

HM receives thanks from Kuwait Emir

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received thanks from Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the 2nd anniversary of his accession to power. In the cable, Shaikh Nawaf expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation for His Majesty's congratulations and best wishes. He lauded the deep-rooted relations binding the two countries and their peoples, wishing His Majesty good health. Shaikh Nawaf also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.



HM, KING OF JORDAN HOLD TALKS

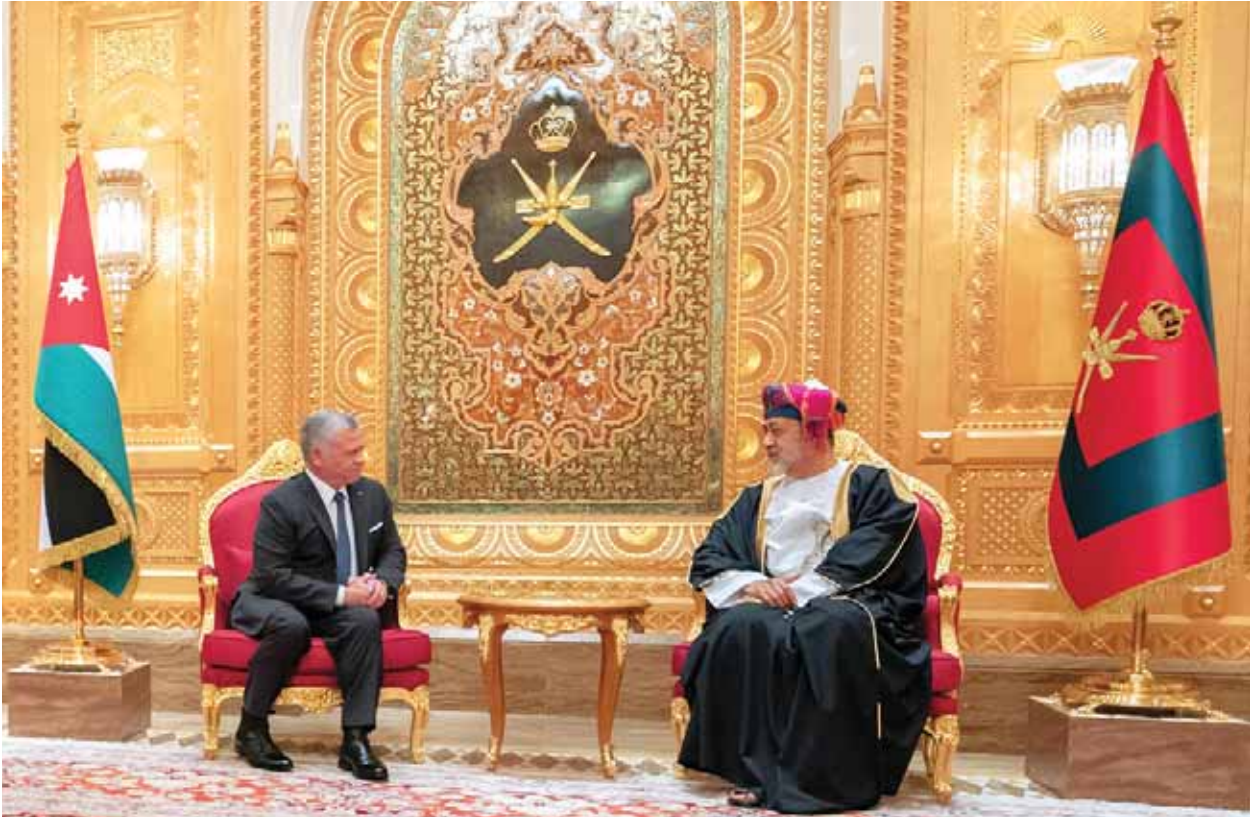


HIS MAJESTY
CONFERS
OMAN CIVIL ORDER
FIRST CLASS ON
KING ABDULLAH

KING ABDULLAH
AWARDS SUPREME
ORDER OF THE
RENAISSANCE TO
HIS MAJESTY

HIS MAJESTY
HOSTS DINNER
BANQUET IN
HONOUR OF KING
ABDULLAH

KING ABDULLAH
PRESENTS
HIS MAJESTY THE
SULTAN AAL AL BAYT
HOLY QURAN



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik held an official session of talks with King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the session, His Majesty the Sultan hailed the King's visit to the Sultanate of Oman. He wished King Abdullah II and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay. On his turn, the Royal guest expressed his sincere sentiments and appreciation for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him by His Majesty the Sultan.

During the session, the two monarchs reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding Oman and Jordan. It also touched on various aspects of cooperation with a view to enhancing fraternal ties and the Omani and Jordanian

people's aspirations for progress and prosperity.

The two leaders also discussed regional and international developments.

OFFICIAL SESSION

The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers; HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan; HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al

Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister (Head of the Mission of Honour); Dr Hamad bin Said al Oufi, Head of the Private Office; and Shaikh Hilal bin Marhoon al Ma'amari, Ambassador of Oman to Jordan.

It was attended from the Jordanian side by Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan; Dr Bisher al Khasawneh, Prime Minister; Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates; Jaafar Hassan, Director of the King's Office; and Amjad al Qahaiwi, Ambassador of Jordan to Oman. — ONA



HM welcomes King of Jordan



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq led the welcoming party for King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan when he arrived here on Tuesday on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman lasting two days.

When the jet of King Abdullah II touched ground at the Royal Airport, His Majesty the Sultan met the guest at the foot of the ramp, welcoming him and wishing him and the accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Oman.

Along with His Majesty the Sultan, King Abdullah II was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court,

Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister (Head of the Mission of Honour), Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education (Escort of the Queen), Shaikh Hilal bin Marhoon al Ma'amari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amjad al Qahaiwi, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Sultanate of Oman, and members of the mission of honour.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan and the Jordanian Monarch proceeded to the reception hall, passing between two

rows of the guard of honour of the Royal Guard of Oman, as Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, welcomed the King, the Queen and the Crown Prince of Jordan.

After a short stay, the motorcade of His Majesty the Sultan and his guest, King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, left the Royal Airport heading to Al Alam Palace for an official reception ceremony.

Before the arrival of the main vehicle of the motorcade at Al Alam Palace, a squadron of cavalry lined the two sides of the road heading to the gate of the palace.

Upon the arrival of the motorcade of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and King Abdullah II at the entrance of

Al Alam Palace, the RGO band played a welcoming tune to the accompaniment of trumpets, as the motorcade entered the courtyard of Al Alam Palace.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan accompanied King of Jordan to the Dais of Honour where the Royal Anthem of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was played, while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute for the guest.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying the Jordanian Monarch, welcoming them and wishing them a pleasant stay.

On his turn, King Abdullah II of Jordan shook hands with some members of the Royal Family, Chairmen of the State

Council and Majlis Ash'ishura, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

After that, His Majesty the Sultan and the guest proceeded to the hall where they took Arabian coffee.

King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein and Queen Rania al Abdullah are accompanied during the visit by an official delegation comprising Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan, Dr Bisher al Khasawneh, Prime Minister, Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Jaafar Hassan, Director of the King's Office, Amjad al Qahaiwi, Ambassador of Jordan to Oman, and some officials. — ONA



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WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 5 | 2022

HM HOSTS DINNER BANQUET IN HONOUR OF JORDANIAN KING



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted an official dinner at Al Alam Palace guesthouse this evening in honour of King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the occasion of his visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The dinner was attended by members of the Royal Family, chairmen of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Oman Police, as well as ambassadors of Arab and friendly countries. – **ONA**



HM the Sultan, King Abdullah II exchange orders, mementos

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, exchanged orders and commemorative gifts at Al Alam Palace on the occasion of the Jordanian Monarch's visit to Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan conferred on King Abdullah II "Oman Civil Order First Class,"

one of Oman's loftiest accolades, as a manifestation of His Majesty the Sultan's esteem for King Abdullah II and in appreciation for the strong ties binding the two countries.

Meanwhile, King Abdullah II awarded His Majesty the Sultan the Supreme Order of the Renaissance, one of the greatest knightships of Jordan, in demonstration of the monarch's

admiration for His Majesty the Sultan and in appreciation for the sincere ties of friendship between the two countries.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan presented a coveted Omani dagger as a commemorative gift to King Abdullah II, who reciprocated the gesture presenting His Majesty the Sultan with "Aal Al-Bayt Holy Quran".

The orders and commemorative

gifts' exchange ceremony was attended by Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Queen Rania al Abdullah. The ceremony was also attended by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Prince al Hussein Ibn Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan. — **ONA**

Honourable Lady hosts dinner in honour of Queen Rania



MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, hosted a dinner at Al Alam Palace in honour of Queen Rania, marking her visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The dinner was attended by a number of senior Omani female officials. – **ONA**



Strong cultural bond between Oman and Jordan

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Jordan assume significance due to their deep-rooted historical ties. It became stronger after the beginning of the Renaissance in the country. The ties gave impetus to education and knowledge sharing between the two countries.

From the beginning of the Renaissance in the Sultanate of Oman, the Jordanian position was different from the positions of some Arab governments, as Jordan provided support to the Sultanate of Oman even in its tough times.

The foundations of this distinguished relations were laid by late King Al Hussein bin Talal and late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

What represents the brotherly relationship between the two countries over time is the strong relationship that linked the two late leaders: Sultan Qaboos and Al Hussein bin Talal.

They had a personal friendship, as this relationship resulted in the presence of nearly six thousand Jordanian citizens



working in the Sultanate of Oman in the public and private sectors, mainly concentrated in the educational, academic, training and engineering sectors, and administrative and financial functions in companies, banks and factories.

This distinguished relationship between the two brotherly countries continued with King

Abdullah II. King of Jordan and late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos had strong personal ties.

Same bond is reflected between King Abdullah II and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Both exchange views, consultations and coordination on Arab and regional issues, guard the interest of the two brotherly countries and people to serve their nations and support

issues.

The websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan mention the cooperation of Jordan, its leadership, the government and the people for the Sultanate of Oman since the beginning of its blessed Renaissance, keeping pace with the path of goodness,

construction and development in it, and hastened to meet its needs of qualified cadres and expertise in the educational, economic, cultural and medical fields.

In the same manner, the Sultanate of Oman has been a support for Jordan in all times, and it has spared no effort in supporting its causes and directions.

On cultural and joint relations, the establishment of the Omani Studies Unit at Jordan's Al al-Bayt University in 1998, was an example of cultural engagement of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with Jordan.

Also, cultural cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is formed in literary participation in intellectual, literary forums and festivals. Even between Omani and Jordanian writers, in addition to the two countries' participation in international book fairs organised in Muscat and Amman.

In the field of academic relations, the Jordanian teaching bodies have contributed with their Omani counterparts in the educational renaissance that the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed in recent decades, as about hundreds of teachers and university professors are working in the Sultanate of Oman. Also, the trend for more cooperation in the educational, academic and scientific field in light of praising the Jordanian teacher distinction and psychological and social closeness to the Omani student.

SOHAR
PORT / FREEZONE



إعلان مناقصة TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders
تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصة أدناه

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SIPC 2022-77	Water Quality System Routine Maintenance	26.250

- تتضمن رسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة ومقدراها 5%
- يمكن للمقدمي العطاءات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداء من يوم الثلاثاء الموافق ٢٠٢٢/١٠/٤ الساعة ٩:٠٠ صباحاً وحتى يوم الخميس الموافق ٢٠٢٢/١٠/١٣ الساعة ٤:٠٠ مساءً.
- على مقدمي العطاءات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً.

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name اسم الحساب	Sohar Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name اسم البنك	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br البنك العربي ش.م.ع. فرع الرئيسي
SWIFT رمز السويفت كود	OMABOMRUXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هي الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
 - All SMEs are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الثانية: يتعين على مقدمي العطاءات تقديم المستندات التالية:

- طلب الحصول على النسخة الإلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة
- نسخة من إيصالات التحويل البنكي
- أوراق السجل التجاري للشركة على أن يتم إرسالها إلى:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الثالثة: سوف يستلم مقدمي العطاءات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

- يحق لشركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة قبول أو رفض أي مورد بدون الإفصاح عن الأسباب.
- يطلب من جميع المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة تقديم بطاقة زيادة إلى كاتب مستندات الشركة
- في حال وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصة الرجاء التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

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SOHAR
PORT / FREEZONE



إعلان مناقصة TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

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تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصة أدناه

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SFZ 2022/004	Upgrading of SOHAR Freezone Custom Inspection Facilities.	262.500

- تتضمن رسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة ومقدراها 5%
- يمكن للمقدمي العطاءات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداء من يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٠٢٢/١٠/٥ الساعة ٩:٠٠ صباحاً وحتى يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٠٢٢/١٠/١٩ الساعة ٤:٠٠ مساءً.
- على مقدمي العطاءات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً.

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SWIFT رمز السويفت كود	OMABOMRUXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted
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- في حال وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصة الرجاء التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

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Oman and India ministers hold fruitful discussions

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Tuesday V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs of India.

The two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation between Oman and India. They also underscored

the importance of boosting bilateral relations in all fields, especially in economic, business and scientific spheres.

The two sides touched on several regional and international matters of mutual interest.

Sayyid Badr congratulated India for hosting the G-20 Summit

in 2023.

The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashel al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Amit Narang, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman, and several officials from both sides. — ONA

Jewellery exhibition to mark 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties



TOKYO: Acting in cooperation with Yamanashi district, the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Tokyo opened the "Yamanashi Jewellery Exhibition" to mark the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Oman and Japan.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Princess Tsuguko and attended by government officials, Japan MPs and heads of diplomatic missions in Japan.

In a speech on the occasion, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Busaidi valued the existing cooperation between Oman's Embassy and Yamanashi district. He

hoped that the exposition will portray the cultural aspects of Oman.

On his turn, Kotaro Nagasaki, Governor of Yamanashi, hailed the efforts undertaken by Oman's Embassy in holding the exhibition and featuring Omani jewellery. He wished cooperation between the two sides would continue to gain grounds.

The exhibition comprised more than 90 Japanese jewellery and Omani gold and silver artefacts demonstrating antiqueness, traditional Omani cultural elements — like gold and silver works, as well as a video clip on Omani tourism attractions and landmarks. — ONA

Preparatory workshop on upcoming climate change conference held

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is organising the 15th workshop on developing the capabilities of Arab countries when participating in climate change negotiations.

The three-day workshop, held at the grounds of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), studies means of supporting Arab countries to implement the decisions of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and Bonn Climate Change Conference (June 2022).

The workshop also discusses key issues on the agenda of the upcoming COP27 in Egypt, which deals with climate-related measures of adaptation, mitigation, financing, assessment, transparency, response and technology.

The current workshop looks into links between science and policy and makes an overview of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as implications of the same to the Arab region.

The workshop includes discussions on Arab countries strategy for obtaining and



mobilising climate action funding through 2022-2030, the outcomes of Paris Climate Accord (2015) and a review of mitigation efforts—like carbon emission long-term strategies and the first international assessment of Paris Accord.

The workshop also deals with the Enhanced Transparency Framework and key elements of transition from the stage of Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) to the stages of Transparency and Response Assessment.

These cover the most recent findings on the impact of implementation of response measures and updates to the

Katowice Committee of Experts' work programme on the effects of implementation of response measures.

The workshop will go through the report on Arab countries' efforts on implementing the Paris Agreement in the agricultural sector. The report was drafted by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

The workshop seeks to coordinate regional stands and priorities in preparation for the COP27.

CAA is organising the workshop in cooperation with the ESCWA, the Arab League, the UNEP's West Asia Bureau and the Unesco. — ONA

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY CELEBRATION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, joins the world in marking the World Teachers' Day, which falls on October 5 of every year.

The International Teacher's Day commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the 1966 International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, which sets standards relating to their rights and responsibilities, ongoing training, employment, teaching and learning.

This year's World Teachers' Day, themed



"The Transformation of Education Begins with Teachers", highlights the procedures committed by member states at the Transforming Education Summit held in

September 2022 in New York.

The World Teachers' Day also underscores the importance of professional development for teachers, supporting innovation in the field, enhancing the position of teachers and their pivotal role in forming a more flexible educational system.

The Ministry of Education, through the programmes of the Specialised Institute for Vocational Training for Teachers, seeks to train and qualify teachers with the latest technologies and assessment standards and to qualify them to make a positive change in the educational field. — ONA

Training programme for MoH staff



MUSCAT: The Academy of Leadership & Decision-Making continues conducting a series of training programmes: "Problem Solving & Decision-Making" for the employees of the Ministry of Health (MoH). The three-day programme started on Sunday at Al Buraimi Governorate for a number of MoH's staff.

The programme includes several exercises divided into two types; core and sub-core. The core exercises include real administrative issues from real life and business. The sub-core practices include practical and intellectual tools. Dr Darweesh bin Saif al Muharbi, founder and CEO of the academy, is participating in the programme as a lecturer. It is worth mentioning that the training programme was conducted previously in a number of governorates across the Sultanate of Oman.



مدائن
madayn

Public Tender at
Buraimi Industrial City

Buraimi Industrial City (Madayn) is pleased to announce a public tender of constructing Masar Rest Area in the City including the following details,

- Constructing MRA of an approximate area of 108.24 sqm with all related work.
- Designing and constructing a gazebo in front of BIC administration building of an approximate area of 13.10 sqm, as well as building a stepping stones pathway leading to the gazebo of roughly 14m * 1.2m.
- Minor renovation in the main gate guardroom.

For those interested in participating in this tender, kindly be aware of the following,

Opportunity Number	Project Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Fee (R.O)
3/2022	Masar Rest Area	16/10/2022	03/11/2022	25

According to The Following Procedures:

- Tender Documents can be obtained from Madayn Support Department at Buraimi Industrial City (Tel: 25657768 / 25657764) during official working hours, against non-refundable fees as mentioned above.
- A collective site visit will be made on 20/10/2022 at 10:00 am.

Completed bids according to the terms of the bid document shall be deposited in the Bid Box at Buraimi Industrial City administration office before 12 pm from the specified date.

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Ministry of Social
Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
183/2022	General Maintenance Works for the Building of the General Directorate of Social Development in Al Dhahirah Governorate	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Second Degree	Sunday 23-10-2022 02:00 PM	Tuesday 22-11-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Wednesday 5/10/2022.

❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry “

www.mosd.gov.om

North Korea fires ballistic missile over Japan



People walk past a TV screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul. – AFP

SEOUL/TOKYO: Nuclear-armed North Korea test-fired a ballistic missile farther than ever before on Tuesday, sending it soaring over Japan, for the first time in five years, and prompting a warning for residents there to take cover. It was the first North Korean missile to follow such a trajectory since 2017, and its estimated 4,600 km range was the longest travelled by a North Korean test missile, which are usually “lofted” high

into space to avoid flying over neighbouring countries. In response to the test, US and South Korean warplanes practiced bombing a target in the Yellow Sea and Japan warned its citizens to take cover and suspended some train services while the missile passed over its north before falling into the Pacific Ocean. It was the latest in an escalating cycle of muscle flexing in the region. A US aircraft carrier

Missile flies over Japan for first time since 2017 as Japan issues shelter warning, stops some trains

made a port call in South Korea for the first time since 2018 on September 23, and North Korea has conducted five launches in the last 10 days.

The period has also seen joint drills by the United States, South Korea and Japan, and a visit to the region by US Vice-President Kamala Harris, who stood at the fortified border between the Koreas and accused the North of undermining security. North Korea accuses the United States and its allies of threatening it with exercises and defence buildups. Recent tests have drawn

Japan, US hold joint drill

TOKYO: Japanese and US military planes carried out a joint drill on Tuesday in response to a North Korean ballistic missile launch, Japanese officials said. Japan’s Joint Staff said eight Japanese and four US fighter jets took part in the drill in airspace west of the country’s Kyushu region. “As the security environment surrounding Japan grows increasingly severe, including North Korea’s launch of a ballistic missile that flew over Japan, the Self-Defence Forces and the US military conducted a joint exercise,” the Joint Staff said in a statement. The forces “confirmed their readiness and demonstrated domestically and abroad the strong determination of Japan and the United States to deal



with any situation”, it added. The announcement came shortly after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida held talks with the head of the US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral John Aquilino. “We are taking swift action,” Kishida told reporters, saying Tokyo and Washington had “decided to conduct a joint drill”, without adding details. Kishida said he would hold telephone talks with US President Joe Biden “to reaffirm the strong coordination between the leaders of Japan and the United States.” — AFP

Pakistan on verge of health disaster after record floods, says WHO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is on the verge of a public health disaster after record flooding, the UN health agency warned on Tuesday as millions were falling ill due to the spread of waterborne diseases. “The water has stopped rising, but the danger has not. We are on the verge of a public health disaster,” World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at the launch of the United Nations flash appeal in Geneva. The UN said it needs \$816 million for rescue and relief in Pakistan, where the worst floods in the country’s history and subsequent infections have killed more than 2,000 people since mid-June. The new appeal is significantly higher than the \$160 million the



World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

UN sought in August. The spread of diseases like cholera, malaria and dengue fever in the worst-hit region of Sindh has triggered fears of a second disaster. More than 350 people

have died of infections so far. Around half of the 33 million affected people still live in makeshift accommodation with little or no access to clean drinking water and toilets. “Many more lives than were lost in the floods could be lost in the coming weeks if we don’t mobilise greater support for Pakistan,” said the WHO chief. The deluge has impacted 33 million people out of a population of 220 million, and caused damage the government estimates at \$30 billion as crops, roads, livestock, bridges, houses, schools, and medical facilities were washed away. The government and the United Nations have blamed climate change for the disaster. — dpa

RESPECTS TO THE BEREAVED



A woman grieves as she pays her respects for victims of the stampede at Kanjuruhan stadium in Malang, East Java. Elite Indonesian police officers were under investigation on October 4 over a stadium stampede that killed 125 people including dozens of children in one of the deadliest disasters in football history. – AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIJING

Japan expels Russian consul in retaliation

Japan has expelled a Russian diplomat in response to the Russian expulsion of a Japanese diplomat on suspicion of espionage. The diplomat working at the consulate in Sapporo in northern Japan has six days to leave Japan, Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said in Tokyo on Tuesday. Hayashi criticised the forcible detention and blind-folding of the Japanese diplomat in the eastern Russian



city of Vladivostok. The treatment and interrogation of the diplomat was a serious violation of international law, as the diplomat had not committed a crime, he said.

BEIRUT

Depositors storm Lebanese banks over withdrawal

Outraged bank clients, at least two of them armed, stormed four commercial banks across Lebanon over withdrawal limits that have been imposed throughout the country amid a financial meltdown. Cases of bank hold-ups have snowballed across Lebanon as residents have grown exasperated over the informal capital controls that banks have imposed since an economic downturn began in 2019. On Tuesday, a Lebanese man armed with a pistol and a gre-



nade entered the Chtaura branch of BLC Bank, demanding access to his \$24,000 in savings, according to Depositors’ Outcry, a group campaigning for angry depositors.

NEW DELHI

Four dead after avalanche in Indian Himalayas

At least four mountaineers were killed on Tuesday during an avalanche in the Indian Himalayas, officials said. Media reports put the toll at 10 following the incident at around 16,000 feet in the northern state of Uttarakhand. “We have confirmation of four deaths out of the 33 people trapped. Around eight of them have already been rescued and the rest are trapped in a crevasse,” Ridhim Aggarwal from the State Disaster Response Force said. “It was snowing but now the weather has improved and we have already launched a rescue operation with the help of the Air Force and other agencies.





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In brief

■ GENEVA



ANGELA MERKEL WINS UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE PRIZE

Former German chancellor Angela Merkel won the United Nations refugee agency's prestigious Nansen Award, receiving praise for her determination to protect asylum-seekers while in office. Pointing to the more than 1.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers welcomed by Germany in 2015 and 2016, at the height of migrant crisis sparked especially by the war in Syria, the UNHCR selection committee hailed Merkel's "leadership, courage and compassion." Merkel had said the German government for 16 years said the situation "put our European values to the test as seldom before. — AFP

■ QUEBEC CITY



QUEBEC'S RIGHT-WING INCUMBENT PARTY WINS NEW TERM

Quebec re-elected its right-wing governing party on Monday, after a heated campaign in which the party leadership pushed claims that immigration threatened the French-speaking Canadian province's culture. With 41 per cent of the vote and 89 seats in the 125-seat Quebec National Assembly, the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ), a right-wing nationalist party led by current Premier Francois Legault, won by a landslide. The party, in office for the past four years, had made declarations blaming immigrants in part for the decline of the French language in the province. — AFP

■ MADRID



SPAIN OPENS TRIAL INTO 2013 TRAIN DISASTER

Nine years after a high-speed train crash that killed 80 and injured over 140, a major trial opens on Wednesday to determine responsibility in Spain's worst rail disaster in nearly eight decades. The accident happened on the evening of July 24, 2013, when a train travelling from Madrid veered off the tracks as it hurtled round a sharp bend on the outskirts of Santiago de Compostela, a city in the northwestern region of Galicia. It was Spain's deadliest train tragedy since 1944, when hundreds were killed in a collision which happened on the Madrid-Galicia line. — AFP

RUSSIAN FORCES UNDER PRESSURE IN SOUTH UKRAINE

KRYVYI RIG: A Kremlin-installed official in the south Ukraine region of Kherson urged residents to remain calm on Tuesday as reports were surfacing that Kyiv's forces were making sweeping gains into Russian-controlled territory.

Moscow this month called up hundreds of thousands of troops to bolster the military in eastern Ukraine where Kyiv's forces have recently made lightning advances and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu meanwhile put the number at 200,000 as of Tuesday.

Ukraine's southern region of Kherson was one of the first where Kyiv's defences collapsed in February but Ukrainian forces recently have accelerated a months-long offensive to recapture it.

"Our artillery and fighter jets are hitting enemy forces that enter the sovereign territory of Russia," said Kirill Stremousov, the Moscow-appointed deputy head of the Kherson region.

"There is no reason to panic," he added in his message to residents of the Black Sea region on social media.

The reported gains into Kherson are a threat to the Kremlin's claim to have formally integrated the agriculturally rich region with a pre-war population of around one million people into the Russian Federation last week.

According to Russian news agencies and unconfirmed social media reports, unidentified forces have attacked occupying Russian units and officials, while Ukrainian forces have destroyed river bridges, leaving Russian units vulnerable to being trapped.

Some 80 per cent of the region



Firefighters put out a fire on the ruins of a destroyed electrical products plant following missile strikes in Kharkiv amid the Russian attack on Ukraine. — AFP

is estimated to be under Russian control.

"Yes, you can hear explosions at a distance, but they're infrequent," Stremousov said in his message.

He called on Kherson's residents to remain calm after his superior, Vladimir Saldo, conceded in an interview that Ukrainian forces had made a "breakthrough" in the region's north east, at the village of Dudchany along the Dniepr river.

But he claimed the push was short-lived and that Russian forces had pushed back again the

Zelensky pledges to retake more of eastern Ukraine 'in a week' Prime Minister Modi says ready to contribute to peace efforts in Ukraine

advancing Ukrainian forces.

Ukrainian officials have so far remained silent about any concrete territorial gains but the head of the presidential administration Andriy Yermak on Tuesday posted emojis of watermelons on social media, hinting at gains in

the region famous for the fruit.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an address to the nation on Monday evening that "there are new liberated towns and villages in several regions".

"Fierce fighting continues in many sectors of the frontline,"

he added, claiming that "more and more occupiers are trying to escape".

Western officials have said that as many as 20,000 Russian troops could be at risk of being trapped on the western bank of the Dniepr river, which cuts diagonally through the region and flows into the Black Sea.

Ukraine's apparent gains in Kherson follow a similar trend in the eastern regions of Kharkiv and Donetsk in recent weeks, with a series of setbacks coinciding with Moscow's claim to have annexed the regions. — AFP

Nobel physics prize goes to sleuths of 'spooky' quantum science

STOCKHOLM: Scientists Alain Aspect, John Clauser and Anton Zeilinger won the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics for experiments in quantum mechanics that laid the groundwork for rapidly-developing new applications in computing and cryptography.

"Their results have cleared the way for new technology based upon quantum information," the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said of the laureates — Aspect, who is French, Clauser, an American and Zeilinger, an Austrian.

The scientists all conducted experiments into quantum entanglement, where two particles are linked regardless of the space between them, a field that unsettled Albert Einstein himself, who once referred to it in a letter as "spooky action at a distance".

"I'm very happy ... I first started this work back in 1969 and I'm happy to still be alive to be able get the prize," Clauser, 79, told Reuters by phone from his home in Walnut Creek, California.

He said he had witnessed his initial work snowball into much larger experiments.

China's Micius satellite, part of a quantum physics research project, was constructed in part on his findings, he said.



Austrian physicist Anton Zeilinger during a press conference at the University of Vienna, after he was awarded with the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics. — AFP

Winners opened the way to powerful new quantum technologies as findings enabled work on quantum computers, encryption

"The configuration of the satellite and the ground station is almost identical to my original experiment. Mine was about 30 feet long, theirs is thousands of kilometres for quantum communication."

Asked to explain his work in layman's terms, he joked he does not understand it himself but added that the interactions it describes permeate almost

everything. "Probably every particle in the universe is entangled with every other particle," Clauser said, chuckling.

French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted his congratulations to the winners, adding "Einstein himself did not believe in quantum entanglement! Today, the promises of quantum computing are based on this phenomenon." — Reuters

EU approves universal mobile devices chargers

STRASBOURG: Mobile phones and other electronic devices in the European Union will have to have standardised charging equipment starting from 2024, under legislation approved by the European Parliament.

The EU parliament vote confirms a deal hatched between negotiators from the legislature and EU countries in June.

EU environment ministers are due to formally approve the legislation later this month before it can come into force.

Under the agreement, USB-C is to become the standard charging socket in the EU. Among the other electronic devices included in the agreement are tablets, e-readers,



digital cameras, headphones and headsets, and portable speakers.

The regulation also allows consumers to purchase charging equipment and devices separately.

The new rule comes after pushing for companies to make charging equipment for mobile phones and other portable devices more uniform since 2014 with original proposals dating as far back as 2009. — dpa

Bangladesh hit by major power blackout

DHAKA: At least 130 million people in Bangladesh were left without power on Tuesday after a grid failure caused widespread blackouts, the government's power utility company said.

Bangladesh has suffered a major power crisis in recent months as a result of higher global energy prices following Russia's war of Ukraine, and has imposed regular cuts to conserve electricity. But it remained unclear what caused Tuesday's unscheduled blackout, which hit more than 80 per cent of the country shortly after 2 pm, according to the Power Development Board.

Apart from some locations in Bangladesh's northwest, "the rest of the country is without power", spokesman Shamim Ahsan said. — AFP

Changes to waste management could slash emissions



KELLY MACNAMARA

The writer is AFP’s global climate and environment correspondent

Reforms to the way that societies collect and treat their waste could slash global emissions of plant-heating methane, a new report said on Monday, noting that simple measures like composting were a climate solution “staring us in the face.”

Governments around the world have pledged to reduce emissions of methane (CH4) — which absorbs 80 times more solar radiation over short periods than carbon dioxide — in their battle to curb global warming.

Human-induced sources of the powerful greenhouse gas are largely from livestock and manure handling, which accounts for some 30 per cent of anthropogenic methane emissions, followed by the oil and gas sector (19 per cent) and landfills (17 per cent), according to

UN climate experts.

A new report by the organisation Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) found that simple tweaks in the waste sector, particularly in urban areas, could slash carbon emissions by the equivalent of the annual emissions of 300 million cars.

The authors looked at ‘zero waste’ strategies, like separating organic materials, composting, recycling non-organic material and overall reductions in discarded products.

While reforms would not remove methane emissions from the waste system, the report estimated that policies could reduce overall emissions of methane from human sources by as much as 13 per cent globally. The authors said that a focus on waste reduction would not only tackle methane, which leaches

TACKLING WASTE WAS A KEY ELEMENT OF REACHING THE PARIS DEAL TARGET OF LIMITING GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5 DEGREES CELSIUS ABOVE PRE-INDUSTRIAL LEVELS

from landfills as organic matter rots, but could also make a major dent in the carbon pollution from the manufacture, transport and use of goods.

“Better waste management is a climate change solution staring us in the face,” said report co-author Neil Tangri of GAIA.

“It doesn’t require flashy or expensive new technology — it’s just

about paying more attention to what we produce and consume, and how we deal with it when it is no longer needed.

”The authors stressed that tackling waste was a key element of reaching the aspirational Paris deal target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The researchers modelled potential emissions reductions from eight cities around the world and found that, on average, they could cut waste sector emissions by almost 84 per cent. Methane is responsible for roughly 30 per cent of the global rise in temperatures to date.

The powerful greenhouse gas lingers in the atmosphere only a fraction as long as CO2, but is far more efficient at trapping heat. Levels of the gas are their highest in

at least 800,000 years.

At last year’s COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, more than 100 nations agreed under the Global Methane Pledge to reduce emissions 30 per cent by 2030. But several major methane emitters — including China, Russia, Iran and India — failed to sign.

“This report demonstrates the huge importance of aligning our waste systems with climate goals,” said Janez Potocnik, from the International Resource Panel of the UN Environment Programme.

“It highlights the absolute necessity of reducing root sources of waste through changing our production and consumption patterns — using all the tools at our disposal to achieve the deep emissions reductions we need.”

— AFP

‘Ulysses’ European tour seeks modern touch for Joyce’s epic novel

ISABELLE WESSELINGH

A festival dedicated to James Joyce’s novel “Ulysses” is touring 18 European cities, with artists and writers linking the work to contemporary issues such as immigration.

“Ulysses”, published in 1922, counts among the 20th century’s key novels, and its centenary has already sparked much celebration in Joyce’s native Ireland.

But Liam Browne, co-artistic curator of “Ulysses European Odyssey”, said the tour is to go beyond the kind of literary fandom seen at home.

“What interested us was Joyce as a European figure, rather than an Irish figure,” he said on the margins of the tour event in Marseille on the southern French coast.

“In his imagination he was engaging with Dublin to write his novels but actually his day-to-day existence was in these European cities,” Browne said.

The crude language and content in “Ulysses” meant there was no chance of it getting published in conservative 1920s Ireland or anywhere else in the English-speaking world. It became the target of an obscenity trial in the United States, and was banned in Britain for more than a decade.

In the end, it was published in Paris by American Sylvia Beach, owner of the “Shakespeare and Company” bookshop which is still a gathering point for aspiring writers today.

The novel tells the story of a single day in the life of Dubliner Leopold Bloom, while Joyce links the day’s events to Homer’s “Odyssey”. Scholars are still busy tracing the subtle connections.

The book has a reputation for being difficult to understand, with the New York Times predicting in its 1922 review that “not ten men or women out of a hundred can read ‘Ulysses’ through”.

Fans the world over still celebrate “Bloomsday” in honour of Joyce every year on June 16.

One of the aims of the European tour — involving actors, directors, writers, musicians, photographers and even food experts — is to connect the novel with today’s burning topics. “We wanted a multi-art response and we wanted the art engaging with society and social issues,” Browne said. “Nationalism, exile, and the place of women in society.”

Joyce, who grew up in Dublin, later lived in Paris, Trieste in Italy, and Zurich in Switzerland, where he died. — AFP



Natalia Yermak

The writer works for the *NYT*



Thomas Gibbons-Neff

The writer is the Kabul bureau chief at *NYT*

A front-line mystery: Was he scouting for firewood, or for Russia?

The white speedboat pulled close to the riverbank in eastern Ukraine and disgorged a half-dozen Ukrainian soldiers carrying their rifles, their packs and the look of exhaustion that comes from days on the front under relentless shelling.

But the last two men aboard the pleasure craft-turned-troop transport awkwardly hoisted a different kind of cargo ashore: a prisoner clad in a Russian camouflage parka with a dish towel fixed around his head using clear packing tape, applied by his captors so that he could not identify the location.

His name was Aleksandr, he was 69 years old and he insisted that he had done nothing wrong. The Ukrainians weren’t buying it.

Ukrainian and Russian forces have captured thousands of prisoners since Russia attacked in February.

Seesaw battles, offensives and retreats often yield dozens of captives who are ferried off to headquarters for interrogation. And with both militaries often in uniform, identifying combatants is far easier than it was during the murky counterinsurgency conflicts of the past two decades in places such as Iraq or Afghanistan.

But when Aleksandr was captured outside the eastern city of Lyman last week, he was thinly dressed, without the customary armband denoting his allegiance — usually red or white for Russia and blue or yellow for Ukraine. To keep him warm, the Ukrainian soldiers gave him a Russian parka they

SEESAW BATTLES, OFFENSIVES AND RETREATS OFTEN YIELD DOZENS OF CAPTIVES WHO ARE FERRIED OFF TO HEADQUARTERS FOR INTERROGATION

had lying around in their trench.

“He came out of the forest and went to our positions,” said Serhiy, one of the Ukrainian soldiers who had found Aleksandr, recounting the capture to a pair of reporters from The New York Times visiting their position near the front line.

Very little on the battlefield can be ascertained with much conviction: where the enemy will strike next, what lies around the bend of a river, whether the next step in an overgrown field will land safely or detonate a deadly mine. The exchange between Ukrainian soldiers and Aleksandr that unfolded over the next roughly 15 minutes provided a snapshot of the confusion and ambiguity that defines life on the front line — what has long been known as the fog of war.

Lyman, a strategically important rail hub, sits on the northeastern bank of the Siverskyi Donets river amid a mesh of fields and forests. The



A Ukrainian police officer in Lyman after it was recaptured from the Russians.

Russians captured it in May, but over the weekend Ukraine’s forces retook the city as part of a stunning offensive that is pushing back Russia in the east. Lyman could serve as an important foothold in future Ukrainian advances.

Retaking Russian strongholds means also taking Russian prisoners.

Mostly they are soldiers to be held by the Ukrainians, and possibly traded for their own comrades.

But there are also civilians suspected of collaborating with the Russians — as the Ukrainian soldiers thought when they apprehended Aleksandr last week.

The Ukrainians were convinced he was a scout for the Russian troops nearby and was trying to find their positions and report them back to the enemy. “He’s the recon, he was looking around!” Serhiy exclaimed.

“What ‘look around’? I was going for firewood,” Aleksandr protested, standing next to Serhiy, blindfolded and expressing annoyance at the accusations. The only part of his face visible under the coloured stripes of the towel was a weathered chin and gray beard stubble.

“How do I know whose positions are where?” Aleksandr asked meekly.

A soldier standing nearby scolded their prisoner: “Who are you telling tales here?” And he scoffed at Aleksandr’s excuse for being in the area. “Firewood!” he snorted.

Fighting in forests, as the Ukrainian troops were when they captured Aleksandr last Monday, is gut-wrenching.

Lines of sight are obstructed by foliage, sounds are amplified and overanalysed.

Low-lying vegetation provides ample concealment for ambushes — so discovery, especially by the better-armed Russians, would make artillery quick to follow.

“He came out from 12 o’clock,” Serhiy added, meaning directly in front of his position.

“From where no one is supposed to be at all, and no peaceful people.” In keeping with Ukrainian military precautions, Serhiy provided only his first name. — **New York Times**

Climate change won't just disappear

We all know that climate change is happening. We know that the atmosphere is warming. We also know that it is happening even more quickly than we feared. In some cases, weather patterns, climates and natural environments are changing.

We also know that all these are the result of human actions! No corner of the globe is immune from the devastating consequences of climate change! Greenhouse gas concentrations continue to rise to record highs, and fossil fuel emission rates are now above pre-pandemic levels, after a temporary drop due to lockdowns, pointing to a huge gap between aspiration and reality.

Cities, hosting billions of people, are responsible for up to 70 per cent of human-caused emissions: they will face increasing socio-economic impacts, the brunt of which will be faced by the most vulnerable populations.

"Climate science is clear: we are heading in the wrong direction", declares a major, multi-agency UN climate science report released in the second week of September.

If the world reaches a climate "tipping point", we will be faced with irreversible changes to the climate system. The report says that this cannot be ruled out: the past seven years were the warmest on record, and there is almost a 50-50 chance that, in the next five years, the annual mean temperature will temporarily be 1.5°C higher than the 1850-1900 average.

Disasters linked to climate and weather extremes have always been part of our Earth's system. But they are becoming more frequent and intense as the world warms. No continent is left untouched, with heat waves, droughts, typhoons, and hurricanes causing mass destruction around the world.

The authors of the report point to the recent, devastating floods in Pakistan, which have seen up to a third of the country underwater, as an example of the extreme weather events in different parts of the world this year. Other examples



Samuel Kutty
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The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

CITIES, HOSTING BILLIONS OF PEOPLE, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR A MAJOR PART OF HUMAN-CAUSED EMISSIONS. AS A RESULT, THEY WILL FACE INCREASING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS, THE BRUNT OF WHICH WILL BE FACED BY THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

include prolonged and severe droughts in China, the Horn of Africa and the United States, wildfires, and major storms.

Global fossil CO2 emissions in 2021 returned to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 after falling by 5.4 per cent in 2020 due to widespread lockdowns. Data shows that global CO2 emissions in the first five months of 2022 are 1.2 per cent above the levels recorded during the same period in 2019, driven by increases in the United States, India and most European countries.

We have the knowledge and the technology to reduce our impact on the climate and ease the pressures on the world's most vulnerable places, people and wildlife. We just need to make it happen. In the Sultanate of Oman, says its Second Nationally Determined Contribution report by the Civil Aviation Authority, the country has a heightened degree of awareness and concern about global warming and its adverse impacts though it is one of the most vulnerable countries in West Asia to the adverse impacts of climate change.

"Climate Change is at the forefront of public and government consciousness due to the accelerated pace of Changing climatic patterns being experienced in Oman", the report claims. Accordingly, the government has developed a national strategy for adaptation and mitigation of climate change from 2020-2040 to accelerate climate action's pace and scale.

With serious structural reforms and transformative policies, Oman has already laid the groundwork for a low-carbon economy and shift to low-emission sustainable development pathways over the last five years.

It has also developed a comprehensive 2040 Vision policy to further liberalise and diversify the economy by increasing investments in tourism, financial services, and port logistics. Additionally, the National Energy Strategy established an audacious goal of generating a significant portion of electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

GOODBYE LENIN



Finland's last monument of former Russian leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is being removed from the streets of Kotka, southeast Finland, on Tuesday. For the time being, Finland's last monument of Lenin will be relocated to a warehouse. Sculpted by Estonian artist Matti Varik, the statue is a gift from 1979, from Kotka's twin city Tallinn, then part of the Soviet Union. – AFP

What Caused the Ukraine War?

JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.

Russia's war in Ukraine is the most disruptive conflict that Europe has seen since 1945. While many in the West see a war of choice by Russian President Vladimir Putin, he says that Nato's 2008 decision in favor of eventual Ukrainian membership brought an existential threat to Russia's borders, and still others trace the conflict back to the Cold War's end and the failure of the West to support Russia adequately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. How can we discern the origins of a war that may last for years?

World War I occurred over a century ago, yet historians still write books debating what caused it. Did it start because a Serbian terrorist assassinated an Austrian archduke in 1914, or did it have more to do with ascendant German power challenging Britain, or rising nationalism throughout Europe? The answer is "all of the above, plus more." But war was not inevitable until it actually broke out in August 1914; and even then, it was not inevitable that four years of carnage had to follow.

To sort things out, it helps to distinguish between deep, intermediate, and immediate causes. Think of building a bonfire: piling up the logs is a deep cause; adding kindling and paper is an intermediate cause; and striking a match is a precipitating cause. But even then, a bonfire is not inevitable. A strong wind may extinguish the match, or a sudden rainstorm may have soaked the wood. As historian Christopher Clark notes in his book about the origins of WWI, *The Sleepwalkers*, in

WHILE THE WEST DID CREATE A NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL THROUGH WHICH RUSSIAN MILITARY OFFICERS COULD ATTEND SOME NATO MEETINGS, RUSSIA EXPECTED MORE FROM THE RELATIONSHIP

1914, "the future was still open – just." Poor policy choices were a crucial cause of the catastrophe.

In Ukraine, there is no question that Putin lit the match when he ordered Russian troops to invade on February 24. Like the leaders of the great powers in 1914, he probably believed that it would be a short, sharp war with a quick victory, somewhat like the Soviet Union's takeover of Budapest in 1956 or Prague in 1968. Airborne troops would capture the airport and advancing tanks would seize Kyiv, removing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and installing a puppet government.

Putin told the Russian people that he was conducting a "special military operation" to "denazify" Ukraine and prevent Nato from expanding to Russia's borders.

But given how seriously he miscalculated, we must ask what he was really thinking. We know from Putin's own writings, and from various biographers like Philip Short, that the intermediate cause was a refusal to see Ukraine as a legitimate state.

Putin lamented the breakup of the Soviet Union, which he had served as a KGB officer, and, owing to Ukraine and Russia's close cultural affinities, he considered Ukraine a phony state. Moreover, Ukraine had been ungrateful, offending Russia with its 2014 Maidan uprising, which removed a pro-Russian government, and its deepening of trade relations with the European Union.

Putin wants to restore what he calls the "Russian world", and, as he has approached the age of

70, he has been thinking about his legacy. Earlier leaders, like Peter the Great, had expanded Russian power in their own time. Given the weakness of the Western sanctions that followed Russia's attack on Ukraine and annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014, Putin seems to have asked himself: Why not go further?

The prospect of Nato enlargement was a lesser intermediate cause. While the West did create a Nato-Russia Council through which Russian military officers could attend some Nato meetings, Russia expected more from the relationship. And while US Secretary of State James Baker had told his Russian counterpart, in the early 1990s, that Nato would not expand, historians like

Mary Sarotte have shown that Baker quickly reversed his verbal assurance, which never did have a written agreement behind it.

When US President Bill Clinton discussed the matter with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, there was grudging Russian acceptance of some Nato expansion, but expectations on both sides differed. Nato's decision at its 2008 summit in Bucharest to include Ukraine (and Georgia) as potential future members simply confirmed Putin's worst expectations about the West.

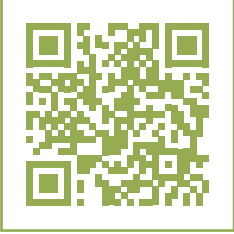
Still, while Nato's decision in 2008 may have been misguided, Putin's change of attitude predated it. He had helped the United States following the September 11, 2001, attacks, but his 2007 Munich Security Conference speech shows that he had already soured on the West before the Bucharest summit. The possibility of Nato expansion thus was merely one of several intermediate causes – one made less salient soon after the Bucharest summit by France and Germany's announcements that they would veto Ukraine's Nato membership.

Behind all this were the remote or deep causes that followed the end of the Cold War. Initially, there was a great deal of optimism, in both Russia and the West, that the Soviet Union's collapse would allow for the rise of democracy and a market economy in Russia.

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A woman reacts as she talks to journalists following a Russian missile strike, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Tuesday. – Reuters



SEEB SINK
AL RIFFA
TO REACH
FIRST AFC
CUP FINAL

OMANI CLUB EMERGES WEST ZONE CHAMPIONS

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Oman's representatives Seeb were crowned 2022 AFC West Zone champions after defeating Bahrain's Al Riffa in style by 4-0 in the final match on Tuesday.

At the Seeb Stadium, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Ahmed al Siyabi, Salah al Yahyaei and Cosmos Dauda struck the winning goals in the second half of the encounter. The victory meant that Seeb recorded a historic accomplishment for Omani clubs as they managed to reach first-ever AFC Cup final which is scheduled to take place on October 22.

National experienced coach Rasheed Jaber began the match with a starting line-up featuring Ahmed al Rawahi as the goalkeeper. Mohammed al Musallami led

the defending line with company of Juma al Habsi, Ali al Busaidi and Hassan al Ajmi. Daniel Ajbola, Eid al Farsi, Salah al Yahyaei and Mohammed al Habsi monitored the mid-field while Mohsin al Ghassani and Abdulaziz al Maqbali were in the forward line.

Both sides came into the final clash with the same objective of progressing into the AFC Cup final.

The hosts were the better side as they pressed hard from the beginning and the strikers were seeking for an early goal.

Seeb dominated proceedings and created more scoring attempts, but all those opportunities did not find the proper way to Al Riffa's goalkeeper.

Mohsin al Ghassani and Abdulaziz al Maqbali did larger portion of control in the attacking



side and tried a lot to penetrate the solid defence of the opponents but the efforts did not end on successful note. Later, the first half ended in a goalless draw.

The Muscat-based team entered the following half with different style as the players received more

instructions from newly appointed head coach Rasheed Jaber.

After several attempts, Abdulaziz al Maqbali managed to break the deadlock as he took lead for Seeb by scoring the opening goal in 47th minute.

A quick response was from



ground, substitute Al Siyabi managed to double the result in the 62nd minute after perfect assistance from Abdulaziz al Maqbali.

The referee decided in the 73rd minute for a penalty to Al Riffa after a challenge from Eid al Farsi but Bahrain's Mohammed Marhoon missed the penalty as Seeb led 2-0. Seeb dominated the proceedings again as Salah al Yahyaei managed to enter the box in the 79th minute and he played a ground ball which went into the net successfully.

Cosmos Dauda confirmed Seeb's victory as he netted the fourth goal in the 92nd minute with a strong sliding header. With the 4-0 win, Seeb moved into the AFC Cup final and will await the winner of AFC Cup 2022 Inter-Zone Final between PFC Sogdiana and Kuala Lumpur City FC.



World No1 Alcaraz loses to Goffin in Astana opener

PARIS: World number one Carlos Alcaraz crashed out in the first round of the Astana Open on Tuesday, losing 7-5, 6-3 to Belgium's David Goffin.

US Open champion Alcaraz suffered his first straight-set defeat since November last year as Goffin made the most of his second chance as a lucky loser.

Alcaraz, 19, was playing his first ATP tournament since his victory in New York that saw him become the youngest ever world number one. He played in last month's Davis Cup, winning one of his two singles rubbers as Spain claimed a place in the quarterfinals.

Goffin only earned a spot in the main draw after the withdrawal of Danish teenager Holger Rune. He plays Frenchman Adrian Mannarino in the last 16.

"I always believe that I have the level to cause some trouble against those guys," said Goffin, a former top-10 player now ranked 66th.

"When you play against the world number one on a big stage, big crowd, the fire inside gives you so much power to play your best tennis because you don't have any choice.

"You have to fight and give your best and that was the case today. I always believed

I had it and I am happy you can still it there."

It was 31-year-old Goffin's third win against a top-ranked player, having beaten Rafael Nadal in 2017 and 2020.

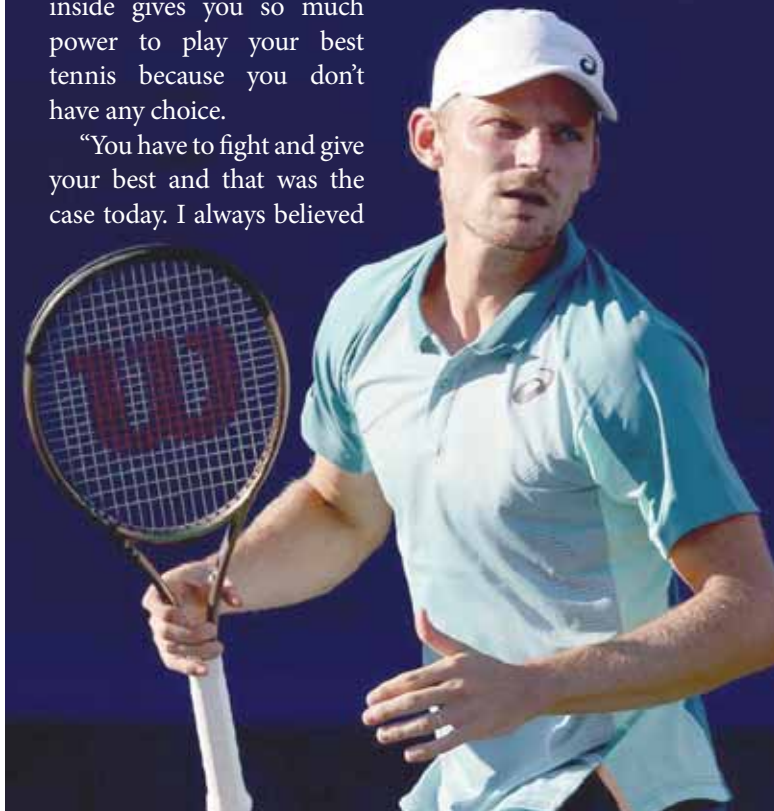
Unlike Alcaraz, third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas avoided an early exit as he eased past Mikhail Kukushkin 6-3, 6-4.

The Greek is hunting a third ATP title of the season. He reached 50 tour-level wins in 2022 after breaking Kukushkin once in each set.

"It was a great match from my side," said Tsitsipas, who goes on to face Italian qualifier Luca Nardi for a quarterfinal place.

Karen Khachanov won on his first outing since reaching the US Open semifinals, defeating American Maxime Cressy 6-4, 7-6 (7/3). — AFP

ASTANA ATP RESULTS
FIRST ROUND: David Goffin (BEL) bt Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) x1) 7-5, 6-3; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) x3) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ) 6-3, 6-4; Luca Nardi (ITA) bt Alexander Shevchenko 7-6 (7/4), 6-2; Karen Khachanov bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 6-4, 7-6 (7/3); Pavel Kotov bt Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (ESP) 6-4, 6-4



Kyrgios cruises past Tseng in breathless Japan opener

TOKYO: Nick Kyrgios said he "struggled to breathe" in the Tokyo air on Tuesday before finding his feet and crushing Taiwan's Tseng Chun-hsin 6-3, 6-1 in his first match since the US Open.

Kyrgios dropped just seven points on his own service in his opening match at the Japan Open as he dismantled world number 87 Tseng in 1hr, 6min.

The maverick world number 20 was playing his first match since his "heartbreaking" quarterfinal loss to Karen Khachanov at last month's US Open but he said he made a "solid" return despite a slow start.

"The first couple of games I struggled to breathe, I think just the humidity and getting back into competitive play," said Kyrgios, whose lawyer appeared for him earlier in the day at a court hearing in Australia, where he faces a charge of common assault.

"I came out a bit slow but I don't play many matches so it's hard to just get straight back into that competitive flow.

"But as soon as I held that first game, I found my form again and played really well."

The Tokyo crowd cheered Kyrgios' name and clamoured for the signed balls that he hit into the stands after the match.

He put on a show on the court as well, hitting one shot between his legs and bickering with the umpire over line calls.

Kyrgios has posted several pictures of himself sightseeing in Tokyo on social media since he arrived and he said he was "excited" to be playing in Japan.

"To play in front of the crowd is amazing, they're so respectful and they always love good tennis," said the 27-year-old.

"The last couple of years, Covid has affected the tournament so it's just good to have this event back and running again."



Nick Kyrgios of Australia hits a return against Tseng Chun-hsin of Taiwan during the Japan Open in Tokyo. — AFP



Jaume Munar of Spain reacts after a point against Casper Ruud of Norway at the Japan Open. — AFP

RUUD SURPRISE

Earlier in the day, top seed Casper Ruud crashed out in the first round after a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to Spain's Jaume Munar.

The Norwegian lost to Carlos Alcaraz in the US Open final last month and he has hardly taken his foot off the gas since, playing in the Davis Cup and Laver Cup before heading to last week's Korea Open.

He finally hit the wall against world number 58 Munar, having his service broken twice in the first set and dumping shot after shot into the net all match.

Ruud admitted he had been trying too hard after his US Open run.

"I might have pushed a little

too much and tried to go for too many tournaments and too many matches in a row but I really wanted to come to Asia and play these tournaments," said the world number three.

"Today I wasn't able to bring my best level but it's an experience and a situation I will try to learn from."

Australian number-six seed Alex de Minaur also made a first-round exit earlier in the day when he lost 6-3, 6-2 to South Korea's Kwon Soon-woo.

Croatia's number-nine seed Borna Coric beat Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), while British number-eight seed Dan Evans beat Moldova's Radu Albot 6-7 (3/7), 6-1, 6-4. — AFP

Oman to take on HK, Singapore meet Bahrain in semis

MUSCAT: Singapore's winning streak continued as they defeated Hong Kong by 58 runs to top Group B in the ongoing ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Division -2 Asia Qualifier at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds on Tuesday.

In another Group B match, Qatar beat Thailand by five wickets to record a consolation win as both the teams had already bowed out of contention for the knockout stage.

Singapore's win at the OCA 2 ground set up their semifinal date with Group A runner-up Bahrain while Hong Kong will take on hosts Oman in the other semifinal. Both matches will be played on Thursday after a rest day.

Electing to bowl first, Hong Kong's attempts to keep the Singapore batters at bay met with early success as the rivals were pegged down to 29/2 by the 12th over. With Singapore batters made to work hard, the run rate dipped and were 69/4 in 23 overs as Vihaan Maheswari got out for 24.

However, a 76-run fifth-wicket partnership between inform



Singapore's Aaryan Modi (left) and Qatar's Taha Shahbaz receive the Man of the Match awards from Sanjeev, Assistant Manager, Purshottam Kanji Exchange – Oman Cricket's Forex Partner.

Sidhant Srikanth, the tournament's only centurion so far, and Aaryan Modi, put the team back on track. Both the batters counter-attacked. However, Srikanth was run out for a 66-ball 45.

Modi batted till the last over for a responsible 72-ball 51 and shared a crucial 47-run eighth wicket stand with from Venkatesan Thiyanesh (32) to lead the team past 200-mark. Singapore were bowled out of the last ball of the

50th over for 209.

Muhammad Mudassar Khan was the most successful bowler with 4/29.

Chasing a challenging total, Hong Kong got off to a forgettable start as they lost opening batter Jayden Botfield for a duck, leg before to Adwitya Bhargava, as the team's total read 0/1 at the end of first over.

A 41-run stand between Daksh Mangkukia (22) and Ansh Doshi



raised hopes but Mangkukia's run-out dismissal applied brakes on the run chase. Doshi departed a run later, becoming Bhargava's second victim. Hong Kong were soon 44/4 as Parth Bhagwat became first of the three wickets of Singapore skipper Jeevan Santhanam (3/32). A fifth-wicket 46-run partnership between Abdul Samad Khan and Mohammad Zahir put up a semblance of fight but Khan's exit led to another mini collapse. Hong

Kong were soon reduced to 108/7. Zahir top-scored with 50 as the team was bowled out for 151 in 48.3 overs.

Besides Santhanam's three-for, Bhargava and Vihaan Hampihallikar picked two wickets each.

Aaryan Modi, man of the match, said: "We are all very happy to have won the match and top the group. We followed our coaches' instructions and game plan, which

was to play our natural game. We executed the plan well to win."

SHAHBAZ HITS 50

Qatar recorded their maiden win in the tournament as they cruised to a five-wicket win over Thailand at the OCA 1 ground.

Qatar put Thailand to bat first and bowled out their opposition for 170 in 48.4 overs.

Siriphum Sonthi was the main run-getter with 29 while the other notable scorers were acting captain Mohak Dugar (28 n.o) and Danuphon Fuangyotpinit (25). For Qatar, Luqman Mehmood and Sreenivas Venkatakrishnan took three wickets each while Niranjan Muthusawamy dismissed two.

In reply, Qatar's Taha Shahbaz's solid 60 helped the team win though Thailand fought hard to defend the total.

Qatar could achieve the win with six balls to spare as they scored 171/5. Skipper Jack Joseph (34) and Hetul Patel (23) made useful contributions in the team's triumph. Thailand's Anucha Kalasi was the most successful bowler with 3/37.

Oman U-17 team eyes second win against Bahrain

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Oman national U-17 team is looking to post a second consecutive win in the AFC U-17 Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers as they will take on Bahrain in the second round. The match will kick off at 17:00 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat. In the following match of Group C, Iraq will face off Lebanon at the same venue and the game will start at 20:45.

The Oman boys started their campaign in the qualifiers on successful note as they edged Lebanon 2-1 in the opener on Sunday. Abdullah al Maqbali netted an early goal in the second minute to put the hosts in the lead while Lebanon's Mohammed Yassen equalised for the visitors.

Omar al Jabri scored the winner in the dying minutes and delivered a crucial triumph for Oman.

In another match of the same group, Bahrain and Qatar settled for a 1-1 draw. Qatar are leading the table order with four points from two matches while Bahrain are in second position with the same credit. Oman are placed in third position with three points from one game. Iraq (one game) and Lebanon (two games) are placed in fourth and fifth places respectively with no points. Oman have a perfect chance to go top in the group as a win in Wednesday's game meant leading the group with two points difference from the second placed team. The triumph will get the team much closer to secure spot in the 2023 AFC Asian Cup.



CRUCIAL WIN

Oman head coach Anwar al Habsi congratulated all for the victory in the opening match. "This victory was registered after a tough game. The first three points keep us in a good position and will encourage the team players to better show in

the forthcoming matches. Thanks to all the players' parents for their patience with us," he added.

Al Habsi, who hails from Al Mudhaibi, clarified that the weakness in fitness side of the players was clear to everyone. "We worked hard to raise the physical

side of the squad and improve the fitness. This was one of the focuses during the last camp in Saudi Arabia and during the friendly games," he said.

Responding to an inquiry on the lack of scoring from the missing attempts, he said that

the only solution for the missing attempts is raising the training sessions. "The team suffered six losses ahead of the qualifiers and it was not an easy task to relieve their pressure. We have missed some vital scorers in the front line including Al Harith al Mashakyie

but we managed to reach to the opponent's goal in different occasions," he ended.

In earlier matches of the group on Saturday, Qatar managed to open the qualifiers with a crucial 2-1 win over Iraq while Bahrain edged Lebanon 1-0.



Al Faisal and team-mates finish fourth in Barcelona

BARCELONA, SPAIN: Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair, German team-mate Fabian Schiller and Zimbabwe's Axcil Jeffries rounded off their first season together in the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS – Endurance Cup by finishing in fourth place in the Silver Cup category at the season's finale in Barcelona.

The Al Manar Racing by HRT Mercedes-AMG GT3 crew had qualified ninth for the last three-hour race of the season. They climbed four places in the race to cross the finish line in fourth with victory going to Silver Cup category champions, Benjamin Goethe, Thomas Neubauer and Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer.

The champions overtook the Garage 59 McLaren 720S GT3 of Vargas Maldonado, Dean MacDonald and Nicolai Kjaergaard in the last hour, while

2022 GT World Challenge Europe – Endurance Cup

Silver Cup – final positions (Drivers):

1. Benjamin Goethe/Thomas Neubauer/Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer - **125pts**
2. Nicolas Schödl/Alex Aka/Marius Zug - **76pts**
3. Stuart White/Konsta Lappalainen - **73pts**
4. Al Faisal al Zubair/Axcil Jeffries/Fabian Schiller - **66pts**
5. Aurelien Panis/Cesar Gazeau/Nicolas Baert - **43pts**

the Emil Frey Racing Lamborghini crew of Mick Wishofer, Stuart White and Konsta Lappalainen finished third.

The result also confirmed that the Al Manar Racing trio finished fourth in the final Silver Cup Drivers' Championship.

Reflecting on the race weekend, Al Zubair said: "That's the end of the season for us and definitely not the way we wanted to end it. Testing was really good and we finished first in pre-qualifying. Qualifying really sent us lower on the grid and we started P25 (all cars) and P9 nine in Silver.

"We moved up to P4 and 14th overall. The race was really good. I drove the first stint and went from about 25th to 20th and my team-mates did a great job to get us further up. So close to a podium, but just not quite. A good season overall and we hope to go further next year."

The Al Manar Racing trio were classified in eighth after the free practice session on Saturday morning, with a best lap of 1min 45.771sec putting them just under a second off the pace of Silver Cup pace-setters, Nicolas Baert, Cesar Gazeau and Aurelian Panis.

Asian Amateur chess concludes today

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 4

The Asian Amateur Chess Championship will conclude in Muscat on Wednesday, under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development. The concluding ceremony will witness a visual presentation of the tournament, followed by honouring the winners of the tournament, the organising committee, referees, sponsoring companies and the collaborating parties.

In the seventh round results of men's section, Musallam al Amri tied with the Lebanese Mahmoud Masarani, Mohammad al Omari beat Salem al Omari, Saeed al Balushi beat Lebanon's Michel, Abdul Rahman al Zadjali beat India's Akshobia and Imad al Balushi beat Kuwait's Mashari al Hassan.

In the women's section, Anah al Esai defeated Ohoud Issa from the UAE, Al Anoud al Ghafri lost to Salma al Khelaifi of Qatar and Afra al Balushi beat Al Badia Hamad from the UAE.

The mother of the Palestinian player Iman Khalil Sawan said: "We reside in Jordan and came to Oman to participate in the tournament. I thank the organising committee for this success and excellence in organising the tournament. Every time my daughter participates, she achieves the goals by interacting with the strongest and experi-



enced players around the world."

"My daughter came to win the title, but we were surprised with great levels and competition from the participants, but she will continue to fight to achieve one of the top three places. Iman had won many titles, as she was crowned the champion of the Arab U-14 Championship in 2021, participated in the Chess Olympiad in Chennai last July and participated in a Dubai tournament before this

championship," she added.

Awad Ahmed Jamil, international referee from Yemen, said: "My role in the Asian championship is to resolve disputes and disagreements if they occur, but that has not happened so far, and that the championship is on the right path. We are happy to participate in this tournament, which will add great benefit to everyone by exchanging experiences and acquiring skills."

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To know more



New RO 24 million fish canning project to launch in Q1 2024

Value addition: FDO manufacturing arm launches work on 100-million can capacity canning project

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) has announced the start of construction work on a new seafood canning and processing plant at Duqm Special Economic Zone in Al Wusta Governorate. The facility, involving an investment of RO 24 million, is targeted for launch in Q1 2024 in line with the company's fisheries development strategy.

According to Eng Ali bin Nasser al Rasbi (pictured), General Manager of International Sea Food Company — the manufacturing arm of FDO — the project will create investment opportunities that will ensure the ready availability of fisheries products and the localisation of the fish product value chain, thereby contributing to the GDP.

The tuna canning project has been designed according to the latest specifications and quality and food safety standards. Phase 1 capacity will be 100 million cans per year, he stated.

"The project comes as a complement to the efforts already expended and a part of the output of Tanfeedh Programme which is



(Image for illustration only)



aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and will promote the Sultanate of Oman's vision of economic diversification by maximising the return on the fisheries in which the Sultanate abounds and increasing

the fish product value chain before export to the global markets," said Al Rasbi.

"The plant will promote GDP growth through the local supply chains of which several Omani SMEs will be part of, thereby enhancing investment opportunities and creating specialised job opportunities," he added.

International Sea Food Company is a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman

and will be the industrial manufacturing arm of the group. FDO also has dedicated arms focused on commercial fishing, and fish and shrimp farming.

In September 2021, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a land usufruct agreement with the International Sea Food Company for the construction of a tuna, sardine and seafood canning plant covering an area of 85,000 square metres.

Oman airports record surge in number of flights and passengers

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 4

The number of international and domestic flights (arrivals and departures) via the various airports of the Sultanate of Oman — Muscat, Salalah, Suhar and Duqm — registered a remarkable growth of 142.1 per cent as of end of July 2022, reaching 32,608 flights compared to the same period in 2021 with 13,468 flights, according to the latest statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of arrivals through the airports has risen significantly by 187 per cent, as the total number of arriving, departing and transiting passengers at Muscat, Salalah, Suhar and Duqm airports reach 4,907,599 as of the end of July 2022. Airport departures up to the end of July also increased by

127 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.

The number of international and domestic flights (arrivals and departures) via Muscat International Airport increased by 114.8 per cent, with 34,556 flights as of the end of July 2022, transporting 4,251,173 passengers, compared with 16,084 flights in 2021 with 647,724 passengers.

On the other hand, Salalah Airport recorded a remarkable increase of 95.3 per cent in international and domestic flights. The number of flights through the airport reached 4,601 as of end of July 2022. The number of international flights through Salalah Airport has increased by 201.9 per cent while domestic flights rose by 52.9 per cent to 2, 578 flights, compared to 1, 686 trips during the same period in 2021.

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CBO, India's NPCI sign MoU to explore E-payment linkages

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Within the framework of commercial and economic cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday, October 4, 2022, with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to study the possibility of linking some payment systems between the two countries.

The MoU was signed by Tahir bin Salim al Amri, CBO's Executive President and Ritesh Shukla, CEO of International Payments Limited, a subsidiary of NPCI. The MoU aims at studying the possibility of connecting the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and RuPay Card used in India with similar payment systems and services in the Sultanate of Oman.

In order to maximise the mutual benefits for the two countries, the



proposed cooperation will also consider the possibility of using Debit Cards issued by the banks in Oman to be used in India through

OmanNet, as well as using the Mobile Payment System.

The signing ceremony was attended by a high-level

delegation from India, headed by V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs,

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AS WELL AS USING THE
MOBILE PAYMENT SYSTEM.

and in the presence of Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman and other officials from the Indian Government, as well as the CBO.

Al Amri explained that this cooperation aims to explore linking payment systems and services between the two countries, adding that this step

will undoubtedly benefit the citizens of the two countries.

He further added that this MoU will also contribute to the knowledge transfer in payment systems domain between the two countries, as well as keeping abreast of global developments in e-payment systems.

A press statement from the Indian Embassy explained that Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.

It also caters to the "Peer to Peer" collect request which can be scheduled and paid as per requirement and convenience.

In the month of September 2022, the number of transactions on India's UPI platform crossed 6.78 billion amounting to over INR 11.16 trillion (1 Omani Rial is equivalent to INR 211.66).

All-new 2023 Toyota Yaris launched in Oman

At an exclusive function, held at the Toyota showroom at Wattayah, the much awaited all-new 2023 Yaris was launched with an all-new profile. Gracing the occasion were guests from different sectors.

Sharing his thoughts on the all-new Yaris, a representative from Saud Bahwan Automotive said, “The Yaris is a compact sedan that has built a strong fan base across the world. When the new Yaris was conceived by Chief Engineer Hideyuki Kamino, he envisioned three pillars to build this amazing vehicle. The first one, Proudful.

“The idea was to create a design and equip the vehicle with innovative features which would make owners feel proud and powerful at the same time. The second pillar is comfortable. The Yaris appeals to customers of various segments, especially those looking for easy to access and comfortable cabin and an easy to drive vehicle. The third pillar is affordable. Users are cost-conscious, but strongly look for value for money creating a satisfying ownership experience.”

Speaking about what sets the all-new Yaris apart he said, “With the all-new Yaris, the team at Toyota set out to ensure that the vehicle is not only functional, but also represents the lifestyle and values of customers. The next-generation sedan adopts a powerful and elegant fastback style that embodies the Yaris’ trademark stability and reliability that has won a loyal following across the region.”

In the all-new Yaris, the width has increased by 10 mm to 1,740 mm, while the length of the wheelbase increased by 70 mm to 2,620 mm. The length and overall height of the vehicle has been maintained at 4,425 mm and 1,480 mm respectively, making the new model the roomiest yet.

The 2023 Toyota Yaris boasts a new glossy black front grille and ultra-slim LED headlamps. The vehicle’s side design and sleek fastback silhouette heighten its hyper-modern aesthetic, while the distinctive diffuser shape at the rear expresses exceptional strength and stability.



The all-new Yaris’ spacious cabin is designed to provide greater comfort and convenience for both the driver and passengers. A 7-inch Thin Film Transistor (TFT) multi-information display and digital LED speedometer can be set to one of four layouts, allowing the driver to fully customise and optimise their experience.

The spacious 475-litre capacity trunk comes complete with a folding board that serves as a partition to enable more efficient luggage distribution.

The vehicle’s cabin hosts a range of practical features, including an 8-inch multimedia screen with Apple CarPlay & Android Auto together with a USB port on the head unit and two ports at the rear console that enable passengers to connect external media devices.

Additional features include a four or six-speaker sound system and an automatic air conditioning system with two rear vents for extra passenger comfort.

Meanwhile, parents benefit from

the added peace of mind provided by Toyota’s ISOFIX safety system, which attaches baby seats securely using specially designed tethers. The all-new Toyota Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I. The vehicle is available with 1.5-litre capacity engine that delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

This is paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission to deliver powerful, smooth acceleration from start-off and at low speeds and quiet, efficient transmission at

higher speeds with excellent fuel efficiency.

The all-new Yaris maintains Toyota’s sterling safety standards. Its safety system is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes Pre-Collision System (PCS), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), as well as a new Front Departure Alert (FDA) feature that gives drivers a visual and audible warning when a stationary vehicle in front begins to move forward.

In addition, the vehicle comes with a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its driver and occupants. These include SRS airbags, with options available based on the grade for either two or six airbags (including front airbags for the driver passenger, side airbags for the front seats, and side-curtain airbags for the front and rear seats), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA), Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with brake hold function, Traction Control (TRC), Hill-start Assist Control (HAC) and many others.

A choice of seven exciting exterior hues adds to the all-new Yaris’s striking visual appeal. These include three new colours – metal stream metallic, scarlet sequin and gray metallic – the last two of which have been newly developed for the vehicle.

Meanwhile, the premium interior cabin features a stylish black and beige colour scheme. The 2023 Yaris also comes with a choice of 15-inch steel wheels or 16-inch alloy wheels.

Earlier in the evening, a representative from Saud Bahwan Automotive said, “Saud Bahwan Automotive and Toyota Motor Corporation always work hand-in-hand to offer high levels of ownership experiences, leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction. I humbly thank our valued customers for their continued patronage. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Toyota Motor Corporation for their constant support, guidance and encouragement.”

The all-new 2023 Yaris is now on display at the Toyota showrooms.

Oman United Insurance named top performing company

MUSCAT: Leading insurance services provider Oman United Insurance Company SAOG (OUIC) was ranked among Oman’s top performing publicly traded firms in the latest edition of the prestigious Alam-Al-Iktisaad Awards (AIWA) held at Grand Millennium Muscat recently.

Muscat-headquartered OUIC was among five listed companies in the ‘Mid-Cap’ category that were named winners of the much-coveted Best Performing Company awards – annual recognitions first instituted in 2009.

Organised by UMS Events, the AIWA Awards honour listed companies that perform consistently and credibly on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) based on a set of criteria. Collecting the award on behalf of OUIC was Sayyid Nassir bin Salim al Busaidi, Chief Management Executive. Senior



company officials were also in attendance at the gala event to celebrate this proud moment in OUIC’s history.

Significantly, it’s not the first time that OUIC has been recognised and honoured at the annual AIWA Awards. The latest award is the seventh in a long list of trophies to be conferred upon OUIC for its consistently strong performance over the years. It’s a testament to the company’s unmatched standing as a top-tier player in Oman’s insurance sector with a solid market presence across key product segments of the industry.

OUIC clinched the latest honour because its 2021 performance on the MSX ticked all the boxes for success. The company delivered a high score across the following seven financial parameters: Revenue growth, operating profit growth, net profit growth, return on average assets, return on average equity, operating profit margin and net profit margin.

Sohar International inaugurates branch in Al Khoudh



MUSCAT: In line with the bank’s efforts to enhance customers’ experience and financial inclusion, Sohar International recently announced the official opening of its branch in Al Khoudh.

The branch was officially inaugurated under the auspices of Shaikh Ibrahim bin Yahya al Rawahi, Wali of Al Seeb, in the presence of a number of the bank’s executive management.

Located strategically in a prime location within Al Khoudh, the fully equipped branch offers the bank’s entire suite of products and service including a dedicated 24-hour digital lobby with ATM and CDM facilities, and a Wealth Management servicing centre with a highly qualified and dedicated team.

The new branch is a strong reflection of Sohar International’s core brand values and will serve the demands of its retail and corporate customers.

Kalyan Jewellers announces Diwali offers on gold, precious stone and diamond jewellery

MUSCAT: With the advent of India’s peak festive season, Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands, has announced a new offer this season across Oman — ‘This Diwali with Kalyan’ — for its patrons across the country.

Staying on course with Indian traditional jewellery trends for the festival season, Kalyan Jewellers has announced an one-of-its-kind offers for customers to get maximum value on their jewellery purchases, across categories – from gold and diamonds to uncut and precious stone jewellery.



The new offer allows patrons to get cashback up to RO 10 on every purchase of gold Jewellery worth RO 500.

The customers will also be able to get cashback of RO 20 on every purchase of precious/uncut jewellers worth RO 500. On purchase of diamond jewellery



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Talking about the offers, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers, said, “We are delighted to announce the launch of our Diwali celebrations with unique offers on our extensive range of jewellery. At



Kalyan Jewellers, we understand the emotion and sentiment of our customers linked with their festivals and jewellery, which is why we strive to provide maximum benefits to our patrons on their festive jewellery purchases by providing them great offers.”

“This Diwali with Kalyan’ offers

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'Journalism no longer the exclusive domain of media professionals'



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:
Oman Observer Editor in Chief takes part in IGCF in Sharjah

HAMMAM AL BADI
SHARJAH, OCT 4

The 11th edition of International Government Communications Forum was held this year under the theme "Challenges and Solutions" to emphasis the importance of communications and effective messaging.

Journalism plays a crucial role in conveying the message that the government relies on to link citizens with the state apparatus. Journalists' role has changed due to the advent of social media, which has begun to have a profound effect on audience mindsets.

As social media picks up pace – technologically as well as in terms of reach – it can also become a double-edged sword in spreading disinformation and rumour.

On the sidelines of the forum, Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili, Editor in Chief of *Oman Daily Observer*, said that the field of journalism is not limited to media alone, as social media – with its inherent power and reach –

demonstrates. "Thus you have a doctor who instantly transforms into a journalist and begins sharing health advice and medical insights. In the same vein, an economist or an engineer believes they can be journalists as well.

Consequently, the practice of information dissemination can no longer be limited to journalists or media professionals alone. A doctor's message can reach as big an audience as a journalist's simply because the former can communicate his message directly and effectively to his audience using social media platforms," Al Shueili said.

He further added: "The current era of journalism is no longer the exclusive domain of journalists. But what differentiates journalists from other professions is their general understanding of editing guidelines, editorial policies, and journalism ethics."

In response to a query, Al Shueili clarified that editorial policies and professional ethics are imbibed by journalists from their workplace. Press policy, on the other hand, is completely different. Despite the turbulent times it's been through, journalism continues to be a very interesting profession, he added.

Oman earmarks 50 sq km of land for green energy projects

Comprehensive strategy: 'Central national team' has been constituted to unify planning around renewables and green hydrogen projects: Investment Promotion Under-Secretary

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 4

Large swathes of desert land in Oman's central and southern regions have been earmarked for the implementation of green energy projects – both renewables and green hydrogen based – a top official of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has revealed.

Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion (pictured), said the Sultanate of Oman is gearing up to be an important producer and exporter of green energy by capitalising on its optimally suited natural resources, as well as its attractive geostrategic location. Key among these resources, she said, is plentiful land offering ideal environmental conditions for renewable energy generation. "Oman has a huge potential to be a leading country in both the solar and wind. And it has an abundance of land available that is ideal for these projects.



In fact, we have up to 50 square kilometres available, which is equivalent to 87 times the size of London," the Under-Secretary told a gathering of dignitaries and investors at an energy forum held in the UK recently.

Earlier, Asila described Oman as "a preferred leading destination and inspiring model globally towards a green and clean energy future".

To this end, the Ministry, among other stakeholder agencies within the Omani government, is doing the groundwork to position Oman as a key player in this field, she noted. "The Oman National Energy Strategy and the Oman Vision 2040 seek to address climate change by supporting the gradual transition to a low carbon economy and energy matrix," said the Under-Secretary, pointing out that a "massive number of a large renewable projects and

The goal is to define a clear strategic path for projects and setting planning controls for project distribution in order to achieve the best utilisation of natural resources, as well as to empower the sector and develop the infrastructure requirements.

ASILA AL SAMSAMIYAH
Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion, MoCIIP

initiatives" are planned for deployment with the goal of supporting the growth of a low carbon economy.

Significantly, a "central national team" has been constituted to unify planning around renewables and green hydrogen projects, said the Under-Secretary. The goal is to "define a clear strategic path for projects and setting planning controls for project distribution in order to achieve the best utilisation of natural resources, as well as to empower the sector and develop the infrastructure requirements," she said.

Alongside solar resources, wind energy is also been harnessed to support Oman's

green energy aspirations, said Al Samsamiyah. She cited in this regard the successful launch of the Gulf region's first commercial-scale wind farm at Harweel in Dhofar Governorate.

"This wind farm has a generation capacity of 50 megawatts with 13 wind turbines and already generates 7 per cent of Dhofar electricity needs. At least five more major wind projects are planned for procurement during the 2021 – 2027 timeframe," she stated.

Further underpinning Oman's strong value proposition as a green energy hub is the country's modern transport infrastructure and advantageous geographical location, said Asila. "Our location offers great competitive advantage as we are optimally suited to support shipments of local green fuels to markets in Asia, Middle East and Europe," said the Under-Secretary.

"Our roads are regarded as amongst the best in the world – perfect for meeting distribution needs across the Gulf. And additionally, sailing times from our ports are on an average 30 to 40 per cent lower than from competing locations. That is 15 days to New York, 12 to the UK and five to Singapore. Besides, we have created a business friendly environment with a range of incentives available for investors in green energy projects and as well with other sectors that is on our focus for 2040," she added.

Oman airports record surge in number of flights

FROM PAGE 13

The number of passengers travelling through Salalah Airport increased by 68.2 per cent until the end of July 2022. The number of international and domestic (departures and arrivals) from Suhar Airport reached 534 as of end of July 2022, and the number of passengers on international and domestic (arrivals/

departures) reached 47,697 passengers.

Meanwhile, Duqm Airport recorded a 6.6 per cent increase in the number of domestic travels (departures and arrivals) reached 386 flights until the end of July 2022, compared to 362 trips during the same period in 2021. The number of passengers increased by 45.1 per cent from 25,402 travellers as of end of July 2021

to 36,868 passengers as of the end of July 2022.

Indians topped the highest number of passengers on departures and arrivals using the Muscat International Airport with 144,845 passengers, followed by Bangladeshis with 47,424 passengers, and Pakistanis with 37,797 passengers as of end of July 2022.

Banker bonus cap could be axed to boost business



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

bonus to make London 'more attractive' for businesses. The cap was introduced by Brussel (with UK being part of EU then) after the 2008 financial crash.

The new chancellor told executives in meetings in London's financial district – known as the 'City' – about his desire to be "decisive and do things differently" and help London win more top talent, the Financial Times reported. His plan comes as the government continues to push ahead with its landmark overhaul to City rules in the Financial Services and Markets Bill.

Banks in America continue to be known for their hard-charging culture, with heavy weighting towards bonuses in pay packets. They are also bringing workers back to the

office quicker and for more days than their European peers. In response, some UK banks have attempted to lure Wall Street's brightest with a more flexible attitude to working from home.

However, as overall pay in London still tends to be lower than in America, the bonus cap can affect UK banks' ability to create an equivalent remuneration package for top staff.

Former chancellor George Osborne was unable to overturn the limit in a challenge at the European Court of Justice after the cap came in at a maximum of two times salary in 2014. But the issue had not been one that the City had been lobbying on since Brexit though.

Appearing before parliament's Treasury committee in October

last year, Citigroup's Europe, Middle East and Africa chief executive David Livingstone said, "we don't think it's a high regulatory priority at the moment", when asked if the bank was looking to reform the cap.

Director for strategy and policy at banking lobby group UK Finance, Matthew Conway, told the same hearing that "none of our members are pressuring us to take this forward as a priority" and that "in three years, I haven't had one discussion about it".

Removing the cap, it is argued, could strengthen London's competitiveness in the global finance industry by allowing banks to attract the best talent with the offer of higher financial package. It would also cut banks' fixed costs as they could dish out

bonuses more freely instead of increased salaries.

A veteran commentator in the financial district, David Bulk said that removing, or easing, the cap was "logical". "This move will stimulate activity in trading markets and in IPO and M&A activity, thus encouraging more banks to focus business on London, therefore delivering more taxation to the revenue," he said.

Some experts have already said that following through with the change would be difficult politically for the government, particularly as the country faces stagflation. Critics also say it may trigger a return of the high risk behaviour that sparked the global financial crisis.

"There is never going to be a good time to do it, but if you can

justify it by saying it will increase overall economic growth then we should look at it," said a minister.

Global head of employment and incentives at Linklaters, Alexandra Beidas, said: "Individuals at banks who are subject to the bonus cap have mixed feelings about it. Some welcomed the increased fixed pay and certainty they have on their remuneration. Others would prefer to have more of their pay based on performance."

She added: "If firms use the freedom resulting from any removal of the bonus cap, this would also mean that a greater proportion of pay that bankers receive is subject to performance and reduction or clawback in the event of misconduct, failures of risk management or similar."

UK chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng is planning to scrap the ceiling on banker

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The call of the caravan

While Qurayat is a beautiful place, one of its many challenges is a good place to stay for guests especially those who wanted to experience Oman's nature. Ahmed al Sinani realised that the best way to bring people to nature is by providing accommodation through a caravan... **P20**



Bella Hadid's spray on dress: Paris fashion week highlights

FROM A SPRAY-PAINTED dress on Bella Hadid to a very muddy Kanye West and a surprise cameo by Cher, there were some viral moments at Paris Fashion Week, which concludes on Tuesday.

Here are some of the highlights from the spring-summer 2023 womenswear shows.

SPRAY-CANNED BELLA

The most talked-about dress of the week came out of a nozzle.

Coperni stole the show when a scantily-clad Hadid had a white dress sprayed on to her by assistants, live on the runway.

It took about 10 minutes for the "Fabrican" to work its magic. Made from polymers and fibres, it dries instantly into a non-woven fabric when it makes contact with air.

Social media went wild, and there were comparisons to the iconic moment in 1999 when Alexander McQueen had a model spray-painted by two robots while rotating on a turntable.

Another futuristic accessory was spotted at Hermes, where hollowed-out, carbon-fibre sandals made it look like the models were floating on air – "a mixture of technology and archaism," said the brand's shoe designer Pierre Hardy.



MUDDY KANYE

Balenciaga has a thing for dirt and trash lately.

Having caused a viral sensation with his ultra-expensive trash bags earlier this year, designer Demna decided to go a step further and fill a convention centre with dirt from a peat bog.

First out on the runway was Kanye West, who was caked in mud as were many of the other models' clothes.

"Putting luxury into the box of polished, exclusive and visually expensive is limited, and pretty old school," the show notes explained.

TROP CHER

Many brands went for big theatrical displays in the hope of drowning out the grim news around the world.

Balmain's Olivier Rousteing wowed his audience after his show by walking down the runway with Cher as her hit "Strong Enough" boomed around the stadium.

At Rochas, designer Charles de Vilmorin said his show was an explicit "ode to indifference", set in a mock-up of the legendary Folies Bergere nightclub.

And Dior staged a "baroque party", with designer Maria Grazia Chiuri saying: "In this heavy historical moment, fashion is the only territory where we can still play."

Her new collection inspired by 16th-century French queen Catherine de Medici, included corsets and high heels – not the usual thing from the feminist Chiuri, but she said it was "ironic power dressing".

ROUND AND PROUD

While most models still looked like they could slip through a toilet roll, there were occasional glimpses of different body shapes on the catwalk.

Belgian Ester Manas's sultry collection of high-cut dresses and swimsuits were presented mostly by plus-size models, while curvy US star Ashley Graham paraded in a mini-dress for Balmain.

Up-and-coming French designer Victor Weinsanto fully embraced bulges as he wrapped a model in nothing but tight bondage ties.

His light-hearted approach also saw him put friends and fellow designers on the catwalk and even encourage his models to smile.

"Fashion cannot be a purely elitist field," he said

BECKS IN PARIS

The biggest hype ahead of fashion week was the Paris debut by former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham.

The 48-year-old has been trying to turn around the commercial fortunes of her label, hiring French managers and now presenting at the most prestigious fashion event.

Beckham played it safe, with a traditional but elegant show of office and evening wear that went down well with critics and buyers.

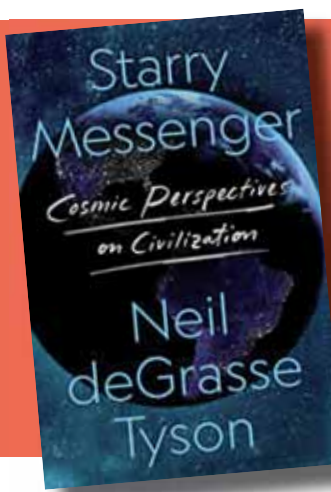
And she took a more humble approach by mingling with the guests following the show, rather than staying cordoned-off backstage. — **AFP**

READ

STARRY MESSENGER

BY NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON

The astrophysicist and director of the Hayden Planetarium delves into subjects including politics, religion, gender and race.



MOVIE MEMORABILIA

Star Wars villain Darth Vader's gloves will be among the famous and familiar items from films, television and the world of music up for grabs in British memorabilia company Propstore's annual live auction next month. Returning to an in-person event following a pandemic pause, this year's auction boasts an extended catalogue of over 1,500 lots with an estimated total worth of 11 million pounds (\$12.3 million). — **Reuters**



IMMERSIVE WORLD

A view of the Museum of the Future in the Gulf emirate of Dubai. The UAE has unveiled its first ministry in the Metaverse and a virtual trip to Mars as Dubai attempts to become a hub for the immersive world, which remains in its infancy but is attracting growing interest. The economy ministry's Metaverse address, unveiled this week at Dubai's Museum of the Future, is a place to interact with governments, corporations and even for the UAE to sign bilateral agreements with other countries, officials said. — **AFP**





Genies not genius: Turkey's low-budget horror flicks boom

KNEELING BEFORE A CHALK star outside his tumbledown house, an old man performs a ritual to rid himself of evil spirits — which many superstitious Turks believe exist.

Perched behind the camera, director Metin Kuru tries to encourage the actor to convey the sheer agony of being possessed by a genie.

But there won't be many takes, because Kuru needs to finish his film fast to feed Turkey's voracious appetite for low-budget horror flicks, with a new

secular ones — lapping up superstitious tales that were previously frowned on.

Film critic Gizem Simsek Kaya believes there may be a link between the horror boom and broader social shifts in Turkey.

"The drive to brush aside superstition and come closer to science (of modern Turkey's founders) began to regress in the late 1990s," Kaya said.

Religious-themed horror movies became popular with "Buyu" ("The Spell") in 2004, and reached an even bigger

this," Kaya said.

FALSE IDOLS

Turkish horror films mostly revolve around jinns or genies — potentially mischievous spirits that are a part of Islamic myths and theology.

This can be tricky for makeup artists like Yesim Vatansever.

Not only are genies supposed to be invisible, but there are also more than 70 types, making depicting them a challenge.

inspiration for the Dracula, the mediaeval Romanian ruler Vlad the Impaler, got his gory nickname from impaling Turks.

Ghosts and zombies also have issues.

"In Islam the dead body is only seen covered in a shroud. When you try to resurrect something, it has to remove the shroud and walk naked," Kaya said.

In one movie, Kaya recalled, a resurrected man who threw off his shroud put on some trousers he found on the street.

"The moment he did that, the movie



supernatural chiller released every week.

"At the end of the day, I try to produce films with as few technical issues as possible," Kuru said between scenes of "Muhr-u Musallat 2 — Yasak Dugun" ("Sealed Invasion 2 — Forbidden Wedding").

Filming many of the scenes in the dark helps.

"The colour palette of horror movies is not as varied, which allows film-makers to shoot with cheaper cameras, less light and smaller crews," Kuru said.

This year alone, 60 new homegrown horror movies will hit screens in Turkey, where demand for entertainment has not waned despite — or maybe because of — the economic crises gripping the country.

Few horror films were made until the 1990s, their growth coinciding with the rise of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamic-rooted AKP party.



audience with the launch of the big-budget "Dabbe" series in 2006.

Director Hasan Karacadag made six "Dabbe" films, the last in 2015, breaking Turkish box office records.

Other blockbusters followed from the equally popular "Siccin" franchise from director Alper Mestci.

"Some Islamic tendencies and the rising tide of conservatism play a role in

"It would be much easier to visualise, say, an alien," Vatansever said.

Film critic Kaya, who teaches at Istanbul's Kultur University, said vampire movies do not work in Turkey because of religious sensitivities.

The idea of the living dead "in Islam is equal to committing shirk," or the sin of idolatry, she said.

It may not have helped either the



turned into a comedy," she said.

TINY BUDGETS

These limitations can make Turkish horror movies look dreadful, Kaya lamented.

"They are shot in a few days, the equipment is poor, and the film can come out blurry," she said.

"I had never seen the words 'error code' accidentally appear in a movie" until it turned up in a Turkish horror flick this year, she said.

Screenwriter Ozlem Bolukbasi conceded that the films were not cinematic masterpieces.

"The budgets and production values are not high," she said.

"But do we still draw audiences? Yes, we do," she added.

Back on set with the old man possessed by a jinn, local villagers had flocked to see the filming.

"It's fun. The whole town is here at the moment," said Huseyin Aydemir, who runs a local restaurant in Buyukorhan, near Bursa in northwestern Turkey.

"A cemetery scene was shot here two days ago. The locals went to the scene hours before the film crew." — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD

Australia lists small wallaby among new endangered species



AUSTRALIA LISTED A SMALL wallaby and the grey snake among 15 new threatened species on Tuesday as it launched a zero-extinction plan for its unique wildlife.

Many of Australia's species are clinging to existence, their habitats shrinking from human activity and extreme events such as the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, wildlife groups say.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government announced a new 10-year scheme to try and halt the slide into extinction of 110 "priority species" and shield 20 "priority places" from further degradation.

It aims to prevent any new extinctions of plants and animals while conserving at least 30 per cent of Australia's land mass.

Wildlife groups blame Australia's poor record in protecting its unique species largely on habitat destruction, accelerated by global warming and resulting extreme weather.

The Black Summer fires burned through 5.8 million hectares in eastern Australia and killed or displaced an estimated 1-3 billion animals.

"The Black Summer bushfires in particular have seen devastating results for many species. We are determined to give wildlife a better chance," said Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek.

"Listing species as threatened under national environment law is a critical step in protecting the species and habitats in need of urgent help."



EXTINCTION CAPITAL

Australia's attempts to protect its wildlife had not worked so far, the minister added.

"Australia is the mammal extinction capital of the world," she said.

Among the 15 plants and animals listed as threatened are the vulnerable small parma wallaby, which faces danger from bushfires and predators, the endangered mildly venomous grey snake of Queensland, and the endangered small wingless matchstick grasshopper, which is sensitive to drought and frequent bushfires.

Wildlife groups welcomed the government's goal of preventing any new plant or animal extinctions.

The objective "is ambitious but essential if future generations of Australians are to see animals like koalas, mountain pygmy possums, greater gliders and gang cockatoos," said the Australian Conservation Foundation's nature programme manager Basha Stasak.

"Stopping the destruction of wildlife habitat is the key to achieving this objective."

Stasak called on the government to strengthen national environment law, saying it had failed to protect animals, plants and ecosystems.

Scientists had estimated the cost of tackling Australia's "extinction crisis" at 1.69 billion Australian dollars (\$1 billion) a year, Stasak said.

DOWNWARD SPIRAL

A five-yearly State of the Environment report released in July painted a picture of wildlife devastation on land and sea.

It cited the clearing of millions of hectares of primary forest and mass coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef caused by marine heatwaves.

WWF-Australia called for investment in recovery plans for all threatened species.

"Australia's wildlife and wild places have been on a dangerous downward spiral," said WWF-Australia chief conservation officer Rachel Lowry.

She welcomed Australia's target of zero-new extinctions, saying it matched the goals of New Zealand and European Union member countries.

Lowry pressed the government to set out and fund a recovery plan for the more than 1,900 threatened species in Australia.

"This plan picks 110 winners," she said.

"It's unclear how it will help our other 'non-priority' threatened species such as our endangered greater glider for example."

Plibersek told journalists that protecting 110 prioritised species would create a "halo effect" on interdependent species in the same habitat.

Protecting 20 locations could create "little Noah's Arks, places that we can be confident we are returning to healthy populations of plants and animals," she said. — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Never-before-seen Beatles footage released in Japan



BEATLES FANS have hailed the release of never-before-seen footage showing the Fab Four on tour in Japan, following a fierce court battle over the 35-minute video.

The silent black-and-white footage of the British band's only visit to the country in 1966 was recorded by police as a security measure.

It shows the musicians descending from a plane in matching kimonos and performing to a rapturous crowd at the Budokan arena in Tokyo, as well as behind-the-scenes police operations.

The footage has a noticeable quirk, however: the faces of everyone except the Beatles — from crying admirers to officers facing off with right-wingers protesting the tour — have been pixelated for privacy reasons.

This had been a key sticking point for fans and freedom-of-information advocates, who fought a long and winding battle demanding that the footage remain uncensored.

They took their case all the way to Japan's Supreme Court, arguing that the video was a "historical document" and pleading for authorities to simply let it be.

However, the top court rejected the case in 2018, and the footage was released late last month after four painstaking years of pixelation work, said Satoshi Shinkai, head of the civic group that fought the legal battle with authorities.

"The film has come to light for the first time ever...I'm sure Beatles scholars and fans across the world will pay close attention to it," Shinkai, himself a Beatles fan, said on Monday.

The Beatles remain hugely popular in Japan but toured the country only once, playing five concerts, and were trailed by legions of screaming fans.

Police provided the heavily edited clips to Shinkai's group, which campaigns for freer information disclosure and has posted the footage publicly on YouTube.

The group had argued that it was almost impossible to identify people in the footage more than 50 years on.

The face pixelation points to Japan's "backwards mindset" regarding information disclosure and its "hidebound views on culture", said Shinkai, who is also a lawyer. — AFP

TRAVEL TALES

As Iraq concrete jungle swelters, ancient stone houses stay cool



AS THE SUN BEATS down on Iraq, most people swelter in their concrete homes — but not the inhabitants of one mountain town known for its ancient and cool stone houses.

Tracing its roots back 2,700 years, the picturesque Kurdish town of Akre says it is better adapted to the modern-day perils of climate change than other parts of Iraq.

"Stone houses are far more resistant" to the rising temperatures and also preserve the town's unique character, said Mayor Baland Reda Zubair.

"Cement radiates heat, raises temperatures and affects the environment," said Zubair of the building material that is allowed only in outlying neighbourhoods.

Many of Akre's narrow alleyways can only be navigated by donkeys and wind through a historic city centre bathed in the pale yellow and brown hues of the locally quarried stone.

Oil-rich Iraq is the world's fifth-most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change, according to the United Nations.

The Kurdistan region where Akre lies suffers from heat and water scarcity like the rest of the country.

But while Iraqi authorities have done little to address the challenges, Akre, a city of 100,000 residents about 500 kilometres (311 miles) north of Baghdad, believes sticking with the old ways will help it adapt.

Since 1991, when Kurdistan gained de facto autonomy from Iraq, it has declared concrete off limits for construction and renovation in the old city of Akre.

NO AIR-CON

An impressive building welcomes those entering the old city. Dating to 1853, it is a remnant of the Ottoman Empire that once ruled the area.

"It's an old military barracks," said Jamil Siddik, a 63-year-old engineer who oversees renovation works in the city.

The limestone used for renovation is sourced from the mountains that surround Akre, he explained. For its residents, "limestone is easy to use. It's cheap and available," Siddik said.

It also provides great insulation. "Concrete blocks may only be 20 centimetres (7.9 inches) wide, while the stones are 40 or 60 centimetres wide," he said.

Bewar Majeed, 37, lives in the old city. By his doorstep, kittens were playing in the sun, as the temperature reached 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

But inside the house, the rooms are nice and cool thanks to its limestone walls.

"I don't need an air conditioner," he said. "I have a small air cooler, which is enough for me, and it's less expensive."

The city's policy promoting stone over concrete relies on public financing.

For years after 2011, public funds paid for the renovation of 25 old houses and a mosque. In 2014, however, funding was suspended "because of the financial crisis", said Mayor Zubair.

Now, he added, old city residents may renovate or build with their own money, so long as they avoid concrete, or "eventually cover it with stone."

TOURIST DRAW

On top of the environmental

benefits, Akre's conservation efforts aim to preserve its heritage value and attract tourism.

According to the regional tourism board, 1.7 million visitors came to Iraqi Kurdistan during the first quarter of 2022, the vast majority of them Iraqis.

The autonomous region has cultivated an image of stability, distancing itself from the violence that has engulfed other parts of Iraq in recent years.

Still, Kurdistan hasn't been entirely spared the sounds of battle.

Neighbouring Turkey regularly carries out military operations there in its fight against the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been designated a "terrorist" group by Turkey and its Western allies.

In July, artillery bombardment several dozen kilometres away from Akre killed nine civilians, most of them Iraqi holidaymakers.

Baghdad blamed Ankara, which denies the Iraqi claim.

But Akre's residents shy away from politics.

Ali, an ice cream vendor, said tourists who are drawn to the town bring him "joy".

"We get Iraqis, Germans and French," he added. "They like our historic city centre." — AFP

TRENDS

Bestseller or dark horse for 2022 Nobel Literature Prize?



THE SWEDISH ACADEMY will on Thursday announce the 2022 winner of the often-criticised Nobel Literature Prize, with the award committee known for its penchant for spotlighting lesser-known writers over bestselling authors.

In the past two years, the 18-member Academy has bestowed the prestigious prize on US poet Louise Glück and Tanzanian author Abdulrazak Gurnah, two writers whose work had not been widely translated and was not known to the broad public — or even some publishers.

"After last year, I think it's maybe even a bit harder to guess" who could win this year, admitted Lina Kalmteg, literary critic for public broadcaster Swedish Radio, recalling the "total surprise" in the studio when Gurnah's name was read out last year.

"I think we can expect a more well-known name this year, after last year's surprise", said Bjorn Wiman, culture editor at Sweden's newspaper of reference Dagens Nyheter.

The Academy is slowly recovering from a devastating #MeToo scandal that led to the postponement of the 2018 prize, and its controversial decision a year later to honour Austrian author Peter Handke.

His pro-Serbian positions extended to backing Serbia's former president Slobodan Milosevic, who was on trial for genocide when he died in 2006. Three years ago, the body promised new criteria would lead to a more global and gender-equal literature prize.

"The Academy is now very conscious of its reputation when it comes to diversity and gender representation, in a totally different way than they were before the 2017-2018 scandal", Wiman said.

"A lot of new people have joined the Academy with new perspectives and other references", he said, noting that it was no longer just made up of "older white men".

Since the #MeToo scandal, the Academy has awarded the Nobel to two women — Louise Glück and Olga Tokarczuk of Poland — and one man.

Does that bode well for another woman this year?

If so, Joyce Carol Oates of the United States, Annie Ernaux and Maryse Conde of France and Canada's Margaret Atwood could get the nod this year.

A prize to Russian author and outspoken Kremlin critic Lyudmila Ulitskaya, often cited as a potential candidate, would also send a strong message after Moscow's war of Ukraine.

BETS ARE ON HOUELLEBECQ

A prize to Ulitskaya "would spark reactions", Wiman said, noting it would highlight her opposition to the Kremlin but also be considered controversial for promoting Russian culture at a time when Moscow is being lambasted for its war in Ukraine.

"This is the kind of complex intellectual debate you really want to see around the Nobel," Wiman said.

Unlike many other literary awards, there is no shortlist for the Nobel, and the nominations to the Academy and its deliberations are kept secret for 50 years.

Left to mere speculation, betting sites list the favourite as France's Michel Houellebecq, whose name has made the rounds in Nobel circles for many years.

In second spot is British author Salman Rushdie, who was the victim of an attempted murder attack in August.

It took the Academy 27 years to finally denounce, in 2016, the Iranian fatwa on "The Satanic Verses" author, a highly controversial silence it attributed to its neutrality and independence.

Other names often cited as possible winners are Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Hungary's Laszlo Krasznahorkai and US authors Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo.

Yet other favourites include Jon Fosse and Karl Ove Knausgaard of Norway, who could bring the prize back to Scandinavia more than a decade after it went to Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer.

Maria Hymna Ramnehill, critic at regional daily Göteborgs-Posten, meanwhile said she was hoping the prize would go to French-Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun or Croatia's Dubravka Ugrešić. — AFP



art & life

Local Scene

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WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 5 | 2022

The call of the caravan

By Baraah Al Mujaini

Qurayat is home to some beautiful attractions and is a stone's throw away from some of Oman's most popular wadi destinations. In winter, Qurayat becomes a winter paradise as people from nearby towns flock to its beaches to enjoy the cooler breeze of the season.

Despite its potential, it is facing challenges when it comes to places to stay for guests.

It is for this reason that Ahmed al Sinani built his business model around renting caravans as an alternative to hotels and apartments. In 2013, Ahmed started to think about this business seriously. He consulted several experts before taking any key steps and consider different aspects to make sure that it become a fruitful endeavour.

Ahmed's business of renting caravans was officially launched in January 2020. The caravans are equipped with several modern amenities including functional showers and toilets.

When Covid-19 challenged the world, his rent-a-caravan business took off providing the much-needed alternative to exploring Oman's beautiful nature.

"Anyone who launches a business must have clear objectives, and mine were: cleanliness, honesty, and credibility. And I think this is what makes my caravans special and unique," Ahmed said.

Al Sinani's caravans are also complemented by different activities that make renting it entertaining. For instance, bikes, cinema screens and banana boats are made accessible to the guest guaranteeing that he has a full package of entertainment, especially for family renters.

Still a growing trend in Oman, Ahmed shared that there are a few challenges that he has to face. While the caravan is a known trend in other parts of the world, different agencies in Oman are yet to embrace it citing some restrictions imposed by municipalities and constantly working with different offices for them to understand what this particular industry needs.

Ahmed also shared that from the renter's perspective, they are yet to fully create a fully functioning system where

guests will be able to adhere to instructions, particularly on the issue of cleanliness and sanitation.

"So far I am satisfied with the extent to which people have liked the idea there are more booking during winter than in the summer because of the weather, yet in general people did like experiencing caravans", Al Sinani said.

Ahmed always tries his best to ensure warm hospitality to the clients, hence, he is keen on providing novel facilities and introducing special offers from time to time.

As a way to enhance the services in the caravan, Ahmed applies a post-experience questionnaire in which he asks about the services and the extent to which the hospitality was convenient. Ahmed also focuses on asking the client if there are any suggestions to upgrade the caravan's level of services and activities.

"Some of the clients do suggest great ideas, yet some of which are hard to apply since we don't own the destination where we place the caravans", Al Sinani said.

Coastal destinations are the most favourable places to have a caravan experience. The Omani golden beaches offer a distinctive experience where you can enjoy the lovely weather and fresh air. According to Al Sinani, the best time to rent caravans is during the winter months however, some clients prefer during the summer since the weather is mostly good next to the sea.

"We have chosen our destinations very carefully to ensure an amazing experience for the clients. It is ideal for relaxation and experiencing new activities offered as a package when renting the caravans. The destination is suitable as well for fishing and swimming, along with an external yard beside the caravan where the client can have a barbecue night or so", Al Sinani added.

The most significant criteria in owning a rental caravan according to Ahmed is to ensure a high level of cleanliness and provide the client with all the facilities needed to ensure an appealing experience.

For those interested to have the caravan experience, Ahmed can be contacted through his Instagram: @caravan.almuzn

