

P12

NEYMAR READY TO CARRY THE WEIGHT OF A NATION



P14

OIL PRODUCTION TO COMMENCE SHORTLY FROM AL JUMD FIELD IN BLOCK 56



P20

TRANQUILITY AWAITS TOURISTS IN WADI TIWI



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO KING OF CAMBODIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Norodom Sihamoni of the Kingdom of Cambodia on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to King Sihamoni. His Majesty also wished the people of Cambodia further progress and prosperity. — ONA

RIYADH

GCC JOINT DEFENCE COUNCIL MEETS

The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday took part in the 19th session of the Joint Defence Council of GCC Ministers of Defence, held at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Oman's delegation was headed by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs. The Joint Defence Council's session touched on a spectrum of military matters of common interest in a bid to enhance the march of GCC military cooperation. In his statement, HH Sayyid Shihab extended an invitation to GCC Ministers of Defence to attend the 20th session of the Joint Defence Council in Oman.

DETAILS ON P3



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# HM to preside over military parade



## PREPARATIONS FOR 52ND NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS COMPLETED

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will preside over a military parade at Al Nasr Parade Ground in the Governorate of Dhofar on November 18 as part of the celebrations for the 52nd National Day.

This was stated by the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations for the 52nd National Day. Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Shaikh Sabaa bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations, said that all preparations have been completed for the celebrations.

Shaikh Sabaa pointed out that a reception will be organised in all wilayats of Oman, with the participation of citizens.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman's flag has been hoisted in the Governorate of Muscat starting from Al Bustan roundabout along the main road till Al Barakah Palace roundabout, while

illuminations were installed on either side of the road. One wilayat from each governorate in Oman has been decorated as part of the celebrations of the glorious occasion, which will see the launch of drone and laser shows, he said.

Lively carnivals will be held in two different sites of the Governorate of Muscat on November 18 and 19.

Similar shows will be held in the Governorate of Dhofar on November 18 and the Governorate of Musandam on November 23, he added.

He pointed out that a number of development projects will be opened in various sectors, marking the National Day.

Shaikh Sabaa extended greetings and sincere wishes to His Majesty the Sultan, praying to Allah the Almighty to endow him with good health and long life. He also wished Oman further progress and prosperity. — ONA

## Stone for monument of legendary Chinese explorer in Dhofar

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
MUSCAT, Nov 8

A foundation stone was laid for the construction of a memorial dedicated to famous Chinese mariner and explorer Zheng He at a seafront site in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday.

The foundation laying ceremony was organised by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman, in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry and Dhofar Municipality.

In attendance at the event were senior officials from Oman and Embassy of the People's Republic of China, including Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality; Li Lingping, Chinese Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman; Ambassador Abdullah bin Khalid al Sulaimani, Acting Director-General of the East Asia Department in the Omani Foreign Ministry; and Dr Khalid al Saidi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani-Chinese Friendship Society.

Speaking at the ground-breaking event, Abdullah al Sulaimani of the Omani Foreign Ministry said: "With the advent of the 52nd glorious National Day of Oman, today we are celebrating

“With the advent of the 52nd glorious National Day of Oman, today we are celebrating the laying of foundation stone for a memorial dedicated to the famous Chinese mariner and explorer Zheng He

ABDULLAH AL SULAIMANI  
Ambassador

the laying of foundation stone for a memorial dedicated to the famous Chinese mariner and explorer Zheng He, who visited the Sultanate of Oman in the 15th century AD. It is considered as the beginning of communication between Oman and China.”

Citing the increasingly robust trade ties between Oman and China, the official urged Chinese investors to increase the flow of investments into Oman in various fields, especially in renewable energy.

TURN TO P2

## SAYYID FAHD RECEIVES IPU PRESIDENT



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received on Tuesday Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). HH Sayyid Fahd lauded IPU's role in cementing ties of friendship among world countries. He underlined the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to support these endeavours to encourage dialogue for the settlement of global conflicts through peaceful means. SEE ALSO P2

PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI

## OIA has over \$40 billion in assets

MUSCAT: Abdulsalam bin Mohammad al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said that the fundamentals of Oman Vision 2040 focuses on promising sectors which will be additions to the oil and gas sectors.

Speaking to an Oman TV programme, Al Murshidi disclosed that the OIA is holding assets worth over RO 16 billion (more than \$40 billion). The OIA invests 60 per cent in the Sultanate of Oman and 40 per cent outside the country.

The chairman of the OIA affirmed that the protection of public funds is more important

than increasing these funds, which is why the OIA embraces transparency to protect its funds and investments. He pointed out that the OIA directs its subsidiaries to disclose their financial statements to the public through annual reports.

When it comes to foreign investment, "the OIA applies geographical and sectoral diversification. The OIA adopts a division of sectors, countries and continents to make sure that the investments of the OIA do not exceed the allocated percentage taking into account the ease of exit from these investments," he said.

The chairman of the OIA

noted that there are number of projects currently under study and will be rolled out for investment by the private sector with a privatisation plan in place for existing government companies.

The chairman of the OIA affirmed that the protection of public funds is more important than increasing these funds, which is why the OIA embraces transparency to protect its funds and investments.

He pointed out that the OIA directs its subsidiaries to disclose their financial statements to the public through annual reports, said the OIA chairman. — ONA



## Fahd receives ex-president of South Africa

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received Thabo Mbeki, ex-president of the Republic of South Africa, in Muscat on Tuesday. The meeting reviewed the advanced relations between Oman and South Africa and means of promoting them in various areas. It also touched on ways of activating the agreements signed between both sides in different areas.

They also reviewed a number of issues at the regional and international arenas. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers; Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy; and Mohammed bin Nasser al Wahibi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs. — ONA



## Fahd, IPU President discuss cooperation

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister, received Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in Muscat on Tuesday.

HH Sayyid Fahd lauded IPU's role in cementing ties of friendship among countries. He underlined Oman's keenness to support these endeavours to encourage dialogue for the settlement of conflicts through peaceful means.

HH Sayyid Fahd also reviewed the march of Shura. The meeting dealt with means of enhancing ties between the IPU and the

Council of Oman.

On his turn, IPU President expressed his delight to visit Oman and view its civilisational landmarks and the progress made in various fields. He underscored world countries' appreciation for the balanced policy espoused by Oman, earning Oman the confidence and respect of all. He also affirmed that his meetings with Omani officials would be reflected positively on enhancing ties of international cooperation.

The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ashishura and Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. — ONA

## IES holds first induction forum



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour organised the first induction forum of the Institutional Excellence System (IES), an enabler to Oman Vision 2040 that aims to enhance the performance and efficiency of the state's administrative apparatus.

The forum brought together representatives of government departments that apply the institutional excellence system.

The forum debated several topics including the Royal directives on the Institutional Excellence System and its seven criteria.

An elaborate explanation of evaluation tools and indicators and the action plan to be applied for the implementation of the institutional excellence system, was presented at the forum. It also debated roles, tasks and responsibilities assigned to the officials in charge of the system application at different

government departments.

The Institutional Excellence System aims at finding a unified national system for the governance of institutional performance, upgrading the work standard and the government services to boost customer satisfaction, encouraging positive competition among various government units, enhancing renovation at government departments and rewarding the excellent units depending on credible scientific standards.

Starting January 1, 2023, a set of indicators will be monitored through the system and three questionnaires will be conducted in all government units to gauge the extent to which government institutions are seeking to upgrade the work environment and measure customer satisfaction and the level of cooperation between the government authorities. — ONA

## Robust cybersecurity must for economic diversity

AFRAH AL BALUSHI  
@afrahalbalushia

The 10th edition of the Regional Cybersecurity Week 2022 began with the participation of more than 400 specialists from 45 countries around the world. The theme for the event is 'Innovation and Cybersecurity Industry'.

It is held as part of the Regional Cybersecurity Conference organised by the Arab Regional Cybersecurity Center and hosted by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

In his opening remarks, Bader al Salehi, Director-General of Oman National CERT, Head of ITU Regional Cyber Security Center & Chairman of OIC-CERT, said, "The conference highlights innovation and development of the cybersecurity industry in terms of risks and cyber threats and the promising economic opportunities."

The conference's opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA). Many national and international experts in



Badar al Salehi, Director-General of Oman National CERT, with Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) Regional at Cybersecurity Week 2022 in Muscat on Tuesday.

information technology and cybersecurity attended the event.

The conference highlighted the importance of cybersecurity, especially after the Sultanate of Oman was ranked among the five best Arab countries in the Digital Economy Index for the year 2022.

The conference seeks to review the best international strategies and experiences in the field of cybersecurity and innovation. It highlights the procedures for evaluating the necessary measures to reduce risks in the integrated, interconnected systems, discussing best

practices to define the national and organisational cybersecurity policy, and presenting the achievements in terms of reducing risks.

The conference also accompanied the launch of the National Cybersecurity Industry Programme, which is part of the national programme for the digital economy, with the aim of creating a national industry specialised in this field based on the human element, creativity and innovation.

The event's Guest of Honour, Dr Maan Murad al Qattamin, Founder and Chairman of Interviable Company, dwelt on

"Innovation in Cybersecurity and Digital Economy."

The conference saw the launch of Hadatha, a cybersecurity programme aimed at establishing a specialised cybersecurity industry in the region, with emphasis on the human capital factor and innovation.

The programme, which is compatible with Oman Vision 2040, seeks to address cybersecurity challenges, develop a proper ecological system, hone cybersecurity talents and establish start-ups and SMEs specialised in the field of cybersecurity.

The programme also offers exposure for specialised local cybersecurity companies at the global level, promotes innovation in the field of cybersecurity and encourages research and development. It establishes partnerships with the private sector and academic and government sectors and paves the way for cooperation with international partners in the industry. It also encourages innovation in cybersecurity, provides incentives and attracts foreign investment in the field of cybersecurity in the Sultanate of Oman.

## Stone laid for monument of legendary Chinese explorer

FROM PAGE 1

Chinese Ambassador Lingping noted that Zheng He was a frequent visitor to Dhofar, bringing pottery, silk, tea and other merchandise from China, while returning with frankincense and other local goods.

"Zheng He's voyages to the Western Ocean contributed to the promotion of friendly exchanges between ancient China and the countries on the coast of the Indian Ocean, economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and these countries," Lingping stated.

Oman and China has established diplomatic ties on May 25, 1978, opening a new



page in the contemporary Sino-Omani relationship, she said. A new milestone in the relationship was celebrated on the 10th National Day of Oman with the historic sailing of 'Sohar', a wooden sailboat, from Suhar to Guangzhou.

"This trip is a rare achievement in the history of contemporary exchanges between China and



Oman, even between China and Arab countries. It is the beginning of the renewal of the historical friendship between China and Oman, as the friendship between China and Oman has entered a new stage," the ambassador stated.

Building on these ties, the two countries agreed to install a memorial to Zheng He in Salalah to commemorate his multiple



visits. The project, designed by the China Transportation

Corporation, will be constructed based on 3D printing technology.

Work on the monument will be completed in 2023.



## Shihab takes part in GCC Joint Defence Council session

**RIYADH:** The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday took part in the 19th session of the Joint Defence Council of GCC Ministers of Defence, held at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Oman's delegation was headed by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs. The Joint Defence Council's session touched on a spectrum of military matters of common interest in a bid to enhance the march of GCC military cooperation.

In his statement, HH Sayyid Shihab extended an invitation to GCC Ministers of Defence to attend the 20th session of the Joint Defence Council in the Sultanate of Oman. Moreover, several decisions and recommendations were taken during the session and they will be submitted to the GCC Supreme Council. — ONA

## Bahrainis cast votes in Muscat

**MUSCAT:** Citizens of the Kingdom of Bahrain residing in the Sultanate of Oman began to cast votes on Tuesday to select their representative in parliamentary elections. The representatives stand for four districts, which are the Capital, Al Muharraq and the northern and southern governorates.

Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Sultanate of Oman, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that Bahrain is witnessing a historic day in its democratic path, which was established by King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Al Kaabi added that the Embassy of Bahrain in Oman completed all administrative and technical arrangements to receive voters and facilitate the electoral process. The embassy contacted



Bahraini residents through various means of communication to update them about the procedures and the requirements

of the voting process, he added, noting that the voters will continue to be received till 8 pm. — ONA

# Nizwa lights up for National Day fete

AMAL AL RIYAMI  
NIZWA, NOV 8

The landmarks, avenues, buildings and homes in the Wilayat of Nizwa are decked up with national colours and lights, as the Sultanate of Oman is getting ready to welcome the 52nd National Day.

Oman celebrates the National Day on November 18 to mark the birthday of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. On this day, Omanis and residents fondly recall the contributions the late Sultan made to transform Oman into a modern and prosperous country.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in 2020 decided to continue the tradition to honour the noble son and great leader of Oman who ushered in the modern renaissance.

The Wilayat of Nizwa completed National Day decorations that spread joy and happiness in the hearts of Omanis and residents. Nizwa Central Market is also decorated with pictures of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and late Sultan Qaboos bin Said along with lights



in national colours.

Traders have also decorated

their premises with flags and lights much to the delight

of visitors. The shops are stocked with clothes, flags, wall

decorations and lamps that reflect patriotic enthusiasm of

the citizens.

Photos by Sami al Hinai



## SAI takes part in UN convention against corruption

**VIENNA:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State's Audit Institution (SAI), took part in the second meeting of the 13th session of the team tasked with implementing the UN Convention Against Corruption.

Oman also participated in the 16th meeting of the International Open-ended Intergovernmental Group on Asset Recovery, as well as the 11th meeting of governmental experts tasked with enhancing international cooperation of the UN Convention Against Corruption. The meetings are being held from November 7 to 11 at the UN headquarters in Vienna. — ONA

# Second phase of sea turtles tracking begins

**MUSCAT:** The Environment Authority launched the second phase of the project of tracking sea turtles via satellite technology. The project aims to enhance informational contributions to study the nesting conditions and natural habitat of sea turtles. Five tracking devices were installed in the Ras Al Jinz area to achieve this objective. The project seeks to monitor threats facing turtle migration, reduce environmental risks, conduct surveys, study the nesting conditions and natural habitats of turtles, understand the behaviour of turtles in nesting and feeding areas, track a greater number of green turtles in Ras Al Hadd and combine local and international efforts to apply best practices in protecting sea turtles.

The project, launched on September 6, witnessed the



participation of personnel from the Marine Environment

Conservation Department, the Environment Preservation

Office, the Environment Control Office and supervisors

of eco-systems in the coastal governorates along with personnel from the Five Oceans Environmental Services Company.

A'aida bint Khalaf al Jabri, marine environment specialist at the Environment Authority and head of the study team, said the project for satellite tracking of turtles aimed to control sea migration of turtles, apply the best practices for protection of turtles and study their nesting conditions and habitats. It also aims to understand the behaviour of turtles in their habitat and feeding conditions.

She said the programme included training of 20 specialists from various coastal governorates in the Sultanate on the method of installation of satellite tracking devices at Ras Al Hadd and Ras Al Jinz in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.



VINOD NAIR  
@vinot\_nair

NEW  
OPERATORS  
RIDE ON  
GROWING  
DEMAND  
FOR  
REASONABLE  
FARES

THE NUMBER OF ON-DEMAND TAXIS in the Sultanate of Oman has been expanding since the first such company-provided service in 2018. “On-taxi demand has been a boon, especially to access remote areas of the capital. Fares are reasonable too, as the efforts to regulate the orange and white taxis with meters never succeeded. Otaxi has been a good example of an Omani venture doing well over a period, and we hope to see more improvements and innovations in the future,” say users.

Rachel, a schoolteacher in MQ, said, “Waiting period to avail a taxi has dropped to within a few minutes compared to what it was at the start. Some operators are using debit and credit cards, and that is a positive step.” In March this year, the government granted a license to Ubar on-demand services, while last week, Ali Al Ghazali Corporation’s ‘Tasleem’ was granted approval to provide taxi services “on-demand” via mobile applications, including instant bookings.

BASIC TRIPS

The licence granted to Tasleem covers basic trips, economy trips, monthly contracts and independent requests from institutions and companies.

Speaking to the Observer, Salim, an on-demand taxi driver, said, “Customers will always welcome improvement in services, and it is good for the environment too. But regulators should also consider the taxi drivers’ welfare. The market is small here compared to other cities, and the entry of several players will spoil the party for everyone, but still, taxis are a city’s lifeline.”

On-demand taxis are not allowed to pick up passengers from Muscat International Airport and that has an area of contention. But licensed airport taxis have a different view. “Our argument is simple. We are licensed operators and must make our living too. Most passengers have family or friends to pick them up from the airport and that leaves a small window of business for us.” Several orange and white taxi operators also cater to their regular customers on-demand at a pre-determined fare though they are not associated with any company.

As part of the efforts to streamline the public transport system in the Sultanate, the then Ministry of Transport and Communications (MoTC) launched several initiatives, which included the complete makeover and the expansion of the public bus services, which were followed by the efforts to provide efficient taxi services to the local population and the foreign visitors.

Otaxi, launched initially as a start-up venture by young Omanis, has grown into the country’s largest on-demand taxi provider, with services expanded into Salalah and Musandam.

Marhaba was the first company to offer taxi services in the country, and they were mandated to provide services from three to five-star hotels and the Port Sultan Qaboos (mainly for cruise visitors).

Subsequently, the public transport company, Mwasalat, got the licence to the taxi services at Muscat International Airport and commercial malls.

Both these companies were allowed to have on-demand services via mobile applications on fares approved by the government.

ON-DEMAND TAXI  
MARKET GROWING



On-taxi demand has been a boon, especially to access remote areas of the capital. Fares are reasonable too, as the efforts to regulate the orange and white taxis with meters never succeeded. Otaxi has been a good example of an Omani venture doing well over a period, and we hope to see more improvements and innovations in the future: **Users**



# MoE hosts meeting on job rotation initiative

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, NOV 8

The Ministry of Education organised an introductory meeting on the initiative of job rotation among the units of the state's administrative apparatus in the ministry's General Diwan on Monday.

The job rotation initiative aims to improve performance and productivity, raise the efficiency of employees and provide them with various skills and experiences that qualify them to develop their careers. The meeting comes within the implementation of the first phase of introducing the initiative, as it requires holding a series of introductory meetings.

by Dr Salwa al Qasabieh, Director of the Individual Performance System Management Office, in her speech said: "The meeting focuses on the job rotation initiative, which came under the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to facilitate the transfer and



mobility of employees in the government sector between government units and within the same unit. This initiative was assigned in the Ministry of Education to the Individual Performance System Management Office at the Directorate-General of Administrative Affairs, after which the work team for the initiative was formed."

Dr Fatima al Hammadi, Head of the Individual Performance Plans Management Department, hosted a visual presentation

of the job rotation initiative among government units.

The presentation introduced the importance of implementing the job rotation initiative; which included 4 tracks: the community by raising the quality of government services by preparing empowered leaders, discovering qualified competencies and raising institutional performance by exchanging competencies, the official by bringing

experiences, practices and knowledge from other parties, and the employee by empowering and raising the employee's competencies and providing them with additional capabilities, in addition to demonstrating skills and capabilities for innovation and creativity.

The presentation also included a definition of the job rotation goals for the unit and for the employee, in addition to the controls for implementing the job rotation initiative and its types.

## VIKING MARS CRUISE SHIP DOCKS AT SALALAH



**SALALAH:** Salalah Port on Tuesday received "Viking Mars" cruise ship with 1,332 passengers onboard including 881 tourists from various nationalities. The tourist programme of the cruise ships included tours to major archaeological and historic landmarks in the Governorate of Dhofar, besides visiting beaches and traditional markets in Salalah. – **ONA**

# Students win academic excellence award in Bahrain

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, NOV 8

Dr Majid bin Ali al Nuaimi, Minister of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain, presented the Academic Excellence Awards for General Education students of GCC countries.

Eighty-four students, including 12 from the Sultanate of Oman, won the awards.

The ceremony included a speech by the minister and another speech by the Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, and a number of presentations.

Raya bint Amer al Jabri, Assistant Director of the Department of Educational Activities, and the supervisor of the participating students, said: "The Academic Excellence Award of the Arab Education Bureau for



students of general education in its fifteenth session held in Bahrain focuses on students who demonstrate high abilities in academic achievement in various subjects in order to highlight that these abilities are refined and honoured to enhance continuous excellence. The Sultanate of Oman hosted the award in the fifth session in 2011, as well as the eleventh session in 2017. I would like to thank all the outstanding

students, their parents, and heads of educational activities departments in the governorates for their efforts."

The award aims to honour outstanding students, enhance their sense of the importance of science, show their country's interest in them, encourage them to continue the path of excellence and motivate the rest of the students to follow their example.



### Tender Announcement

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

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                                                             | Grade                                                                                                                                                        | Last date for<br>obtainment<br>of Tender<br>Document | Last date<br>for Tender<br>Submission | Tender<br>Document<br>Price<br>(non-<br>refundable) |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 232/2022   | Establishment<br>of a<br>hydrotherapy<br>unit at Al-Wafa<br>Center for the<br>Rehabilitation<br>of Persons with<br>Disabilities<br>in Ibri | Companies<br>specialized<br>in building<br>contracting and<br>registered with<br>the General<br>Secretariat<br>of the Tender<br>Board in the<br>First Degree | Friday<br>18-11-2022<br>02:00 PM                     | Monday<br>28-11-2022<br>10:00 AM      | R.O.<br>25/=                                        |

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Wednesday 9/11/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website ([reg@tenderboard.gov.om](mailto:reg@tenderboard.gov.om)) tel. **(24402200)**.

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

[www.mosd.gov.om](http://www.mosd.gov.om)



العمانية للاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية  
oman education & training investments

### Directors Report

On behalf of the Directors of Oman Education & Training Investment Co. S.A.O.G., it is my pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Company for the financial year ending August 31, 2022.

**First: The Orientations and lines of Action for the current stage:**

- 1- Oman Educational and Training Investment Company SAOG aspires through its vision to be among the best investment companies in the Sultanate of Oman.
- 2- The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation has approved the distribution of seats in the internal missions of private higher education institutions for the academic year 2022/2023. A total of 712 study missions were allocated to Solar University
- 3- The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation adopted the following programmes:  
a. Ph.D. in Engineering  
b. Ph.D. in Education
- 4- On 9/2022/6/ - Solar University celebrated the graduation of the nineteenth and twentieth cohorts of its students under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh / Sabun bin Hamdan Al-Saadi - Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for National Day Celebrations - at the Irfan Theater at the Anman Convention and Exhibition Center. The total number of graduates of the two regiments reached 3126 graduates.
- 5- On 26/6/2022, the University held an official operational opening ceremony of the "Solar Production" project and the inauguration of the manufacturing incubator under the patronage of His Excellency Qais bin Mohammed Al-Yousef - Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. It was established in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

**Second: Financial Statement:**

#### Consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at 31 August 2022

|                                      | Group             | Parent Company    | Group             | Parent Company    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                                      | 2022              | 2022              | 2021              | 2021              |
|                                      | RO                | RO                | RO                | RO                |
| <b>ASSETS</b>                        |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Non-current assets                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Property and equipment               | 31,256,604        | 127,469           | 32,447,024        | 1,314             |
| Right-of-use asset                   | 139,556           | -                 | 152,805           | -                 |
| Investment in subsidiaries           | -                 | 6,399,050         | -                 | 6,399,050         |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>      | <b>31,396,160</b> | <b>6,526,459</b>  | <b>32,599,829</b> | <b>6,400,364</b>  |
| Current assets                       |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Inventories                          | 33,316            | -                 | 18,682            | -                 |
| Due from subsidiaries                | -                 | 5,147,239         | -                 | 5,450,190         |
| Fee and other receivables            | 863,081           | 2,805             | 1,637,498         | 2,309             |
| Cash and bank balances               | 5,763,147         | 16,806            | 6,453,889         | 4,520             |
| <b>Total current assets</b>          | <b>6,659,544</b>  | <b>5,166,850</b>  | <b>8,112,069</b>  | <b>5,456,819</b>  |
| <b>Total assets</b>                  | <b>38,055,484</b> | <b>11,693,309</b> | <b>40,711,899</b> | <b>11,857,183</b> |
| <b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>        |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| <b>EQUITY</b>                        |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Share capital                        | 7,000,000         | 7,000,000         | 7,000,000         | 7,000,000         |
| Legal reserve                        | 4,132,420         | 2,051,736         | 3,829,355         | 1,890,786         |
| Property revaluation reserve         | 5,301,623         | -                 | 5,301,623         | -                 |
| Retained earnings                    | 2,391,589         | 2,254,596         | 2,434,233         | 2,533,048         |
| <b>Total equity</b>                  | <b>18,817,632</b> | <b>11,306,332</b> | <b>18,565,211</b> | <b>11,443,834</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Non-current liabilities              |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Deferred grant related to assets     | 14,811,983        | -                 | 14,484,325        | -                 |
| Deferred tax liability               | 1,241,875         | -                 | 1,177,904         | -                 |
| Lease liabilities                    | 134,322           | -                 | 144,570           | -                 |
| End-of-service benefits              | 1,138,963         | 30,712            | 1,118,985         | 27,203            |
| Students' deposits                   | 120,344           | -                 | 206,035           | -                 |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b> | <b>16,407,237</b> | <b>30,712</b>     | <b>17,133,819</b> | <b>27,203</b>     |
| Current liabilities                  |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| Deferred grant related to assets     | 472,332           | -                 | 472,332           | -                 |
| Lease liabilities                    | 10,780            | -                 | 9,889             | -                 |
| Due to subsidiaries                  | -                 | 164,691           | -                 | 32,193            |
| Trade and other payables             | 1,929,999         | 194,274           | 3,607,425         | 353,953           |
| Income tax payable                   | 657,964           | -                 | 925,193           | -                 |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>     | <b>3,070,615</b>  | <b>359,265</b>    | <b>5,014,839</b>  | <b>386,146</b>    |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>             | <b>19,737,852</b> | <b>389,977</b>    | <b>22,148,658</b> | <b>413,349</b>    |
| <b>Total equity and liabilities</b>  | <b>38,055,484</b> | <b>11,693,309</b> | <b>40,711,899</b> | <b>11,857,183</b> |
| <b>Net assets per share</b>          | <b>0.266</b>      | <b>0.383</b>      | <b>0.385</b>      | <b>0.163</b>      |

#### Consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 August 2022

|                                                               | Group               | Parent Company   | Group               | Parent Company   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
|                                                               | 2022                | 2022             | 2021                | 2021             |
|                                                               | RO                  | RO               | RO                  | RO               |
| <b>Income</b>                                                 |                     |                  |                     |                  |
| Tuition fees                                                  | 12,453,515          | -                | 14,134,039          | -                |
| Dividend income from subsidiaries                             | -                   | 2,110,000        | -                   | 2,933,000        |
| Other income                                                  | 608,367             | 10,332           | 115,046             | 700              |
| <b>Total income</b>                                           | <b>13,061,882</b>   | <b>2,120,332</b> | <b>14,249,085</b>   | <b>2,933,700</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                               |                     |                  |                     |                  |
| Salaries and other related staff costs                        | (8,452,736)         | (240,045)        | (8,563,907)         | (271,889)        |
| Administrative and other operating expenses                   | (1,995,704)         | (269,903)        | (1,665,290)         | (401,656)        |
| Depreciation on property and equipment                        | (1,084,349)         | (886)            | (1,160,531)         | (1,264)          |
| Impairment of property and equipment                          | (221,864)           | -                | (239,302)           | (24,366)         |
| Release of deferred grant related to assets                   | 472,332             | -                | 472,332             | -                |
| Amortisation of right-of-use asset                            | (13,269)            | -                | (13,269)            | -                |
| <b>Total expenses</b>                                         | <b>(11,295,590)</b> | <b>(510,834)</b> | <b>(11,169,967)</b> | <b>(699,175)</b> |
| <b>Profit for the year from operations</b>                    | <b>1,766,292</b>    | <b>1,609,498</b> | <b>3,079,118</b>    | <b>2,234,525</b> |
| Write back of liabilities no longer payable                   | 511,075             | -                | -                   | -                |
| Finance costs                                                 | (8,585)             | -                | (25,578)            | -                |
| Finance income                                                | 26,763              | -                | 23,395              | -                |
| <b>Profit before tax for the year</b>                         | <b>2,295,545</b>    | <b>1,609,498</b> | <b>3,076,935</b>    | <b>2,234,525</b> |
| Income tax                                                    | (493,124)           | -                | (618,970)           | -                |
| <b>Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year</b> | <b>1,802,421</b>    | <b>1,609,498</b> | <b>2,457,965</b>    | <b>2,234,525</b> |
| <b>Earnings per share</b>                                     | <b>0.026</b>        | <b>0.023</b>     | <b>0.035</b>        | <b>0.032</b>     |



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar during a joint press conference in Moscow on Tuesday. – AFP

## Russia and India consider joint weapons production

**MOSCOW:** Russia and India are considering joint production of modern defence equipment, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

He had spoken with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar about the prospects of military and technological cooperation, Lavrov said on Tuesday after a meeting with Jaishankar in Moscow, according to the state news agency Tass. What specific defence equipment might be discussed remained open. It was the fifth meeting of the two ministers this year.

Referring to aid to Ukraine, Lavrov accused Western countries of trying to consolidate a “dominant role in world affairs” and prevent “the democratisation of international relations” under the pretext of “Ukrainian events.” He therefore highly valued the position of Russia’s “Indian

friends” on Ukraine, Lavrov said.

India is neutral on Russia’s war on Ukraine because it has close relations with both the West and Russia. The country also does not support Western sanctions and promotes conflict resolution through dialogue. Most recently, India has been buying more relatively cheap oil from Russia.

New Delhi also relies heavily on Moscow for its military equipment and spare parts. According to Lavrov, Russia and India also want to cooperate more closely in the fields of nuclear energy and space travel.

Jaishankar stressed that his country wants to continue buying oil from Russia. “As the third largest consumer of oil and gas and a country with not very high incomes, we have to look for affordable sources, so the India-Russia relationship is to our advantage.” — dpa

## Global South needs \$2 trillion a year to cope with climate

**SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT:** Developing and emerging countries — excluding China — need investments well beyond \$2 trillion annually by 2030 if the world is to stop the global warming juggernaut and cope with its impacts, according to a UN-backed report released on Tuesday.

A trillion dollars should come from rich countries, investors and multilateral development banks, said the analysis commissioned by Britain and Egypt, hosts respectively of the 2021 UN climate summit in Glasgow and this week’s COP27 event in Sharm el-Sheikh.

The rest of the money — about \$1.4 trillion — must originate domestically from private and public sources, said the report. Current investments in emerging and developing economies other than China stand at about \$500 billion.

The new 100-page analysis, Finance for Climate Action, is presented as an investment blueprint for greening the global economy quickly enough to meet Paris climate treaty goals of capping the rise in global temperatures below two degrees Celsius, and at 1.5C if possible.

Warming beyond that threshold, scientists warn, could push Earth toward an unlivable hothouse state.

“Rich countries should recognise that it is in their vital self-interest — as well as a matter of justice given the severe impacts caused by their high levels of current and past emissions -- to invest in climate action in



A delegate poses for a picture at an exhibitions pavilion at the convention centre hosting the COP27 climate conference in Sharm el Sheikh on Tuesday. – AFP

emerging market and developing countries,” said one of the report’s leads, economist Nicholas Stern, who also authored a landmark report on the economics of climate change.

The report is among the first to map out the investment needed across the three broad areas covered in UN climate talks: reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions that drive warming (mitigation), adapting to future climate impacts (adaptation), and compensating poor and vulnerable nations for unavoidable damages already incurred, known as “loss and damage”.

It calls for grants and low-interest loans from the governments of developed countries to double from about \$30 billion annually today to \$60 billion by 2025.

“These sources of finance are critical for emerging markets and developing countries to support action on restoring land and nature, and for protecting against and responding to the loss and damage due to climate change impacts,” the authors said.

“Emerging market” countries include large economies in the global south that have seen rapid growth — coupled with rising

greenhouse gas emissions -- in recent decades, including India, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam. Historically seen as part of this group, China was excluded from the new estimates, presumably because of its unique and hybrid status.

Its economy — the second largest in the world — is in many respects advanced, and Beijing has positioned itself as a major international investor in its own right, through its Belt and Road Initiative and the promotion of “South-South” investment across the developing world.

— Agencies

## Palestinian NGOs call Israeli crackdown ‘like an execution’

**GENEVA:** Israel’s decision to outlaw several Palestinian rights groups as organisations was “like an execution” designed to stop them from probing abuses, the head of one of the bodies told UN investigators.

Israel’s designation last year of seven Palestinian civil society groups as “terrorist” bodies, followed by closure orders and raids on their offices, sparked widespread international outrage.

Those designations and their impact are now the subject of a series of rare public hearings, which opened on Monday and are hosted by a high-level team of UN investigators probing the

causes of the decades-long Middle East conflict. This type of public hearing has only happened twice previously, in 2009 also during an investigation involving Israel, and as part of a large probe into rights abuses in North Korea that concluded in 2014.

The hearings, which have been harshly criticised by Israel, will also address later this week the killing in May of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

“In these proceedings, we are not drawing any conclusions or making any judgements,” lead investigator Navi Pillay, a former UN rights chief from South Africa, told the gathering via video link.



A Palestinian man walks on a sidewalk of a flooded street due to heavy rain in Gaza City, on Tuesday. – AFP

The heads of three of the designated organisations took the floor on the first day, all saying Israel had justified the move with a “secret” file, and had provided no real evidence against them.

Shawan Jabarin, who runs legal-aid human rights group Al Haq, described a years-long campaign against his organisation, including efforts to convince backers to drop their support, as well as death threats against him and other colleagues.

The “terrorist” designation in October 2021 was a culmination of that, he said, describing it “like an execution” aimed at halting his organisation from examining a

vast array of rights abuses. But he insisted during the live-streamed event that “we will not stop.” “We will continue fighting against the culture and the policy of impunity,” Sahar Francis, director of prisoner advocacy group Addameer, meanwhile described “a systematic attack against the human rights defenders” in Israel.

She said the “terrorist” allegations against Addameer and the other organisations relied only on testimony from prisoners pressured to become informers or subjected to “torture,” with no insight into their operations.

“There is no justice in this whole process.” — AFP

### SHORT TAKES

#### COLOMBO

##### UN warns of worsening food crisis in Lanka

The United Nations on Tuesday warned of a worsening food crisis in bankrupt Sri Lanka and said the number of people needing urgent humanitarian help had doubled to 3.4 million. UN agencies had estimated in June that 1.7 million out of the 22 million population in Sri Lanka required help.

The UN agencies in Colombo in a joint statement said they had raised \$79 million to feed those in need, but the increasing number of poor people meant they needed an additional \$70



million. “Food insecurity in Sri Lanka has increased dramatically due to two consecutive seasons of poor harvests, foreign exchange shortages, and reduced household purchasing power,” the statement said.

#### BEIJING:

##### China for ‘rebuilding trust’ with Australia

China’s foreign minister called for the “rebuilding of mutual trust” in a phone conversation with his Australian counterpart on Tuesday, Beijing said, in a sign of easing tensions after years of difficult ties between the countries.

Australia and China maintained virtually no high-level communication during the Covid-19 pandemic, when Beijing slapped a trade embargo on billions of dollars worth of Australian goods in retaliation for Canberra urging an independent



probe into the origins of the virus.

China has previously demanded Australia address its grievances as a precondition to improving ties, with Beijing’s ambassador quoting foreign minister Wang Yi as saying “a reset requires concrete actions”.

#### TOKYO

##### Japan to tighten rules on religious donations

The Japanese government will propose a new law to prevent harmfully large donations to religious groups, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Tuesday, after Shinzo Abe’s assassination heightened scrutiny of the Unification Church. Kishida has been battling criticism over links between the sect and politicians since former premier Abe was shot dead in July.

The man accused of Abe’s murder reportedly resented the Unification Church over massive



donations his mother made that bankrupted the family.

Kishida said he had met people who had suffered because of large financial contributions to the church, which denies wrongdoing and has pledged to prevent “excessive” donations.



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## In brief

■ JAKARTA



### PUTIN UNLIKELY TO ATTEND G20 SUMMIT IN BALI: OFFICIAL

Russia's Vladimir Putin is unlikely to travel to Bali to attend the G20 summit next week, an aide to the Indonesian president said on Tuesday, potentially resolving a diplomatic dilemma for the summit hosts.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo had invited Putin to the summit scheduled for November 15-16 in Bali, but the Kremlin has so far not confirmed the Russian leader's plans. "There's a strong likelihood that President Putin will not come, but it doesn't mean Russia will not be present. It will be present but it may not be the president," said Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin.

■ SEOUL



### NORTH KOREA VOWS ACTION OVER US AND SOUTH KOREA DRILLS

North Korea's military has vowed to take "sustained, resolute and overwhelming" measures in response to the joint US-South Korean military air exercises. The Korean People's Army (KPA) general staff alleged the joint drills were "in fact, an open provocation aimed at intentionally escalating the tension in the region and are directly targeting" North Korea.

"The serious situation prevailing on the Korean peninsula due to the reckless military hysteria of the US and South Korea is now moving towards the more unstable confrontation," an English-language statement carried by state news agency read.

■ ROME



### 89 MIGRANTS BROUGHT TO SHORE IN ITALY

German sea rescue charity Mission Lifeline has been allowed to bring all 89 remaining migrants on board its ship, the Rise Above, ashore in southern Italy. Unlike with two other boats still at sea, this time the Italian authorities did not refuse permission to allow the rescued people to leave the ship.

They disembarked in the port of the city of Reggio Calabria, a spokesperson for the organisation said.

In the past few days, the vessel had taken on board a total of 95 people from boats in the Mediterranean, as the migrants tried to head from North Africa to Europe.

DONALD TRUMP SAYS MAKING 'VERY BIG ANNOUNCEMENT' ON NOVEMBER 15

# US votes with Biden agenda at stake

WASHINGTON: Polls opened on Tuesday in crucial US midterm elections that could decide the political future of both President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump -- who has all but announced he will seek the White House again in 2024.

Biden's Democrats are facing a gargantuan struggle to hang on to Congress, after a race the president has cast as a "defining" moment for US democracy -- while Trump's Republicans campaigned hard on kitchen-table issues like inflation and crime. Trump -- who has been heavily hinting at a new run -- grabbed the election eve spotlight to flag "a big announcement" on November 15, while Biden made a final appeal to Democrats to turn out en masse at the polls.

"The power's in your hands," Biden told a rally near the capital. "We know in our bones that our democracy is at risk and we know that this is your moment to defend it." With polls showing Republicans in line to seize the House of Representatives, the increasingly far-right party eyed snarling the rest of Biden's first term in aggressive investigations and opposition to spending plans.

Returning to the White House on Monday night, Biden told reporters he believed Democrats would win the Senate -- though conceding "it's going to be tough" to retain the House and that his life in Washington may become "more difficult." If both the House and Senate flip, Biden would be left as little more than a lame duck.

With Congress out of



Gubernatorial candidate Wes Moore poses for pictures with supporters during a rally with US President Joe Biden at Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland, on Monday. -- AFP

Democrats' hands, he would see his legislative agenda collapse.

That would raise questions over everything from climate crisis policies, which the president will be laying out at the COP27 conference in Egypt this week, to Ukraine, where Republicans are reluctant to maintain the current rate of US financial and military support. An influx of far-right Trump backers in Congress would also accelerate the shift that

has been taking place inside the Republican Party since the former real-estate tycoon stunned the world by defeating Hillary Clinton for the presidency in 2016.

Despite facing criminal probes over taking top secret documents from the White House and trying to overturn the 2020 election, Trump has been using the midterms to cement his status as the de facto Republican leader and presumptive presidential

nominee. In a typically dark, rambling speech to fans in Dayton, Ohio, Trump said, "if you support the decline and fall of America, then you must, you absolutely must vote for the radical left, crazy people."

"If you want to stop the destruction of our country, then tomorrow you must vote Republican in a giant red wave," he said -- before teasing his 2024 announcement.

Across the country voters called on their fellow citizens to cast their ballot in the midterms, which historically have low turnout. "I would emphasise vote, vote, vote," 24-year-old student Luke Osuagwu said in Atlanta, Georgia.

"If you're not voting, you can't really stand for society or anything like that," agreed Alethia McClenton, a 45-year-old Georgia Aquarium employee. -- AFP

## Europe sees warmest October on record: EU

PARIS: October temperatures in Europe were the warmest on record, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said on Tuesday, hitting nearly 2 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 reference period.

"The severe consequences of climate change are very visible today and we need ambitious climate action at COP27 to ensure emissions reduction to stabilise temperatures close to the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees," said C3S deputy director Samantha Burgess, referring to UN climate talks currently taking place in Sharm el Sheikh.

The climate monitor said a warm spell "brought record daily temperatures to western Europe, and a record-warm October for Austria, Switzerland and France". Large parts of Italy and Spain also saw records shattered last month.

"Canada experienced record warmth, and much warmer-than-average conditions also occurred in Greenland and Siberia," C3S said.

It noted that colder-than-average temperatures were seen in Australia, far eastern Russia, and in parts of west Antarctica. The news comes as world leaders gather for high-stakes climate talks in Egypt, facing calls to urgently slash emissions to avert further climate calamity.

UN chief Antonio Guterres

**The news comes as world leaders gather for high-stakes climate talks in Egypt, facing calls to urgently slash emissions to avert further climate calamity**

warned that nations must cooperate or face "collective suicide" in the fight against climate change.

"Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish," Guterres told the UN COP27 summit.

C3S also said in its release on Tuesday that October 2022 saw drier than average conditions over most of southern Europe and the Caucasus.

"It was also drier than average in most of central North America, over the Horn of Africa, in large parts of Russia, central Asia and China, and in regions of South America," it said.

Meanwhile, in parts of the Iberian Peninsula, regions of France and Germany, the UK and Ireland, northwest Scandinavia, a large region of Eastern Europe and central Turkey the weather was "wetter than average".

Outside Europe, wetter-than-average conditions were recorded in parts of North America, southern central Asia, and in Australia. -- AFP

## Norway princess gives up royal duties for alternative medicine

OSLO: Norway's Princess Martha Louise has relinquished her royal duties in order to focus on her alternative medicine business with her fiancé, a self-proclaimed shaman, the palace said on Tuesday.

The 51-year-old princess' relationship with Durek Verrett, a popular Hollywood spiritual guru, caused waves in Norway after the African-American "sixth-generation shaman" suggested in his book "Spirit Hacking" that cancer was a choice. He also sells a medallion on his website dubbed a "Spirit Optimizer", which he claims helped him overcome Covid-19.

A poll in September found 17 per cent of Norwegians now have a lower opinion of the generally popular royal family, nearly all citing the princess and the shaman as the reason.

"The princess... is relinquishing the role as royal patron... and will not be representing the royal house at the present time," the palace said in a statement.

However, "in accordance with the king's wishes, the princess will keep her title".

The palace said that once the princess and Verrett were wed, he would become a member of the royal family but would not have a title or represent the monarchy. Martha Louise, who claims



This file photo shows Princess Martha Louise of Norway (L) and her fiancé self-professed shaman Durek Verrett in Oslo. -- AFP

to be able to speak with angels, lost her honorific "Her Royal Highness" title in 2002 when she chose to work as a clairvoyant.

In 2019, the divorced mother-of-three agreed not to use her title as princess in her commercial endeavours.

The couple have now agreed to refrain from any association with the royal family in their social media channels, media productions and commercial activities.

"This is intended to draw a dividing line that more clearly separates commercial activity from the Royal House of Norway", the palace said.

It added that the royal family has "great confidence in the

Norwegian health service and the Norwegian health authorities", stressing the importance of "established medical knowledge and scientific research".

In the same statement, Martha Louise said she was "aware of the importance of research-based knowledge".

"I also believe, however, that there are components of a good life and sound physical and mental health that may not be so easy to sum up in a research report."

She said "spirituality, intimacy with other people and yoga and meditation" could be important supplements, as could "a warm hand, an acupuncture needle, a crystal". -- AFP

# Engaging students with learning challenges in school



Massrat Shaikh

The writer is an educational psychologist

Every classroom has neurodiverse students, and it is essential to engage them so that they are focused and ready to learn.

Neurodiversity can be seen in every classroom, and we need to incorporate the needs of neuro-diverse students into our pedagogy. Our neuro-diverse students are often great at hiding how overwhelmed they are in the classroom. Often, students will present their anxiety through fidgeting, talking to themselves, or engaging in off-task behaviour that soothes them or in a variety of other ways that are specific to them.

The following strategies can help make these students feel less anxious and help them stay engaged in class.

- 1. The First Five Minutes: Students need to feel at ease in class and being seen is the best way to start. It is always a great way to connect with students and learn about them as people. The first

five minutes spent walking around the classroom, talking to students, and asking about themselves help children feel connected.

- 2. Relaxation: Another great way to help our neurodivergent students in the classroom is to use calming meditation often throughout the day. Taking time to calm minds can help our most anxious students. The hustle from one class to the next and possible school challenges can cause any student, especially neurodivergent ones, to have difficulty getting into the right frame of mind for class. Many great apps and YouTube videos can walk the class through a 5-minute breathing exercise. Spending the first 5 minutes focused only on relaxing is lovely and works particularly well after lunch or physical education class.

- 3. Keep it Moving: Allowing students to move their bodies in class whenever possible is essential, especially for neurodivergent students. Students who find sitting challenging may wander the room, adjust their seats, or dig in their bags. Giving movement breaks in the classroom helps students to release their energy. If the student is physically settled, they can focus in class. Wobble chairs or exercise balls, and fidget toys can help as well.
- 4. Helping Students Organise: Neurodiverse students struggle with executive function, making organisation difficult. The best example would be a student cleaning their desk by jamming everything in their backpack or cleaning out their backpack by stuffing everything in their desk.

These messy places are not about students being messy but about their inability to organise. Making class organising time something for everyone is helpful. Cleaning desks, lockers, and bags together help students not feel singled out or overwhelmed by the task. Helping students organise engages them better in the classroom.

- 5. Words Matter: Students show greater interest in completing tasks after being exposed to the teacher's positive talk. Students' motivation, engagement, behavior during lessons and attitude towards the subject increased significantly, leading to better results. Research shows that teachers and students perceive positive teacher language as necessary, whereas negative talk is a source of students'

discouragement.

- 6. Rule of Three: Following the rule of three helps the students to learn what is expected of them. Telling the students about a task, writing it down on the board and then talking to them one-on-one is helpful in a classroom. This way, there have been three touch points in the class activity. The one-on-one touch point is always the most effective for neurodiverse students, but the first two are great for the students who do not need to have the one-on-one talk. Over time, all students learn the routine of where the information can be found to do the work in class.

Neurodivergent students need a little extra help, so they do not get lost in our classrooms. Establishing these patterns early can really help them be successful in school.

## Veteran French designer now looks to space

SANDRA BIFFOT-LACUT

Philippe Starck, the prolific French architect and designer who has made everything from lemon juicers to wind turbines, shows no sign of slowing down and is increasingly turning his eye to space.

Visiting an exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris featuring some his early work, the 73-year-old seemed bemused by the volume of items on display.

"I don't have the software for periods and dates," he told AFP when asked about the period.

"To me, the 1980s were like being abandoned in an Amazon jungle with nothing to eat, wild animals everywhere, a rusty machete... I just did what I could. And when you do what you can, you don't remember what's going on elsewhere."

Starck made his name as an interior decorator for Paris nightclubs in the 1970s, before landing a dream commission to refurbish the Elysee Palace apartments for president Francois Mitterrand in 1983. He went on to design luxurious hotels and restaurants around the world.

But he also gave the world an uber-electric range of everyday items, from his futuristic lemon juicer to electric bikes, toothbrushes, water bottles — and on to boats, wind turbines and control towers.

There was always a hint of humour and surrealism, he said, but also a desire to "democratise design" by keeping things affordable.

"We managed to remove two zeros from prices," he said. "At the time, in today's prices, sitting on something designer cost 20,000 euros, which wasn't right. Today, it's 700 euros, which isn't bad."

These days, Starck cares less about household objects and has his eyes on bigger things.

There is a long-awaited "laboratory for pure creativity" being built in Qatar, and immediately after the exhibition, he was due at the launch of a new hydrogen energy project.

But his real focus appears to be skyward: working with US company Axiom Space on the living quarters it plans to connect to the International Space Station, and teaming up with Nasa for a new astronaut training camp.

The focus on space is part of our "necessary change" as a species, he said. "Except when we're dead, we've been fixed by gravity, but that's clearly over, so I'm tackling it head-on."

Some early memories remain — being left with some old toys and his grandfather's workbench during the holidays as a young child: "I made my first items on that workbench and I haven't stopped since." — AFP



Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

# Russia's attempt to disrupt the grain deal

Of late, Russia has suddenly intensified its "grain diplomacy". In the last week of October, Moscow abruptly suspended its participation in the secure Black Sea grain corridor but rejoined after four days, easing fears of further disruptions to grain exports from key supplier Ukraine at a time of rampant global food inflation.

Apparently, the Russians temporarily suspended the deal on the pretext of a major Ukrainian drone attack on its naval fleet in annexed Crimea. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who played the key role in brokering this deal under the auspices of the United Nations in July, was again quite active in persuading Vladimir Putin to reverse the suspension of this grain deal to avert a global food crisis.

The Ukrainian drone attack on the Russia navy was a rather weak justification to block the Ukrainian exports to pass through the Black Sea. It was just a tenuous excuse on the part of the Russians to bully the Kyiv government. Apparently, three main reasons can be tagged to Putin's deliberate attempt to disrupt the grain deal at this time; one, the grain deal is supposed to be renewed on November 19, two, the forthcoming G20 summit in Bali on November 15, and three, Russia's desperation to force the West to ease restrictions on state agriculture lender Rosselkhozbank to facilitate Russian grain exports.

In fact, the Russians want to utilise both the events to put pressure on the West to win this concession that is likely to affect the next crop of wheat in Russia. While UN Chief Antonio Guterres is trying hard to convince Moscow to agree to extend the grain deal beyond its scheduled expiry on November 19, Putin is deliberately creating such snags with a clear intention to bargain on loosening up some of the sanctions on few selective types of transactions through the Russian banking system to facilitate the agriculture sector.

Though Putin has not yet publicly talked about its demands except the calls for the release of Russian fertiliser stuck in European ports and warehouses, and resume exports of



The Ukrainian drone attack on the Russia navy was a rather weak justification to block the Ukrainian exports to pass through the Black Sea. It was just a tenuous excuse on the part of the Russians to bully the Kyiv government.

PUTIN ASSUMES THAT THE WESTERN CAPITALS ARE NOW AT THE BRINK OF EXHAUSTION AFTER ALMOST EIGHT MONTHS SIMMERING ENERGY AND FOOD CRISIS AND HE CAN NOW MANIPULATE THE SITUATION TO HIS ADVANTAGE BY DEMANDING CONCESSIONS FOR HIS NEXT SEASON OF WHEAT AND GRAIN CROPS

ammonia, an important ingredient in fertiliser, through a Russia-Ukraine pipeline.

Russia has been asking the Western countries to allow state lender Rosselkhozbank to restore its relations with correspondent banks despite Western sanctions. This would facilitate the bank, which has not

had a major role in the international grain trade so far, to ensure smooth transactions of payments for Russian grain and other foodstuffs. Prior to the latest stringent sanctions, such payments were routinely channelled through international banks and subsidiaries of other Russian banks in Switzerland.

Putin is shrewdly trying to manoeuvre the renewal process of the grain deal by building up pressure on the Western capitals – before the start of the G20 summit – to eventually find some wedge to penetrate the stringent Western sanctions. Putin is playing his cards very carefully. He has very deceitfully used the energy card after the attack on Ukraine, which actually instigated one of the worst energy crisis in the post World War II era – and cost of living crisis – across the globe.

Putin assumes that the Western capitals are now at the brink of exhaustion after almost eight months simmering energy and food crisis and he can now manipulate the situation to his advantage by demanding concessions for his next season of wheat and grain crops. So, the G20 summit is going to have another round of intense diplomacy between Russia and its opponents, while Turkey is playing the role of a mediator.

# On the road to climate hell!

Climate change is real and is causing widespread disruption in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world. People and ecosystems least able to cope are the hardest hit! Extreme weather events like floods, storms, drought, heat waves and disruption of food systems are affecting health in a myriad of ways. It is also undermining livelihoods, equality and access to healthcare and social support structures.

Ironically, the people who are worst hit by the climate crisis are those who contribute least to its causes, and who are least able to protect themselves and their families against it. They are the people in low-income and disadvantaged countries and communities!

And the climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including women, children, ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations, and those with underlying health conditions.

In February last, a report by the United Nations warned that the increase in extreme weather patterns is surpassing the resilience of some human and natural systems. Again, in the beginning of this week, the agency warned that the world is heading towards a catastrophe as irreversible consequences have already been locked in due to global warming.

UN scientists estimate that global temperatures have now risen by 1.15C since pre-industrial times and said the latest eight years were on track to be the warmest on record.

The report also warns of the other wide-ranging impacts of climate change, including the acceleration of sea level rise, record glacier mass losses and record-breaking heat waves.

In this context is the ongoing Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC (COP 27) which is being held in Egypt to decide on actions that will shape how people and nature respond to increasing climate risks.

UN Secretary-General António



The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN IS CURRENTLY UPDATING CLIMATE AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS TO KEEP PACE WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Guterres said the planet is “on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator” and called for the creation of a “climate solidarity pact” between wealthier and developing countries to meet key climate goals.

As the heads of countries are meeting for the COP27 in Egypt after the Glasgow summit a year back with the participation of 120 world leaders, have they kept their climate promises?

Leave alone Glasgow, for almost three decades, leaders have met in different venues to discuss the problem of climate change and tried to work toward a solution to global warming. They have negotiated, signed treaties, reneged on those treaties and signed new ones!

No denying the fact that Glasgow COP26 did produce new building blocks to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement through actions that could get the world on a more sustainable, low-carbon pathway forward.

Ironically, even after one year, cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions are still far from where they need to be to preserve a livable climate, and support for the most vulnerable countries affected by the impacts of climate change is still falling far short.

Among the ambitious plans were the cuts to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) while reducing coal power use and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies which had never been explicitly mentioned in decisions of UN climate talks.

Even as countries were given a September deadline, only 22 countries out of 196 submitted the plans. At the same time, the UN report estimates that if all targets are met, global emissions will still increase by 10.6 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010.

Significantly, the Sultanate of Oman is among six countries in the Arab world to have achieved 60 per cent of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Oman is currently updating climate affairs management regulations to keep pace with local and international developments. It has pledged to reduce its emissions 7 per cent from business as usual by 2030.

## TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE



The blood moon is seen during a total lunar eclipse in Fish Creek, some 230 km southeast of Melbourne, Australia, on Tuesday. – AFP

# India’s predicted urban boom to put cities under severe strain

GLEND KWEK AND SIMON STURDEE

India is projected to see an explosion in its urban population in the coming decades, but its cities already cannot cope and climate change will make living conditions harsher still.

The metropolis of Mumbai, one of India’s biggest, grew by some eight million people in the past 30 years — the rough equivalent of the whole of New York City — to a population of 20 million, and is forecast to add another seven million by 2035. Like other Indian megacities, Mumbai’s housing, transport, water and waste management infrastructure has not kept pace, with around 40 per cent of people living in slums.

These crowded collections of ramshackle buildings, side by side with some of India’s richest neighbourhoods, often have no regular water, power supply or proper sanitation. As the world’s population approaches eight billion, most of them in the developing world, it is a situation replicated globally.

Those living on the outskirts of Mumbai commute for hours to work, with many hanging out of doors on packed trains, and others travelling by car or motorbike on clogged, pothole-

METROPOLIS LIKE MUMBAI, ONE OF INDIA’S BIGGEST, GREW BY SOME EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE IN THE PAST 30 YEARS

filled roads that flood during the monsoon. In the biggest slum, Dharavi of “Slumdog Millionaire” fame, where a million people live, Mohammed Sartaj Khan arrived from rural Uttar Pradesh as a teenager and works in a tannery.

“My childhood was wonderful in the village. It has a peaceful environment unlike the crowd here,” Khan, now 35, said in Dharavi’s warren of lanes. “When I came here, I saw people running like ants,” he said. “The way ants keep walking in their lanes despite the crowd... Nobody cares about others.”

But in his village, he added, “people don’t have money.”

At first, he earned Rs 6,000 (\$70) a month in Mumbai but now operates a machine and makes four times that, most of which he sends back to his wife and children — whom he can seldom afford to visit.

The UN projects that India’s population will rise from its current 1.4 billion to overtake China’s and peak at 1.7 billion in the 2060s, before dropping back to 1.5 billion by the start of the next century.

By 2040, 270 million more people will live in Indian cities,

according to the International Energy Agency, driving carbon emissions higher from power generation and transport, and from the production of steel and concrete to house them. Overcrowding, shoddy infrastructure and severe air, water and noise pollution are part of everyday life in India’s megacities.

About 70 per cent of the billions of litres of sewage produced in urban centres everyday goes untreated, a government report said last year.



People walk through a crowded commercial street in Chennai. India is projected to see an explosion in its urban population in the coming decades. – AFP

Every winter, the capital New Delhi, home to 20 million people, is cloaked in toxic air pollution that, according to one Lancet study, caused almost 17,500 premature deaths in 2019.

Millions of people in Indian cities have no regular running water and rely on deliveries by truck or train.

People in Delhi and elsewhere are digging ever-deeper wells as groundwater levels sink.

Chennai ran out of water in the summer of 2019, a crisis blamed on both insufficient rains

and urban sprawl onto former wetlands. At the same time, urban flooding is increasingly frequent.

The tech hub of Bengaluru has some of India’s worst traffic congestion and saw inundations in September blamed on unauthorised construction.

Natural catastrophes are forecast to cause more and more misery for India’s cities as the planet’s climate warms and makes weather more volatile. Scientists believe the annual monsoon rainy season is becoming more erratic and more powerful, causing more flooding and also more droughts.

Rising temperatures are making Indian summers ever more scorching, particularly in urban areas full of concrete trapping the heat. This year, India saw its hottest March on record.

And while Covid-19 did not affect India’s slums as badly as some had feared, overcrowding puts them at risk in future epidemics. Poonam Muttreja from the Population Foundation of India said more investment in the rural economy could stem migration to cities, while new incentives could encourage people to move to smaller urban centres. — AFP

# sport

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Champions League’s ambassador Turkish former footballer Hamit Altintop (C), flanked by Uefa Head of Club Competition Tobias Hedstuck (R) and Uefa Deputy General Secretary Giorgio Marchetti, during the draw for the round of 16 of the 2022-2023 Uefa Champions League tournament in Nyon. – AFP

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2022-2023                               |     |                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| Last 16                                                  |     |                       |
| MATCHES 1 <sup>st</sup> LEG: FEBRUARY 14-15, 21-22, 2023 |     |                       |
| MATCHES 2 <sup>nd</sup> LEG: MARCH 7-8, 14-15, 2023      |     |                       |
| RB Leipzig (GER)                                         | - - | Manchester City (ENG) |
| Club Brugge (BEL)                                        | - - | Benfica (POR)         |
| Liverpool (ENG)                                          | - - | Real Madrid (ESP)     |
| AC Milan (ITA)                                           | - - | Tottenham (ENG)       |
| Frankfurt (GER)                                          | - - | Napoli (ITA)          |
| Borussia Dortmund (GER)                                  | - - | Chelsea (ENG)         |
| Inter Milan (ITA)                                        | - - | Porto (POR)           |
| Paris SG (FRA)                                           | - - | Bayern Munich (GER)   |
| Source: UEFA                                             |     |                       |

## LIVERPOOL HANDED REAL REMATCH

### PSG CLASH WITH BAYERN MUNICH IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE LAST 16

**PARIS:** Liverpool will have the chance to avenge last season’s Champions League final defeat at the hands of Real Madrid after Jurgen Klopp’s side were drawn on Monday to face the holders again in the last 16.

Meanwhile, the other standout tie saw Paris Saint-Germain drawn to play Bayern Munich in a repeat of the 2020 final which was won by the German club.

Liverpool won five of their six group games but missed out on top spot to Napoli after losing 4-1 when the sides met in Italy.

The Anfield club also lost the 2018 Champions League final to Real, who won their group ahead of RB Leipzig. “The first thing that we can say about this draw is it is

proper Champions League. This is a tie that speaks for itself and one that we should all be excited about,” Klopp told Liverpoolfc.com.

The first leg will be at Anfield on February 21, with the return at the Santiago Bernabeu on March 15.

“They are two historic teams and the tie is going to be electric, fascinating for the fans,” said Emilio Butragueno, a great former Real player who is now the director of institutional relations for the 14-time European champions.

Current domestic form suggests Real should be favourites, with Carlo Ancelotti’s side unbeaten in La Liga while Liverpool are eighth in the Premier League despite winning away to Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday.

However, both clubs will lose key players to the World Cup and Butragueno acknowledged much can change in the three months before the Champions League returns. “The World Cup is going to condition the whole season. We will see how the players are when they return,” he said.

PSG only missed out on topping their group because Benfica scored more away goals across all matches after the sides remarkably finished level on points, goal difference, goals scored and head to head.

**CHELSEA TO PLAY DORTMUND**

That left the Qatar-owned club exposed to a tough draw, a year on from their painful exit in the first

knockout round at the hands of Real.

In terms of form they could not have got tougher than Bayern, who were the only side to win all six group matches, despite being in a section with Barcelona and Inter Milan.

The 2020 final was played behind closed doors in Lisbon at the height of the pandemic, with Bayern triumphing 1-0. PSG gained revenge the following season by beating the Bavarians in the quarterfinals.

Like PSG, Manchester City have never won the trophy but are also one of the leading contenders to do so this season.

Pep Guardiola’s side will be expected to dispose of Leipzig, who

they faced in the group stage a year ago and beat 6-3 at home before a 2-1 defeat in Germany, by which time they had already secured first place in the section.

Chelsea, who defeated City in the 2021 Champions League final, also drew German opposition in the shape of Borussia Dortmund, with the clubs set to meet for the very first time in a competitive game in the first leg at the Signal Iduna Park on February 15.

After topping their group thanks to a last-gasp winner away to Marseille last week, Tottenham Hotspur were given a tough draw against Italian champions AC Milan. They have met at this stage of the competition before, with Spurs winning 1-0 on aggregate in

2010/11 thanks to a solitary goal at San Siro by Peter Crouch.

Inter will play Porto and last season’s Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt take on Napoli, while Benfica’s reward for winning their group is a tie against tournament outsiders Club Brugge of Belgium.

The first legs of all last-16 ties will be played between February 14 and 22, with the return matches all in March.

The final of this season’s Champions League will be held in Istanbul on June 10 next year. The Turkish city was supposed to host the final in 2020 and again in 2021, only for the game to be moved on each occasion to Portugal due to the pandemic. — AFP

## Alves in, Firmino misses out as Tite names squad

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Liverpool’s Roberto Firmino was left off the list on Monday as Brazil coach Tite named his World Cup squad, seeking a sixth title with a team led by Neymar and 39-year-old veteran Dani Alves.

Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain veteran Alves, who signed with Mexican side Pumas in July, made the team despite the fact he has not played a match in two months.

The oldest player ever named to a Brazilian World Cup squad, he will be participating in his third edition of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Firmino, who has returned to form for Liverpool this season, nevertheless failed to make the cut for Qatar, losing out to forwards such as Arsenal’s Gabriel Jesus, Flamengo playmaker Pedro and Tottenham’s Richarlison, just back from injury.

But there were few surprises on Tite’s list.

The ‘Selecao’ will be led by Neymar, looking to end the five-time champions’ 20-year World Cup title drought.

The 30-year-old striker has been having a stellar season at PSG with 15 goals and 12 assists in 19 matches.

Playing in his third World Cup, he will be looking to show up critics who accuse him of diving and failing to deliver when it counts.

He will be joined up front by the likes of Vinicius Junior of Real Madrid and

| BRAZIL SQUAD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>GOALKEEPERS:</b> Alisson (Liverpool/ENG), Ederson (Manchester City/ENG), Weverton (Palmeiras)                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>DEFENDERS:</b> Dani Alves (Pumas/MEX), Danilo (Juventus/ITA), Alex Sandro (Juventus/ITA), Alex Telles (Sevilla/ESP), Bremer (Juventus/ITA), Marquinhos (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA), Thiago Silva (Chelsea/ENG), Eder Militao (Real Madrid/ESP)                                         |
| <b>MIDFIELDERS:</b> Casemiro (Manchester United/ENG), Fabinho (Liverpool/ENG), Fred (Manchester United/ENG), Everton Ribeiro (Flamengo), Bruno Guimaraes (Newcastle/ENG), Lucas Paqueta (West Ham/ENG)                                                                                  |
| <b>FORWARDS:</b> Neymar (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA), Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid/ESP), Richarlison (Tottenham/ENG), Raphinha (Barcelona/ESP), Rodrygo (Real Madrid/ESP), Antony (Manchester United/ENG), Gabriel Jesus (Arsenal/ENG), Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal/ENG), Pedro (Flamengo) |

Arsenal’s Jesus, giving the tournament favorites serious firepower.

Brazil had an undefeated World Cup qualifying campaign to finish first from South America, conceding just five goals in 17 matches.

They will train for five days next week in Turin, Italy before heading to Qatar, where they play their Group G opener against Serbia on November 24. — AFP



Brazil’s Roberto Firmino (L) during the 2022 Fifa World Cup South American qualifier against Peru in Lima on October 13, 2020, and Brazil’s Gabriel Barbosa during another qualifier against Venezuela in Caracas on October 7, 2021. Both players have missed out on the squad for the Qatar World Cup.



## Shonal second in Bahrain Rotax karting race

**MUSCAT:** It was a start that the young Muscat-based go-karting racer Shonal Kunimal wished as he climbed the podium in the opening race as the 2022-2023 Bahrain Rotax Max Challenge (BRMC) began at the Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC), the world-class grassroots motorsport facility of Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

The 11-year-old Indian School Ghubra student came second in the Mini Max category in the first round on the weekend.

Amid plenty of closely fought racing at Bahrain's premier national karting championship, Shonal's performance stood out as he missed the podium by a narrow margin.

The Mini Max class featured six drivers - Nasser Nass, Shaikh Ahmed bin Saqr al Khalifa, Isa Almoayed, Yousif Alghaith, Ali Almoayed and Shonal Kunimal.

Shonal was second in qualifying and was involved in a close contest with Nasser, with the lead being exchanged in the 12-lap sprint. Nasser, however, edged past Shonal a couple of corners before the chequered flag and went on to win the race on 1.414 km circuit in a time of 8 minutes 55.963 seconds. Shonal had to settle for second, finishing 0.153 seconds behind, while Shaikh Ahmed completed the podium in third 0.230s back.

The BRMC will feature eight rounds in its 2022-2023 season.



## PAKISTAN LOOK FOR 'SOMETHING SPECIAL' AGAINST SOLID NZ

**SYDNEY:** Pakistan's best is yet to come and struggling skipper Babar Azam is due "something very special" in their Twenty20 World Cup semifinal against New Zealand on Wednesday, team mentor Matthew Hayden warned.

The 2009 champions only scraped into the knockouts when the Netherlands unexpectedly defeated South Africa and Pakistan then beat Bangladesh to secure their second successive last-four berth.

Former Australia opener Hayden, who was batting coach for Pakistan at the last World Cup and appointed team mentor for this edition, said they planned to make the most of their second chance. "When the Netherlands beat South Africa it was a significant moment for us, a very significant moment for the team in general around reaching its potential," he said on the eve of the semifinal in Sydney.

"Lots of prayers as Pakistan woke up to see that result, 232 million people can't be wrong,

and as a result of that I feel there has been very much an uplift in tempo in our group.

"It has been a roller-coaster... but I really believe we have yet to play our best game, which is a huge threat to oppositions."

While Pakistan's bowling, led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, has been improving, their batting has been fragile, a concern against a top-class New Zealand attack led by Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson.

Azam's form in particular remains a worry with the opener managing just 39 runs in five matches.

Hayden, himself a destructive opener who played 103 Tests and 161 ODIs, said the skipper was due some "fireworks" — and predicted they could come on Wednesday.

"There's no question Babar has been under some adversity but that will only make him an even greater player," he said.

"We know with the weather that when there's a lull, there's

often a storm that follows, so look out rest of the world because I think we're about to see something very special from Babar."

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson played down any significance in his team making 200-3 on the Sydney wicket, noting that they only managed 167-7 against Sri Lanka when they returned to the ground later in the tournament.

"The first game we played here the wicket was a very good one and then the second time it had changed," he said. "We'll just be looking to focus on our cricket really and the plans that we are looking to execute and make sure we adjust to the conditions and try and play smart."

Williamson said the results counted for little when it came to the knockouts. "Finals sport can go any way," he said. "Both teams match up pretty well, there's some similar trends, we've both been playing some good cricket. "They've got an outstanding pace attack," he added. — AFP



(From left) Kashyap P, Munis Ansari and Ganesh N of Muscat CT.

## Muscat CT, Yalla Shabab clinch fine wins

**MUSCAT:** Muscat CT beat Oman Stallions by 9 wickets and Yalla Shabab beat AER Bin Ali by 3 wickets in the Premier Division of Oman Cricket's Season 2022-23 powered by Muscat Pharmacy.

Electing to bowl first, Muscat CT were in the exploit of the fresh wicket. Ganesh Narsumiyya and Munis Ansari wrecked havoc in the Oman Stallions dugout as they claimed 5 wickets (3 for Ganesh and 2 for Munis) in the first 6 overs of the powerplay for 11 runs.

Yaser Ali's 23 and Jiten R's 25 helped the stallions jot a few runs before Samay Shrivastav picked 2 wickets to end the Stallions innings at 85 in all.

Muscat CT started with all blitz from Kashyap Prajapati (39 off 39) and Jatinder Singh (26 off 32) with Shoaib Khan lighting up the finish with his 19 off 13 balls.

In the second match, Yalla Shabab elected to bowl first. AER lost their two wickets early on in the powerplay. A stable 43 off 57 balls from Usama Aqeel and a

quick 46 off 53 balls from Sean Nowak along with the rest batters getting to double digits but not making an impact guided AER's total to 216.

Mohammad Rafi and Mohammad Zahid's 3 wickets each and Kaleemullah's 2 wickets restricted AER with the total seeming to be an easy chase for the Shabab.

Yalla Shabab got off to a sturdy start but was well settled by Mujibur Ali's 51 off 83 balls and a match winning 78 off 125 balls by Mohammed Nadeem with Mohammed Naseem adding to finish the game for Yalla Shabab.

### BRIEF SCORES

Oman Stallions 85 all out in 32.3 overs (Yaser Ali 23 (24) 4x5; Ganesh N 3-26, Munis A 2-10, Samay S 2-15) lost to Muscat CT 89-1 in 13.5 overs (Kashyap P 39 (39) 3x4, 1x6, Jatinder Singh 26 (32)) by 9 wickets. AER Bin Ali 216 all out in 48.1 overs (Sean Nowak 46 (53b) 5x4, 1x6, Usama Aqeel 43 (57) 6x4; Mohd Rafi 3-18, Mohd Zahid 3-31) lost to Yalla Shabab 217-7 in 49.4 overs (Mohd Nadeem 78 (125b) 5x4, Mujibur Ali 51 (83) 5x4; Asim Kamal 2-27) by 3 wickets.



The Yalla Shabab players.

## Bank Muscat opens green fields in Qurayat, Yanqul

**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat continues to hand over Green Sports fields across the Sultanate of Oman in line with its commitment to social responsibility, community development and the youth. The bank recently inaugurated the new Green Sports field for Al Shabab Sports Team in the Wilayat of Yanqul at an event held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said and in the presence of Taya bin Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, Bank Muscat and

Ahmed bin Suleim al Alawi, Head of Al Shabab Sports Team.

The bank also inaugurated another new Green Sports field for the Al Hajir Sports Team in Qurayat at an event held under auspices of Dr Juma bin Ali al Juma, Honorary President of Qurayat Sports Club and attended by Faisal al

Maashani, Regional Manager - Capital East, Bank Muscat, Abdullah bin Salim al Wahaibi, Head of Al Hajir Sports Team.

On the occasion of the

inauguration of the Al Shabab Sport Team's Green Sports field, Taya bin Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, Bank Muscat, congratulated the team and expressed his appreciation for completing their project on time. He added that the bank's landmark CSR programme, Green Sports, was continuing to achieve great success in creating sustainable green spaces across the Sultanate of Oman.

Taya Bait Sabeea added that the new facility would help the

Al Shabab team develop the skills of its team members as well as other sports and cultural entities affiliated to it. He called on everyone in the community to make the best use of the new facilities, adding that it would greatly add to social bonding and cohesion within the community.

Speaking during the inauguration of the Al Hajir Sports Team's new field in Qurayat, Faisal al Maashani, Regional Manager — Capital East, Bank Muscat, said that the

new facility would greatly help the team improve its capabilities and talent. He added that new Green Sports fields are being used by local communities also for a number of social activities. He also pointed out how these new facilities are helping improve community bonding and the harnessing of the talents of Omani youth across the country. Faisal al Maashani hoped that the team would contribute talent at the national level so as to enhance the sporting talent and prowess

of Omani sportspersons.

Bank Muscat's Green Sports programme is one of the leading CSR programmes in Oman, which provides support to local sports teams as part of the bank's efforts to develop sports infrastructure and green spaces throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

The Green Sports programme has so far benefitted 163 teams with over 50,000 team members across Oman. The bank recently also announced the 20 winners of the programme for 2022.



Green Sports field for Al Shabab Team in Yanqul.



Green Sports field for Al Hajir Team in Qurayat.



FIFA WORLD CUP  
Qatar 2022



DAYS TO GO



NOVEMBER 20 - DECEMBER 18



NEYMAR

BRAZIL  
FORWARD

AGE: 30

HEIGHT: 1.75 M

CLUB:  
PARIS SG

INTERNATIONAL  
DEBUT: 2010

CAPS  
121

GOALS  
75

Titles with Brazil  
Confederations Cup (2013)  
Olympic Games (2016)

# NEYMAR READY TO CARRY NATION’S WEIGHT

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Fuelled by past disappointments at the World Cup, Neymar has been preparing for a long time to make sure he is in peak condition to lead Brazil into this year’s tournament in Qatar.

Now aged 30, the world’s most expensive player has often struggled to live up to expectations and been hampered by injuries since joining Paris Saint-Germain from Barcelona in 2017 for a record 222 million euros. It is not so long ago that Neymar let slip that Qatar could be his last World Cup as he struggled with the demands of playing football at the highest level.

But his form and his attitude in the first three months of this season bode well going into Brazil’s bid to win a record sixth World Cup crown.

After reporting for pre-season training a week earlier than expected, Neymar hit the ground running when the French campaign kicked off and he has scored 15 goals in 19 games so far for PSG, while also providing a hatfull of assists for the likes of Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe.

“He is flying. It is the fruit of all the preparation he has put in,” said national team coach Tite recently of Brazil’s superstar forward.

**READY TO EQUAL PELE?**  
Close-season talk that PSG were

keen to cut their losses and sell Neymar has faded, and he heads to Qatar needing just two goals to draw level with Pele on 77 as Brazil’s all-time top goal-scorer.

Eight of Neymar’s 75 goals for his country came during Brazil’s outstanding World Cup qualifying campaign, as they went unbeaten through 17 games to finish top of the single South American qualifying group.

He set up another eight goals and developed promising relationships with fellow attackers like Richarlison and Lucas Paqueta.

“With Neymar in good form, we have a great chance of winning the World Cup, because he is a player who really can make the difference on the field,” Brazil

great Cafu said.

Neymar may be fuelled by the desire to finally win a Ballon d’Or, but above all he will be determined to banish the memory of his previous World Cups.

Brazil’s 2014 campaign ended in a disastrous 7-1 humiliation at home to Germany in the semifinals.

Yet that only came after Neymar — carrying the weight of a nation on his shoulders — suffered a fractured bone in his back in a challenge by Juan Camilo Zuniga in their last-eight defeat of Colombia.

Four years later Neymar scored in wins over Costa Rica and Mexico but Tite’s team underwhelmed as they went out in the quarterfinals to Belgium.

**OFF-FIELD CONTROVERSY**  
Neymar’s international disappointment also extended to the 2019 Copa America, which Brazil won without him as he recovered from an ankle ligament injury.

He was back as Brazil hosted last year’s Copa, but could not prevent them losing the final to Argentina at the Maracana.

So far success with his country has been limited to the 2013 Confederations Cup and an Olympic gold at the Rio Games in 2016.

“I hope he is in inspired form so that Brazil have a greater chance of reaching the final,” Careca, who played for the Selecao at the 1986 and 1990 World Cups, said.

Yet Neymar’s fine form on the pitch comes as he continues to make headlines off the field.

Prosecutors in Spain recently dropped corruption and fraud charges against Neymar and several others accused in a trial over his 2013 move from Santos to Barcelona.

Meanwhile, he also came in for criticism after coming out in support of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro in the Brazilian presidential election campaign.

Nevertheless, the mercurial player is focused on his World Cup goal.

“I have a dream of winning it,” Neymar said in a recent interview with PSG’s website. — AFP



**Brazil**

1<sup>st</sup> FIFA ranking

22<sup>nd</sup> World Cup



Sources: FIFA, UEFA, federation

"Selecao"

COACH  
Tite  
Since 2016

BEST PERFORMANCE  
5-time winner  
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2022

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# business

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## Oman Investment Authority, Saudi ACWA Power ink MoU to explore investment in Suez wind project

**SHARM EL SHEIKH:** Oman Investment Authority (OIA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ACWA Power of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), to explore the feasibility of investment of up to 10 per cent in the development, construction, and operation of the 1.1GW Suez Wind Energy project.

This investment is in line with the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment and pioneering role in reducing CO2 emissions and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change and in cooperation and partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt. This project is valued at \$1.5 billion.

The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

The signing ceremony was attended by Eng Salim al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Head of the Omani delegation to the conference, Shaikh Khalifa al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, Naif al Abri, Chairman



of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, Abdullah al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Egypt, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab League, and Humaid al Maani, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, in addition to chief executives of OIA Companies operating in the field of energy.

Mulham Basheer al Jarf, Acting

Deputy President for Investment at Oman Investment Authority, said that OIA signed the MoU in line with Oman’s efforts to enhance joint investments with Arab nations like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt in renewable energy projects, particularly wind power.

Those projects, Al Jarf added, aim to reach the national goal of net zero emissions in all development sectors by 2050, simultaneously with Oman’s ambitious plans

for energy transformation and decarbonisation and major green hydrogen and renewable energy projects.

He pointed out that OIA prioritises the clean energy sector in its investment activities and its sustainability plan for the renewable energy sector.

This is achievable through OIA’s companies operating in the energy field or through partnerships with regional and international investors such as Hassan Allam Holding and ACWA Power of the

THE PLANT IS EXPECTED TO OPERATE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY AND WILL GENERATE ENOUGH POWER FOR APPROXIMATELY 1,080,000 RESIDENTIAL UNITS AND REDUCE ABOUT 2.4 MILLION TONNES OF CARBON EMISSIONS ANNUALLY.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mohammad Abunayyan, Chairman of ACWA Power, said that Suez Wind Energy was already a remarkable project because of its ambition and scale. Bringing together investors from within the Arab world for this regional project proves that the will for implementation, which is the key mission of COP 27, is strong.

He added that the signing of this important MoU demonstrates the confidence of investors in ACWA Power’s expertise and capability to deliver mega-scale projects. He said “As we continue to build upon our renewables portfolio in Egypt, we value our continued partnership

with Oman Investment Authority and Hassan Allam Holding and believe their collaboration and contribution to this significant wind energy project will strongly enable the energy diversification goals of the nation.”

The Suez Wind Farm project, which is expected to start operations in 2026, is located close to Ras Ghareb City in the Gulf of Suez region near Jabal Al Zait in Egypt. Power will be generated using turbines of up to 220 meters in addition to several latest advanced technologies.

The plant is expected to operate at the highest level of efficiency and will generate enough power for approximately 1,080,000 residential units and reduce about 2.4 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually.

It should be noted that OIA, represented by its subsidiary OQ Group, signed a joint development agreement for the Oman Hydrogen Project with Saudi Company ACWA Power last May to establish an ammonia production plant using green hydrogen and renewable energy sources in the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA



## Oman, Saudi sign pact on energy cooperation

**SHARM EL SHEIKH:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, signed with the Kingdom Saudi Arabia, represented by the Ministry of Energy, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of energy.

The signing took place on the sidelines of Oman’s participation in the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for 2022 (COP27)—hosted by Egypt and lasting from 6 to 18 November.

Eng Salem bin Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals,

signed on behalf of Oman, while the Saudi side was represented by Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud, Minister of Energy. The MoU aims to establish a framework for cooperation between the two parties in the field of energy. It encourages cooperation in various areas of energy such as oil, gas, renewable energy, electricity, energy efficiency and petrochemicals.

It also encourages cooperation in the fields of the circular carbon economy and its technologies to reduce the effects of climate change. This includes carbon capture, reuse, transport and storage.

TURN TO PAGE 14

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, NOV 8

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has announced the formal launch of a landmark drive to inventory all state-owned assets in a bid to unlock further socioeconomic value from these diverse and sizable holdings.

The initiative, dubbed the National Assets Register, will encompass the broad spectrum of government-owned holdings and resources of potential value – monetary or intrinsic. The list will include everything from transport infrastructure and buildings to hydrocarbon resources, historical monuments and even intangible assets such as Intellectual Property.

“It is an integrated central system that takes full account of government assets and helps to draft a strategy to ensure a centralised management of the assets, as well as to maximise their efficiency and returns,” said the Ministry of Finance.

“This can be achieved through the optimal use of such assets in a way that generate more financial resources for the State Budget,”



it further stated in its latest news bulletin on

Oman’s fiscal performance. According to experts, the initiative will help boost Oman’s international credentials as a modernising economy with institutional mechanisms that, among other things, help with the prudent management of its national resources for the ultimate good of its people.

Part of the goal, according to the Ministry, is to catalogue all state-owned assets – financial and non-financial – and ascertain their actual value. Additionally, the effort would help in the

identification of government assets for privatisation or development via the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) route, the Ministry stated.

In addition to state-owned financial assets, the register will also cover the country’s Oil & Gas resources, as well as hydrocarbon assets transferred to the government under Energy Production Sharing Agreements.

Notable additions to the register also include government land, existing buildings and those under construction, construction machines and equipment, furniture and office equipment, state-owned IT and

communications systems, and transport assets.

Heritage assets, of which Oman has a prodigious supply, will be inventoried as well. So will intangible assets, such as patents, software, brands and IP rights.

Importantly, the National Assets Register will strengthen “transparency and accountability” in the overall stewardship of state assets, the Ministry said. Furthermore, it will improve decision-making that enhances the efficiency of public service delivery.

The scope of the database will also include projects implemented under the PPP model, and government-owned assets operated by entities that form part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman.

The inventory process will be phased, starting with the assets of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Muscat Municipality. In the next phase of its rollout, an online portal of the National Assets Register will be launched, the Ministry added.

## Takaful Oman Insurance moves to new head office



**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate's only indigenous Islamic insurer, Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG has stayed committed to continuously enhancing its operational efficiency to further enrich customer experience.

In line with the same, the company recently announced that it has moved to its new head office in Taminat Complex, Bausher. The new office was inaugurated by Abdullah bin Salem al Salmi, Executive President of Capital Market Authority, in the presence of Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, Vice-President of the Insurance, sector as well as other senior members of the Capital Market Authority.

The inauguration also witnessed the attendance of the company's Board of Directors, Sharia Supervisory Committee members, key clients, and other distinguished guests.

At the inauguration, Mohammed al Khonji, Chairman of Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG, said that the company's core focus is to broaden its existing customer base and grow its market share and profitability by introducing new products and services across both its retail and corporate segments.

The inauguration of the new office is in tandem with this vision as it provides a central hub of operations and is an embodiment of the company's identity, ethos,

and values.

After expressing his gratitude to the Capital Market Authority for their continued support, Neelmani Bhardwaj, Chief Executive Officer (acting) at Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG, said, "It gives me immense pride to say that we are a company that places a keen emphasis on professional growth and employee empowerment while fostering a strong corporate culture."

"We are aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and its focus on developing the skills and capabilities of local talents. Our fully equipped office will complement our well-conceptualised talent management policies and help us to further contribute to nurturing a skilled workforce."

The new office, which is on the 6th floor, is aesthetically designed with an open plan. With an ample number of meeting rooms, it aims to promote a collaborative and conducive work environment while increasing interaction between departments.

In addition, with a 20-seater training room, it aims to introduce continuous learning and training programmes for its staff and local distribution partners in Oman. The company already conducted its first training session in the new office on the day of the inauguration.

## Oil production to commence shortly from Al Jumd field in Block 56

JOMAR MENDOZA  
@JmObserver

Tethys Oil, a Swedish oil company which has interests in the Sultanate of Oman's Blocks 3 and 4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58, announces that oil production is expected to commence in the coming weeks from Al Jumd field in Block 56.

The company said that preparations for the extended well test of the Al Jumd discovery on Block 56 is already in its final phase. All field works have been completed, the wells are hooked up to the production system and production is expected to commence in the coming weeks following final acceptance tests and certification.

Three wells have been completed on the Al Jumd structure all recording initial flows of oil of up to 700 barrels per day. Preparations for the extended well test are well underway, the tanks are filled with oil and infrastructure such as flowlines and pumps are in place.

"At the time of writing what remains before extended production testing can commence is the finalisation and approval of the oil



metering station and its installation at the Sim Sim facility where oil from Block 56 will be metered before entering the national Omani pipeline system on its way to the export facilities in Muscat.

"We are hopeful that the meter will be up and running within the next four to six weeks and that we early next year will be in a position to further evaluate the Al Jumd oil discovery from the perspective of potential commerciality," Magnus Nordin, Managing Director of Tethys Oil said. "The extended well testing of Al Jumd stands out as the most significant milestone of our operated Blocks," he added.

Meanwhile, Tethys Oil's cash flow from operations stood at \$23 million while production from Blocks 3 and 4 came in at 9,788 barrels of oil per day, 3 per cent lower than Q2. Blocks 3 and 4 production has underperformed expectations throughout the year and while the company have seen more stability in Q2, some challenges remain, primarily on the surface with bottlenecks in the production system and a shortage of workover rig time to carry out necessary well maintenance.

## Sharakah appoints new CEO

**MUSCAT:** Fund for Development of Youth Projects SAOC (Sharakah) has announced the appointment of Ali bin Ahmed Muqaibal as the Chief Executive Officer of Sharakah. Ali took charge of the office in October 2022.

Ali Muqaibal holds a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University and MBA from INSEAD. He is an executive business leader who brings with him more than 20 years of vast experience across different disciplines, like, corporate and investment strategy formulation and execution, portfolio management, digital transformation, and transforming businesses in the consumer and enterprise segments.

Ali has exceptional international business experience, growing Omani enterprises in several countries, besides sitting on the



Boards of different international organisations. His plethora of experience ranges across major organisations such as Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG, Occidental Oman, Oman Oil Co and Oman Oil Marketing Co.

In his role as Sharakah's CEO, Ali is responsible for steering and executing the company's vision, and strategy in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. He will be leading the organisation with an emphasis on increasing the impact

of local SMEs and entrepreneurs in the national economy.

"We welcome Ali Muqaibal as the CEO of Sharakah. We believe that Ali has the capability, passion, creativity and skills required to inspire and lead Sharakah in its mission to succeed and making a difference in the SME arena," said Hani al Zubair, Chairman of Sharakah's Board.

Ali conveyed his gratitude and said, "I am honoured to be part of a prestigious organisation like Sharakah and thankful to the Board of Directors of Sharakah for posing trust and confidence in me."

He added, "Playing a strategic role in the SMEs ecosystem in the Sultanate and making a positive impact is our vision, and going forward our strategies will evolve around these paramount objectives benefitting the Omani SME sector."

## Oman, Saudi ink MoU on energy cooperation

FROM PAGE 13

Moreover, the MoU encourages cooperation in the field of hydrogen and promoting digital transformation and innovation in the field of energy, developing standards to promote the use of sustainable non-metallic materials instead of traditional materials and strengthening cooperation with companies specialised in the field of energy, as well as developing qualitative partnerships between the two sides with regard to the localisation of materials, products and services related to all sectors of energy, supply chains and technologies.

The MoU allows the two parties to add other areas of cooperation through diplomatic channels. — ONA

## Bank Nizwa participates in Sibos 2022 in Amsterdam

**MUSCAT:** Bank Nizwa has established itself as a progressive, resilient and agile Islamic bank that has remained steadfast in aligning with the digitalisation agenda of the nation while spearheading sustainability and financial inclusion initiatives.

As per its strategy to enhance its visibility and client servicing capabilities, the bank recently participated in the Sibos 2022, the world's premier financial services event held in Amsterdam. Becoming the only Islamic banking entity from Oman to attend the prestigious, international event this year.

The bank was represented by senior officials including the General Manager of Wholesale Banking Group, Narasimhan R, the Head of Treasury, Suad al Balushi and the Senior Manager of International Banking, Aiman



Salih. The central theme of the event was 'Progressive Finance for

a Changing World'. The conference was held from October 10-13 and

witnessed the participation of over 10,000 delegates from most of the countries in the world.

Bank Nizwa is already maintaining good business relationships with renowned international financial institutions.

The bank participated in the Sibos 2022 to further strengthen its relationship with International Financial Institutions and to explore more products related to trade and payments which Bank Nizwa can offer to its customers.

Commenting on the bank's participation, Narasimhan R, General Manager of Wholesale Banking Group at Bank Nizwa, said, "Sibos 2022 was an excellent platform for industry enthusiasts to share relevant insights into the latest trends shaping the banking sector, drive meaningful debates on contentious topics and raise awareness on potential risks,

challenges that may emerge in the industry."

Whilst such risks entail vulnerabilities, it also poses opportunities for growth.

To be able to leverage growth opportunities, it is quintessential that financial institutions embrace sustainable policies and stay committed to their digital agenda — a key message that was strongly reiterated at the event.

He further said, "As a bank that has continuously focused on innovation to keep pace with and meet the demands of a dynamic market, Bank Nizwa has been able to strike the right balance between technological advancements and sustainable practices.

"At the same time, our prudent management of risks and returns, strong adherence to international best practices and stringent compliance guidelines have helped

us to overcome challenges in a highly competitive ecosystem."

Sibos is the world's premier financial services event organised by swift.

The annual conference and exhibit connect thousands of executives, decision-makers and thought leaders from across the industry. Sibos 2022 also featured more than 150 insightful conference sessions across eight stages. More than 250 speakers are thought leaders, industry experts and financial specialists from around the globe.

Recognising the various factors that can potentially impact the financial ecosystem, the event emphasised the need for digital transformation, embracing sustainable practices and ethical change as well as enhancing the capabilities of organisations to navigate through risks.

# A simplified visa system could attract new talent



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

For some time, the UK tech sector, in particular, has struggled for talented staff with more jobs that require data literate people than there are available to fill them. Two thirds of businesses say they struggle to fill their tech roles. Solving this problem is one of the more important actions the government can take.

Technology is becoming an ever-bigger part of life and of UK's economy. If the UK wants to remain a nation of geopolitical importance, it has to keep creating and scaling technology companies. And while London is currently one of the best places in the world to be a tech start-up, attracting more VC investment than any other city in Europe, the UK cannot be complacent.

For this to continue, the government needs to get behind start-ups.

The Entrepreneurs Network and the firm Coadec recently published a manifesto that sets

out how the government can enable start-ups to boost the UK's economic growth. Chief among these recommendations is how to ensure the UK continues to draw in talent.

The government already recognises the importance of talent to the tech sector, which is why it has created schemes like the Start-up visa. But these generous-on-paper routes are not as easy to use as they should be for early-stage companies.

Sometimes the problem is funds. Some visas are now five times more expensive than they were ten years ago, giving the Home Office an 800 per cent profit on some applications.

Considering that immigrants, especially highly-skilled ones, are net contributors to the country, it makes sense to provide visas at-cost instead of at a profit. Prices shouldn't make the UK less-competitive as a country.

Sometimes the problem is time. Delays mean that start-ups can wait between six weeks to two

IF THE UK WANTS TO REMAIN A NATION OF GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE, IT HAS TO KEEP CREATING AND SCALING TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES. AND WHILE LONDON IS CURRENTLY ONE OF THE BEST PLACES IN THE WORLD TO BE A TECH START-UP, ATTRACTING MORE VC INVESTMENT THAN ANY OTHER CITY IN EUROPE, THE UK CANNOT BE COMPLACENT.

months to get their visas. It should only take them three weeks, as initially promised.

And sometimes, the ambition is there but the policy detail doesn't match it. The Scale-up Worker visa allows someone to move to the UK if they have a job at an approved scale-up.

However, the qualification criteria listed by the Home Office would exclude some of UK's fastest growing scaleups and the visa still has much red tape attached.

According to Dom Hallas, executive director of Coadec, a simple fix would be replacing the existing criteria with a point-based system which scores a business based on its growth rate, staff growth and amounts invested.

The same is true of the High Potential Individual visa, which was meant to be a low-bureaucracy route for promising talent. Graduates from a short list of top universities can use this route to move to the UK for two years within five years of their graduation date.

Yet the "top university" rankings used here include a lot of criteria that are not relevant to this visa.

A better ranking, suggests Hallas, would look at the human capital of graduates, that is to look at developing graduate level knowledge and skills, confident to access the labour market, which can be calculated using graduate earnings.

If the visa was reformed in this way it would include more specialist STEM institutions, small but elite American Arts Colleges, and top business schools. Of course, immigration is only a small part of the talent question. Britain should also be boosting the quality of education at home and make it easier for women to pursue rewarding careers in tech.

There are good ideas for solving those problems too, Hallas says, but if the new prime minister wants to look at changes that can make life easier for the UK's start-ups almost immediately, he should take a look at the quick fixes waiting in immigration policy.

## How Joe Biden can help save the planet at COP27

Joe Biden and other rich country leaders will get a lot of flak from poorer countries when they arrive at the United Nations climate conference in Egypt later this week. But if the United States' president joins up his existing policies across geopolitics, trade and climate, he can change the narrative.

Biden can drive forward "Just Energy Transition Partnerships" (JETPs), which aim to fast-track the decarbonisation of developing economies, with countries such as India. This will advance Western interests, while saving the planet.

The countries of the Global South will rightly criticise rich countries for failing yet again to meet their promise to provide \$100 billion a year in climate finance. America deserves the biggest share of the blame.

States such as Pakistan will also complain that they are already suffering the consequences of climate change despite having done very little to cause it. Again, America merits the lion's share of the criticism – although other rich countries and China, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, are also big culprits.

Many countries, both rich and poor, are also unhappy about the Inflation Reduction Act, Biden's landmark climate legislation. It is brilliant that the US leader is subsidising the rollout of clean green technology in America. But this legislation also has a protectionist twist, as it encourages domestic production at the expense of foreign manufacturers.

Biden risks alienating potential friends at the same time that he is stressing the importance of alliances to contain the threat of China. As the United States cuts its dependency on Chinese-sourced rare earths, solar panels and the like, it doesn't have to make all of this in America.

It will be cheaper to spread production around friendly countries according to their comparative advantage.

That is the point of "friend-shoring", a plan to build up trade links with allies, which Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has championed.

Does Biden's left hand know what his right hand is doing? America and other rich countries have a series of policies which could accelerate the just transition across the Global South.

It now needs to pull them together into a coherent package. The Group of Seven large industrialised nations have created a \$600 billion partnership for infrastructure and investment with the developing world, as a green alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

South Africa announced the first JETP at last year's UN climate conference – via an \$8.5 billion partnership with rich countries that is ultimately supposed to unlock huge amounts of private capital. Indonesia, Vietnam and Senegal may unveil their own partnerships this month. — Reuters

## CEOs are talking more about recession



STEPHEN GANDEL

The writer is a news editor for DealBook, joining The New York Times in 2021. He was previously a senior reporter for CBS News, and a columnist at Bloomberg.

Despite a surprisingly resilient labor market, talk of an economic downturn is on the lips of corporate leaders.

James S Tisch, CEO of Loews, the hotel, insurance and industrial conglomerate, said on an earnings call with analysts last week that his "fearless forecast" was for recession, but not one that would be as "cataclysmic as '08 or '09."

When asked by an analyst how a potential recession might affect sales at Starbucks, the coffee chain's interim CEO, Howard Schultz, said, "We're highly concerned and humbled by the environment."

And William J Hornbuckle, CEO of MGM Resorts International, told analysts last week that he and his executives were "not blind," and that they "remain keenly aware of the impact of inflation" and the potential that the economy was headed for a downturn.

Recession has been an increasingly hot topic, reports the DealBook newsletter. It's customary for large public companies to hold conference calls with analysts after they report their earnings. Of the 409 companies listed on the S&P 500-stock index that have held analyst calls to discuss the most

recent quarter, the R-word came up as a topic 165 times, according to Sentieo, a market data provider.

A year ago, "recession" was uttered on 42 earnings calls by S&P 500 firms for the third quarter. Discussions about a recession have been elevated throughout this year, with big year-over-year jumps in the first and second quarters as well.

Last week, Federal Reserve officials made a fourth supersize interest rate increase in an effort to tame inflation, heightening fears of an economic slump. The Fed chair, Jerome H Powell, said he thought there was still a window for a so-called soft landing, in which inflation dissipates but the economy does not fall into a recession.

"Has it narrowed? Yes," Powell told reporters. "Is it still possible? Yes." Some economic indicators released last week seemed to back Powell's view. Last quarter, the gross domestic product rose at a better-than-expected annual pace of 2.6 per cent.

On Friday, the government reported that employers added 261,000 jobs to their payrolls in October, which was also above expectations.

Nonetheless, CEOs on 88 third-quarter conference calls said that the

Fed's raising of interest rates to fight inflation was either a major factor slowing their business, or that they expected it to be, according to Sentieo.

Last week, Steven Roth, real estate developer and CEO of Vornado Realty Trust, told analysts that because the Fed was "deadly serious" in fighting inflation, "the economy is clearly slowing."

Internationally, recession is also a big topic. Of the 9,000 companies worldwide that Sentieo tracks, the topic of recession has come up on 2,122 of those companies' conference calls in the past three months, up from 193 in the same period last year. Earnings growth has slowed significantly. Profits are up just over 2 per cent on average for S&P 500 companies that have reported this quarter, down from 6 per cent growth a quarter ago, according to FactSet, which tracks corporate profits and other market data.

Worse, analysts now expect that fourth-quarter profits for S&P 500 companies will be lower this year than they were a year ago. If that turns out to be the case, it will be the first profit drop across the 500 companies collectively since the start of the pandemic.

— The New York Times



### WITH OR WITHOUT PUTIN

A fruit vendor rides his cart past a logo of the G20 Summit, in Jakarta on Tuesday. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who is this year's chair of the bloc of major economies, said during a phone conversation last week that Russian President Vladimir Putin had not ruled out attending the summit in Bali, and would join if possible. "But if not ... maybe he'll ask to do it virtually," Jokowi, as the Indonesian president is popularly known, told reporters during a visit to Bali. — AFP

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| 4                     | Planning Engineer - Electromech                                        | BE Mech       | 6 to 8 years (out of which 3 years of Gulf experience)    | Required Primavera P6 certificate holder with experience in Project control & planning activities in Oil & Gas with knowledge of pipeline and piping construction, civil support activities, Overhead line construction and Control & Automation activities. Individual shall be responsible for –<br>• Building overall plans & schedules for conceptual, front-end designs and for execution phase of projects; and,<br>• Provide plans & schedules for ad-hoc construction service requests and integrated maintenance plans                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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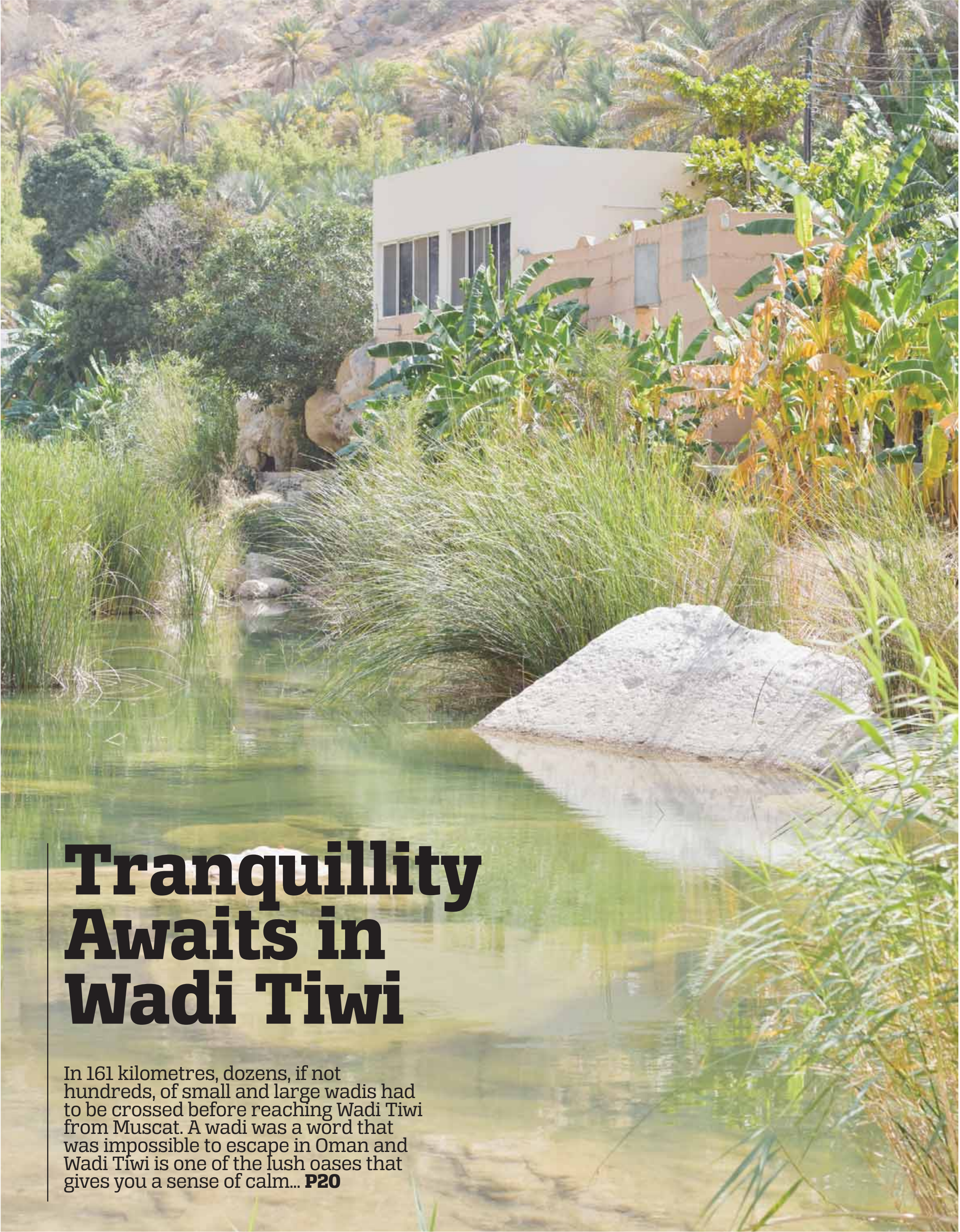
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**STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN**



## Tranquillity Awaits in Wadi Tiwi

In 161 kilometres, dozens, if not hundreds, of small and large wadis had to be crossed before reaching Wadi Tiwi from Muscat. A wadi was a word that was impossible to escape in Oman and Wadi Tiwi is one of the lush oases that gives you a sense of calm... **P20**

### READ

#### THE FIRST TO DIE AT THE END

BY ADAM SILVERA

In this prequel to "They Both Die at the End," Orion and Valentino attend the premier of Death-Cast in Times Square.



### TRAVEL TALES

People release floating lanterns in a pond during the Loy Kratong festival in Bangkok. During Loy Kratong, people gather around lakes, rivers and canals to pay respects to the goddess of water by releasing beautiful lotus-shaped rafts, decorated with candles, incense and flowers onto the water. — AFP



### MUSICAL DILEMMA

A violin and bows on display at the studio of French bow maker Edwin Clement in Paris. Brazil wants to ban the usage of Pernambuco wood, also known as brazilwood, essential for making bows. — AFP





# Creating Beauty on the Inside

**THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM** of Art. The Ace Hotel New York. The Chicago Athletic Association. The NoMad hotel in London. Goop's store in Los Angeles. The Reykjavik Edition hotel, in Iceland. The Boom Boom Room.

These are all some of the places where people can step into the world of interiors created by Roman and Williams, an architectural and interior design firm started 20 years ago this month. As that world has grown to include locations in seven countries and three continents, Robin Standefer, 58, and Stephen Alesch, 57, the company's married founders, have often returned to Montauk, New York, where they have lived part time since 2006.

"I think this room has been the centre of our lives and our creativity for the better part of the past 20 years," Standefer said inside a studio at their Long Island home, on a Sunday afternoon in October.

In the studio — a renovated garage — there were sheepskin throws covering a wood-frame couch by Brazilian designer and architect Sergio Rodrigues; bushels of dried hydrangeas bursting from antique battery jars collected by Standefer; and paintings of seascapes, bought on eBay and embellished by Alesch, lining a wall. On another wall hung the bust of a stuffed goat, a gift to the couple. Its glassy eyes seemed to be gazing down at a group of conch shells Standefer had arranged concentrically on a low wood table that she and Alesch had designed.

"Their rooms are like portals into another place and time," said Johannes Knoops, a professor in the interior design department at the Fashion Institute of Technology and the chair of the college's Lawrence Israel Prize committee. The prize, which recognises exemplary interior design, was awarded to Roman and Williams in 2013.

Interiors designed by Standefer and Alesch typically incorporate antiques and vintage pieces meant to be used, not kept out of reach on a shelf. Alexandra Cunningham Cameron, the curator of contemporary design at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, said, "Roman and Williams have figured out the formula for making antiques physically and intellectually cozy — which, by today's standards, they most often are not."

Their process includes researching historical materials and traditional forms of craftsmanship: bricklaying, say, or the intricate lost-wax method of casting bronze into decorative objects. They often experiment with such techniques themselves and then work with artisans to apply the methods in their projects, whether pieces of furniture or buildings the firm designs.

"There's no need to reinvent everything all the time," Alesch told GO in 2009, the same year he and Standefer completed interiors at the Ace Hotel New York, where they filled the lobby with vintage British campaign chairs, tartan-covered armchairs, an enormous American flag and a case of stuffed birds, all lit warmly with filament bulbs. Interior Design magazine honoured the Ace in New York as the boutique hotel of the year in 2009, and Wallpaper magazine's 2010 Design Awards recognised it as one of the five best new hotels.

Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

Roman and Williams Buildings and Interiors, as the firm is formally known, was named for the founders' maternal grandfathers, William Winters (hers) and Roman Alesch (his). Standefer and Alesch started it in the living room of their East Fourth Street loft in Manhattan in November 2002. They first met a decade earlier, in Los Angeles, while working in the art department of the film "The New Age." Together, they refashioned a storefront on Robertson Boulevard into a fictitious clothing boutique featured in the movie.

Alesch, who was born in Nina, Wisconsin, grew up in Malibou Lake, a residential community developed by director Cecil B. DeMille in Agoura Hills, California. He studied philosophy and engineering at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and apprenticed at architectural firms in Los Angeles before getting into movies. As a set designer, he began each project with a hand drawing, a method he has continued to use at Roman and Williams.

Standefer, who was born in the Bronx and raised in Manhattan, New York, studied art and architecture at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, before graduating from Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. She then worked as a curator and, in the late 1980s, as a visual consultant on the film "New York Stories." In that job, she met Martin Scorsese, who later hired her as a creative consultant on his films "Goodfellas" and "The Age of Innocence."

They bought the loft where they would eventually start Roman and Williams in 1997. By then a couple, they would spend time in New York between production design jobs in Hollywood, where they had developed a reputation for craftsmanship, attention to detail and fashioning sets with a lived-in quality.

"People said that their homes looked fake, and the sets they were on felt real," Alesch said. Standefer added, "The stars and producers on these movie sets said, 'Why don't our houses look as good as the movie sets?' And we were like, 'They can.'"

Their first high-profile client was actor Ben Stiller, whom Standefer and Alesch had become friendly with while working on the sets of "Zoolander" and "Duplex." Stiller hired them in 2002 to redesign his 1920s Spanish-style home in Los Angeles, where they had walls repainted in aquamarine blue, aubergine velvet sofas installed and dark wood bookcases built to match exposed-wood ceiling beams. In 2003, they opened the first Roman and Williams office on the Paramount Pictures lot in Hollywood.

Their transformation of Stiller's home stood out to one visitor in particular: "I walked into Ben's house, and I was like, 'Who did your house?'" actor Kate Hudson said. She had recently bought her childhood home in the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles, which was built in the 1930s.

While working on Hudson's home, the duo decided to move to New York. They closed their office on the Paramount lot and in 2004 opened their current office on Lafayette Street in SoHo (which they said would soon move to a different location in the neighbourhood). A year later, in 2005, Standefer and Alesch were married.

## TAKING OFF IN NEW YORK

Not long after their pivot to private residences, Standefer and Alesch took on a more public-facing project: reimaging the lobby of the Royalton hotel in midtown Manhattan, which at the time featured interiors designed by Philippe Starck. The lobby became a place to see and be seen after Starck redesigned it in 1988 but over the years had lost its buzz.



Their Royalton lobby, which featured dark wood panelling, brown leather couches and steel coffee tables, debuted in 2007 to mixed reviews. "The old lobby was the must-see interior of its time, and the new one isn't," critic Alice Rawsthorn wrote in The New York Times.

But by then, Roman and Williams had already been hired for other hotel projects. Developer André Balazs, after meeting Standefer and Alesch in 2004, commissioned the company to design all the interiors at his first Standard hotel in New York: the Standard, High Line.

Although Roman and Williams had done a hotel lobby, the Standard project was on a different scale. The company at the time had six employees, including its two founders. When told that developers had to visit the office to ensure the firm could do the job, Standefer recalled thinking, "We need more people." She added, "So we bring in friends, like, to sit in the office, walking through the office."

A few months after Balazs hired the

firm to do the 338-room Standard hotel, Alex Calderwood, a co-founder of the Ace Hotel chain, commissioned it to design interiors at the Ace Hotel New York, a 258-room property inside a 1904 building in the NoMad neighbourhood of Manhattan.

The 2009 debut of both hotels — the Standard that March and the Ace that May — helped establish Roman and Williams as a design firm with range. The Boom Boom Room club atop the Standard — with its curvy banquettes, glossy golden bar and panoramic view of a shimmering city at night — conveyed 24-karat glamour. The rooms at the Ace, decorated with Gibson guitars and vinyl LPs, evoked hipster sophistication.

Business took off from there. Over the next decade, as Roman and

## DISCOVERY



# Science confirms: to light up the dance floor, turn up the bass

**ELECTRONIC MUSIC** lovers know the drill: as soon as the DJ turns up the bass, the crowd goes wild and dances with heightened enthusiasm. But to what extent is this a conscious reaction?

Researchers have taken a closer look at the relationship between bass frequencies and dancing, thanks to an experiment conducted during a real-life electronic music concert.

The results, published on Monday in the journal *Current Biology*, showed that participants danced almost 12 per cent more when researchers introduced a very low frequency bass — one that dancers could not hear.

"They couldn't tell when those changes happened, but it was driving their movements," neuroscientist David Cameron of McMaster University, who led the study, said.

The results confirm the special relationship between bass and dance, which has never been scientifically proven.

## THE PULSE OF THE MUSIC

Cameron, a trained drummer, notes that people attending electronic music concerts "love when they can feel the bass so strong" and tend to turn it up very loud.

But they are not alone. In many cultures and traditions across the world "it tends to be the low-frequency instruments like the bass guitar or the bass drum, that give the pulse of the music" that gets humans moving.

"What we didn't know is, can you actually make people dance more with bass?" said Cameron.

The experiment took place in Canada, in a building known as LIVElab, which served both as a concert hall and a research laboratory.

About 60 out of 130 people who went to see a concert by electronic music duo Orphyx were equipped with motion-sensing headbands to monitor their dance moves.

During the concert, researchers intermittently turned very-low bass-playing speakers on and off.

A questionnaire filled out by concert-goers confirmed that the sound was undetectable. This allowed researchers to isolate the impact of the bass and avoid other factors, such as dancers reacting to a popular part of a song.

## BELOW THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"I was impressed with the effect," said Cameron. His theory is that even when undetected, the bass stimulates sensory systems in the body, such as the skin and the vestibular system — more commonly known as the inner ear.

These systems have a very close connection to the motor system — responsible for movement — but in an intuitive way that bypasses the frontal cortex.

He compares it to the way the body keeps the lungs breathing and the heart beating.

"It is below the level of consciousness."

Cameron said the research team believes the stimulation of these systems "give a little boost to your motor system. And that adds a little bit of energy and vigour to your real-world movements."

He hopes to verify this hypothesis in future experiments.

As for why humans dance at all, the mystery endures.

"I've always been interested in rhythm, and especially what it is about rhythm that makes us want to move," in the absence of a specific function of dance.

Most theories revolve around the idea of social cohesion.

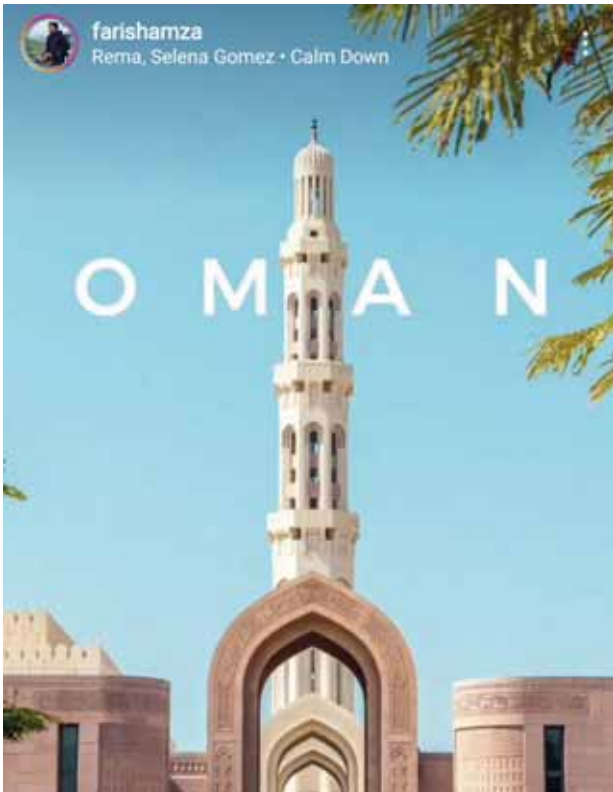
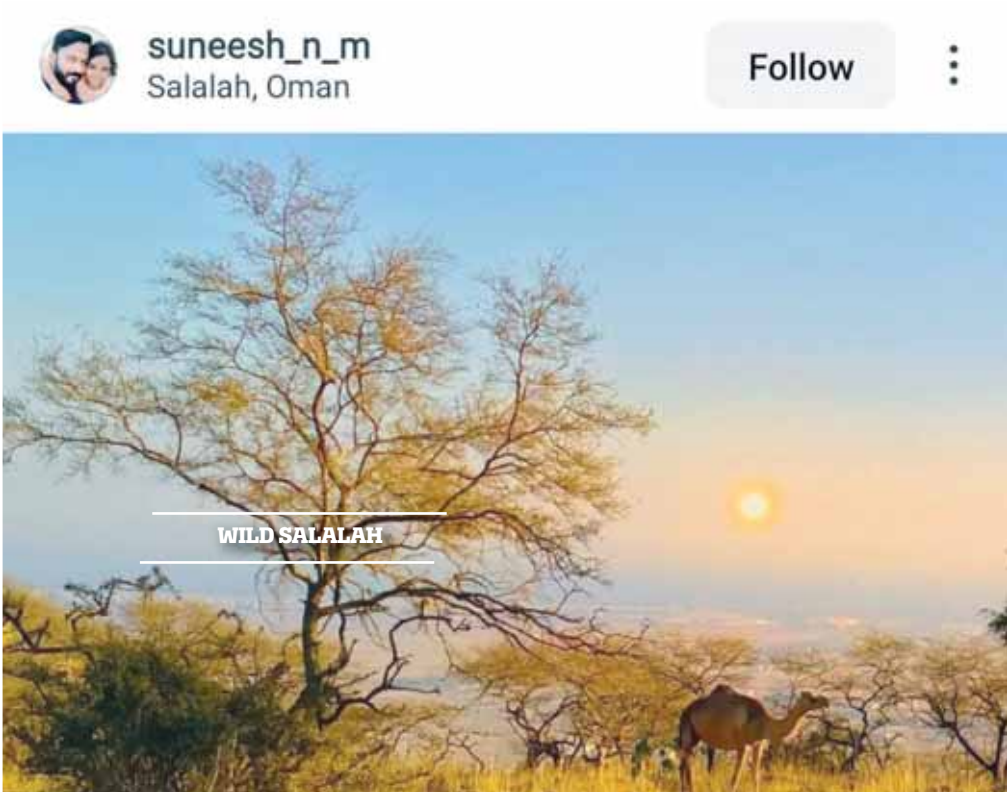
"When you synchronise with people, you tend to feel bonded with them a little bit afterward. You feel good afterwards," said Cameron.

"By making music together, that allows us to feel better together as a group, and then we function better as a group, and we can be more efficient, and we can have more peace." — **AFP**



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

‘Exceptional’ discovery as ancient bronze statues emerge in Tuscany



**ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN** Italy have found more than two dozen beautifully preserved bronze statues dating back to ancient Roman times in thermal baths in Tuscany, in what experts are hailing as an “exceptional” discovery. The statues were found over the last two weeks in San Casciano dei Bagni, a hilltop town about 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Rome where archaeologists have been exploring



ancient ruins for the last three years. “It is a very significant, exceptional finding,” Jacopo Tabolli, an assistant professor from the University for Foreigners in Siena who is leading the archaeological project, said on Tuesday. Tabolli said the statues — which according to



Italy’s ANSA news agency are 2,300 years old — used to adorn a sanctuary before they were immersed in thermal waters, in a sort of ritual, “probably around the 1st century AD.” “You give to the water because you hope that the water gives something back to you,” he said of the ritual. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Myanmar hot-air balloon festival returns with a bang



**THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE** have gathered in the hills of central Myanmar for the annual Tazaungdaing light festival that marks the end of the rainy season with a fiery nighttime display of exploding hot-air balloons. The celebrations in the former British hill station of Pyin Oo Lwin have not been held for two years because of the Covid pandemic and unrest

grab. “We are holding our festival here but we are sorry for what is happening elsewhere,” said Aung Myat Thu, 37, who spent months working with friends on their balloon. “When we were preparing for the competition, we all worked alongside our worries.” The hot-air balloons featured an array of artwork from images of Buddha to traditional motifs,

tradition is rooted in Buddhism, the hot-air balloon contest was started by British colonialists in the late 19th century. Previous editions have drawn tens of thousands of local and foreign visitors, attracted by the colour — and danger — of the gathering. The balloons are loaded with fireworks, and any miscalculation on when to light the rockets



following a military coup. But on Sunday night rival teams began launching 76 aerial artistic creations that will take flight over the next five days, competing for marks in aesthetics, teamwork, height reached and time spent in the air. Their balloons were propelled upwards about 100 metres (320 feet) using the heat from a fire before fireworks inside exploded, obliterating months of work in a spectacular burst of lights across the inky sky. The festivities are a rare respite from the economic misery and violence wracking much of the country almost two years after the military’s power

with one made in the shape of a polar bear. Some participants hooked dozens of red, white and yellow candles to their balloons before releasing them into the chilly night air to huge cheers. Crowds ambled between stalls at a temporary fairground while traditional dancers performed. While the Tazaungdaing

can result in catastrophe. In 2014, three people were killed at Tazaungdaing celebrations in Taunggyi in neighbouring Shan state when a balloon crashed onto spectators below. Tin Mar Lwin, 41, was beaming Sunday night after sending off her balloon, which was decorated with a huge red and gold Buddha seated on a lotus leaf. “I want the situation to be stable like this,” she said. “I want peace. I’m hoping for it. I’m happy coming to this event.” — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Jimmy Kimmel Will Return as Oscars Host



In recent years, the Academy Awards have gone with three hosts new to the job. They’ve gone with zero hosts. But in 2023, just one will be on hand, and it’s a veteran: Jimmy Kimmel. The late-night star, who has emceed the ceremony twice before, will be the sole host of the 95th Oscars when they air March 12 on ABC, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced on Monday. “Being invited to host the Oscars for a third time is either a great honour or a trap,” Kimmel said in a statement. “Either way, I am grateful to the academy for asking me so quickly after everyone good said no.” The host, who can be seen late nights on ABC in “Jimmy Kimmel Live!,” held the Oscars job in 2017 and again in 2018. The next year, Kevin Hart was set to take the stage, but when tweets and jokes by him considered homophobic resurfaced, he refused to apologise and bowed out instead. Rather than draft a replacement, the academy asked a variety of stars to rotate in throughout the evening in the 2019 show, including Tina Fey, Amy Poehler and Maya Rudolph. For the 2023 show, executive producers Glenn Weiss and Ricky Kirshner have been tasked with restoring luster to an event tarnished by low ratings and the Will Smith slap heard ‘round the world. They will be trying to win over an audience that has grown more interested in streaming fare and seems less inclined to go to movie

theatres regularly, if seeing box office numbers are any indication. “With Kimmel, Weiss and Kirshner’s fresh perspective and masterful guidance, the Oscars will celebrate its rich 95-year history, the collaborative nature of movie-making, and our diverse, dynamic and deeply creative community of film-makers,” the academy’s chief executive, Bill Kramer, and president, Janet Yang, said in a statement. Kramer recently said next year’s show would not address, even in jokes, the surreal moment earlier this year when Smith slapped Chris Rock onstage. But that determination to take the high road may be put to the test if “Emancipation,” the slavery drama from Apple that stars Smith, proves to be a contender. He was barred from academy events, including the ceremony, for 10 years. But the film has been the subject of awards chatter, and while Smith would not be allowed to attend, any nominations could make for an awkward evening. The host announcement comes relatively early in the awards season calendar for a change. For the 2022 Oscars, the academy unveiled its trio of hosts — Wanda Sykes, Amy Schumer and Regina Hall — less than two months before it was held in March. That show drew 16.6 million viewers, the second-least-watched Oscars on record, but an improvement over the year before, when fewer than 10 million tuned in. — NYT

# art & life

## Local Scene

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WEDNESDAY | NOVEMBER 9 | 2022

# Tranquillity Awaits in Wadi Tiwi

By Olga Velikaya

**"WE COME BACK ON THE** weekend," said Aisha Ali, smiling. "My parents' house is right there," she pointed at the light beige flat-roofed house with a brown door. Her eyes wandered around the sleepy village bathed in midday light, down the lush banana farm, and up the ancient tree she was sitting under. Its large crown offered a welcoming escape from the burning heat. The texture of the tree held countless stories. Aisha's hands were painted with henna, and the yellow floral dress and hijab she wore glowed like cheerful sunshine.

"Are you here to see the wadi?" she asked. "Welcome, welcome!"

In 161 kilometres, dozens, if not hundreds, of small and large wadis had to be crossed before reaching Wadi Tiwi from Muscat. A wadi /was a word that was impossible to escape in Oman. It meant a valley or a riverbed that was dry except when it rained. Those thirsty rocky passes awakened with a drop of rainfall. Their sleepy calm nature was completely misleading, for, in a storm, wadis turned into fierce, all-consuming currents.

Wadi Tiwi was named after a little coastal village in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. Though often overshadowed by more famous neighbouring Wadi Shab, it had its unique charm. Hugged with mountains on each side, the road through the valley stretched along green plantations and tiny settlements with characteristic pastel houses. It was necessary to beep at sharp turns in Al Hosn village since it was a one-way street. A thick canopy of banana and palm trees towered over mud-brick fences that protected the residents' privacy. In contrast to the absence of travel during the pandemic, narrow paths were packed with curious travellers.

Our car slipped while crossing what appeared to be a harmless puddle. It seemed that when the roads were covered with water, they became slimy, so caution was needed. Driving up the hill past rounded boulders and green plants, we reached Harat Bidah village, where the paved road ended. Although it was just further down the valley, few people were around. While some of the mud houses stood in ruins, others sparkled with fresh paint and blue and white mosaic décor. Muffled voices and TV commercials could be heard from some beige houses. Little goats peeked through the gate, interested in newcomers. Colourful, unique designs and wooden engravings

on Omani doors deserved an article of their own. A young boy came running and sat under the shade to listen to the conversation we were having with locals who were both curious and eager to share.

Whenever an Omani met another Omani, they politely asked about the health and well-being of each member of the family. To what a customary reply was, "Al-Mamdu lillāh." When an Omani met a foreigner, the conversation eventually led to a family. They asked about your country, what you did in Muscat, and whether your family was with you. Family ties in Oman were strong, and Friday was the day when everyone got together.

"My daughters often visit," Aisha Ali said and then looked at her son. "Mohammed comes every weekend." Though the majority of people moved to Tiwi, Sur, or Muscat and returned on weekends or holidays, three or four families still lived in the village permanently.

The path by the mosque led to the falaj tracks inside the plantation surrounded with lush greenery. While burnt leaf tips hinted at a prolonged drought, the entire valley was extraordinarily green. The air was filled with the sounds of bees and butterflies humming around banana and date trees. We walked down the paved steps to the wadi and found an exposed, textured riverbed with shallow emerald-green pools. With the first rain, the valley would fill with water attracting countless visitors.

Near one of the houses in the village, there was a large traditional oven for roasting shuwa meat. Aisha Ali, who was talking to one of her elderly neighbours, said it belonged to her brother and invited us to come during Eid Al Adha to have the meat with her family. Some younger Omanis came and asked questions, and a small boy seemed interested in the camera. Unlike many adults, kids often felt open to taking photos. Dressed in a light brown robe, the boy calmly looked directly at the lens with his brown eyes. For a brief moment, he was serious, but then intrusive thoughts kept changing his expression. Out of nowhere, he got a dry tree branch and started playing with it. Amid the silence, only distant children's voices and insect buzzing could be heard. Wadi Tiwi filled travellers' minds and memory cards with new faces, sights, and a sense of calmness – peaceful and welcoming.

