman will come together at 7:30pm on Wednesday, June 22, at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre to discuss accessing new international markets.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth and Oman Business Forum and generously supported by HSBC and SOHAR Port & Freezone, the June 22 'Cracking the Export Market' Tejarah Talks will be moderated by His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Founder, The Firm.

And sharing their export insights and stories will be Salem al Bortmany, CEO, Areej

Vegetable Oils; Abdullah al Badri, CEO, Voltamp Energy; Ali Taqi Hassan, Assistant General Manager & Head of Global Trade & Receivables Finance, HSBC; Faisal Ahmed Khan, COO, A'Saffa Food Processing; and Shayan Sumar, Operations Director, Apex Transgulf Manufacturing.

According to Maymuna al Adawi, MoCIIP Director and Tejarah Talks organiser: "Wednesday's session has been designed specifically to help existing as well as potential Omani exporters network and guide them on how to improve their exports or export for the first time."

Today, there is a wealth of Omani SMEs and start-ups that have products and services to export but may lack the know-how on where and how to start their export journey. The June 22 event is an opportunity for these businesses to get advice from market experts as well as hear from successful exporters on their experience and learnings.

"At the end of the day, our aim is to inspire more Omani SMEs to look at the opportunities afforded by exporting," emphasised Al



HH Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Founder, The Firm

Adawi.

When it comes to exploiting new markets through exports, Oman has its fair share of international success, from car batteries and fibre optic cables to marble and sanitary ware.

Companies the length and breadth of Oman producing value-added products and services

exported to over 130 countries. But given that two thirds of growth in global trade is coming from new entrants, there is a constant demand for business advice and support in breaking into high-growth market economies and overcoming barriers.

Despite the ongoing global health pandemic, inflationary

DESPITE THE ONGOING GLOBAL HEALTH PANDEMIC, INFLATIONARY PRESSURES AND SUPPLY CHAIN PROBLEMS OMANI EXPORTS REMAIN ROBUST.

pressures and supply chain problems Omani exports remain robust. In 2021, Oman's non-oil exports to India reached \$1.2 billion a jump of 172 per cent on 2020.

While Oman-made exports to the US hit nearly \$500 million in February 2022 up 141 per cent on the same period last year. Positive trade data that indicates increased demand for Omani goods and services in two of the world's most competitive markets.

"These are very encouraging results," remarked the MoCIIP Director. "Exports of goods and services already contribute a significant amount to Oman's economy but it is vital we maintain and capitalise on this momentum in order to meet the challenges we face today and in the future."

Now really is the time for local businesses to focus on the bigger

picture and explore opportunities elsewhere, and the reality is they do not have to look too far to successfully diversify their export markets."

However, opportunity does not come without risk, points out Al Adawi, "To minimise these risks I would urge local businesses seeking to take their first steps into overseas markets to attend Wednesday's Tejarah Talks and take advantage of the wide range of expert advice on offer."

The MoCIIP Director concluded: "The world is facing a number of significant challenges but our focus is firmly on building a stronger and more resilient economy and increasing Oman's export capacity will be pivotal to this. Our SMEs are the multinationals of tomorrow and we must focus on nurturing their export potential. Hopefully, Wednesday's Tejarah Talks will help small firms break into the international scene and for larger companies boost their global presence."

To reserve your Tejarah Talks seat, e-mail your name and contact details to: TT@tejarah.gov.om

Bioenergy harnessing potentials with mesquite, other weeds and farm residues

HEMANATHA JAYASURIYA & AHMED AL BUSAIDY

The Sultanate of Oman is estimated to produce more or less 400,000 metric tonnes of dates annually and certainly producing a huge amount of date plant residues.

There are other crops that produce plant residues seasonally and in most cases these residues are burnt at farm sites. In addition, there are unwanted weed plants destroyed at farm level either by using chemicals or by other means.

Mesquite weed plant is found to be rapidly spreading in the Sultanate of Oman affecting farmland and other areas such as wadis and canals affecting drainage systems. Mesquite eradication and control is one of the challenges in Oman.

This article highlights the benefits of using weeds and agricultural residues to harness bioenergy that can be used in cooking, barbeque and other heating applications.

Mesquite has several species native to America and later introduced to many other continents such as South America, Africa, Australia, Asia and the Mideast.

Some countries introduced the plant to use as a stock food, shelter, and erosion control considering its fast growing characteristic even under arid conditions. Several negative effects of the Mesquite weed plant has readily recognised as follows:

- The plant has large thorns that can injure animals and humans,
- People have shown allergic behaviour to pollen from the plant,
- The toxic behaviour of its fruit to foraging livestock, causing their teeth to fall off.
- This plant quickly grows

	Calorific value (MJ/kg)		
	Main branches	Medium branches	Small branches
Mesquite plant residues	15.96	15.51	17.18
	Leaflets	Trunk	Fruit stalks
Date palm residues	15.62	12.28	16.41

Table 1: Average calorific values in mesquite and date palm components in this research

Figure 1 (below) : Equipment and apparatus used for bioenergy harnessing project



(a) Biomass briquetting machine



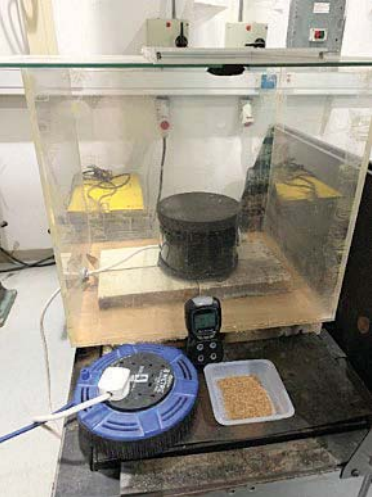
(b) Mesquite weed plant



(c) Briquettes



(d) Bomb calorimeter



(e) Gas emission analysis

and covers large parts of a wadi, and tends to alter wadi flows and thereby have a negative impact on groundwater levels.

It is well-understood fact that the need for eradication of this plant and its' rapid spread over wadis, arable or abandoned landscapes in Oman.

An SQU funded research project, which is in-progress proposed two methods of eradicating the weed plants and using farm residues; developing a bioenergy harnessing method and making charcoal as a soil amendment, hence realising financial benefits while accomplishing the weed eradication and profitable use of farm residues.

Under bioenergy harness system, shredding the dried plant components and making biomass

briquette can be done. These briquettes can be used for heating, cooking and barbeque making.

Under the project, bioenergy harness system, biomass briquette making system was developed and the energy potential was evaluated.

The calorific values of the biomass made from different components of the plant were estimated using a bomb calorimeter, and compared with

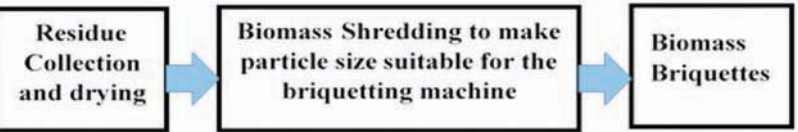


Figure 2: Biomass briquette making process

IIA Oman holds chief audit executive forum

MUSCAT: The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Oman Chapter (sponsored by CBFS), held its 2nd Chief Audit Executive (CAE) Forum Meeting recently under the theme, 'Internal Audit as Agent of Change'.

More than fifty CAEs and Deputy CAEs participated in the meeting representing various organisations and industries. UAE IIA President Abdulqadir Obeid Ali was the keynote speaker and Chief Guest for the session.

Muneer al Mughairy, President IIA Oman, welcomed the chief guest and Chief Audits. He shared IIA Oman key achievements and initiatives in 2021 and 2022.

He highlighted the role of IIA in nurturing local talent for meeting market demand and appreciated the role of Capital Market Authority (CMA) in developing governance processes in the country which enhances investors' confidence.

He also recognised the need for further involvement of Internal Auditors with IIA through enrollment for Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) classes, keeping the membership up to date and attending continued professional education sessions that are offered by IIA.

The CAEs discussed the positive role internal audit performs in the face of fast paced technology changes and the importance of understanding the business operating environment and risk context to enable Internal Auditors to become change agents and trusted advisers for the organisation.

A panel discussion was conducted where CAEs shared their experiences on the challenges faced during the pandemic and lasting impact on Internal Audit and other functions within the organisations.

Russia gas squeeze threatens Europe’s stockpiling plans

With France becoming the latest country to be cut off from Russian natural gas and supplies sharply reduced in Italy and Germany, Europe’s summer stockpiling plans are looking shaky.

As the war in Ukraine nears its fourth month, Moscow is hitting Europe — which gets some 40 per cent of its gas from Russia — where it hurts.

Several European countries, including Italy and Germany, are highly reliant upon Russian gas for their energy needs and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi has bluntly accused energy giant Gazprom of lying over the reasons for the cuts.

Europe uses less gas in summer months as it does not need to heat buildings, but countries are racing to replenish their reserves for the following winter. The EU wants the gas storage infrastructures of its member states to be filled to at least 80 per cent of their capacity by November.

The gas squeeze, which pushes prices up, “has consequences, not immediately on consumption, but on stockpiling”, Draghi said, adding that Italy’s reserves were at 52 per cent.

The reduction in supplies will also be costly for manufacturers — especially in countries like Germany, where factories in the chemical, steel, cement and fertiliser industries need huge quantities of gas.

“The Russians have been using gas as a weapon for a long time”, Thierry Bros, a professor at the Sciences Po university in Paris, said.

“The Kremlin uses the principle of uncertainty, one day something and the next day something else, to... stretch the commodities market and drive up prices”.

Poland, Bulgaria, Finland and the Netherlands have had their natural gas deliveries suspended over refusing to follow Russia’s demand that it be paid in rubles.

The latest blows hit France, where operator GRTgaz said it had not received any Russian gas by pipeline since June 15, and Italy, which faced a third day of reduced supplies. — AFP

The Kremlin uses the principle of uncertainty, one day something and the next day something else, to... stretch the commodities market and drive up prices

THIERRY BROS
Professor



NO MORE!

A worker removes McDonald's logotype from a restaurant in Moscow on Friday. McDonald's sold its Russian business to Russian businessman Alexander Govor, a licensee of the chain. Former McDonald's restaurants in Russia have been renamed "Vkusno i tochka" (tasty and that's it!). — AFP

The growing trend of Buy Now, Pay Later



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

LET’S NOT FORGET THAT MOST OF THE BNPL PLAYERS ARE EARLY-STAGE GROWTH COMPANIES – TO GROW

FinTech is a concept that I saw evolving from its inception. From being just a trendy buzzword, to a full scale segment of the financial industry. One of the most recent trends is the Buy Now, Pay Later, also referred to as BNPL.

The new form of lending sees me be living its golden age.

Apple has just announced its intentions to enter the Buy Now, Pay Later space in a more aggressive fashion than expected — Apple’s BNPL will be available anywhere where Apple Pay is accepted (US only for now).

With this move, Apple is moving deeper into financial services by opting to manage their own credit decisions, leveraging their vast cash balance sheet, instead of partnering with an institution like Goldman Sachs as they did on the Apple Card.

Apple’s BNPL feature works on the Mastercard Instalments technology platform, helping mostly banks to offer easy instalment products to their customers.

Prior to this announcement, BNPL stocks had already gone into a tailspin as the model’s defensibility, rising competition (including now from Apple), and regulatory risks are called into

question.

The state of the sector isn’t as bad, however, as suggested by some news reports, which reflect calculations from peaks that were part of a wider tech-stock bubble and were not sustainable.

As more inflation rate hikes are coming from record low levels, BNPL companies are facing higher costs in borrowing funds, which eat into the margins derived from providing interest-free instalment loans for shoppers at point of sale.

Let’s not forget that most of the BNPL players are early-stage growth companies — to grow, they need to keep spending money on areas like marketing and technology for user acquisition, resulting in a multi-year path to profitability.

Consequently, some predict that BNPL as we’ve known it in the last few years will not survive due to “structurally negative unit profitability, which it obscures through highly misleading reporting”.

I had a conversation with Radek Jezbera, the CEO of Kilde, an alternative lending platform licensed under the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

“Industry participants in this space will increasingly fall into two camps defined by their customer bases and levels of consumer loyalty.”

Said Jezbera, “The likes of Atome, Klarna, and Afterpay, who have high levels of consumer loyalty and active customer bases, will likely pivot to become global shopping and financial super apps, leveraging their robust customer relationships and brand recognition to penetrate into all aspects of financial services.

The second group of BNPLs, which focus on the merchant side, will most likely continue servicing e-commerce merchants. As competition grows, this will exert increasing pressure on merchant fees and margin. Higher borrowing costs threaten to hit all kinds of growth-oriented fintechs, impacting their margins, while at the same time consumer spending may be decreasing.”

And on how the current market in influencing the BNPL trend, Jexbera commented: “Even through an economic downturn people will keep shopping and might be increasingly tempted to try new ways of borrowing at zero cost, which is precisely what BNPL offers.

In emerging markets specifically, people are only at the start of their consumption journey and pay-later plans may look more compelling when compared to putting a purchase on credit cards as rates rise.”

Putin’s war and the German economic model



DALIA MARIN

The author, professor of International Economics at the School of Management of the Technical University of Munich, is a research fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research and non-resident fellow at Bruegel

Will Germany’s economic model survive Russian President

Vladimir Putin’s war on Ukraine? As I noted in a recent talk at Harvard University, answering that question requires revisiting recent economic history.

Germany’s economy was transformed after the fall of communism in 1989.

Liberalisation of trade with the country’s eastern neighbours had three profound effects at home. First, it led to de-centralised wage bargaining. Second, it had a flattening effect on hierarchical management in German firms. And third, it extended German production networks into Central and Eastern Europe.

On the first count, the opening of ex-communist Europe — where labour costs were lower — changed the power equilibrium between Germany’s trade unions and

employers’ federation. With the loss of union bargaining power, wage negotiations shifted from the national level to the firm level.

Owing to this new structural wage restraint (the so-called Lohnzurückhaltung), unit labour costs in Germany declined by 30 per cent between 1995 and 2012. Germany was the only country in Europe to experience such declines.

While the 2002-05 Hartz labour-market reforms are often blamed for reducing German wages, the data indicate that they played no role in this development.

The opening of the ex-communist countries also introduced decentralised management. As trade became more internationalised and competitive, innovation and the generation of new ideas became more important. To encourage more creativity among workers, German firms delegated decision-making power to lower levels of management.

This approach proved highly

effective. Germany’s business culture increasingly championed quality and empowering lower levels of management led firms to introduce more products that customers appreciated.

The typical (median) German firm that embraced decentralised management increased its export-market share by a factor of three, while firms that stuck with centralised management generally recorded no such gains.

Finally, the opening of ex-communist Europe led to expanded production networks, which reduced costs and helped Germany deal with a severe skills shortage.

Germany’s eastern neighbours offered a large pool of skilled workers, particularly engineers. In 1998, 16 per cent of the these countries’ populations had university degrees, compared to 15 per cent of Germans.

Moreover, the growth of Germany’s human-capital stock (based on measures across

five categories of educational attainment) had slowed to an annual rate of 0.18 per cent in the 1990s, compared to 0.75 per cent in the 1980s.

Thus, when German firms invested in Central and Eastern Europe, they employed three times as many people with academic degrees and 11 per cent more research personnel in their subsidiaries than in their parent firms.

By the late 2000s, the resulting supply chains had reduced costs and increased productivity in German multinational firms by over 20 per cent. Germany went from being the sick man of Europe in the 1990s to the economic powerhouse that it is today.

Will these economic arrangements survive Russia’s invasion of Ukraine? To answer that, it helps to revisit the period following the 2008 global financial crisis. While transnational supply chains were a major engine of

globalisation after the fall of communism, and especially after China’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001, they stopped expanding after 2008.

Increased global uncertainty led to an accelerating trend of reshoring to high-income countries, including Germany. The risk of non-delivery for key inputs made firms in high-income countries reassess their production networks.

While the global financial crisis ended hyper-globalisation, the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have triggered de-globalisation. The coronavirus introduced an unprecedented degree of global uncertainty, compounding the legacy effects of the 2008 shock.

Kemal Kilic of LMU Munich and I estimate that Covid-19 has reduced global supply chains by 35 per cent, measured by imported inputs from developing countries as a share of total inputs.

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Making of traditional Chicken Makbous

A Jordanian chef who revels in preparing this authentic dish is Executive Chef Mohammad Aba Atya at Fraser Suites Muscat. Other Omani dishes which he loves to prepare are the Lamb Shuwa with kabuli rice, meat arsiya, chicken harees, chicken tareed, and meat makbous.... **P20**

No, Happy the elephant isn't a person, New York's top court says

AS INTELLIGENT AS she is, Happy the elephant doesn't meet the definition of a "person" and is therefore not being illegally confined in the Bronx Zoo, New York's top court ruled on Tuesday in a closely watched case for animal rights. The state's Court of Appeals 5-2 verdict against the habeas corpus proceeding filed by the Nonhuman Rights Project (NRP) means Happy will remain in her one-acre lot, where she has lived for 45 years, rather than moving to a much larger sanctuary. NRP had contended Asian elephant, who was born in the wild in 1971, is an

"extraordinarily cognitively complex and autonomous nonhuman" who should be "recognised as a legal person with the right to bodily liberty protected by the common law." It was the latest legal defeat for the organisation, which has previously made similar petitions on behalf of other elephants as well as chimpanzees throughout the United States. The majority decision, written by Chief Justice Janet DiFiore, acknowledged "no one disputes that elephants are intelligent beings deserving of proper care and compassion."



But she affirmed the decisions of lower courts that previously heard the case, writing: "Because the writ of habeas corpus is intended to protect the liberty right of human beings to be free of unlawful confinement, it has no applicability to Happy, a nonhuman animal who is not a 'person' subjected to illegal detention." "Granting legal personhood to a non-human animal in such a manner would have significant implications for the interactions of humans and animals in

all facets of life, including risking the disruption of property rights, the agricultural industry (among others), and medical research efforts," DiFiore added. If such relief were granted to elephants, "What of dolphins — or dogs? What about cows or pigs or chickens — species routinely confined in conditions far more restrictive than the elephant enclosure at the Bronx Zoo?" Reacting to the news, NRP praised the two dissenting judges, and said their views, as well as the fact that the case

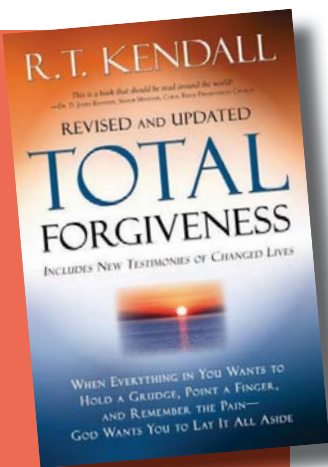
was heard in New York's highest court, represented hope for the cause in the future. Justice Rowan Wilson wrote: "When the majority answers, 'No, animals cannot have rights,' I worry for that animal, but I worry even more greatly about how that answer denies and denigrates the human capacity for understanding, empathy and compassion." Wilson recalled the case of Ota Benga, a member of the Mbuti pygmy people who was kidnapped from Africa and placed on exhibit at the Bronx Zoo in 1906, attracting a quarter of a million visitors. Wilson said that while Benga was a human being and Happy was not, "The crucial point from both Mr Benga's and Happy's confinement... is that both suffered greatly from confinement that, though not in violation of any statutory law, produced little or no social benefit." DiFiore retorted that was "an odious comparison with concerning implications," adding, "We are unpersuaded." She concluded with the observation that enormous interest generated by the case was "a testament to the complicated and ever-evolving relationship between human beings and other animals," but stressed that ongoing debate should be settled by legislation, not the courts. — AFP

READ

TOTAL FORGIVENESS

BY RT KENDALL

Crippled with debt, Grant and Ally go head-to-head in this agonising competition show to prove they'll do ANYTHING to pay off their student loans.



CENTURY-OLD

One of the first Leica cameras ever produced sold at auction in Germany on Saturday for 714.4 million (\$151 million). The Leica O-Series prototype (serial number 105) is nearly 100 years old and very rare. It is one of the first 35mm cameras ever made. — dpa



BYE, BYE BTS?

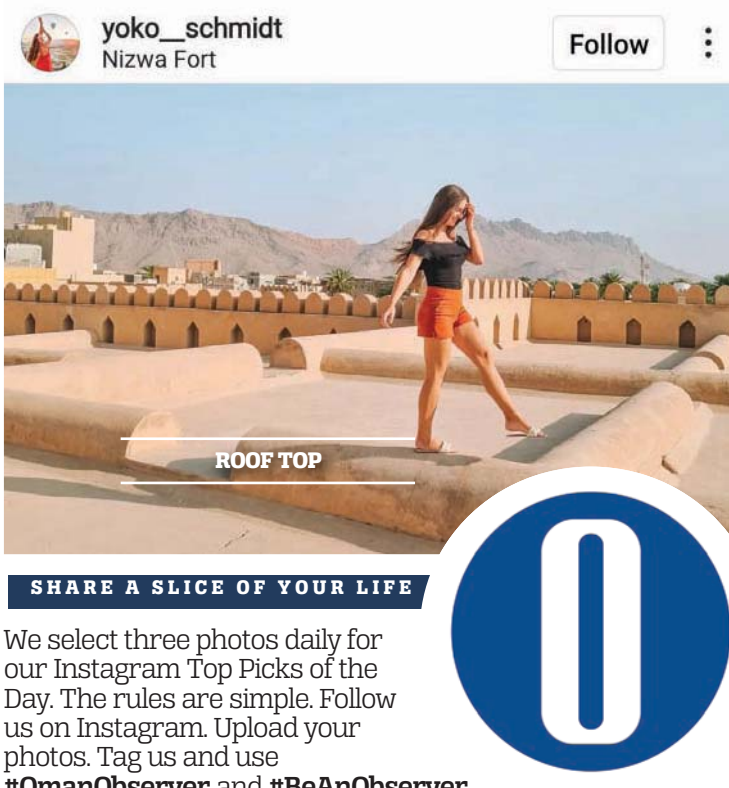
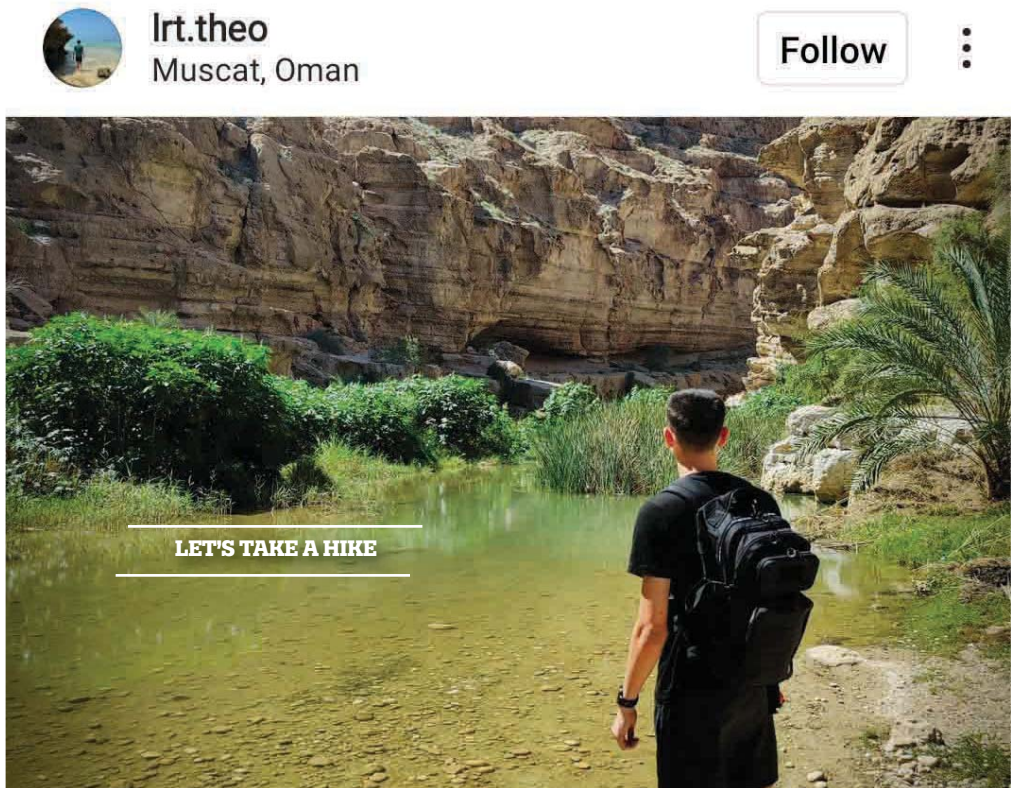
A woman cycles past a mural depicting RM, a member of K-pop group BTS, in Goyang, northwest of Seoul. — AFP





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

It's a small world: Disney to fly guests round all 12 parks for \$110,000



NOT SURE WHICH Disney resort to visit next summer?

Disney chiefs have a solution for its most obsessive — and deep-pocketed — fans, offering a round-the-world package trip to all 12 parks, starting at a hefty \$110,000 per person.

"Disney Parks Around The World — A Private Jet Adventure" will fly 75 mega-fans around the world in July 2023, with VIP visits to Disney resorts in California, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Paris and Florida.

Across 24 days, there will also be stops at countries which do not have Disney parks, including tours of the Taj Mahal in Agra, India and Egypt's Pyramids of Giza.

According to its brochure, the "bucket list adventure" also includes a "rare opportunity to be a guest at Summit Skywalker Ranch," founded by "Star Wars" creator George Lucas outside San Francisco.

"You'll travel in luxury via a VIP-configured Boeing 757, operated by Icelandair, with long-range capabilities that allows for direct flights to maximise your time in each destination," it says.

Guests will be joined on board by "experts and staff, who use an audiovisual system for informative briefings and lectures," while Disney "leaders" and "Imagineers" will be on hand at various points.

As well as the movies, TV shows and theme parks it is best known for, the Walt Disney Company has long offered travel packages, including cruises.

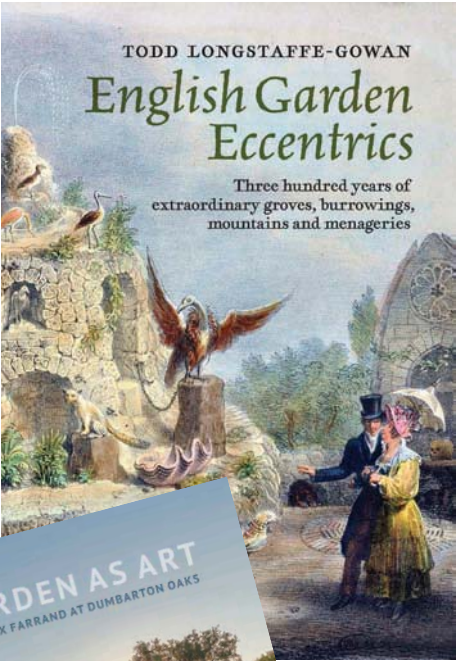
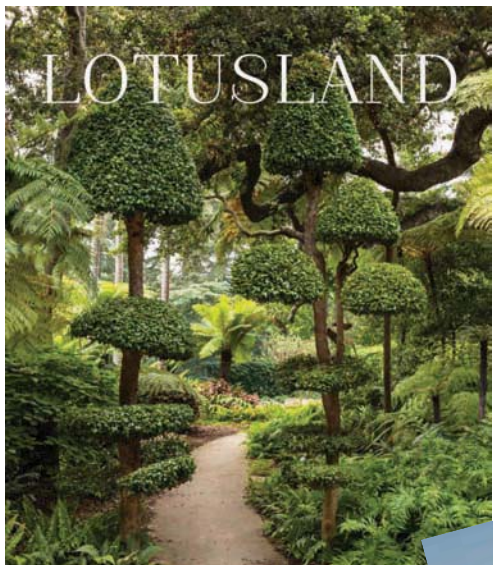
With theme park attendances and tourism more generally recovering from the pandemic, Disney's latest offering is its most luxurious yet.

The \$109,995 per person price tag is based on two people sharing, with those who travel solo facing an additional surcharge of at least \$10,995.

No discount is offered for children, who must be at least 12, and airfare to Los Angeles and from Orlando for the first and last legs is excluded. — AFP

HOME IMPROVEMENT

Gardens of Earthly Delights



IN THE SHADOWS of skyscrapers and apartment blocks, foragers find a paradise among the slippery rocks of London's River Thames. Scouring crevices for bits of ceramic, glass, carved stone and metal, they hope for "the dopamine hit released by making a find," as historian Malcolm Russell writes in "Mudlark's: Hidden Histories From the River Thames" (Princeton University Press, \$35, 224 pages).

Bone hairpins surfacing in the muck may have been used by beauticians in ancient Roman colonies. Chinese coins could have belonged to stowaways smuggled aboard British merchant ships in 18th-century Canton. A 19th-century glass rod would have served to crush sugar cubes harvested by enslaved Africans on Caribbean plantations. Syringes for mercury injections helped Victorian sex workers relieve their syphilis symptoms.

Russell makes sense of the millennia of currents that jumbled together bullet casings, rosary beads, printers' metal type and bristleless toothbrushes.

With crisp geometric footprints. Farrand is at the heart of a trio of new or revived books, starting with "Garden as Art: Beatrix Farrand at Dumbarton Oaks," an essay collection edited by Thaisa Way, Dumbarton Oaks' program director of garden and landscape studies (Dumbarton Oaks, \$49, 292 pages).

Way also contributed a preface to a new, revised edition of Farrand's "Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks" (\$35, 272 pp), with commentary by Jonathan Kavalier, the site's director of gardens and grounds. And Monacelli has released a new edition of Judith B. Tankard's biography "Beatrix Farrand: Garden Artist, Landscape Architect" (\$60, 248 pp).

The books trace the neighborhood's origins in farmland tilled by enslaved people before the Civil War. Farrand preserved many 19th-century trees, "unhurt and undisturbed," as she reassured Mildred Bliss. A creeping fig vine that sprouted in the 1860s or so still engulfs the interior of the Blisses' orangery.

Farrand, who also helped fill the Blisses' library with lavishly illustrated garden literature, wrote that the grounds were meant to offer peace "even to the most restless mind."

astonished visitors with sculptured terrain. The property owners sometimes fended off depression by focusing on pruning trees into the shapes of peacocks or lining pathways with chiseled stone figures of famous authors.

Hydraulics powered thunderous waterfalls, human-made mountaintops were covered with pulverized white stone to simulate snowfall, and grottoes teemed with ceramic gnomes or pet kangaroos.

Some sites were praised for amounting to "extraordinary caprice," and others accused of "reckless whimsicality," Longstaffe-Gowan writes. One 19th-century aristocrat, Dame Eliza Broughton, loved her miniature Alps to the point that her will dictated that her corpse be "carried to the grave by my Gardener."

Like many of the landscape feats that Longstaffe-Gowan describes, the Broughton peaks have vanished.

Starting in the 1940s, retired opera singer Ganna Walska brought in teams of personnel to organise plants with strong personalities at Lotusland, her property in Montecito, California. She welcomed visitors to her bamboo groves and cypress mazes, reachable via paths lined in amethysts and stone lanterns.

"Lotusland" (Rizzoli, \$60, 288 pages), with a foreword by architect Marc Appleton and photos by Lisa Romerein, offers close looks at mermen sculptures bearing tridents and fountains made of tiered clamshells.

Sprinkled throughout the book are portraits of Walska wearing flowers in her hair and exuberantly patterned clothes, her arms outstretched in emulation of the forms of her agaves, waterlilies and lemon trees. — NYT

FASHION

Kim Kardashian accused of damaging Marilyn Monroe dress at Met gala



THE PRIVATE MUSEUM that owns an iconic dress worn by Marilyn Monroe allowed it to be "permanently damaged" when it lent it to reality star Kim Kardashian for her appearance at the Met Gala extravaganza last month, a Monroe memorabilia collector alleged on Wednesday.

A platinum blonde Kardashian shined but also stirred controversy when she donned the stunning skintight gown Monroe wore in 1962 to sing "Happy Birthday, Mr President" to John F. Kennedy.

Scott Fortner, a collector who runs a website dedicated entirely to Monroe, released before and after photos this week of the crystal-studded cream gown.

The after shots were taken by a friend of Fortner, who saw the dress on display on Sunday at curiosity museum Ripley's Believe It or Not! in Los Angeles, which owns the dress and had allowed Kardashian to wear it.

The comparison shots seem to show small tears in the fabric near hooks that fastened the dress together as well as missing crystals and others hanging by a thread.

The alleged damage to the gown, which Ripley's bought at auction for a record \$4.8 million, has drawn widespread criticism on social media in recent days.

In an update published to his Instagram account on Wednesday, Fortner specified that "I blame Ripley's, as they allowed the dress to be worn."

"I feel that any and every celebrity offered a chance to wear this garment very likely would jump at the opportunity," he said. "There's a reason someone would want to wear it. Kim K just happened to be the one who got to do it."

"It's now permanently damaged, and likely would have been damaged regardless of who wore it," Fortner said.

Asked by AFP about the accusations, Ripley's did not respond on Wednesday afternoon.

In early May, Ripley's trumpeted the opportunity for Kardashian to wear the dress. "Great care was taken to preserve this piece of history. With input from garment conservators, appraisers, archivists, and insurance, the garment's condition was top priority," the company said.

Kardashian, who reportedly went on a major diet to be able to squeeze into the legendary garment, did not respond to the allegations on her social. — AFP



art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | JUNE 19 | 2022

Making of traditional Chicken Makbous

By Liju Cherian

Chicken makbous is a traditional spiced Arab rice dish that is similar to Indian biryani, and is popular in the Sultanate of Oman. A Jordanian chef who revels in preparing this authentic dish is Executive Chef Mohammad Aba Atya at Fraser Suites Muscat.

Other Omani dishes which he loves to prepare are the Lamb Shuwa with kabuli rice, meat arsiya, chicken harees, chicken tareed and meat makbous. The Oak Restaurant at Fraser Suites Muscat offers a wide range of Middle Eastern and international cuisine, as well as local favourites which chef Mohammad loves preparing new dishes especially with Omani products at the restaurant.

Ingredients:
Onion: 3 numbers
Chicken: 2 breast
Cloves: 4 pieces
Ginger: teaspoon (Chopped)
Cinnamon stick: 1 stick
Turmeric powder: one teaspoon
Cardamom whole: 5 number
Coriander powder: 1 teaspoon
Coriander seeds: 6 numbers
Black pepper: 5 numbers
Dry lemon: 1 teaspoon
Salt: As per taste
Green chilli: 1 piece chopped
Chilli powder: Half teaspoon
Ghee: 250 gms
Tomato slice: 1 number
Basmati Rice: 250 gms
Bay leaf: 3 leaves
Raisin: 10 gms
Fresh coriander: Garnish
Fried onion: Garnish

METHOD OF PREPARATION:

First in a pan put ghee and make it a little warm. Once the ghee is warm add sliced onion and cook for about 2 minutes. After the onion becomes brown in colour, add chopped garlic and chopped ginger and cook for 2 minutes. After this add cinnamon stick, cloves, black pepper, whole coriander seed, bay leaf, chilli powder and chicken. Sautéed for about 10 minutes. After this add a fresh tomato slice and cook for one minute and then add rice with 300 ml chicken stock water, salt, dry lemon and turmeric powder and cover it and



cook for 20 minutes in low flame. Then take out the chicken makbous in a bowl and add freshly chopped coriander, raisin, cashew nut and fried onion as garnish on the top. Serve with raita and tomato salsa. The dish can be served for 2 to 3 people.

ABOUT THE CHEF:

Mohammad Aba Atya from Jordan has been the Executive Chef at Fraser Suites Muscat since 2020. He has a Bachelor in Hotel Management from the Institute for Training Tourism and Hotel in Amman, Jordan.

He has about 12 years of work experience in the hospitality industry having worked his way up with several star hotels in Jordan.

As a child, he was always interested in

food and hospitality as young as the age of 9. He always used to help his mother with cooking and began enjoying the art of cooking food.

Mohammad began his career as a trainee with InterContinental Amman (Jordan), and the best part of being a trainee is that you get the chance to learn cooking in all kitchen areas. He won the Best Trainee Award in the kitchen area with special praise from his chef who was highly impressed with his cooking style. After this he worked as Commis 3 in the main kitchen with InterContinental Hotel and later moved up with promotion as Commis1.

Later, he moved to Logan Hotel Dead Sea, Jordan, as demi chef de parties which exposed him to fresh challenges where he learnt about different types of cuisine where he worked for 3 years.

After he earned appreciation of his guests who presented his works on various online platforms, Mohammad joined as a senior sous chef at Holiday Inn Hotel Amman where he worked under many experienced chefs who were known for cuisine infusion. From here he moved to Saudi Arabia, where he learnt new ways to cook food, new thinking like PNL, HECCP, staff training and motivation and food coasting.

Mohammad moved to Muscat as the Executive Chef with Fraser Suites Muscat where his vision is to make food the first choice for the guests. He has planned novel ways and launched food promotions like the seafood festival, Arabic food theme festival, Suwali nights and others.

He is presently working in coordination with banquets, catering and three other restaurants in order to share his best experience to the guests.

CONSERVATION

Working 24/7 to save baby manatee orphaned in Colombia



LAST SEPTEMBER, Tasajerito the manatee was found lost in a Colombian swamp, just three days old and separated from his mother.

Nine months later, the baby sea cow weighs as much as an adult woman and is bottle fed round the clock by doting aquarium staff.

Though much stronger now, Tasajerito's prognosis is still touch-and-go, said Angela Davila, a veterinarian at the Rodadero Aquarium in Santa Marta in northern Colombia, near where he was found.

"Tasajerito is... still considered critical", Davila told AFP. "He appears strong, he appears lively and to be feeding well, but things can change in a heartbeat."

Rescued by fishermen, Tasajerito was brought to the aquarium with little hope of survival.

A search for his mother proved fruitless. Now safely ensconced in a dedicated pool at the aquarium, he has clung to life – increasing his consumption of a special vitamin-boosted milk formula six-fold in a few months.

Today, Tasajerito measures over 1.5 metres (4.9 feet) in length and weighs 53 kilograms (117 pounds).

Yet, he is still "a newborn", said Rodadero marine biologist Julieth Prieto, who noted that manatees are raised by their mothers for five years and suckle for half that time.

"This makes the rehabilitation process... a challenge because we have to meet those needs that the mother usually provides", she said.

'VULNERABLE' SPECIES

Tasajerito's human foster par-

ents are also teaching him to float, dive and swim.

To be released into the wild one day – hopefully in about two years' time – he will have to grow to between three and four metres in length and weigh some 600 kg.

The American Manatee species (Trichechus manatus), to which Tasajerito belongs, is listed as "vulnerable" to extinction on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, its population of some 10,000 individuals on the decline.

Threats include residential and commercial development, aquaculture and shipping lanes, with watercraft strikes responsible for a large number of deaths, according to the IUCN.

In Colombia, hunting by humans is a major threat, as are hippos – a foreign species introduced by drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, who imported some as pets in the 1980s.

The hippos now number more than 100, competing for food and space with manatees.

The manatee is one of the world's largest aquatic mammals, and according to Prieto, fulfils "irreplaceable ecological functions" in its population area that stretches from Brazil's east coast all the way to the southeastern United States.

Seasonal migrants, they help keep rivers and water channels clear, devouring plants as much as 50 kg of aquatic plants each everyday.

"If this species were to become extinct, we would have to dredge to restore water flow between rivers, swamps and the sea", Prieto said. — AFP