

Oman's seaports offer promising supply link with the world

Omani sea ports ranked first in terms of the value of the Sultanate of Oman's exports to other countries in 2021. With 86 per cent of export goods handling, Mina al Fahal emerged as the perfect seaport in the region. Among the land ports, with 12 per cent of the value of exports, the highest was at Khatm al Shakla port, then airports with 2 per cent, the highest was through Muscat International Airport. **DETAILS ON P3**



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IRAQ DEFEAT SAUDI ARABIA TO CLINCH WAFF WOMEN'S FUTSAL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE



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KARWA MOTORS TO MANUFACTURE ELECTRIC BUSES IN THE FUTURE



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SURFING PIONEER OF SUR HAS BIG DREAM FOR THE SPORT



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO MADAGASCAR

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent greetings to President Andry Rajoelina of the Republic of Madagascar on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and the friendly people of Madagascar.

NOMINATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL POLLS

The period designated for receiving applications for candidacy to the third term of the Municipal Councils from the newly formed wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Sinaw in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, opens on Sunday. The Ministry of Interior has called on citizens of the wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Sinaw who wish to and are eligible to stand for the Municipal Council elections to submit their applications on the website elections.om after filling in the form and attaching the required documents. **SEE P2**

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I DID NOT EXPECT TO SURVIVE: AFGHAN QUAKE SURVIVOR

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Egyptian president to visit Oman tomorrow



MUSCAT: President Abdul Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt will pay an official visit lasting two days to the Sultanate of Oman from Monday. This was stated in a statement issued by the Diwan of

Royal Court reading as follows: "In affirmation of the fraternal relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt, President Abdul Fattah el Sisi of Egypt will pay an official visit

lasting two days to the Sultanate of Oman from Monday (June 27). The visit stems from the keenness of the leaderships in the two countries in supporting bilateral relations and means of enhancing them towards

wider horizons. "The visit will explore various areas that serve the joint interests and meet aspirations of their peoples. It will also discuss a number of topics of concern to the

two sides in light of the regional and international developments. "May the Almighty Allah grant the two leaderships success to serve their countries, the Arab and Islamic nations!" — **ONA**



BUNCH OF YELLOWS

A boy carries a big bunch of yellowish Al Mabsily dates in the Wilayat of Bidiya in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate during date harvest season which will continue till September. Tabseel, the cooking and processing of dates as soon as they turn yellow, is a well-known ancient tradition that is celebrated by farmers across Oman.

PHOTO BY MUSA AL HAJRI

Haj Mission leaves for Saudi Arabia

MUSCAT: The Omani Haj Mission for the 1443 AH pilgrimage left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Sultan bin Said al Hinai, on Saturday. The mission was seen off at Muscat International Airport by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Abdullah bin Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials at the ministry. Soon after arriving at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, the Omani Haj Mission will head to Mecca. Three days

later, a team will head to Madina. During its stay at Mecca and Madina, the Omani Haj Mission will provide services to Omani pilgrims in the holy lands to ensure seamless performance of the Haj rituals. The Omani Haj Mission comprises Iftaa and religious guidance delegations, administrative and financial delegation, a medical team, a delegation from the State Audit Institution, a delegation from the Royal Oman Police, a media delegation, scouting team and a delegation for supervising Haj tour operators. — **ONA**

SEE ALSO P2

Youth's act of bravery saves boys from drowning

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

An incident would have ended in disaster but for the act of bravery of young man Ali bin Nasser al Wardi. His quick action ended in the rescue of two boys stranded in a wadi in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on Saturday. Due to Ali bin Nasser al Wardi's heroic act, the two children were rescued. Even though it was difficult for Ali to balance while locking in his arms two children aged 13 and 8 years, he swam to safety, beating the heavy current. Speaking to an Oman newspaper, Ali said, "The wadi was strong, but the rescue was necessary." The rescuer of two children said, "I encountered the children in a

panic state, and I took the risk to save them. I was in a state of fear, but it got over because the children were afraid. We used a rope with the help of my father and brother, which was tied around my waist. Thus I went down into the wadi and thank God we could save the children." The current was extremely high, making it tricky while treading back to the bank. When they arrived near the bank, others stepped in to pull them out. Meanwhile, a driver in a four-wheeler who tried to cross the wadi hardly began his crossing when the powerful rush of water turned the vehicle around and soon took its path. Fortunately, the vehicle swayed a little closer to the bank and got



stuck. The occupants of the vehicle were lucky to make it safely to the land, crossed the wadi by foot by

holding hands to withstand the push of the strong current. The driver has been fined for

attempting to cross the wadi and for endangering the life of co-passengers. The fine for crossing wadi is RO 500. Meanwhile, the Royal Oman Police has sent an alert for road users of Adam-Haima to be cautious as the horizontal visibility was affected due to the rise of dust as well as the formation of a dust storm. There is a dust and sandstorm alert for Adam, Yaaloni, Sunainah, Haima, Marmul and Qarn Alam. Oman Met Office has reported that there are chances for local cloud formations bringing in sporadic rains and sometimes thunderstorms accompanied by active winds in the mountainous areas of Al Dakhiliyah, North and South Al Sharqiyah.



■ OMANI HAJ MISSION LEAVES FOR SAUDI ARABIA



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Despite warning, wadi crossing continues; one more held



SAMUEL KUTTY
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Amid warnings of penalties and dangers involved in crossing flooded wadis, violations in this regard continue unabated.

With some parts of the Sultanate of Oman receiving heavy rains following the condensation of clouds over the Al Hajar Mountains, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has already had to take action against a citizen.

According to the police, the Al Dhahirah Governorate Police Command arrested the citizen for deliberately crossing an overflowing wadi.

“The citizen who risked crossing the wadi stream with his vehicle endangered his own life and the lives of other passengers with him,” the police said, confirming legal procedure against the guilty.

Crossing of wadis is a punishable offence under Article

The Law stipulates that any person who intentionally crosses the wadis in such a way as to endanger his life or the life of other passengers with him or others shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months and a fine not exceeding RO 500

ROP OFFICIAL

49 of the Traffic Law. Crossing wadis is an offence punishable by a hefty fine and a jail sentence. It puts your life and the lives of others in danger. Please be careful while driving, especially with the running wadis.

“The Law stipulates that any person who intentionally crosses the wadis in such a way as to endanger his life or the life of other passengers with him or others shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months and a fine not exceeding RO 500.”

While expressing concern, an

ROP official said that despite the deployment of patrols and rescue teams in areas close to wadis by ROP and Public Authority for Civil and Ambulance, people do not heed to the warnings and cross wadis. On the other hand, the Capital Market Authority issued a warning earlier, calling on citizens, residents, property owners, and owners of industrial establishments and shops to adhere to security and safety instructions during rain and valleys in a way that preserves their safety and the safety of their

properties. The authority stressed that working to follow the security and safety instructions will have a significant impact in mitigating the consequences of the property damage it causes and limiting losses that may fall on individuals and institutions.

The authority confirms that the unified vehicle insurance policy in the comprehensive insurance coverage provides coverage for damages caused by disasters.

However, it requires the holder of the document to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the vehicle and not to risk crossing the valleys and to follow the instructions of the Royal Oman Police.

“Deliberate crossing of the valleys and failure to follow the instructions of the police may lead to the denial of the right of the policyholder from compensation in the event that it is proven that the damage to the vehicle resulted from a deliberate act committed by its driver,” it said.

Nominations for municipal polls in Jabal Akhdhar and Sinaw



MUSCAT: The period designated for receiving applications for candidacy to the third term of the Municipal Councils from the newly formed wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Sinaw in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, opens on Sunday.

The Ministry of Interior has called on citizens of the wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Sinaw who wish to and are eligible to stand for the Municipal Council elections to submit their applications on the website elections.om after filling in the form and attaching the required documents.

The ministry declared that the citizens of the wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Sinaw who are willing to stand for the elections should be registered at the Electoral Register of their respective wilayat a day prior to the start of the period of candidacy for the Municipal Council elections. — **ONA**

RNO marks World Hydrography Day

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman National Hydrographic Office (ONHO) of the Royal Navy of Oman, on Thursday marked the World Hydrography Day alongside the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and other authorities concerned.

The World Hydrography Day falls on June 21 each year. This year’s celebration was themed “Hydrography - Contributing to the United Nations Ocean Decade”.

The event coincided with the United Nations (UN) Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), in addition to the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO 2030) project, which aims to provide a comprehensive coverage of all the depths in the seas, oceans and coasts of the world to maintain the sustainability and organisation of applied ocean sciences to provide the necessary support for blue economy. It also aims to make the economy

based on science and knowledge. Marking this day is an opportunity to raise awareness and enhance public knowledge of hydrography and the various hydrographic services provided by IHO.

Since the Sultanate of Oman is part of the world, the Ministerial Decision No (121/2021) was issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to form a national team to achieve the goals of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). This team consists of several parties, namely the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Education, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Environment Authority, the Diwan of Royal Court, the Royal Navy of Oman, Sultan Qaboos University, and the Environment Society of Oman. — **ONA**



OMAN'S SEAPORTS OFFER PROMISING SUPPLY LINK WITH THE WORLD

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OMANI SEA PORTS ranked first in terms of the value of the Sultanate of Oman's exports to other countries in 2021. With 86 per cent of export goods handling, Mina al Fahal emerged as the perfect seaport in the region.

Among the land ports, with 12 per cent of the value of exports, the highest was at Khatm al Shakla port, then airports with 2 per cent, the highest was through Muscat International Airport.

The volume of trade exchange of the Sultanate of Oman reached RO 33.8 billion during 2021, compared to RO 28 billion in 2020, registering an increase of 20.7 per cent, according to the customs database of the General Administration of Customs for the year 2021.

Shipping through seaports is less expensive compared to shipping through airports. Over the past years, the Sultanate of Oman has worked to enhance the performance of ports, facilitate customs release procedures for goods, and open direct lines between Omani ports and many international ports.

It works to become a regional centre for import and export, having invested billions of riyals in the construction of ports along its shores, in addition to completing the legislative and technical infrastructure that facilitates the work of importers and exporters, attracts local and foreign investments.

STRATEGIC LOCATION

Oman is distinguished by its strategic location overlooking open seas and proximity to international shipping lines. The government focuses on making the main Omani ports pivotal export centres in the region.

Over the past years, it has signed agreements with international companies to manage and operate the main ports to benefit from its global experience in attracting international shipping lines and investments of an export nature to the country.

Through its commercial and industrial ports and seaports, Oman seeks to be among the top ten countries in logistical performance at the international level by 2040, and for the transport and communications sector to become the second source of national income.

Through the implementation of successive five-year plans, Oman was able to develop a series of ports, whether commercial, industrial, touristic or fish, and began reaping the fruits of its investments in this sector, especially in the port of Salalah and Sohar. Thus, it was able to attract billions of riyals as local and international investments, provided thousands of job opportunities and raised the port sector's contribution to the Sultanate's national product.

To develop and enhance the competitiveness of the ports sector in the region, the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology plays a tangible role in the marketing programmes of ports and industrial zones. The ministry coordinates with port management and



SULTAN QABOOS PORT

COVERS
AN AREA OF
26.7
SQUARE
KILOMETRES

CONTAINS
13
BERTHS



PORT OF SALALAH

COVERS
AN AREA OF
10.71
SQUARE
KILOMETRES

CONTAINS
21
BERTHS



SOHAR PORT

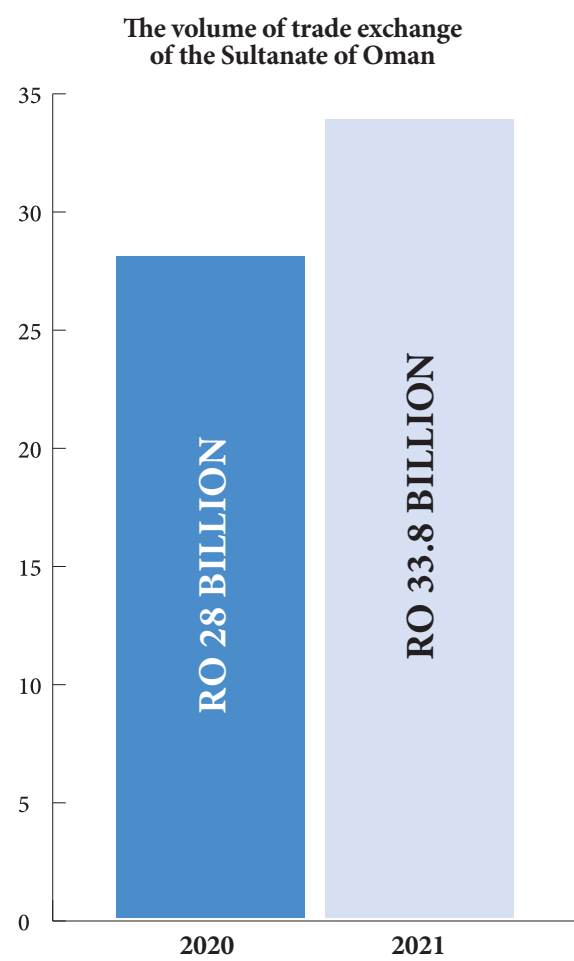
COVERS
AN AREA OF
45
SQUARE
KILOMETRES

CONTAINS
21
BERTHS

operation companies and the competent authorities regarding the international marketing programmes for the ports it supervises, and each port prepares an annual marketing plan to attract foreign investment.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Omani ports are characterised by specifications comparable to international ports, as they are able to



receive the largest ships in the world.

They have berths with a depth of some 25 metres, sufficient storage areas, container terminals, and modern equipment for handling goods. The government has prepared the infrastructure for Omani ports and has been equipped with modern equipment in order to be ready for the import and export process and the speed of clearing the goods.

One of the most important main ports in Oman is the Port of Salalah, which is the pivotal centre for the distribution and transport of containers in the transit area between the east and west. It enjoys a strategic location overlooking the axis of the Indian Ocean countries, and its location on international shipping lines. The port area is 10.71 square kilometres and contains twenty-one berths. While Sohar port is a specialised port for general cargo, containers, and liquid and bulk cargo activities. The area of the port is more than 45 square kilometres and contains twenty one berths. As for the Port of Duqm, it is considered one of the major economic projects and has a developed infrastructure. It is projected to support the national economy and contribute to diversifying sources of income by attracting huge industrial investments due to its distinguished geographical location close to international shipping lines and African and Asian markets.

PORT OF DUQM

The Sultanate of Oman is preparing the port of Duqm to become one of the main ports in the region. The port currently witnesses the implementation of several infrastructure projects preparing it for the stage of full commercial

operation. The most prominent of these projects are: the establishment of the commercial terminal for the berth, which includes the construction of roads, the gate of the commercial pier, the inspection area, the truck registration building, the port's one-stop-shop building, the customs building, and other buildings related to the clearance work of the commercial terminal.

The Sultan Qaboos Port in Muttrah, which was established in 1974, is the first port in Oman for import and export services. It attracted the bulk of goods of various types and sizes and made a significant contribution to the modern development of the country. It covers an area of 26.7 square kilometres and contains 13 berths. However, the port of Khasab in the Governorate of Musandam receives great attention from the government to encourage commercial movement and serve the local economy of the governorate due to its strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz in the far north of Oman. As for Shinas port, it is one of the most important ports in revitalising the movement of local trade between the wilayats of Al Batinah North in connection with fishing, livestock trade and agricultural products. It witnessed many developments represented in the provision of floating berths to serve trade and fishing activities and the rehabilitation of livestock pens in the port.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

According to officials, these ports, thanks to their global infrastructure, will provide a set of competitive advantages for their presence on the main trade lines of the markets of Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. They provide a distinguished connection network that keeps pace with the requests of ships that exceed 3,000 requests to move to more than 52 destinations from the ports. Thus, they provide better transit times, provide the advantage of changing direction on the main shipping lane between East and West to a minimum and facilitate access to those markets through one efficient and secure central location. Also, making the Sultanate of Oman a global logistics centre is represented in simplifying procedures, the flexibility of legislation and policies related to transport, shipping and customs, opening the door for foreign investments and licensing the establishment of companies that enhance the work of the logistics sector. That is also done through speeding up and facilitating transactions by making a qualitative leap in the systems of completing transactions that govern the movement, inspection and financing of the shipping market across borders, ports, airports, and the entire supply chain and reduce the time period for the release of goods.

By coordinating with the General Administration of Customs, several initiatives that facilitate trade have been accomplished, such as the one-stop-shop for inspections, customs warehouses, the application of the International Land Transport Agreement and others.

Workshop on short film directing held in Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI

NIZWA, JUNE 25

As part of the Al Dakhiliyah International Film Festival, a workshop on short film directing was held on Thursday in Nizwa.

The workshop was presented by Emirati director Nawaf al Janahi, in the presence of a group of cinema-enthusiasts, including directors, photographers, and some festival guests. The workshop opened with a speech by Mohammed bin Suleiman al Kindi, director of the festival, in which he referred to the importance of cinematography as a major component of film production.

He pointed out that Al Dakhiliyah International Film Festival aims to achieve many benefits for those

interested in the film industry in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Oman. He pointed out that the workshop will discuss several topics chosen to suit the needs of those interested in this field.

Al Janahi began the workshop with a review of the interests and activities of the participants and their relationship to film directing in general. He made it clear that the output should stem from the person's love for the work.

The session focused specifically on the importance of understanding the director's relationship with screenwriter, producer, director of photography, editor and actor.

Al Janahi reviewed the importance of the role played by the screenwriter. He also pointed out the importance of the message that

the film sends to the audience, as it sometimes requires modification, deletion and addition.

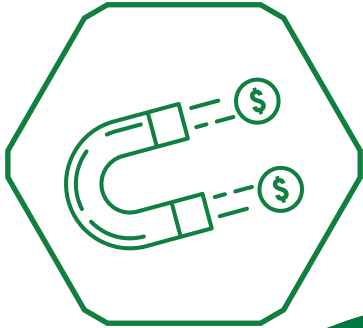
He stressed that the success of any cinematic work requires the integration of roles. He said that the most prevalent fallacies are that the success or failure of the work is attributed to the director, and this is a fallacy that the public must be aware of, because the success of the work comes through the success of each of its components. The work cannot be distinguished without dialogue and a distinct scenario, as well as a producer interested in the details of the work and actors who perform their roles according to what is required of them. The workshop witnessed discussions among the participants on directing and other facets of film-making.





NEW FILLIP TO DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNORATES

ATTRACT
INVESTMENTS



CREATE JOB
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CITIZENS



WITH
THE UNIFIED
SYSTEM OF THE
GOVERNORATES, THE
SUPERVISORY REFERENCE
WILL NOW BE UNIFIED
BY THE MINISTER OF
INTERIOR AS PART OF
THE EFFORTS TO ENSURE
THE ORGANISATIONAL
ISSUES OF COMMON
NATURE

THIS
DEVELOPMENT
MODEL WILL BALANCE
GROWTH AND
CONSOLIDATE THE
COMPETITIVE FEATURES OF
EACH GOVERNORATE



ESTABLISH
AND MANAGE
MUNICIPAL
FACILITIES

PROTECT
PUBLIC
PROPERTIES



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The development of the governorates coinciding with a modern approach to decentralised administration is one of the key components of Oman Vision 2040.

This development model will balance growth and consolidate the competitive features of each governorate. It will also contribute to devising social, economic and environmental priorities within the framework of decentralisation.

Since his ascension to the throne, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has been endeavouring to delegate tasks and streamline government agencies aimed at power devolution, which on the other hand, has a direct impact on productivity and transparency and enhances the economy's potential competitiveness.

This 'economic dividend' will come through devolved administrations' ability to tailor policies to local needs, generate innovation in investments and service provision through inter-provincial competitions, and stimulate participation and accountability.

Within this framework comes the Royal Decree 36/2022 establishing the Unified System of the Governorates, which specifies their responsibilities to be imparted in coordination with the other authorities to fulfil the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The Minister of Interior will now unify the supervisory reference for all governorates as part of the efforts to ensure the organisational issues of common nature between the governorates under unified regulations that govern all municipal affairs in them.

The new system targets sustainable development of the governorates by providing an environment which will attract investments, create job opportunities for citizens, establish and manage municipal facilities and protect public properties.

In addition to setting clear, broad and flexible terms of reference for the governors, the new system enables the governors to carry out direct executive tasks related to economic development, enhancing the governorate's own sources of income, enhancing its competitiveness, and encouraging investments in it.

According to the new system,

the Minister of Interior should meet the governors at least twice a year or, as the need arises, to discuss the common affairs of the governorates. The governor is responsible for preparing projects related to the development plans for the governorates in coordination with the competent authorities and following up on their implementation.

"The governor is the representative of the government who will receive complaints, if any, related and take appropriate decisions in this regard. The governor will also coordinate with the heads of government units regarding the performance of their branches and offices in the governorate", a statement on the system says.

In the new administrative system, governors directly oversee the walis, follow up on their daily work, evaluate their performance, and submit periodic reports on them to the Minister of Interior.

They will also submit an annual report on the outcome of the governorate's work as well as issues that need to be presented to the Council of Ministers, to the Minister of Interior, who, in turn, refer them

to the Council of Ministers.

Each governorate will have an independent budget though they will have allocations from the state general budget. The other sources of finance include investment returns and a percentage of municipal fees, which are determined by a decision of the Council of Ministers.

"Each governorate will have a municipality with the level of a directorate-general except for the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar where the municipality has a higher status, and they directly fall under the governor," it states. "The municipality within the governorate is entrusted with practising all municipal activities stipulated by the system."

"The municipality has a branch in each wilayat that undertakes the exercise of activities within the wilayat under the direct supervision of the municipality", it adds.

Referring to the new system, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah said, by granting powers to the governors will strengthen the governorates and help unify the supervisory reference to the Minister of Interior. This will also ensure the organisational

issues of a common nature between the governorates under unified regulations governing all municipal affairs, he added.

"This will enhance the desired administrative and economic decentralisation of the governorates by making them administratively and financially independent units", he said.

Shaikh Mu'dhid bin Mohammed al Yaqoubi, Governor of Al Wusta, said that the Royal Decree No. 36/2022 confirms the supreme keenness to activate the decentralisation approach in the governorates as a tool for comprehensive development within the most prominent features of the Oman Vision 2040 and the application of the concept of competitiveness based on comparative advantages.

"This will undoubtedly contribute to unifying the procedures and simplifying them according to a common vision that achieves the desired goals. The unification of the supervisory reference from my point of view comes in harmony with the insightful vision of unifying procedures and facilitating tasks, especially in the joint affairs of the governorates", he said.



Camels move to plains of Dhofar as khareef begins



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The mountains of Dhofar Governorate are where pastoralists have been continuing their traditional occupation for years.

Come monsoon, and one can see the camel migration. Camel owners will ensure the camels are moved to the coast or the plains. Under the khareef conditions, the mountains go under a blanket of fog and mist. Continuous drizzle makes the ground slippery and risky for camels to walk.

Confirming the migration, Dhofar resident Mussallam al Mashiki said khareef had arrived, and people were enjoying the weather.

He lives in Madinat al Haq and owns camels, cows and goats.

"Madinat Al Haq is a small town in the mountains, and when the rains arrive, we take our camels to Salalah or Taqah city while the cows remain on the mountains. The Najd area is also an important relocation area for camels."

Commenting on the arrival of khareef and good locations associated with the season, Musallam says, "We enjoy khareef by visiting Wadi Darbat, but we also enjoy Jabal Samhan."

Jabal Samhan is a Nature Reserve and is also known as home to the Arabian Leopards. It is also one of the highest peaks in Dhofar Governorate.

Covetable yoga feat by Muscat resident teen



KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Staying in a convoluted position in yoga for 33 minutes controlling the breath is almost an impossible task for the ordinary.

But a Muscat resident has proved that practice can really make one do such feats as she broke the online world record by staying in Karnapidasana for 33 minutes.

J Sree Vaishnavi, a class 8 student of Indian School Muscat (ISM) who has been practising yoga since she was just five, has got her name etched in the annals of yoga championship records on International Yoga Day recently.

She has many other credentials to her credit, and this is her third world record. She came first in 'Online World Record'

for maintaining maximum time in Upavistha Konasana on April 19, 2019, for 26 minutes 39 seconds at the Indian Embassy and the same posture was recorded in Limca Book of Records.

She bagged the Second Online World Record for maintaining a maximum time of 15 minutes and 46 seconds in Rajakapotasana - Full pigeon pose on December 28, 2019 at the OWR Campus in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu.

She received the second prize in 2020 and first prize in 2021 at the School level yoga competitions conducted by the Indian Embassy on International Yoga Day.

Vaishnavi also chants Patanjali Yoga sutras first and second Pada.

She has completed Yoga Alliance 200 hours teacher training in yoga.

Nation to mark World Drug Day today

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will join other countries to mark the World Drug Day which is celebrated on June 26 each year.

The World Drug Day is aimed at combating the threat of drugs being a shared responsibility between the community and the authorities concerned.

This year's celebration includes exhibitions and awareness lectures carried out by the awareness team at the Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

The Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, in cooperation with the other units of Royal Oman Police (ROP), achieved many accomplishments



in terms of control and monitoring operations against drug dealers and smugglers. Over the past years, the anti-drug unit seized considerable quantities of drugs linked to international

drug cartels.

The ROP has opened regional and international channels in order to enhance international cooperation and join world efforts in combating the phenomenon of

drug trafficking.

Regarding the role of the community in combating drug abuse, the Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances affirmed that it is laying a great emphasis on the community as the security control is not enough and there should be communal cooperation with the authorities to curb the scourge of drug trafficking.

Drug smuggling crimes are punishable by death or life imprisonment in addition to a fine of up to RO 50,000 with the aim to stem drug abuse among the youth as official reports indicate that the age group 20-45 years is the most vulnerable to the threat of drug addiction. — ONA

■ 'SHABAB OMAN II' RECEIVES 5,000 VISITORS OVER TWO DAYS



The Royal Navy of Oman's vessel Shabab Oman II opened its doors to visitors during her participation in Kiel Week 2022 in Germany. More than 5,000 people visited the vessel over two days. The exhibition on board the ship showcased exquisite details of the Omani heritage and history and genuine traditions that held the visitors spell-bound.

AI Najd Agriculture Development Company
شركة النجد للتنمية الزراعية

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS

The AI Najd Agriculture Development Co (S.A.O.C) invites following tender:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
AI Najd-1/2022	Power Supply to the Dowkah farm in Dhofar Governorate	85/=	"B" and Above	23/06/2022 until 05/07/2022	11/08/2022

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies with Grade "B" and above which registered with Tanweer, Tender Board and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for Electrical Works for tender AI Najd-1/2022 may obtain the Tender documents from company Muscat office Ghala Area at Wilayat Boshar against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The tender may be collected on any working day between 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to AI Najd Agriculture Development Co (S.A.O.C).
- Offers Submission:** The offer for tender (AI Najd-1/2022) should be submitted in One sealed envelope with red wax addressed to the **Chairman of Board**, AI Najd Agriculture Development Co (S.A.O.C) marked with tender number and the subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the Tenderer.
- Offers Submission:** offers for tender (AI Najd-1/2022) should be submitted in Two sealed envelopes (Financial & Technical) with red wax addressed to the **Chairman of Board**, AI Najd Agriculture Development Co (S.A.O.C) marked with tender number and the subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelopes. The exterior of the envelopes containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the Tenderer.
- Submission Location:** The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box at the AI Najd Agriculture Development Co (S.A.O.C), Muscat office Ghala Area at Wilayat Boshar, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- AI Najd Agriculture Development Copmany (S.A.O.C) without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

For more information, please call: 98048123 or 99773774

RAO celebrates passing out of new batch



MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) celebrated at the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Training Regiment Field on Thursday the passing-out of a new batch of recruits.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Ja'aboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF).

The event was attended by senior SAF officers, as well as RAO officers and personnel. — ONA

**Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES
TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT**

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (R.O)
15/2022	Building works – Thumrait	Excellent	07 th July 2022	1 st August 2022	830/- R.O

***For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)**

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).

You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.

- Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
- Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
- Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:
A. Financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)
B. Technical files.
- Confirmation of site visit.
- All addendums and circulars.
- List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
- List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
- Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
- Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Iran N-talks to resume in days: EU



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Josep Borell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, speak during a press conference at the foreign ministry headquarters in Tehran. – AFP

TEHRAN: Talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal will resume within days after being stalled for months, the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell said on Saturday during a surprise visit to Tehran.

The negotiations began in April last year but hit a snag in March amid differences between Tehran and Washington, notably over a demand by Iran that its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps be removed from a US terror list.

"We will resume the talks on the JCPOA in the coming days... I mean quickly, immediately," Borrell told a news conference in the Iranian capital, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The landmark nuclear deal has been hanging by a thread since 2018, when then US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord and began imposing harsh economic

The landmark nuclear deal has been hanging by a thread since 2018, when US unilaterally withdrew from the accord

sanctions on America's arch enemy.

The administration of incumbent US President Joe Biden has sought to return to the agreement, saying it would be the best path with the Islamic republic.

"We agreed today that this visit will be followed by the resumption of negotiations also between Iran and the US facilitated by my team to try to solve the last outstanding issues," said Borrell.

The EU foreign policy chief was speaking after a two-hour meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, on the second day of a previously unannounced visit to Tehran. Amir-Abdollahian confirmed the resumption of the negotiations.

"We will try to solve the problems and differences through the talks that will resume soon," Amir-Abdollahian said, adding the key for Tehran was "the full economic benefit of Iran from the agreement concluded in 2015."

"We hope that specifically the US side, this time around, realistically and fairly makes responsible and committed efforts in the negotiations and on the path to reach the final point of the agreement," he added.

On the eve of Borrell's trip, the US point man on Iran, Robert Malley, had "reiterated firm US commitment to come back to the deal" over a meal with the EU diplomatic chief, according to the EU's coordinator for the talks,

Enrique Mora.

"We remain committed to the path of meaningful diplomacy, in consultation with our European partners," Malley said in a tweet.

France, one of the six world powers that agreed the 2015 deal, had on Friday appealed to Iran to "seize this diplomatic opportunity to conclude now, while this is still possible".

The nuclear deal Iran reached with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States gave it relief from sanctions in return for guarantees it could not develop an atomic weapon. Iran has always denied wanting a nuclear arsenal.

In April, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States still believed a return to the accord was "the best way to address the nuclear challenge posed by Iran".

— AFP

Spain plans to spend €9 billion to soften Ukraine war impact

MADRID: The Spanish government agreed on Saturday to an extra € 9 billion (\$9.5 billion) in new spending to tackle the economic effects of the war in Ukraine. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said after an extraordinary Cabinet meeting that it had been decided to extend the measures of the first relief package totalling €16 billion for another six months until December 31 and to launch new aid measures.

The left-wing minority government's plan still must be approved by parliament.

The new measures to cushion the consequences of the war and the sharp rise in energy prices include a reduction in VAT on electricity from 10 to 5 per cent, reductions in public transport subscription rates by 30 to 50 per cent, a 15 per cent increase in lower old-age and disability pensions and a special payment of €200 for people earning less than €14,000 a year.

Sánchez explained that they were also considering an increase in taxes on the excess profits of electricity companies, namely on high additional profits as a result of the Ukraine war. The plan is still being refined but it should be presented soon.

With a view to the upcoming



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez holds a press conference at Moncloa Palace in Madrid. – AFP

debates and votes in the Congress of Deputies, Sánchez called on "all political forces" in the country to support the announced measures.

This week he had appealed to the opposition: "I wish that instead of complaining, instead of criticising, you would support this royal decree for the good of families, businesses and industry in our country."

Meanwhile, Ukraine said it came under "massive bombardment" on Saturday from neighbouring Belarus, a Russian ally not officially involved in the conflict, as clashes were reported in the streets of the eastern city of Lysychansk.

— dpa/AFP

Norway raises terror alert level to highest level

LONDON/OSLO: After the deadly shootings in Oslo, the Norwegian secret service has raised the terror alert level to the highest level.

The danger of a terrorist threat is assessed from three to five and thus to "exceptionally" high, the Norwegian secret service PST announced at a press conference on Saturday, as reported by the broadcaster NRK.

A suspected lone gunman shot dead two people in the centre of the Norwegian capital on Saturday night. At least 21 others were injured, 10 of them seriously, by gunshots in and around a well-known bar, according to police. Investigations into suspected terrorism are ongoing. Hate crime is strongly suspected, police said in the morning. The attacker is said to be a Norwegian with Iranian roots. The suspect had already been arrested during the night.

Meanwhile, Oslo's Pride march

Two killed in Norway 'terror' shooting as police investigate the events as a terrorist attack

was called off on Saturday after "terrorist" shootings in the centre of the normally tranquil Norwegian capital killed two people and wounded 21 others. Police arrested a suspect, a 42-year-old Norwegian man of Iranian descent, shortly after the shooting started around 1am in three locations in central Oslo. "The police are investigating the events as a terrorist attack," police said in a statement.

Organisers of the Pride march that was due to take place on Saturday afternoon said they were calling it off.

"All events linked to Oslo Pride have been cancelled" following "clear" recommendations by



People with Pride flags lay flowers in the aftermath of a shooting in central Oslo killing two people injuring 21. – AFP

police, the organisers wrote on Facebook.

"We do not yet know the

reasons for this terrible act, but to all the others who now are afraid and are in mourning, I say we are

all with you," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said on Facebook.

Police said two people had died

and 21 were wounded, including 10 seriously, and said two weapons had been seized.

The man arrested "is suspected of homicide, attempted homicide and a terrorist act", senior police official Christian Hatlo told a press conference.

The terror charge comes because "of the number of wounded and killed, the number of crime scenes... and there is good reason to believe that he had intended to sow terror", Hatlo said. Police received the first reports at 1:14 am and the suspect was arrested five minutes later, police said. Police said they were able to quickly apprehend the suspect thanks to the "heroic contribution" of bystanders.

The shootings happened near the London Pub gay club, the Herr Nilsen jazz club and a takeaway food outlet. On Saturday, rainbow flags hung near the scene. Police presence was stepped up throughout the capital. — AFP

JOHANNESBURG

Zuma slams graft report as gossip, irrational

South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, fingered to be a graft enabler, rubbished as "unlawful" and "full of gossip" a judicial report detailing how rampant corruption gutted state coffers during his nine-year-tenure. Known as state capture, the web of corruption hollowed out state companies in the continent's most advanced economy, to the benefit of a few wealthy individuals and companies. Zuma's foundation spokesman Mzwanele Manyi told Zuma regarded the report as



"unlawful and highly irrational" "It is predictably full of gossip, innuendo and conjecture. It is very short on concrete evidence," said Manyi. — AFP

KABUL

Afghan released from prison arrives home

An Afghan freed after 15 years of detention in the United States' notorious Guantanamo Bay prison arrived home to a hero's welcome. Asadullah Haroon had languished without charge for years at the US detention centre in Cuba after being arrested in 2006 while working as a honey trader travelling between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Washington accused him of being a courier linked to Al Qaeda and serving as a commander with the Hezbe-Islami group. Like most of the



Guantanamo detainees he was never formally charged, and his lawyers filed numerous lawsuits over the years to press for his release. — AFP

BEIJING

Shanghai reports zero Covid cases for first time

China reported zero new Covid-19 infections in Shanghai for the first time since March on Saturday, as the country's latest outbreak subsides after months of lockdowns and other restrictions. China is the last major economy committed to a zero-Covid strategy, stamping out all infections with a combination of targeted lockdowns, mass testing and long quarantine periods.

The economic hub of Shanghai was forced into a months-long lockdown during a Covid surge



this spring driven by the fast-spreading Omicron variant, while the capital Beijing shuttered schools and offices for weeks over a separate outbreak. — AFP

Heatwaves around the world push people and nations ‘To the Edge’



Raymond Zhong

Millions of Americans are once again in the grips of dangerous heat.

Hot air blanketed Europe last weekend, causing parts of France and Spain to feel the way it usually does in July or August.

High temperatures scorched northern and central China even as heavy rains caused flooding in the country's south. Some places in India began experiencing extraordinary heat in March, though the start of the monsoon rains has brought some relief.

It's too soon to say whether climate change is directly to blame for causing severe heatwaves in these four powerhouse economies — which also happen to be the top emitters of heat-trapping gases — at roughly the same time, just days into summer.

While global warming is making extreme heat more common worldwide, deeper analysis is required to tell scientists whether specific weather events were made more likely or more intense because of human-induced warming. (A team of researchers who studied this spring's devastating heat in India found that climate change had made it 30 times as likely to occur.)

Even so, concurrent heatwaves seem to be hitting certain groups of far-flung places with growing frequency of late, for reasons related to the jet stream and other rivers of air that influence weather systems worldwide.

Studies have shown that parts of North America, Europe and Asia are linked this way. Scientists are still trying to determine how these patterns might change as the planet warms further, but for now it means simultaneous heat extremes will probably continue affecting these places where so much of the world's economic activity is concentrated.

“To have a heatwave, we need the heat, and we need the atmospheric circulation pattern that allows the heat to accumulate,” said Daniel E Horton, a climate scientist at Northwestern University.

With global warming, he said, “we’re definitely getting more heat.” But climate change might also be affecting the way this heat is distributed around the world by globe-circling air currents, he said.

Simultaneous weather extremes in numerous locations aren't just meteorological curiosities. Individual heatwaves can lead to illness and death, wildfires and crop failures. Concurrent ones can threaten global food supplies, which have been under perilous strain this year because of Russia's war of Ukraine.

The warming of recent decades has already made it hard for scientists to know what to call a heatwave and what to treat as simply a new normal for hot weather, said Andrew Dessler, a climate scientist at Texas A&M University.

If the threshold for a heatwave is just the mercury exceeding



Children cool off on a lawn sprinkler toy in Fresno, California. — AFP

100 degrees Fahrenheit for days in a row, for instance, then it's “not at all unexpected,” Dessler said, to see them occurring more regularly in several regions at once. “As time goes on, more and more of the planet will be experiencing those temperatures, until eventually, with enough global warming, every land area in the mid-latitude Northern Hemisphere would be above 100 degrees,” he said.

Yet even when scientists look at how often temperatures exceed a certain level relative to a moving average, they still find a big increase in the frequency of simultaneous heatwaves. One recent study that did this found that the average number of days between May and September with at least one large heatwave in the Northern Hemisphere doubled between the 1980s and the 2010s, to around 152 from 73. But the number of days with two or more heatwaves was seven times higher, growing to roughly 143 from 20. That's nearly every single day from May to September.

The study also found that these concurrent heatwaves affected larger areas and were more intense by the 2010s, with peak temperatures that were almost one-fifth higher than in the 1980s. On days when there was at least one large heatwave somewhere in the Northern Hemisphere, there were 3.6 of them happening per day on average, the study found.

These “dramatic” increases came as a surprise, said Deepthi Singh, a climate scientist at Washington State University and an author of the study.

Singh and her co-authors also looked at where concurrent heatwaves occurred most frequently during those four decades. One pattern stood out: Large simultaneous

heatwaves struck parts of eastern North America, Europe and central and eastern Asia increasingly often between 1979 and 2019 — “more than what we would expect simply by the effect of warming,” Singh said.

The study did not try to predict whether heatwaves along this pattern will become more frequent as global warming continues, she said.

Scientists are working to pin down how the meandering of the jet stream, which has long shaped weather patterns for billions of people, might be changing in this warming era. One factor is the rapid warming of the Arctic, which narrows the difference in temperatures between the northern and southern bands of the Northern Hemisphere. How exactly this might be affecting extreme weather is still a matter of debate.

But those temperature differences are key forces driving the winds that keep weather systems moving around the planet. As the temperature differences narrow, these air currents may be slowing down, said Kai Kornhuber, a climate scientist with the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University. That means extreme events like heatwaves and heavy downpours are likely to last longer.

“The longer a heatwave lasts, the more you push natural and societal systems to the edge,” Kornhuber said.

Climate change already means the world will see more extreme weather events, and more extremes occurring simultaneously, he said. “These circulation changes, they will act on top of it,” he said, “and would make extremes even more severe and even more frequent.”

The warming of recent decades has already made it hard for scientists to know what to call a heatwave and what to treat as simply a new normal for hot weather

When, exactly, did Mount Vesuvius erupt?



Elisabetta Povoledo

Traditionally, it has been held that the lives of ancient Pompeians were tragically cut short on August 24, AD 79, when Mount Vesuvius unleashed its fury, smothering Pompeii and other cities along its perimeter with volcanic debris.

A study by Italian authors made public gives weight to theories that shift the date of the eruption by two months, to the end of October or even early November. It cites — among other evidence — the discovery during a recent site excavation of a charcoal inscription scrawled on a wall October 17, AD 79.

“That inscription is certainly dated after August 24,” the date used by generations of scholars, based on an account by Roman author Pliny the Younger, who witnessed the eruption, said Giovanni P Riccardi, an associate researcher at the Vesuvius Observatory of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, and one of the authors of the study. The later dating, he added, confirmed other evidence that has emerged over the years challenging the August dating.

Since 1748, when the first excavations began, the ancient city of Pompeii has captured the popular imagination as a testament to the arbitrariness of nature and the fragility of humankind.

In their introduction to the study, the scientists note that nearly 2,000 years after the eruption, the

lure of Pompeii has inspired movies and television series; art, including Andy Warhol's pop version of “Vesuvius”; and music, like the 2013 hit “Pompeii” by British rock band Bastille.

Over the years, excavations at the buried city have provided insight about the life of the ancient Romans, and new technology has offered even more detailed clues about their lives, including culinary habits.

Research at the site, said Sandro de Vita, a co-author who works at the Vesuvius Observatory, has offered additional hints of a later dating, from the discovery of typically autumnal fruit — like walnuts, chestnuts and pomegranates — to wine already sealed in dolia, or terra-cotta containers, suggesting the grape harvest was over.

On-site excavations also found that braziers had been in use at the time of the eruption, and some of the victims were wearing heavy clothes, still visible in plaster casts. “This all offers a different interpretation from what Pliny wrote,” he said.

Riccardi noted that there are no original copies of Pliny's letter and that it survives only through copies made in medieval times, meaning that slightly different versions, with different dates, exist of the same text.

The August 24 dating comes from a copy of Pliny's letter in the Florence, Italy-based Medicea Laurenziana library, the oldest known copy. “Just because it's older, strangely it's considered more reliable. But this is certainly not the way to treat a historical fact,” Riccardi said.



The Pompeii archaeological site in Italy.

Excavations at the buried city have provided insight about the life of the ancient Romans, and new technology has offered more detailed clues about their lives, including culinary habits

Biagio Giaccio, another co-author at Italy's National Research Council, said that some historians believe that in copying the text, the monks who penned the Florence version wanted to associate the eruption with an ancient Roman festival known as the mundus, celebrated on August 24. Romans believed that on that day, a circular crater leading to the underworld was opened, allowing souls to emerge.

But the charcoal inscription spurred debate when it was found in 2018 on one wall of the so-called House With the Garden, which opened to the public last year.

It was likely scribbled by a worker who was restoring the villa at the time of the eruption and reads: “XVI K Nov in(d) ultis pro masumis esurit(ioni),” which the authors of the study have translated as: “The 16th day before the kalends of November, he indulged in food in an immoderate way.” The date corresponds to October 17.

“The idea that the disaster happened in the autumn is old news, but if they could link it to further scientific questions about the eruption that might be interesting,” University of Cambridge classics professor Mary Beard said in an e-mail.

Further questions about what Vesuvius might tell us drove the study, said Mario A Di Vito, another co-author, noting that the dating issue was just one of many discussed in the article, published in Earth-Science Reviews.

When the going gets tough



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

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

A friend of mine recently expressed his concern that his contract may not be renewed as his place of work started a ‘wave of Omanisation’ as he calls it.

He told me that he is having sleepless nights thinking about the day he gets told that he has to pack and leave the country. I sympathise with him and reassured him that he is still productive and talented and should not have a problem starting a new job elsewhere.

The economic crises post Covid forced many businesses to let go of their employees despite their good performance. Such a situation understandably affects the sense of job security that we all need in order to do our jobs.

Most of us spend at least eight hours at our workplace and

more working from home. It’s understandable that some people feel angry, frustrated and let down when they get their notice of end of service.

So how can we deal with the emotions during such times? We all know that living through difficult times can affect our mood, health, and outlook about life in general.

Some people feel helpless and overwhelmed by stress and anxiety while others feel uncertain about the future. Most people have some degree of resilience that helps them through such difficulties.

The term resilience is used to describe the ability to cope with the loss, change and trauma that one experiences. Therefore, building resilience can help us cope with life-changing events.

‘WE OFTEN FACE LIFE ADVERSITIES THAT CHALLENGE OUR CONFIDENCE AND ABILITIES TO BOUNCE BACK. HERE ARE FEW TECHNIQUES THAT HELP US BUILD OUR RESILIENCE’

According to psychologists, the following tips can help in building resilience. First, practice acceptance and don’t deny the event that is taking place. Denial can give you temporary relief from the shock of a traumatic event but long term denial will prevent you from adapting to the new situation and finding possible solutions.

The second step is to identify

what you can and cannot control. Make a list of all the things you cannot control and allow yourself to stop worrying about them.

Focus on the actions that you can take. If your contract is not renewed, you cannot change the reason behind it but you can control how much time and effort you put into updating your CV and searching for a new job.

Remember previous times in your life where you had to cope with adversities, this will boost your confidence that you will be able to pull through again.

The third tip is to accept your feelings: some of us are taught to put on a brave face and bury our painful emotions which does not work most of the time. Instead it increases our stress levels and

prevents us from moving on. When you allow yourself to experience painful emotions, the trauma will start to disappear gradually and you’ll be able to move forward. The fourth tip is to talk to someone you trust about your feelings even if they don’t have a solution for you.

Sharing your emotions with someone who is caring and empathetic can help you gain confidence and move on. Avoid talking to people who are negative and critical as they may make you feel worse. The fifth tip is to invest in self-care such as having enough sleep, eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly.

Finally, remember to stay focused and have faith in God and things will be fine eventually.

German activists up their game to keep climate centre stage

YASMINE GUÉNARD-MONIN

With climate change pushed down the news agenda as Germany tackles an energy crisis and the war in Ukraine, environmental activists are resorting to increasingly eye-catching stunts to get their message across.

Last week, around a dozen activists sprayed a black liquid that looked like oil on the chancellery in Berlin and stood in front of the building with a banner that read: “Save oil instead of drilling.”

Dressed in orange high-visibility jackets and hard hats, the protesters were members of Letzte Generation (‘Last Generation’) — a protest group that has become the new face of environmental activism in Germany.

“The government has ignored everything else: petitions have been written, a million people have taken to the streets,” said Lina Joansen, a 24-year-old student taking part in the protest. The activists want a promise from the government that it will not drill for oil in the North Sea.

“We know that fossil fuels can only aggravate the climate catastrophe that is already happening,” said law student Myriam Herrmann, 25.

Six months ago, a new coalition government was elected in Germany on a promise to make climate change one of its top priorities.

The Greens entered power for the first time in more than two decades, forming a coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) under Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the liberal FDP.

Green party Economy Minister Robert Habeck announced an ambitious \$68 billion climate investment plan and promised that Germany would end coal power and generate 80 per cent of electricity from renewables by 2030.

But since then, climate concerns have been overshadowed by the war in Ukraine, an acute energy crisis and record inflation.

Germany has accelerated plans to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) by sea, wants to explore new oil and gas reserves in the North Sea, and has even decided to reactivate mothballed coal-fired power plants.

The government has said it is still on target to meet its 2030 climate targets, but the protesters are not convinced.

Herrmann is “incredibly disappointed”, especially with Habeck. “We don’t have time for stopgap solutions any more,” she said.

Letzte Generation was born following a hunger strike last year by activists demanding a law to ban supermarkets from destroying unsold food products.

Earlier this year, small groups of Letzte Generation protesters blocked busy roads in Berlin by sitting down and glueing their hands to the tarmac. More than 100 were arrested. — AFP

In Afghan quake: ‘I did not expect to survive’

CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM, SAFIULLAH PADSHAH, KYLE CRICHTON AND KIANA HAYERI

As the earth shook, she said, speaking through her tears, she felt the walls of the room collapsing on her. Then everything went dark. When Hawa, a 30-year-old mother of six, regained consciousness, she was choking on dust, and struggled to make sense of the scene around her.

“I did not expect to survive,” she said on Thursday from her hospital bed in Sharana, capital of Paktika province in Afghanistan’s southeast.

Her village, Dangel Regab, like many others in Paktika’s Geyan district, was a tableau of death and destruction in the wake of the 5.9-magnitude earthquake that struck in the early hours of Wednesday — the deadliest in Afghanistan in two decades.

A reporting team for The New York Times witnessed the scale of the devastation in Geyan — and the magnitude of the response. On rugged unpaved roads over mountainous terrain, cars and trucks laden with supplies made their way to hillside villages that were strewn with wrecked houses.

Dazed residents shuffled through the debris, using tarps to build makeshift tents and burying the dead.

Afghan officials in the hard-hit areas estimated that at least 1,000 people had been killed and at least 1,600 injured. The United Nations’ humanitarian office on Thursday offered a slightly lower estimate — 770 people killed and 1,440 people injured — but cautioned that its figures were likely to rise.

Relief officials said the rescue effort was winding down and that they were focusing on the survivors, who had endured not only a heavy rain, but also unseasonably frigid temperatures that threatened to bring snow to some areas.

As the scale of the disaster came into focus on Thursday, the supreme leader of the insular Taliban government, Haibatullah Akhundzada, issued a rare plea for international help.

The earthquake added to an already dire humanitarian crisis that has engulfed Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power. The banking system has largely collapsed under the weight of international sanctions, and the foreign aid that propped up public services under the previous

government has vanished. Around half the country’s 39 million people are facing life-threatening levels of food insecurity, according to the World Food Programme.

The West has pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency relief aid to stave off a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe. But the

DAZED RESIDENTS SHUFFLED THROUGH THE DEBRIS, USING TARPS TO BUILD MAKESHIFT TENTS AND BURYING THE DEAD

Taliban have struggled to attract longer-term assistance from Western donors, which have balked at the new government’s restrictions on women and its human rights record.

The earthquake in Afghanistan poses a difficult new test for the Biden administration’s approach to the Taliban, which it refuses to recognise or provide with direct financial

assistance after cutting off its access to \$7 billion in foreign currency reserves held in the United States.

And although the United States has sent more than \$1 billion directly to humanitarian programmes within the country over the past year, many human rights advocates say that the US government must work with the Taliban and provide the country with economic assistance to alleviate human suffering on a wide and lasting basis.

Adding to the misery, the areas hit by the earthquake along Afghanistan’s mountainous border with Pakistan were among the country’s poorest even before the economic crash.

On Thursday, roads into the earthquake zone were crowded with cars and trucks loaded with relief aid: bread, flour, rice and blankets, among other things. Emergency medical workers treated the injured in ambulances as military helicopters hovered overhead.

Back at the Paktika public hospital in Sharana on Thursday, survivors described horrific scenes of crumbled buildings, anguished cries for help and bodies strewn throughout a desolate moonscape.

Many survivors face bleak futures. Only two of Hawa’s six children survived the quake. Her three sons and one daughter died, along with 17 other family members.



A damaged house in the Geyun district of Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

Our desert oasis: Our garden of Eden



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

that doesn't really 'spring' to mind when you think of the hinterland and its environs does it? But honestly, whether it was just Lena and I, family and friends, or visitors, our garden always retained its revitalising perspective. I can't imagine how many evenings we, would sit outside under the gazebo, gazing with pride upon our garden, our little riot of colorful chaos, that ran the length of our house down one side.

When we moved into our rented home, the yard was paved, except for the garden area on the side of the house, that had a date palm in the corner, and was otherwise, pretty much just an expanse of stones with a plumbed garden tap. Lena, whose mantra about plants is that they "just want to grow", set me to work making it happen. I wasn't keen at first, but her enthusiasm was infectious, I guess.

First, I had to dig out a substantial number of rocks and blocks, construction detritus much of it, and get some depth for whatever we put in the

I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MANY EVENINGS WE, WOULD SIT OUTSIDE UNDER THE GAZEBO, GAZING WITH PRIDE UPON OUR GARDEN, OUR LITTLE RIOT OF COLOURFUL CHAOS, THAT RAN THE LENGTH OF OUR HOUSE DOWN ONE SIDE

garden to grow. After a few days it dawned on me that I would need some dirt, or soil, and I was at my wits end trying to figure out where, as the garden centres in Muscat had plenty of mulch and soil additives, but no soil.

Then, driving home from work one afternoon, lo and behold, there appeared in front of me a little Toyota truck, so overloaded with dirt it looked like an overloaded cartoon truck. Chuckling to myself, I followed the truck all of 500 metres before it stopped at the local Omanoil filling station. With the help of the attendants there, I found that while this truckload was destined elsewhere, they would bring me a load of the same soil the next day, and sure enough, they were as good as their word. I was happy, I had my dirt, and they were happy, tucking away a handful of rials.

A weekend of backbreaking toil followed as I lost count of the wheelbarrow loads of soil I shovelled, wheeled into the yard, tipped and spread on the 'garden.' Though it was just a barren expanse, it didn't stay that way for long, as Lena found some lovely pink and red Bougainvillea in the Muscat nurseries. She also found where someone had thrown some Aloe Vera over their fence and 'saved' them, got some Desert Rose offcuts and Yucca, and grew an amazing Drumstick tree from a seedling. She tried for even more colour with Petunias of many colours, but the extreme weather conditions were too challenging for those little babies. She tried herbs, but they too were scorned by the weather.

Having lived in Oman for more than a decade, I can reveal that one of the most refreshing, revitalising aspects of living in the interior of the Sultanate of Oman, in sleepy Birkat al Mouz, near Nizwa, was... wait for it... enjoying our garden.

I know what many of you are thinking. Garden? In Oman? In Nizwa? Yes, I know... green fingers and all



WATERING HOLE

Elephants drink water at a water point in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya. The camp's 10 luxurious tents see tourists flocking again, after the shutdown linked to Covid-19. They observe in small groups elephants, giraffes, antelopes or lions on 5,000 hectares, located on the edge of Amboseli National Park, in the south of the country and have a glimpse of the life of the Masai, the owners of the land. – AFP



Jean Baderschneider

The author is a non-executive Director of Fortescue Metals Group

The green hydrogen revolution

Human-induced climate change is causing dangerous and widespread environmental disruption and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world faces unavoidable climate hazards over the next two decades. But, with average annual global greenhouse-gas emissions reaching their highest levels in human history between 2010 and 2019, we are simply not doing enough to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius.

The IPCC report released in April recommended that the world rapidly reduce fossil-fuel supply and demand between now and 2050: By 95 per cent in the case of coal, 60 per cent for oil and 45 per cent for natural gas. But how can we possibly achieve such ambitious targets?

The answer is by switching to green hydrogen, which can be produced from all forms of renewable energy, including solar, wind, hydro and geothermal. Green hydrogen is a zero-emissions fuel; when produced through electrolysis, the only "emission" is water. It is a practical and implementable solution that, by democratising energy, decarbonising heavy industry and creating jobs globally, would help revolutionise the way we power our planet.

A rapid acceleration of the green-energy transition can also fundamentally alter the geopolitical landscape, since countries will no longer be powerful simply because of the fossil fuels they produce. In 2021, Russia provided 34 per cent of Germany's crude oil and 53 per cent of the hard coal used by German power generators and steelmakers. Russian-piped natural gas was Germany's largest source of gas imports in December 2021, accounting for 32 per cent of supply. Since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his horrific, unjust war in Ukraine in February, fossil-fuel exports to Europe have been earning Russia roughly \$1 billion a day.

But since the start of the invasion in February, European Union countries in particular have moved quickly to reduce their energy dependence on Russia, recently agreeing to ban all seaborne imports of Russian oil. These new sanctions against Putin's war machine could cut the amount of oil the EU buys from Russia by 90 per cent this year. The United States has declared a complete ban on Russian oil, gas and coal imports, while the United Kingdom is phasing out imports of Russian oil by the end of 2022.

These policies have sent fuel prices soaring. But sharply higher prices have also highlighted the opportunity to drive down energy costs by investing in renewables and the production of green hydrogen.

New research suggests that green

hydrogen will be competitive with fossil fuels over the next decade. The cost of green hydrogen is expected to decline significantly by 2025 and to fall to \$1 per kilogram by 2030 in favourable locations such as Australia. For comparison, grey hydrogen, which is made using polluting liquefied natural gas, currently costs around \$2 per kilogram.

Some advocate using LNG to "solve" the current energy-security crisis, but "natural gas" contains methane, and the IPCC says that we must reduce use of natural gas by almost 45 per cent by 2050; adding more to the energy mix now would be a catastrophic mistake.

So, there is now a global race for

POLICYMAKERS WILL NEED TO ACCOUNT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' INTERESTS DURING THE GREEN TRANSITION AND ENHANCE FUNDING AND INCENTIVES FOR THEM TO MOVE TO CLEAN ENERGY AS THE BASIS OF INDUSTRIALISATION

green energy, and specifically for green hydrogen. Dozens of countries that have abundant renewable-energy sources can develop energy independence by producing green hydrogen at scale. And energy importers will not have to rely only on the few countries (such as Russia) that have a natural endowment of fossil fuels.

In a recent report, the International Renewable Energy Agency said that (green) hydrogen can bolster energy security in three main ways: By reducing import dependence, mitigating price

volatility and boosting energy systems' flexibility and resilience through diversification. As technologies improve, the cost of green hydrogen will fall. We must do everything we can to accelerate this process.

Companies like Fortescue, where I am a board director, are investing significantly in green hydrogen and will help to replace Russian fossil fuels with green energy. Fortescue recently announced an agreement with Germany's largest energy distributor, E.ON, to supply Europe with five million tonnes of green hydrogen a year by 2030 — the equivalent of one-third of the calorific value of the energy that Germany currently imports from Russia.

But while rapid changes in the energy and geopolitical landscape present a clear opportunity to address the energy and climate crises simultaneously by investing in green energy, there is a clear perception of unfairness when developed countries claim that relatively low-emitting developing economies need to shut down fossil-fuel use. Why should they risk slowing their development to address a problem they played no part in causing?

It's a valid question. Policymakers will need to account for developing countries' interests during the green transition and enhance funding and incentives for them to move to clean energy as the basis of industrialisation.

The world is clearly at a fork in the road. We can remain locked into a costly, polluting future that is hideously inefficient and empowers only a handful of fossil-fuel-rich countries. Alternatively, we can choose a green revolution of low-cost energy for all that keeps our future secure from pollution, global warming and dictators. Given that green energy has the power to democratise global supply as more countries achieve energy independence, the choice is not difficult.

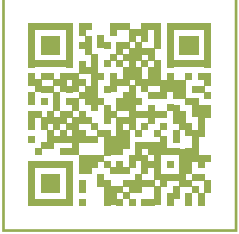
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A Lake in the shape of a hydrogen filling station

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Battle between youth and experience continues on last day of world swimming championship

BUDAPEST: In a competition which is drawing to a close with the veteran women striking back, Katinka Hosszu opened the final day of the world championships by drawing a roar from the scattered Saturday-morning crowd as she won her heat in the women's 400 individual medley.

Hosszu edged Tokyo champion Yui Ohashi in her heat, but was only the fifth fastest qualifier overall.

It was the teenagers who shone, however, as 15-year-old Canadian Summer McIntosh set the fastest time at 4:36 with 16-year-old American Katie Grimes next.

Hosszu was almost 13 seconds outside the world record she set at the 2016 Olympics and exactly three seconds slower than McIntosh.

Hungary's 33-year-old Iron Lady, who failed to win a medal in the Olympics last year, has collected a relay bronze in Budapest to take her total in Olympics and long- and short-course world and European championships to 96.

It has been a week of breakout performances by teenagers, with McIntosh and two 17-year-olds, Romanian freestyler David Popovici and Italian breastroker Benedetta Pilato, all winning golds.

Yet on Friday, two veteran women added golds to their huge medal hauls. Sarah Sjostrom, a 28-year-old Swede, surged to her fourth consecutive victory in the women's 50m butterfly.

Just over an hour later, Katie Ledecky, at 25 a veteran in long-distance swimming, won a record-



Japan's Yui Ohashi (L) and Hungary's Katinka Hosszu compete in a heat for the women's 400m medley event during the Budapest 2022 World Aquatics Championships at Duna Arena in Budapest on June 25, 2022. — AFP

breaking fifth straight 800m world title and 23rd world championship medal.

Sjostrom will be back in action on a wild last night of seven finals, chasing a 20th overall world championship medal in the 50m freestyle. She finished second in qualifying, raced a little over 10 minutes after her butterfly win,

behind the Pole Katarzyna Wasick. Australian 20-year-old Meg Harris qualified third.

In the women's 50m breaststroke Pilato, already the world record holder, will try to end 25-year-old Lilly King's reign as world champion.

The American has had a mixed championship. She had dominated

the 100m breaststroke in recent Olympics and worlds, but finished fourth behind Pilato. Then King won the 200m breaststroke for the first time at a major championship.

The showdown between McIntosh and Hosszu is the last individual final of the competition, guaranteed to keep the Hungarian public in their seats in an arena

where Hosszu won both medleys in the 2017 championships.

The competition ends with the two 100 medley relays.

Olympic champions Australia qualified fastest in the women's race. The Swedes, with Sjostrom swimming a leg were third. The Americans, the defending champions and he world record

holders, qualified seventh. The United States topped the men's qualifying without fielding their strongest quartet.

'YOUNG BLOODS'

Australian breaststroke gold medallist Zac Stubblety-Cook had an explanation for the number of new stars to emerge in Budapest.

"The year after the Olympics is a bit of a different feel", the 23-year-old said. "The young bloods are coming through."

The decision, partly to help FINA's covid-depleted finances, to add an even-year edition a year after one Olympics and only two before the next one's in Paris and just weeks before the Commonwealth Games, meant many swimmers stayed away.

The championships are also long and draining and star names were among the casualties as health was a recurring theme.

American star Caeleb Dressel quit the tournament for undisclosed medical reasons, South African Chad Le Clos, a four-time world champion, left blaming breathing problems after bronchitis, Australian Shayna Jack, returning to major competition after a drugs ban, broke a hand after becoming entangled with another swimmer in warm ups.

Lani Pallister, in an impressive display of honesty, ruled herself out of the women's 800m free style final after qualifying second.

The Australian felt unwell, tested herself for Covid and when the result was positive her chance of a medal was gone. — AFP

Omani swimmer tests waters at world championship in Budapest

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

Oman's swimmer Nasser al Kindi is taking part in the World Swimming Championships which will conclude on July 3 in Budapest, Hungary. Al Kindi will debut in the high profile swimming event after achieving top records in his local and regional participation.

The World Swimming Championships is one of the most powerful world championships, organised by FINA, the world swimming governing body, and occur every four years with the participation of more than 2,500 swimmers representing more than 180 countries.

Al Kindi is one of the potential local youngster swimmers as he participated in four times at GCC championships for different ages including in the 10-year category. He took part at the 25th Aquatics Championships for GCC countries, which was hosted in Qatar in 2015.

In the category of 13-14 years, he participated in the 17th Open Water Swimming for GCC which was held in Kuwait in 2019. He



also attended in the category of 13-14 years in the 15th edition championship of swimming for short basins (25m) for GCC, which was held in Kuwait in 2019. Two years later, he participated in the 15-17 years category in the 28th Aquatics Championships for GCC in Qatar.

The Omani swimmer participated in the local championships. He achieved

first place for the category of 13-14 years (2 km) in the 13th Oman Open Water Swimming Championships which was held in Sur in 2019. Also he participated in the 14th Oman Open Water Swimming Championships in Musandam in last March where he achieved first place in the category of 15-17 years and third place at the general level in the same tournament.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

As many as 14 football clubs confirmed their participation in the domestic competitions of 2020/2023 season.

The Oman Football Association (OFA) set Friday (June 24) as a deadline to receive the confirmation from the local clubs to take part in different domestic competitions including: His Majesty Football's Cup championships, Top tier league represented by Omantel league, Soccer beach league, futsal league, first division league, U-17 league and U-20 league.

Defending champion, Seeb, Al Nahdha, Dhofar, Al Musannah, Al Nasr, Sohar, Al Rustaq, Al Suwaiq, Al Ittihad, Bahla, Oman club beside promoted clubs: Al Basaher, Al Oruba and Sur confirmed their taking part at coveted cup of His Majesty Football's Cup championships and top tier league represented by Omantel league.

Seeb, Al Suwaiq, Sohar and Al Oruba clubs declared their participation in all the OFA domestic competitions for the



new season 2022/2023. Bahla and Sur did not acknowledge their attendance at beach soccer league and futsal league while Al Nahdha did not confirm their presence at futsal league. Dhofar, Al Musannah, Al Nasr and Al Basaher did not show interest in taking part at Futsal league.

The relegated teams Muscat, Nizwa and Saham beside Al Mudhaibi, Al Shabab, Al Khabourah, Fanja, Ahli Sidab and Al Talia approved their attendance in the first division league. Muscat, Saham and Al Shabab

confirmed their attendance in all the domestic competitions under organisation of OFA league union.

Al Wusta club, which established in 2013, regret from taking part in all the OFA domestic competitions.

Seeb claimed two titles in the previous season as they lifted HM Cup and won Omantel league title. Al Basaher club crowned as champion of first division league while Al Musannah claimed the beach soccer title. Jalaan club won U-17 league title while Nizwa captured the shield of U-19 league.



Surprise outcomes at Czech Para Open 2022

PRAGUE: Surprise outcomes dominated the scene, as the men's and women's singles events at the Czech Para Open 2022 concluded in Ostrava on Friday.

Arguably the biggest upset was caused by the host nation's Filip Nachazel, he emerged the men's singles class 4 winner.

In the final he beat Slovakia's Peter Mihalik (7-11, 11-8, 11-8, 6-11, 11-3), having one round earlier ousted Indonesia's Adyos Astan (11-8, 11-8, 6-11, 14-12), the player the previous day who had ended the progress of Boris Travincek, like Peter Mihalik from Slovakia (11-2, 11-8, 6-11, 9-11, 11-8).

At the other end of the scale, the least unexpected accrued in women's singles class 5; Alexandra Saint Pierre of France continued her quite incredible run.

A debut in 2021 when she won in France, soon after she added to her gold collection on the Costa Brava; this year she repeated the success before emerging victorious in Slovenia.

The good form continued in Ostrava; in a group administered women's singles class 5 event, she remained unbeaten, notably in her concluding match overcoming Korea Republic's Jung Younga, the top seed (11-8, 11-7, 13-11).

SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

Titles against the odds, in the men's singles events, taking the advantage of potential top seeded adversaries having departed

earlier in proceedings, Italy's Federico Falco, Ukraine's Vasyl Petruniv, Sweden's David Olsson and Great Britain's Josh Stacey all seized the opportunities presented.

At the final hurdle Federico Falco beat Korea Republic's Kim Hakjin to win class 1 (11-7, 12-14, 12-10, 11-3); at the same stage Vasyl Petruniv overcame Frenchman Sylvain Noel (11-9, 11-8, 11-7).

Likewise, in class 5, David Olsson secured the top prize at the expense of Sam Roelofs from the Netherlands (7-11, 11-7, 14-12, 11-7); Josh Stacey ended the hopes of Spain's Ander Cepas (4-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-8) on what proved a good day for Great Britain.

Justifying their top seeded positions, Will Bayley won men's singles class 7; Sue Bailey prevailed in women's singles class 4.

SURPRISE WINNERS

Gold for Sue Bailey as predicted; in the counterpart women's singles events, additional to Alexandra Saint Pierre, the titles secured by Italy's Carlotta Ragazzini, Norway's Nora Korneliussen and Turkey's Ebru Acer were contrary to predictions.

Competing in class 2-3, Carlotta Ragazzini accounted for Slovakia's Alena Kanova, the top seed, at the final hurdle (11-5, 11-8, 11-6); similarly, Nora Korneliussen secured the class 7 title at the expense of the top seed. — ITTF

Forest sign Nigeria striker Awoniyi from Union Berlin

LONDON: Nottingham Forest have paid a club record fee of around £17 million (\$20 million) to Nigeria striker Taiwo Awoniyi from Union Berlin.

Awoniyi agreed a five-year contract with Forest, who are preparing for their first season back in the Premier League since 1999.

The 24-year-old scored 20 goals in 43 games in all competitions in his last season in the Bundesliga.

He is Forest's first senior signing since their victory over Huddersfield in the Championship play-off final.

"There's been a lot of interest in Taiwo from other Premier League clubs and other clubs across Europe, so we're delighted that he's chosen Nottingham Forest," Forest boss Steve Cooper said.

"He's a player who we really believe in and we look forward to him going on to fulfil his potential and become a top Premier League striker with Nottingham Forest."

Awoniyi began his professional career at Liverpool before leaving last July, but did not make a first-team appearance for the Reds and was sent on loan several times.

Liverpool are set to receive 10 per cent of the fee under the terms of his departure.

Awoniyi's 15 goals in 31 Bundesliga matches helped Union Berlin secure a fifth-place finish and qualify for the Europa League for the first time since 2001-02.

"It's always been my dream to play in the Premier League and, having spoken to Steve Cooper about our ambitions and looking at Forest with its great history, it's a club that I want to be part of," Awoniyi said.

Awoniyi won the first of his three caps for Nigeria against the Central African Republic last October and scored his first goal against Sudan in January at the African Cup of Nations. — AFP



Swiatek 'overwhelmed' by seeing legend Serena back at Wimbledon

LONDON: World number one Iga Swiatek said on Saturday she is "overwhelmed" to see Serena Williams back at Wimbledon, one year after the US legend limped away from the All England Club.

Williams, a seven-time champion at the tournament, and still chasing an elusive 24th Grand Slam title, will be playing her first singles match since her tearful, injury-enforced withdrawal in the first round in 2021.

"I saw her yesterday, I was pretty overwhelmed," said Swiatek, the recently-crowned French Open champion. "I didn't know how to react. I wanted to meet her. I saw that she had so many people around her. I don't know her team. It was pretty weird. "But just seeing her around is great because



she's such a legend, there's nobody that has done so much in tennis."

Swiatek wasn't even born when Williams made her Wimbledon debut in 1998. But the Pole appreciates the ground-breaking achievements of the American

and sees the 40-year-old still as a genuine threat despite her ring-rustiness.

"I'm pretty sure that she's going to be in good shape because she has so much experience coming back from breaks or just playing

in Grand Slams. I think she can use it," said the 21-year-old. Swiatek is on a Serena-esque run of dominance herself this season.

Having taken over from the now retired Ashleigh Barty as world number one, she has put together a 35-match win streak.

That run surpassed Serena's best of 34 successive wins and equalled Venus Williams' record of 35 straight victories in 2000 for the longest winning stretch by a woman in the 21st century.

A second French Open triumph earlier this month also gave Swiatek a sixth title in 2022.

With defending Wimbledon champion Barty retired, Swiatek has been given the honour of opening Tuesday proceedings on Centre Court. — AFP

Japan thrash Uruguay for second week running

TOKYO: Japan warmed up for two home rugby union Tests against 2023 World Cup hosts France with a 43-7 win over Uruguay on Saturday.

Japan, World Cup quarterfinalists on home soil in 2019, beat Uruguay 34-15 in Tokyo last week and they were again too strong for the South Americans in the southern city of Kitakyushu.

Captain Atsushi Sakate and Dylan Riley scored first-half tries for the home side before Sakate, Gerhard van der Heever and Yusuke Kajimura added more after the break.

Japan will step up their World Cup preparations when they take on Six Nations champions France in Toyota next Saturday before playing them again at Tokyo's Olympic stadium the following week. Japan made a fast start against



Uruguay, with Sakate scoring the first try in the fifth minute after a break-away at a line-out.

Fly-half Takuya Yamasawa kicked three penalties to put the home side in control with just over 20 minutes gone, only for Uruguay to stem the tide and pin Japan back for the rest of the first half. A mistake just before the interval cost Los Teros, when a dropped pass sparked a race for the ball that ended with Riley touching down for another try. — AFP



Iraq defeat Saudi Arabia to clinch WAFF Women’s Futsal Championship title

JEDDAH: Iraq defeated hosts Saudi Arabia 4-2 in the final to win the third edition of the WAFF Women's Futsal Championship on Friday.

Saudi skipper Leen Mohammed opened the scoring in the first period but Iraq fought back for the win thanks to a brace from Shokhan Salihi and one goal each from Direen Mullabakar and Tbarek al Ghazawi.

The Iraqis lifted their first title in their third appearance in the competition while Saudi Arabia took the silver medal in their maiden participation.

Bahrain finished third after defeating Kuwait 2-0 in the play-off with goals from Al Anood al Khalifa and Manar Ebrahim.



OMAN’S ROYAL CAVALRY WINS 1ST, 2ND PLACES IN DAX RACECOURSE IN FRANCE

MUSCAT: The Royal Cavalry won the first and second places in the first half competitions at the French Dax racecourse which was dedicated to purebred Arabian horses category for a distance of 1,400 metres. The horse “Safwa”, owned by the Royal Cavalry, won the first place and was led by Gary Sanchas and supervised by trainer Elizabeth Bernard. The horse “Fatina”, owned by the Royal Cavalry, claimed the second place award and was led by Michael Forrest and coached by Sanchas.

Overton falls short of hundred as Bairstow leads England advance

LEEDS, United Kingdom: Jamie Overton fell agonisingly short of a debut century in the third Test on Saturday as England continued to pile on the runs against New Zealand.

Overton was out for 97 but Jonny Bairstow extended his overnight 130 not out to 162 on his Headingley home ground on the third day of the third and final Test.

England, already an unassailable 2-0 up in this series, were bowled out for 360 in reply to New Zealand's first-innings 329 — a lead of 31 runs.

It represented a remarkable recovery after they had collapsed to 55-6, with Bairstow and Overton sharing an England seventh-wicket record stand of 241.

At lunch, New Zealand were 18 runs behind at 13-0 in their second innings.

Overton, selected primarily as a fast bowler in place of the injured James Anderson, was within a shot of getting to three figures in his first innings in international cricket when he nicked Trent Boult low to first slip Daryl Mitchell.

The 28-year-old, who resumed on 89, never found the same fluency that had characterised his innings on Friday.

It was no shock when Boult, who had removed all of England's top three with a superb display of new-ball bowling, located Overton's outside edge.

Surrey paceman Overton received a rousing reception as he returned to the pavilion and the

cheers kept coming.

England's new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum had urged the team to play with freedom after taking charge of a side that had won just one out of 17 Tests prior to this series.

Stuart Broad, a fast bowler by trade but also a fine shot-maker earlier in his Test career, embraced the new approach by hitting Boult for 14 runs in three balls courtesy of two fours and a six to the delight of the crowd.

Broad was eventually bowled by Tim Southee for 42 but by then England had gone ahead.

Spectators had already had plenty to cheer as Yorkshire favourite Bairstow, fresh from his match and series-winning 136 against the World Test champions at Trent Bridge, went to 150.

But one ball after Broad's exit, he holed out off spinner Michael Bracewell to end a brilliant 157-ball innings including 23 fours.

Number 11 Jack Leach hit two fours before he was last man out, lbw to Southee.

Bairstow then resumed his former role of wicketkeeper, with Ben Foakes unable to take the field because of a stiff back.

Stokes took the unusual decision to give a spinner in Leach the new ball following the left-armer's 5-100 in the Black Caps' first innings.

New Zealand, however, got through five overs before lunch, without alarm. — AFP



Asia’s best learn India 2022 challengers

KUALA LUMPUR: Asia's three representatives learnt their opponents for the Fifa U-17 Women's World Cup India 2022 following the draw on Friday.

The action promises to be exciting with China PR, Japan and India all drawn in challenging groups.

Hosts India, who will be making their debut, will play the United States in the tournament opener with Morocco and Brazil also in Group A.



China PR, who will be making their third appearance in the tournament after group stage outings in 2012 and 2014, will face defending champions Spain, Colombia and Mexico in Group C.

Japan, the 2014 Fifa U-17 Women's World Cup champions, were drawn in Group D alongside Tanzania, Canada and France. Group B comprises Germany, Nigeria, Chile and New Zealand with the tournament scheduled for October 11-30.

India will be hosting a Fifa tournament for the second time, having organised the hugely successful 2017 Fifa U-17 World Cup. — AFC

GROUPS
Group A: India, USA, Morocco, Brazil
Group B: Germany, Nigeria, Chile, New Zealand
Group C: Spain, Colombia, Mexico, China PR
Group D: Japan, Tanzania, Canada, France



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BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 26



same time, Port of Duqm is engaging with Asyad Group to enhance logistics operations at the gateway, he stated.



Vodafone signs pact with Goal One Soccer Centers

MUSCAT: Vodafone recently entered into an agreement with Goal One Soccer Centers, with Ahmed al Shuaili, Chief Financial Officer signing on behalf of Vodafone and Ahmed al Mahrazi, Chief Financial Officer, representing Goal One. The agreement will see the presence of branding and a Vodafone kiosk set up within the Goal One premises.

Commenting on the signing, Ahmed al Shuaili, Chief Financial Officer of Vodafone said, “Our collaboration with Goal One stems from our commitment to enriching In-Country Value by supporting local SMEs and enabling them to attain brand exposure.



Moreover, we will be able to conduct sports activities and events at any of their 10 football pitches, alongside boosting our presence with branding elements at their facilities together with an e-kiosk.”

From his side, Ahmed al Mahrazi from Goal One stated, “We are pleased to be a part of Vodafone’s efforts in partnering with local SMEs. Our main goal is to bring the community together through sport.

Vodafone’s support will not only be beneficial for enriching the services we provide but also align ourselves with the objectives of Vodafone, which hosts a global-scale reputation, to enhance the local economy.”

Goal One is located in Al Athaiba, Muscat and hosts multiple FA recommended 5-a-side pitch sizes and Fifa-approved astroturf.

Pitches have dedicated rubber cushioning to provide a safe and healthy experience for all ages.

Bookings are done through the Goal One Soccer Centers mobile application where players can pay online, split payments, create teams and manage tournaments.

Vodafone is available across the Sultanate of Oman through the My Vodafone App on Google Play Store, Huawei AppGallery and the App Store and in more than 3,500 outlets across Oman. The full list can be found on www.vodafone.om

Oman Arab Bank launches ‘Friends of OAB’ rewards programme

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the launch of “Friends of OAB”, its new referral programme. Starting from today, OAB customers will be able to refer their friends and family by clicking on “Friends of OAB” on the OAB Online Banking app, a not-to-be-missed opportunity with rewards up to RO 1,000 for successful referrals.

The more friends and family members a customer refers, the greater the rewards. OAB customers taking part in the referral programme will automatically receive OAB rewards points when their referral deposits RO 1,000 and above in their new OAB account, and maintains that amount for at least one month.

The reward amounts to 1% for every RO 1,000 deposited (up to 10 referrals). It is simple to reap the rewards as an OAB customer could earn up to RO 1,000 with only 10 referrals.

Beneficiaries will be able to view details of their current and previous reward points and transaction details at any time, with ease, through the OAB Online App.

Commenting on the launch of the programme, Rashad al Shaikh, Head of the Retail



THE REWARD AMOUNTS TO 1% FOR EVERY RO 1,000 DEPOSITED (UP TO 10 REFERRALS). IT IS SIMPLE TO REAP THE REWARDS AS AN OAB CUSTOMER COULD EARN UP TO RO 1,000 WITH ONLY 10 REFERRALS.

Banking Division at OAB, said, “We are always exploring new ways to reward our customers for their loyalty. The reward programme is not new to our customers. Following the success of the OAB rewards programme for credit cardholders, we decided to extend the rewards programme to “Friends of OAB”.

Our latest programme enables customers to earn reward points when they refer their friends or family members to OAB through the OAB Online Banking app. These points can be redeemed for incredible benefits”.

Through the “Friends of OAB” programme, customers will be able to redeem their points to pay for their purchases using OAB POS machines at partner retailers. Additionally, customers can also benefit from a cashback option, which will be directly credited to their account, equal to the value of the points redeemed. More information is available on the OAB website (www.oman-arabbank.com) and via the OAB Online App.

More than 100 CEOs to attend CEO Inspire Forum

MUSCAT: The CEO Inspire Forum will be launched on Wednesday at Rozna Restaurant and it will be attended by 100 chief executive officers from the various sectors in Sultanate of Oman. The forum will be organised jointly by Oman Arab Bank and Alizz Islamic Bank under the direct supervision of Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest).

The three organising entities are focused on devising and implementing a common strategy that promotes economic diversification in Oman and target the economic sectors that can potentially create a sustainable value in light of the recent economic rebounds and ease of the restrictive Covid pandemic measures by the government.

The forum will feature several working papers which will try to draw up a roadmap for a more effective private sector contribution in developing the economy, organisations, community and individuals. Within the current scenarios, the role of the private sector is hugely indispensable to stand hand in hand with the government in its efforts to materialise the visions and focus on the initiative with the long-term benefit.

Nowadays, CEOs are expected to go beyond their respective organisations and



adopt shared visions, ideas and the opportunities to promote business growth during the upcoming years against the backdrop of the global challenges.

This approach can only be attained through innovative insights and by charting new ways that create an added value to the local communities and the economic landscape as a whole.

Commenting on the CEO Inspire Forum, Suleiman bin Hamad al Harthi, CEO- Alizz Islamic Bank said: “Full economic recovery is going to take time. However, there is a growing sense of optimism and persistent efforts are being made towards continuous improvements in the macroeconomic level.

We expect the demand for credit to remain high coupled

with the stability of liquidity during the current year. When we decided to organise this forum in partnership with Oman Arab Bank under the direct oversight of Ominvest, this was preceded by a comprehensive assessment of the roles to be undertaken by the private sector in prompting economic growth as seen in some international experiences, in addition to assessing the role of CEOs in this regard.”

By the beginning of 2022, markets started to regain consumers trust and the external source of income became the main drivers of growth due to the soaring oil and gas prices.

Thankfully, the Sultanate of Oman is poised to witness an increase in investments. Following the increase in oil prices, Oman Vision 2040 investments are likely to increase by the double which will put the onus of the private sector leading establishments to become a genuine partner to formulate responsive and innovation solutions including, among other things, establishing new economic entities, create employment opportunities, diversify partnerships, enhance cash flows and create sustainable PPPs. Rather than sitting and waiting for the initiatives to come to our doorsteps, we must be proactive and innovate our own solutions.”

Bank Muscat’s Woqar banking package continues to improve financial inclusion of retirees

MUSCAT: Financial inclusion or the process of ensuring easy access to financial services to all sections of society, is a crucial enabler of strong economic growth and development. As the Sultanate of Oman’s leading financial services provider, Bank Muscat attaches great importance to social responsibility initiatives aimed at improving financial inclusion as a means of strengthening the country’s progress and development.

The bank launched the Woqar Banking Package in 2020 after studying in great detail and understanding the needs of retirees who were working in both government and private institutions.

Earlier, the pensioner segment was not served by any bank in Oman for flexible-

term finance or credit cards based on their pension, and Bank Muscat was the first bank to extend a financing solution for retirees in Oman. With attractive rates of interest starting at just 3.25 per cent and a maximum loan tenure up to 10 years for personal loans and 25 years for home loans, the Woqar package, which also includes credit cards, allows retirees to live their lives with dignity and at their own terms.

Meanwhile, Bank Muscat continues to launch new financial products and services targeting different sections of society in step with the changing needs of its customers and the development of Oman.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah bin



Tamman al Mashani (pictured), General Manager — Products, Bank Muscat, said: “Easy access to various financial products and services like digital transactions, savings, credit and insurance, is very

important for strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s economy.

This is all the more important in the case of groups that have traditionally fallen short of the financial inclusion net. By launching the ‘first of its kind’ Woqar banking package in 2020, Bank Muscat has reiterated its commitment to provide innovative banking services to all members of society in a sustainable manner. We are delighted with the response to Woqar and thank our customers for their strong confidence and feedback, which reinforces other supportive actions undertaken by the bank to improve financial inclusion in the Sultanate of Oman.”

Bank Muscat is continuously debuting new financial products and services

targeting different sections of society in line with the changing needs of its customers and the nation’s progress and development. With its large network of 146 branches and over 800 e-channel devices spread across all governorates as well as Omnichannel mBanking and Internet Banking, a state-of-the-art Contact Centre and an e-payment gateway, the bank reaches out to the maximum members of society in its ongoing efforts to serve the nation better, everyday.

Customers can get more information about Woqar by visiting any of the bank’s branches across the Sultanate of Oman, contacting the Call Centre on 24795555 or by going to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/loans/Pages/details.aspx#woqar>.



HMR are environmental advisors for Green Energy Oman mega project

Landmark venture: The local Omani engineering consultancy's remit covers all aspects of the mammoth project which, upon completion, will be one of the largest Green Hydrogen projects in the world.

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

Well-known Omani environmental and engineering consultancy services firm, HMR, has been appointed Environmental Advisor for the world-scale Green Energy Oman (GEO) project planned for implementation in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ranked among the largest green energy ventures currently on the anvil for development globally, the GEO scheme is backed by an international consortium comprising OQ, the Sultanate of Oman's global integrated energy company, InterContinental Energy, the leading dedicated green fuels developer and EnerTech, a Kuwait government-backed clean energy investor and developer.

Muscat-headquartered HMR's selection as environmental consultants for the prestigious



giga-scale green hydrogen venture is a testament to the company's track record of excellence and experience in delivering environmental advisory services to clients across a range of industries, locally and internationally.

Over the roughly three decades of its operations in the Sultanate of Oman, and in the wider region, HMR has undertaken environmental impact assessment studies for a wide and diverse array of industrial, economic, Oil & Gas, renewable, tourism and infrastructure landmarks distributed across the country and globally.

Commenting on the award, Dr Hussam al Rawahy, Managing Director and Founder of HMR Consultants, said: "HMR are delighted to be involved in this prestigious mega project that is planned to produce carbon-free fuels and contribute to the global climate change agenda. It places Oman on the map as a leader in the drive to decarbonise hard to abate sectors, and we are excited to be an integral part of the GEO team."

Nashwa al Rawahy (pictured), Director at HMR, added: "We have a qualified team with a robust approach to drive environmental and social compliance for this

important stage of the project. Our work will support GEO progress development plans and set the framework for continued environmental and social management throughout the project lifecycle."

As environmental advisors for the GEO Project, HMR is tasked with delivering the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and other related technical studies over a 14-month timeframe.

The ESIA will identify, predict, and evaluate environmental and social impacts; seeking to enhance positive and mitigate adverse impacts, while managing residual impacts to as low as reasonably practicable levels.

"The GEO conceptual design is under way and conducting the ESIA in parallel ensures that significant environmental and social aspects are systematically addressed and incorporated immediately in the decision-making process", said Nashwa.

HMR's remit as Environmental Advisor encompasses all GEO project elements, which includes 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable solar and wind energy to produce over 1.8 million tonnes of zero-carbon green hydrogen per annum. When fully completed across multiple phases, the project's geographical footprint will cover a staggering

6,500 sq kilometres across vast swathes of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

According to Nashwa, the ESIA will be comprehensive and cover all project components including Upstream (wind and solar), Midstream (electrolyser systems, power, hydrogen and water conduits), Downstream (ammonia production), desalination plants and marine export facilities.

Specialised technical studies within HMR's scope include coastal outfall discharge and recirculation assessment, flood risk assessment, emissions modelling, noise assessment and landscape and visual flicker assessment.

These technical studies will be integrated into the overall impact assessment. Selecting HMR as the local environmental consultants signals GEO's commitment to in-country value creation, and critical to start building local capacity early in the development cycle, commented HMR. This curve will be accelerated as the project progresses from design to construction and operations, and the potential for engagement with qualified Omani companies will create further opportunities throughout the value chain, scaling the green hydrogen economy at the local level.

EU leaders reckon with Russian gas cuts and inflation woes

BRUSSELS: EU leaders wrapped up a two-day summit on Friday focused on the dangers posed by Moscow's gas supply cuts and the skyrocketing inflation fuelled in part by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Twelve EU countries are grappling with diminished gas flows from Russia, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in Brussels.

Germany is currently advancing through a gas emergency plan after an alarming drop in deliveries. German authorities have described the declining supplies as Russian retaliation for Western sanctions.

"If Germany gets into trouble, it will also have an enormous impact on all other European countries, including our own," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said on Friday.

De Croo said that Russia is in an economic war with Europe, meaning that the EU must stand together.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whose government is trying to quickly end Germany's heavy dependence on Russian gas, said that Berlin was prepared for the current predicament and will continue to intensify efforts to diversify its energy supplies. — dpa

New facility building launched in Samayil Industrial City

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 26

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) inaugurated the facility building and Masar Service Centre in Samayil Industrial City under the auspices of Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn.

Developed at a cost of nearly RO 4.5 million and featuring more than 16,000 sqm of space, the facility building consists of 8 floors (ground + 7 floors) with a rental area exceeding 12,000 sqm. The building will offer space dedicated to public and private bodies, commercial stores, banks, cafes and restaurants, food court, telecom companies, among other services.

Besides, Masar Service Centre was inaugurated on the ground floor to enhance the level of services offered to investors by accelerating and simplifying procedures, reinforcing ties with partners to provide integrated services to investors, as well as strengthening relations with the investors to ensure a safe and ideal business environment.

Masar features an integrated platform to obtain approvals, permits and licenses necessary for investment projects under one umbrella and within a



specific timeframe.

A cooperation agreement was signed between Madayn, represented by Samayil Industrial City, Shumookh Investment and Services, and Industrial Innovation Academy. Designed for dedicating space in the Facility Building to incubate, support and empower Small and Medium Enterprises, the agreement was signed

by Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, Director General of Samayil Industrial City, Eng. Musallam bin Jumaa al Hudaifi, CEO of Shumookh Investment and Services, and Dr Ayman bin Abdullah al Fudhaili, CEO of Industrial Innovation Academy.

Meanwhile, Madayn is implementing several key projects in Samayil Industrial City including the medical

fitness examination project, which is expected to be opened in December this year, in addition to the Medical Clinic. Madayn is also constructing a dual-lane road linking Samayil Industrial City with the expressway.

This year, Samayil Industrial City has received 10 industrial, service and commercial investment applications, of which seven got localised. These investments will support the creation of new job opportunities for the nationals. The current total area of Samayil Industrial City touches 7.8 million sqm and the leasable land area reaches 5.6 million sqm, of which 2.1 million sqm have been leased.

MSX closes the week lower

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.18 per cent. The financial index was the only index ending higher by 0.91 per cent. The Industrial Index and Services index closed lower by 1.27 per cent and 2.19 per cent respectively. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.82 per cent.

Sohar International Bank (BKSB) disclosed on MSX that it has sent a letter of intent to the Board of HSBC Oman (HBMO) on June 15, 2022, proposing a merger of the two banks.

Additionally, BKSB announced that its due diligence process for merger with Bank Nizwa (BKNZ) (talks that began in November last year and CBO's approval for due diligence received in January this year).

Given the bank's intent to grow inorganically to become the second-largest bank of Oman, this new capital is expected to be deployed to fund the mergers as well as preserve the bank's capital adequacy metrics. If the two mergers go through successfully, then the combined entity is expected to surpass Bank Dhofar (BKDB) in its asset size (as of 1Q22) at RO 8.06 bn to become the second-largest bank of Oman in terms of total assets, after Bank Muscat (BKMB) that had total assets of RO 12.8 bn at end-1Q22.

If only BKSB and HBMO combine, then the total assets of the combined entity will be RO 6.6 bn. If only BKSB and BKNZ combine, then the total assets of the combined entity will be RO 5.6 bn, still larger than BKDB.

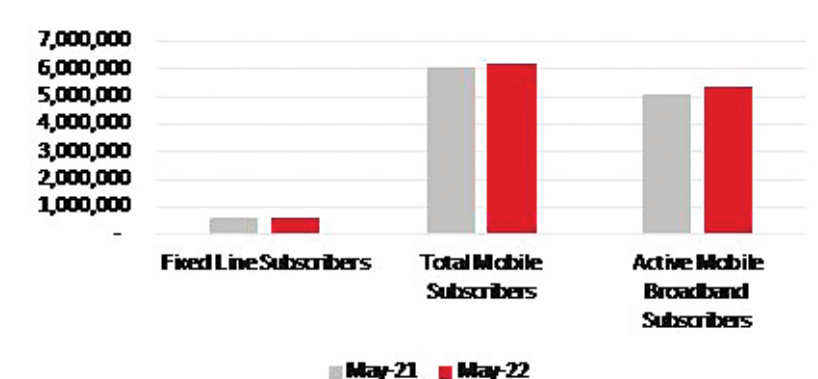
Oman Telecom Sector Data for May reveals that fixed line subscribers are down 1.6 per cent while mobile subscribers are up 3.5 per cent YoY. Within mobile, prepaid subscribers are down 1.4 per cent while postpaid subscribers are higher by 24.3 per cent YoY.

Active Mobile broadband subscribers are up by 6.2 per cent. Penetration levels are higher at the end of May 2022 as compared to May 2021. The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman were at 1.568m in May 2022, representing an increase over April 2022 registered vehicles at 1.565m.

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

The State Budget recorded a deficit of RO 1.2 billion in 2021, equivalent to 3.7 per cent of GDP at current prices. [Courtesy: U-Capital]

Oman Telecom Subscriber Data



Source: NSCI

Oceans saved us, now we can return the favour

Humanity must heal oceans made sick by climate change, pollution and overfishing in order to rescue marine life and save ourselves, experts warned ahead of a major UN conference opening on Monday in Lisbon.

By absorbing — decade after decade — a quarter of CO2 pollution and more than 90 per cent of excess heat from global warming, oceans have kept Earth's terrestrial surface liveable.

Our species has returned the favour by dumping mountains of plastic waste into the sea, emptying the deep blue of big fish, and poisoning coastlines with toxic chemicals and agricultural runoff that create dead zones bereft of oxygen.

At least one-third of wild fish stocks are overfished and less than 10 per cent of the ocean is protected," Kathryn Matthews, chief scientist for US-based NGO Oceana, said.

"Destructive and illegal fishing vessels operate with impunity in many coastal waters and on the high seas."

Nearly \$35 billion in subsidies that aggravate overfishing will fall under a harsh spotlight in Lisbon, despite first steps towards a partial ban put in place by the World Trade Organization (WTO) last week.

At the same time, ocean water made acidic by CO2 along with vast marine heatwaves lasting months or longer are killing coral reefs that support a quarter of marine life and provide livelihoods for a quarter of a billion people.

"We have only begun to understand the extent to which climate change is going to wreak havoc on ocean health," said Charlotte de Fontaubert, the World Bank's global lead for the blue economy.

Jointly hosted by Portugal and Kenya, the five-day UN Ocean Conference brings together thousands of government officials, businesses, scientists and NGOs in search of solutions.

While they do not all see eye-to-eye on what needs to be done, they largely agree on what is at stake.

"If we don't do the right thing, we might end up with a dead ocean," Rashid Sumaila, a fisheries expert and professor at the University of British Columbia, said. "Think about that — Oh man, it's scary." — AFP

Destructive and illegal fishing vessels operate with impunity in many coastal waters and on the high seas.

KATHRYN MATTHEWS
Chief scientist, Oceana



EXPANSION OF DIATOMITE MINING IN FRANCE

The Foufouilloux diatomite quarry operated by multinational company Imerys, specialised in minerals for industrial use is pictured in Viragues in central France. Imerys is seeking to expand its diatomite mining operations to the "narse de Nouvialle" wetlands, an area rich in biodiversity including protected species, and also rich in minerals, sparking opposition from local farmers, hunters and environmentalists.

— AFP

Series B funding as a market sentiment indicator



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When we look at macroeconomics indicator, inflation is one of the most important metrics to keep in mind as a litmus of the market's status and sentiment.

Inflation paints a picture of the current status of consumer's confidence as supply and demand go through a temporary unbalance. When inflation rises quickly, currencies lose value and investors tend to change money allocation according to their own investment strategy.

But in this column I want to focus on another indicator that could offer a clue to where investors are placing their bets in times of inflation. I am referring to the Series B rounds.

Series B are rounds of funding for companies with proven technology or product, that are about to begin further scaled. At this stage capital invested usually represents a safer bet.

Series B are unlikely to exit, and therefore even when the market is bearish, companies can focus on growth. So far in 2022, there have been more than 50 Series

B worth \$100 million each in the United States alone.

2021 was a record year for Series B rounds, with close to 2,000 deals closed reaching a total of nearly \$60 billion in funding. 2022 started on a good note with January well on track to outperform 2021 monthly average, at \$5 billion.

However, funding dropped in February, perhaps due to concerns around the tense situation in Ukraine. Both February and March struggled to reach \$4 billion a month, and although the number of deals closed in March was the highest this year, with more than 100, the funding was not exceptional.

April showed a different trend, with just above 80 deals, but overall summing up to more than \$4 billion, as the second best month in 2022. May, however showed sign of sluggish investment, with the same amount of deals closed as April, but less than \$4 billion raised.

And finally June, which to date is by far the worst month in the past eighteen months. At the time of this column being written, less than 60 deals have been closed, with the total amount raised hardly

reaching \$3 billion, summing up the first half of the year at \$24 billion.

The good sign is that funding in H1, 2022 is greater than a full year in 2017, 2018, and 2019, but still lower than 2020. Overall 2022 seems on track to be the second best year for Series B in the past 5 years. As for the main trends, food-tech and artificial intelligence seem to be the biggest catalysts.

For example, the largest B round in the first half of 2022 went to Anthropic, a San Francisco-based artificial intelligence (AI) research company that attracted \$580 million in April.

The startup - which just became a unicorn with valuation exceeding \$1 billion - pledged to use the funds to build an infrastructure aimed to explore and improve the safety properties of computationally intensive AI models.

The second largest Serie B round went to Eikon Therapeutics, a Hayward, California-based company which develops technology to analyse single molecule protein behaviour in living cells. In January they raised \$518 million. Lastly, 13 companies claimed to have raised Series B funding for crypto and NFT related projects.

Inflation as a political power play gone wrong



YANIS VAROUFAKIS

The author is a professor of economics at the University of Athens, the leader of the MeRA25 party and a former finance minister of Greece.

The blame game over surging prices is on. Was it too much central-bank money being pumped out for too long that caused inflation to take off? Was it China, where most physical production had moved before the pandemic locked down the country and disrupted global supply chains?

Was it Russia, whose invasion of Ukraine took a large chunk out of the global supply of gas, oil, grains and fertilisers? Was it some surreptitious shift from pre-pandemic austerity to unrestricted fiscal largesse? The answer is one that test-takers never encounter: All of the above and none of the above.

ivotal economic crises frequently evoke multiple explanations that are all correct while missing the point. When Wall Street collapsed in 2008, triggering the global Great Recession, various explanations

were offered: regulatory capture by financiers who had replaced industrialists in the capitalist pecking order; a cultural proclivity towards risky finance; failure by politicians and economists to distinguish between a new paradigm and a massive bubble; and other theories, too. All were valid, but none went to the heart of the matter.

The same thing is true today. The "we told you so" monetarists, who have been predicting high inflation ever since central banks massively expanded their balance sheets in 2008, remind me of the joy felt that year by leftists (like me) who consistently "predict" capitalism's near-death — akin to a stopped clock that is right twice a day.

Sure enough, by creating huge overdrafts for the bankers in the false hope that the money would trickle down to the real economy, central banks caused epic asset

price inflation (booming equity and housing markets, the crypto craze, and more).

But the monetarist story cannot explain why the major central banks failed from 2009 to 2020 even to boost the quantity of money circulating in the real economy, let alone push consumer price inflation up to their 2% target. Something else must have triggered inflation.

The interruption of China-centred supply chains clearly played a significant role, as did Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But neither factor explains Western capitalism's abrupt "regime change" from prevailing deflation to its opposite: all prices taking off simultaneously.

This would require wage inflation to overtake price inflation, thus causing a self-perpetuating spiral, with wage rises feeding back into further price hikes which, in turn, cause wages to rise again, ad

infinitum. Only then would it be reasonable for central bankers to demand that workers "take one for the team" and refrain from seeking higher wage settlements.

But, today, demanding that workers forgo wage gains are absurd. All the evidence suggests that, unlike in the 1970s, wages are rising much more slowly than prices, and yet the increase in prices is not just continuing but accelerating.

So, what is really going on? My answer: A half-century long power play, led by corporations, Wall Street, governments and central banks, has gone badly wrong. As a result, the West's authorities now face an impossible choice: Push conglomerates and even states into cascading bankruptcies, or allow inflation to go unchecked.

For 50 years, the US economy has sustained the net exports of Europe, Japan, South Korea, then China and other emerging

economies, while the lion's share of those foreigners' profits rushed to Wall Street in search of higher returns.

On the back of this tsunami of capital heading for America, the financiers were building pyramids of private money (such as options and derivatives) to fund the corporations building up a global labyrinth of ports, ships, warehouses, storage yards, and road and rail transport. When the crash of 2008 burned down these pyramids, the whole financialised labyrinth of global just-in-time supply chains was imperilled.

To save not just the bankers but also the labyrinth itself, central bankers stepped in to replace the financiers' pyramids with public money. Meanwhile, governments were cutting public expenditure, jobs and services. It was nothing short of lavish socialism for capital and harsh austerity for labour.

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Surfing pioneer of Sur has big dream for the sport

Khamis bin Salim al Alawi founded the Oman Surfers School in Ras Al Hadd after falling in love with the sport in 2016. As a pioneer of surfing in Sur, he wanted more Omanis to embrace the sport and grow it in such a manner that the country can eventually send surfing participants at the Olympics... **P20**



Japan judo hits crisis point as bullied, burnt-out children quit

JAPAN IS THE HOME of judo but a brutal win-at-all-costs mentality, corporal punishment and pressure to lose weight are driving large numbers of children to quit, raising fears for the sport's future in its traditional powerhouse.

Underlining the scale of the problem, the All Japan Judo Federation cancelled a prestigious nationwide tournament for children as young as 10, warning they were being pushed too hard.

A pressure group dedicated to those injured or killed while practising the martial art says that 121 judo-related deaths were reported in Japanese schools between 1983 and 2016.

Japan regularly dominates the Olympics judo medal table but federation president Yasuhiro Yamashita said that the values of the sport are being lost as parents and coaches chase short-term glory.

"Judo is a sport that emphasises

humanity," said Yamashita, who is also the president of the Japanese Olympic Committee and won gold at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

"If you see no worth in anything but winning, and the result is all that matters, that gets distorted."

The number of people taking part in judo in Japan has plummeted by almost half since 2004 to about 120,000, according to the federation's figures.

Children account for the steepest decline in numbers.

Reports have emerged of primary school children being forced to lose weight — sometimes up to six kilograms (13 pounds) — so they can compete in a lighter division.

Young children are taught the same dangerous moves as Olympic athletes and intense training regimes can leave them injured or burnt out.

Parents and coaches have been



known to berate referees during matches and corporal punishment still exists, despite reforms in a sport that has been plagued by abuse and bullying scandals over the years.

The All Japan Judo Federation decided to take action in March by cancelling a national tournament for elite children aged between 10 and 12, planning to replace it with events such as lectures and practice sessions.

The backlash was fierce with angry parents and coaches accusing the federation of dashing children's dreams and jeopardising Japan's status as the bastion of judo.

VIOLENCE, NOT WORDS

Junior high school student Rion Fukuo, 13, a regional champion last year, said at her judo club in the central

Shizuoka region that she "feels sorry" for this year's primary school children who have no tournament to aim for.

Kosuke Moroi, whose 12-year-old daughter attends the same club, said he was "disappointed" when he first heard the news but concluded it was

"a good decision" after learning more about the reasons.

Yamashita said scrapping the competition had put a spotlight on "a problem that involves Japanese society".

"It's been two-and-a-half months since we decided to cancel the competition and people are still debating it on TV and in newspapers," he said, adding that most opinions "have been in favour".

Judo and other martial arts were used for military training in Japan before World War II and servicemen would visit schools to give lessons.

Martial arts were banned during the post-war US occupation but they later were recognised as sports, with judo making its Olympic debut at the 1964 Tokyo Games.

Noriko Mizoguchi, a Japanese judoka who won silver at the 1992 Barcelona

Olympics, said a belief that corporal punishment makes children stronger was still common in Japan.

"One thing that has stuck to coaching in Japanese sports is that it doesn't use words, it uses violence," she said.

"There's a co-dependence, like with domestic violence, as if being hit is like being shown affection."

Problem parents

Coaches who use corporal punishment can be stripped of their licences but parents are harder to control.

Hisako Kurata, a representative of the Japan Judo Accident Victims Association, said most parents "don't think about the danger and just want their child to win".

"Parents think that if their child wins a title, they'll be happy, they think they're doing it for their child," said Kurata, whose 15-year-old son died in 2011 as a result of a head injury sustained at his high-school judo club.

"The parents end up having the same win-at-all-costs mentality as the judo club and they contribute to it."

Mizoguchi, who has coached in France, said judo was "not fun" for Japanese children and that the "macho culture" surrounding the sport has had its day.

"You have to treat each kid with care and have a long-term vision for the future, otherwise Japanese judo has reached its limit," she said.

"Old-school coaches are scared that if we do away with the kids' competitions, Japanese judo will lose its strength."

"I think it will actually become stronger." — **AFP**

READ

HOW HIGH WE GO IN THE DARK

BY SEQUOIA NAGAMATSU

This hauntingly beautiful story focuses on how the human spirit perseveres through it all. With everything from a cosmic search for home to a theme park for terminally ill kids and a talking pig, it's a lyrical adventure that feels fantastical yet familiar.



A YOGA CELEBRATION

A woman participates in a mass yoga session near the Dal Lake to celebrate the International Day of Yoga in Srinagar. — **AFP**



FASHION TRENDS

The photograph of late French fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy displayed at the entrance of his personal collection's presentation prior to the auction at Christie's auction house in Paris on June 8, 2022. The live sales of Hubert de Givenchy's estate raised more than 114 million euros, more than double the presale low estimate of the collection, making it the second most valuable collection ever sold at French auction, Christie's in Paris said. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Scientists find new population of polar bears in sea-ice free region



POLAR BEARS FACE an existential threat from the rapid decline of Arctic sea ice, which they rely on as platforms to hunt seals.

But in a new study, scientists have identified an isolated subpopulation of polar bears in Southeast Greenland that instead make use of freshwater ice pouring into the ocean from the region's glaciers, suggesting this particular habitat is less susceptible than others to climate change.

Their findings, described in the journal *Science* on Thursday, open up the tantalising possibility that at least some pockets of the species might be able to survive further into this century, when Arctic sea ice is expected to disappear completely during summer months.

"One of the big questions is where in the Arctic will polar bears be able to hang on, what we call 'persist,'" first author Kristin Laidre, a polar scientist at the University of Washington and Greenland Institute of Natural Resources told AFP.

"I think that bears in a place like this can teach us a lot about where those places might be."

Laidre and colleagues first spent two years interviewing Inuit subsistence hunters who provided input and ecological knowledge, including harvest samples for analysis.

They then began their own field work, which lasted from 2015 to 2021, in a harsh region that was long understudied because of its unpredictable weather, heavy snowfall and jagged mountains.

HEMMED IN

Each year, the team would spend one month in springtime, staying in the nearest settlement Kuummiit, which is a two-hour helicopter ride from where the bears live. Fuel depots had to be staged along the route in advance down the coastline, creating a hopskotch-like commute to work.

The team tagged the bears with satellite tracking devices, and collected genetic samples by either capturing bears or firing biopsy darts into their rumps.

Thought to number a few hundred individuals, "they are the most genetically isolated population of polar bears anywhere on the planet," said co-author Beth Shapiro, a geneticist at the University of California, Santa Cruz and investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, in a statement.

"We know that this population has been living separately from other polar bear populations for at least several hundred years."

Unlike their cousins, the Southeast Greenland polar bears were found to be homebodies, seldom straying far to hunt.

Their isolation arises from the geography: they live in a complex landscape of fjords on the very edge of their range on the southern tip of Greenland, well below the Arctic circle, with nowhere to go.

To the west there are an enormous set of mountains and the Greenland Ice Sheet, and to the east the open water of the Denmark Strait all the way to Iceland. They also have to contend with a rapid current that flows southward along the coast.

"We see that when they get caught in this current they jump off the ice and they walk back home to their fjords," said Laidre. The team found that some of the tracked bears accidentally caught in this situation had to trek more than a hundred miles back home. — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

When the World Gives You Lemons ... Make a Stand



WHEN LAURA KURTZ staged lemonade stands as a child in Raleigh, North Carolina, they were simple affairs.

"We would bring out the folding card table and chairs and pop them at the end of the driveway," said Kurtz, who is now 34 and a management consultant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. "The lemonade would come from concentrate."

Fast forward to Memorial Day 2022, when she and her 4-year-old daughter, Penny, set up a lemonade stand in front of their home.

The idea started at a store. "If you impulse purchase a set of lemon-shaped napkins from T.J. Maxx, then naturally you have to build an elaborate lemonade stand," she said.

Using crates and other supplies, Kurtz built a stand, complete with a fabric white-and-yellow-striped awning and shelves to display a bowl of fake lemons and decorative straws. She also made lemon garlands and an array of signs, and tied pink ribbons to the top for "pops of color."

The morning of the event, Kurtz and Penny squeezed lemons and added sugar, water and ice, which her daughter later sold for \$1 a glass. "My dad was appalled by the price. He said it was

too much money," Penny said. "I was like, 'Dad, it's freshly squeezed.'"

Penny made \$13 over two hours. "I think that might have covered the price of lemons, but that wasn't the point," Kurtz said. "The point was to have fun."

Lemonade stands have long been part of the quintessential American experience. A *New York Times* article from July 1880 describes them popping up around New York City: "This cheap lemonade business has come very much to the front in New York within the last year or two," it said. "Before if a thirsty soul wanted a glass of lemonade, on a hot day, he had to go into some bar-room and pay 15 cents for it. Now, at any one of these lemonade stands — and scores of them have been established — a customer can have a glass of ice-cold lemonade made before his eyes for five cents."

Children eventually took over the trade, and for at least a few generations, parents have seen them as ways for their children to learn entrepreneurial skills while having fun.

Lemonade stands suffered early in the pandemic. Social distancing rules made them all but impossible. Now they are back in full

force in cities and suburbs across America. While some families still use concentrate and card tables, others have become more ambitious: making DIY stands, buying special wardrobes for the occasion, advertising on social media and offering more upscale options (organic elderflower lemonade, anyone?). Additionally, many vendors are opting to donate their proceeds to charity.

Michael York, a Marine Corps veteran in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and his daughter, Aria, did not want to settle for a card table. "We spent one day building a lemonade stand ourselves," said Aria, who is 8. "We found wood down the street and decorated it. We used sparkly black, blue, green and yellow paint to make a sign."

"It was so fun to make," she added.

Even after the pandemic, York, 36, has appreciated how bonding projects like this are for his family. "I kind of go overboard with everything we do with the kids," he said (he and his wife also have a 4-year-old daughter).

It was also important to him and his daughter that all the money go to a good cause: They raised \$280 for Home Base, an organisation that provides funds and clinical care to veterans and their families. ("That felt good," Aria said.)

And unlike their parents, children now have access to technology to help bolster profits.

For Carrie Weprin in the Boerum Hill neighbourhood in the New York borough of Brooklyn, accepting payments through Venmo from people who didn't have cash was a game-changer.

And Weprin found that her children, Elijah, 5, and Naomi, 3, were tenacious salespeople: "Anytime somebody walked by and didn't stop, they were very vocal about it," said Weprin, 36, a documentary film-maker. They "had no shame." In the wake of the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, the family donated their proceeds to Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit that advocates for gun control.

Children used to put up a lemonade stand and hope people saw it. Now they and their parents can promote stands through social media and text messaging. — NYT

FASHION

Fashion couturier Sara Onsi launches dreamy bridal 2022 collection



EVERY YOUNG GIRL'S dream is to live out their lifelong fantasy wedding, and that journey all starts with the idea of the perfect wedding gown. The type of gown that'll make them feel as if they've landed right in a fairytale story. But how do you really find the perfect wedding dress?

Statistically speaking, most brides try on between 4 to 7 dresses before the right one falls in their excited, anxious hands. Even then, a wedding dress can still take up to 6 months to be created, altered and sent to your door.

"Our Bridal 2022 collection called Your Selfdom is built on the realisation that every woman carries herself differently, that her aura is to be shown and celebrated through graceful bridal gowns that fits perfectly and speaks of who they choose to be," says Sara Onsi, Founder and Creative Director of Middle Eastern Luxury Fashion Brand Sara Onsi.

"When a woman wears my creation, I want her to feel celebrated — like a star deserving of glamour. I want her to feel that she is the inspiration at every design, implementation and finishing stage — bringing our vision and imagination to a dreamy glamorous piece that she can call her own," she added.

Aside from her Bridal 2022 launch, Sara Onsi just recently became the first-ever Egyptian Fashion Designer to have dressed celebrities and personalities at the Cannes Film Festival Red Carpet, successfully bringing Egypt and the Middle East an international fashion house that disrupts norms through refined craftsmanship, modern elegance and bold femininity.

Some of our favourite Red Carpet looks include Miss France Flora Coquerel in a fully beaded mint gown from the SS22 collection,

International actress and film producer Fagun Thakrar in a couture pleated yellow gown from the SS22 collection and English model, socialite and aristocrat Lady Victoria Hervey in a gold fringed dress.

There is no doubt that Middle Eastern Fashion Couturier Sara Onsi is quickly becoming a global fashion force who can weave dream dresses with magic wands at one hand, and passion at the other.



ABOUT SARA ONSI

A brand born to be home to its founder, crafted with vast passion and a vision to become a part of different life stories. Sara Onsi grew into becoming a birthplace of fashionable haute couture that doesn't only dazzle but carries meaningful details of craftsmanship and design.

Sara Onsi, the beating heart of the namesake brand, is a character with passion and belief in magic that brilliant design brings to a woman's life. Her launch in 2016, was the starting point of a journey filled with color, embellishment, and shining pieces all made to perfection to make every woman feel like the valuable gem she is.

art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | JUNE 26 | 2022



Surfing pioneer of Sur has big dream for the sport

By Erin Coyle

With big grins on their faces as they practice balancing and jumping up on a surfboard, some Omani boys have a reason to be so happy. They are part of a course offered by Oman Surfers School in Ras Al Hadd. The one-month class is taught by the owner and founder, Khamis bin Salim al Alawi from Sur, who has big plans for Oman.

Al Alawi found his calling of the waves in 2016 when a visitor from the UAE came to Oman. He was visiting Khamis' uncle when Khamis joined them at Ras Al Hadd and saw them surfing and tried it.

Khamis was hooked from the first wave and liked the feeling of being on the water. The visitor left and gave them two boards, so he and his uncle could continue surfing. Khamis said from that first time that he wanted this same feeling again and again.

The first year he continued surfing with his uncle. One year later, Khamis and a friend started surfing because his friend wanted to do more than play football. There were only three Omani surfers in the beginning, and now there are about seven surfers, which is increasing as

surfing is becoming sought-after. Al Alawi indicates that Omanis appreciate their free time and enjoy more outside activities.

He is so passionate about the sport that he is trying to get Oman to join the International Surfing Association, hoping to send Omanis to the Olympics in the future.

With this passion, he opened Oman Surfers School last year. The one-month course, sponsored by Brew Oz, a local coffee shop in Sur, is for kids ages twelve to sixteen years old. The kids learn how to surf alone, without pushing and helping.

If there are no waves, they still practice paddling and balancing. Not only is surfing being taught, but Khamis is teaching the kids surf etiquette, such as don't surf alone and learning who has priority on a wave. In addition, the kids are learning to respect each other, respect locals' and respect more advanced people. Khamis goes on to say that he's also teaching the kids to appreciate nature and be grateful and patient. The kids are learning to protect the environment, and if they see turtles in a net, they know they should release the net and help the turtle.

I had a chance to watch one of the classes. The kids first practiced balancing and jumping up

on the board on the sand. When they were ready, they enthusiastically headed into the water.

For the newer students, Khamis stays with them to make sure they are comfortable on the board. The kids had big smiles for the entire class, which showed they were having fun. They said they liked surfing because it's fun and they can spend a long time in the water.

Al Alawi is hosting his first competition in Ras Al Hadd for the school tentatively right after Eid. Only the kids from the course will be able to compete. The event is open to the public to watch. The kids want the competition to see how their level is and to improve themselves. It motivates them to go to the next level and learn what competition is all about.

Al Alawi is doing great things to raise awareness about surfing. He hopes to produce good surfers while putting Oman on the map for tourism. He also wants locals to have fun, see the ocean and environment differently, and learn to appreciate both. His dream is to also surf in Hawaii.

Private lessons are also available in addition to the kids' course. For more information, go to Instagram @oman_surfers_school.

