

Candidacy for municipal elections closes on June 2

The Ministry of Interior announced the submission of applications for candidacy of the municipal councils third term, will close on June 2. The ministry said eligible citizens who are willing to stand in the elections may submit their applications on the dedicated website elections.om after filling the e-form and attaching the required documents.



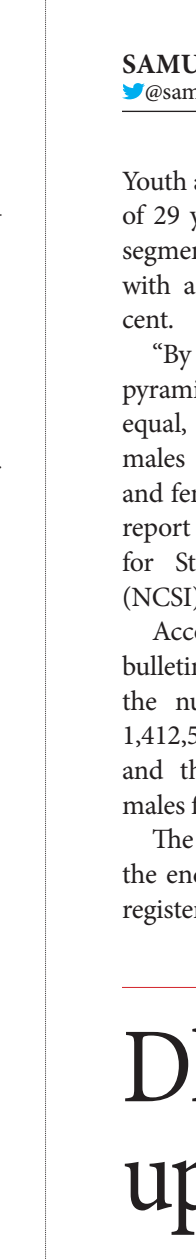
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SERBIA TO PLAY OMAN AHEAD OF QATAR WC



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COMMISSIONING PHASE OF DUQM REFINERY TO START IN Q1 2023



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AIDING A CHILD'S SENSORY DEVELOPMENT



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO JORDAN'S KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Abdallah II of the Kingdom of Jordan, on the death of Doctor Faisal Sedqi al Yasin, father of Queen Rania Al Abdullah. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the King, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the departed soul in peace and grant the King and his family members patience and fortitude. — ONA

YOUTH AND CHILDREN FORM TWO-THIRDS OF POPULATION

OMAN SEES 2.49% RISE IN POPULATION

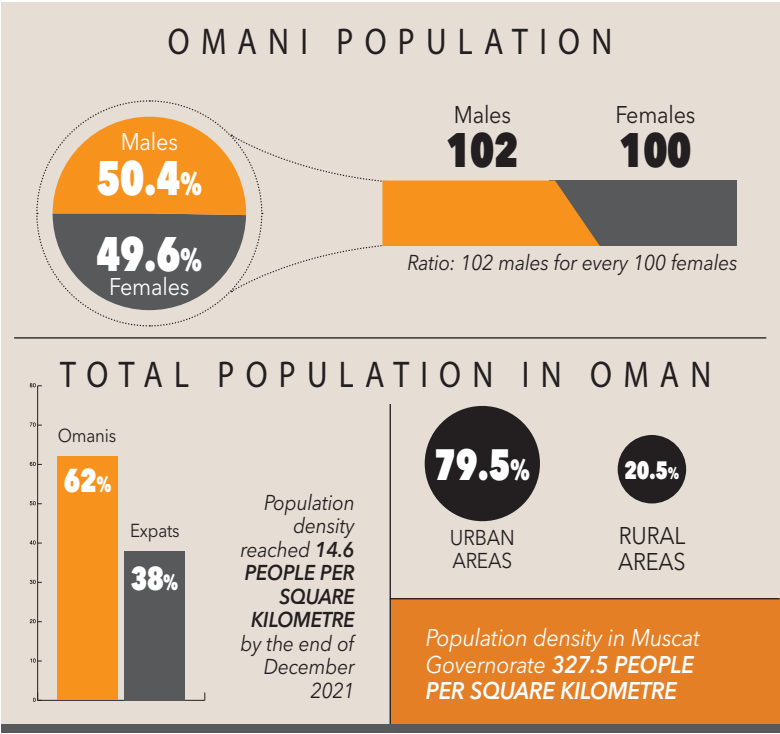
SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttv](#)

Youth and children under the age of 29 years constitute the largest segment of Omani population with a representation of 63 per cent.

“By gender, the population pyramid for Omanis is almost equal, with the proportion of males reaching 50.4 per cent and females 49.6 per cent”, says a report from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to the annual bulletin of the statistics agency, the number of males reached 1,412,508 and females, 1,391,609, and the gender ratio was 102 males for every 100 females.

The Omani population at the end of 2021, says the report, registered an increase of 2.49 per



cent to reach 2,804,117 people accounting for 62 per cent of the total population.

The total population of the Sultanate of Oman reached 4,527,446 people at the end of

December 2021 compared to 4,481,042 people against the corresponding period in 2020, with an increase of 1.04 per cent.

The number of expatriates stood at 1,723,329, which is 1.25 per cent less than the previous year to reach 38 per cent of the total population.

According to the annual bulletin from the statistics agency, the population density reached 14.6 people per square kilometre by the end of December 2021.

While urban areas constituted 79.5 per cent of the total population, the remaining 20.5 per cent was in rural areas.

Muscat Governorate tops the governorates in terms of density with 327.5 people per square kilometre, while Al Wusta Governorate has the lowest population density among all the governorates.

RO 1.2 billion for projects this year

MUSCAT: The overall financial allotments earmarked for developmental projects for the current year amounted to RO 1.2 billion, said Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy.

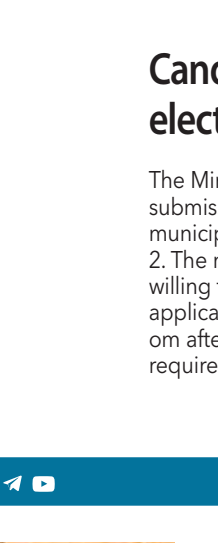
The official added that the development budget is revised every now and then depending on the state's financial and economic indicators.

Commenting to ONA, Dr Al Maawali said that the ministry has a mechanism for measuring and selecting the developmental project for this year. The mechanism is based on a solid scientific method that identifies the criteria for selecting developmental projects in a manner that ensures the realisation of the highest economic value.

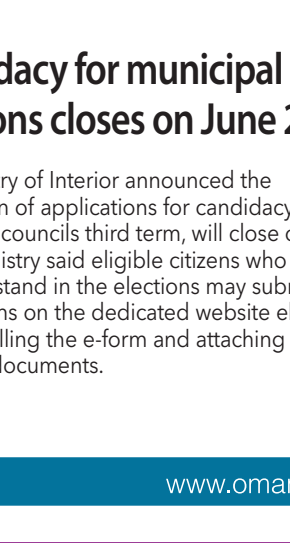
The evaluation mechanism of priority projects for 2023 has been updated by introducing new criteria for evaluating the projects.

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RUSSIA STEPS UP BATTLE FOR EASTERN UKRAINE

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GEORGIA EMBODIES TRUMP'S MOUNTING WOES

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Dhofar Governorate gears up for khareef season

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnassri](#)

With khareef season round the corner, preparations in the Governorate of Dhofar for the season are in full swing after a gap of two years due to Covid-19.

Khareef usually extends from mid-June to end of September, and thus constitutes an important attraction, especially for the residents of the Arab region who experience hot weather during these months of summer.

With regard to the preparations by the authorities concerned, Dhofar Municipality indicated that it is in the process of developing two camping sites with distinctive designs. It said in a statement that it will equip the sites with entertainment facilities, camping umbrellas, road paths and parking lots in front of each camping unit. Yet, the date of the start of construction work at one of the two sites will be announced soon, while the second site will be constructed after evaluating



Khareef extends from mid-June to end of September, and thus constitutes an important attraction, especially for the residents of the Arab region who experience hot weather

In a joint meeting in April between Dhofar Governorate Office, Dhofar Municipality and a number of officials of the government and private agencies concerned, they discussed raising the level of municipal services in all areas, road signs for internal roads, as well as the roads leading to the governorate through the Wilayat of Thamrait, and the coastal road through the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands, and the readiness of all the proposed sites to host the events and activities accompanying the tourist season in the Wilayat of Salalah.

IndiGo

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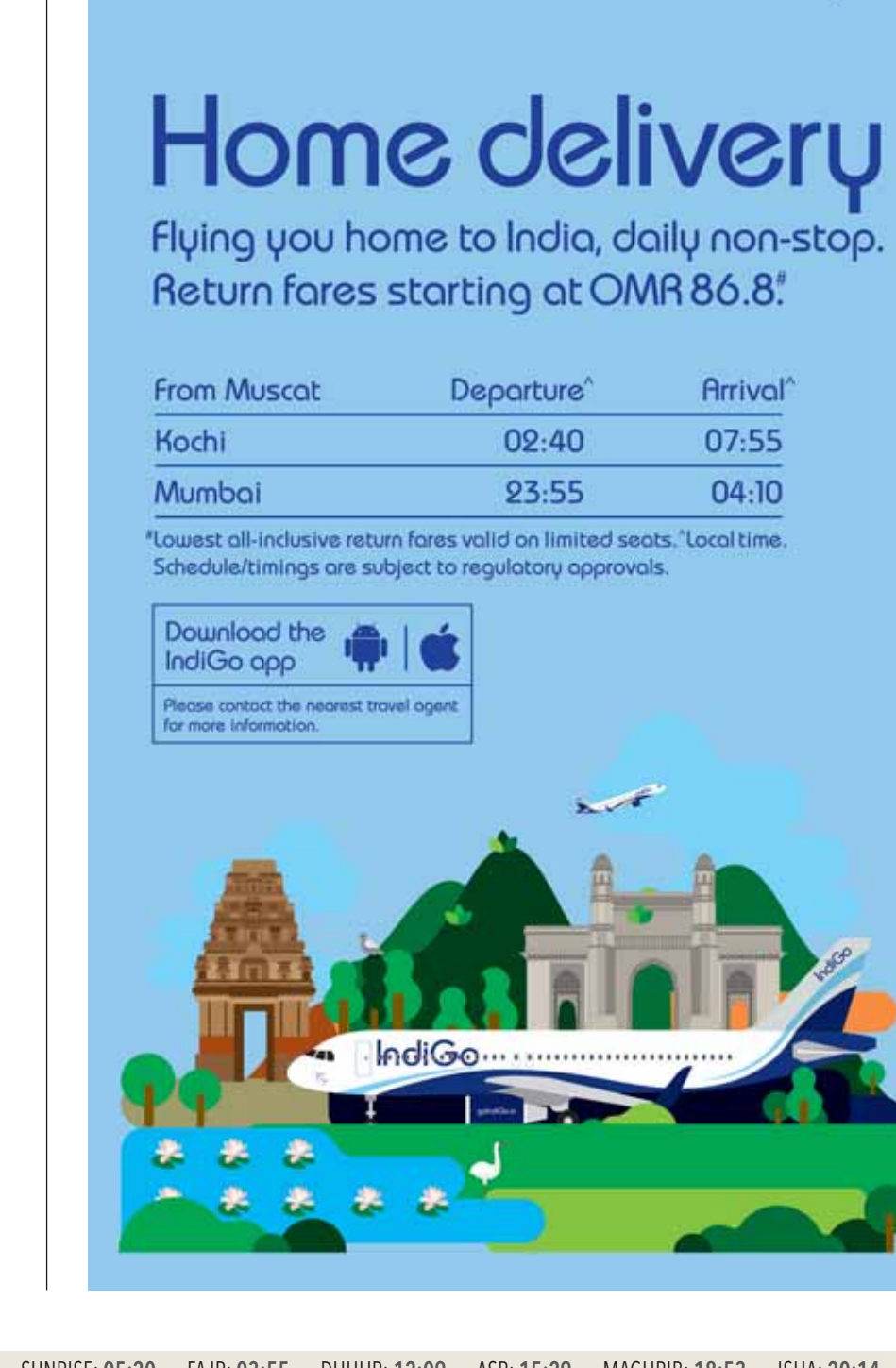
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Oman, UK sign military executive order

LONDON: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), and Admiral Tony Radakin, Chief of the British Defence Staff, signed the executive order of the mutual defence agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, at the headquarters of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), on Saturday.

The signing of the executive order of the joint defence agreement comes as a continuation to efforts made by both countries to foster their historic cooperation in various aspects including the military field in addition to their keenness to strengthen relations and realise the joint national objectives. — ONA

Air travellers must carry prescriptions for medications

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Oman Airports has directed all airlines to ensure that travellers carry prescriptions for medications they carry with them. "It has been observed that a number of passengers have been carrying different medical tablets without a prescription, which is leading to delays within the passenger's journey apart from instances of the Royal Oman Police seizing those medicines," Oman Airports said in a statement.

Speaking to the observer, an official at Oman Airports said, "One of the reasons people carry medicines is because they are expensive here, compared to countries like India and Thailand. Apart from personal use, many times travellers are requested by their friends and relatives to bring important medicines that are much more expensive here."

He added, "As the verification process consumes time and stress, the simple solution is carrying the prescription with them."

"The medicines are expensive and sometimes not available in Oman," said a recent traveller responding to this directive.

According to the Ministry of Health guidelines in Oman, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances that affect the central nervous system with a possibility of misuse are prohibited. "Usually, these drugs are governed by a strong regulatory system. Psychotropic substances are usually used for curing psychological disorders like anxiety and depression. Some countries may add other medicines to this group." Travellers are allowed to carry quantities of these drugs, for personal use, and usually use them for one month only and they should have a medical report regarding their medical condition or medical prescriptions prescribed by their doctor, MoH said.

MoH added that travellers must check the country of destination rules regarding the travellers' medications.

Many countries permit to carry an only one-month quantity of medications to meet the patient's demand, requiring the possession of either a medical report or a prescription or both."

Other guidelines include to carry documents of the medication usage and the prescribing physician's information if your medication was in the form of a syringe (insulin), carry the doctor and pharmacist information in case the medication has expired or lost and you need another quantity of it.

Discuss with your doctor or pharmacist the possibility of fixing new times of taking the medication according to the time of the destination country. Purchasing a non-prescription drug while you are in a foreign country since some of the medications are different from the one in your country either inequality or in their components.

Indonesia adds Oman to visa on arrival list

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The Indonesian government has announced that the Sultanate of Oman is among the list of countries whose citizens can obtain a tourist visa through airports on arrival.

In a statement, Oman's Foreign Ministry said that from May 30, citizens travelling to Indonesia have to submit Coronavirus vaccine certificate, health insurance, return ticket and details of hotel reservations for the period of the visit.

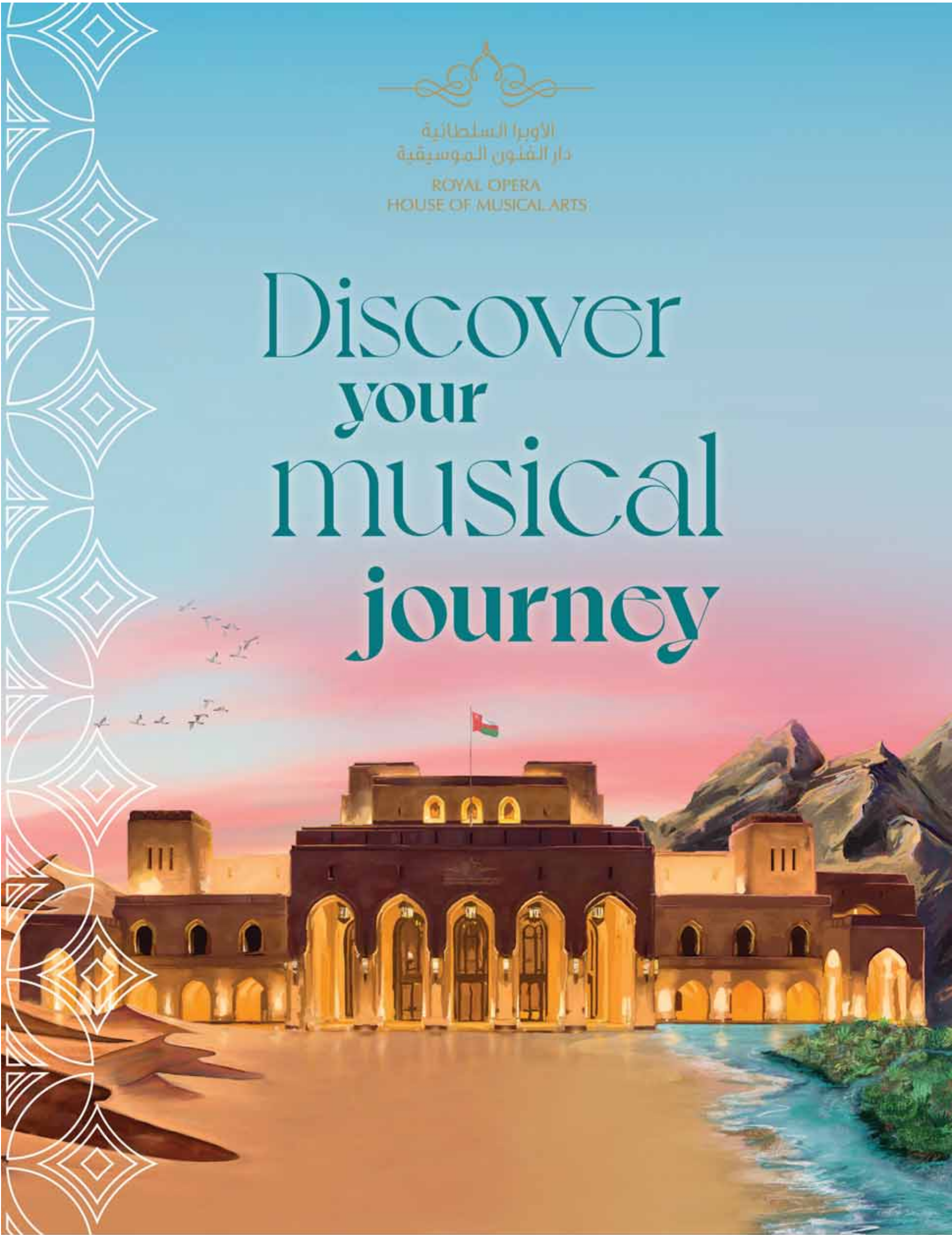
The 30-day visa-on-arrival facility is available at international airports including Bali, Jakarta and Surabaya.

Children under 18 years are exempted from this rule (previously under 12 years). They follow the same provisions for their parents or caregivers.

The traveller should download the PeduliLindungi application on one's smartphone and fill out the e-Hac Indonesia within the application. The PeduliLindungi app is available for download on Apple and Android devices.

They must provide evidence of a negative PCR test taken in the country of origin within 48 hours of the scheduled flight departure.

Upon arrival, no further PCR testing or quarantine is necessary if the body temperature is below 37.5 degrees Celsius. The visitor is free to travel anywhere in Indonesia. A second PCR Test is only necessary if the visitor's temperature is above 37.5 degrees Celsius.



Visit the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts to experience the perfect interactive introduction to music at the innovative new exhibition *Oman and the World: A Journey through Music*.

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Book your tickets through rohmuscat.om.org





Efforts continue to protect environment in Al Dhahirah

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

The Environment Administration in Al Dhahirah Governorate has been making continuous efforts to protect and preserve the environment by implementing the laws and regulations in order to safeguard the wildlife to ensure a clean and sustainable environment.

Fahd bin Saeed al Nasri, Acting Director of Environment Administration in Al Dhahirah Governorate, in an interview said that inspection visits were being conducted frequently by environmental inspectors and technicians to quarries, crusher units, factories and companies to ensure that environmental regulations are implemented. There were 48 visits in the first quarter of 2022, during which five environmental violations were found out.

Regarding wildlife protection, he said the Arabian gazelle, birds and reptiles had come under their observation.

The administration conducts patrols to monitor wildlife

throughout the day and to prevent rule violations. Despite all this, the officials face several challenges and difficulties in monitoring and documenting observations regarding the wildlife due the large area of Al Dhahirah Governorate and its mountainous nature.

He said educational programmes and awareness initiatives were also being conducted to raise awareness about environment among all segments of the local community. Seven awareness campaigns were held in partnership with several bodies in education, agriculture and other sectors.

The administration works in an organised manner in this aspect and seeks to achieve a balance between all the governorates of Oman. Among the most important targets that the administration seeks to achieve is the national initiative to plant 10 million wild trees. Until the end of April this year, 5,383 seedlings were planted. According to the management plan for this year, it is expected to reach 40,000 seedlings.

■ FROM P1

Oman sees 2.49% rise in population

The bulletin stated that the population pyramid for Omanis by gender for the year 2021 is almost equal, with the proportion of males reaching 50.4 per cent and females 49.6 per cent, and the number of males reached 1,412,508 and females, 1,391,609, and the gender ratio was 102 males for every 100 females.

North Al Batinah Governorate ranked first in terms of the top five governorates in which Omanis are concentrated with a percentage of 20.1 per cent, followed by Muscat Governorate

in second place with 19.7 per cent, and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate came in third place with 13.4 per cent, while South Al Batinah Governorate ranked fourth with 12.9 per cent. South Al Sharqiyah is in fifth place with 8.3 per cent.

At the same time, the youth category from 18 to 29 years of age represents the largest segment of the expatriate population, as the percentage of young people out of the total expatriate males reached 22.1 per cent, while the youth percentage of the total expatriate females was 17.4 per cent.

Youth pivotal to achieving digital transformation

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Modern information technology alone cannot drive the country towards digital transformation but a model comprising youth with technology will continue to play a pivotal role in Oman's corporate arena and companies' ability to do so.

It's no wonder that technologies like cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, 5G and analytics are critical to ensuring effective digital transformation strategies. However, the youth are pivotal to achieving Oman's ambitions to become a competitive, innovative, and sustainable economy and meet its Vision 2040 goals, according to Microsoft.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the Comex 2022, Saif bin Hilal al Hosni (pictured), Microsoft Regional Director for Oman and Bahrain, said that youth skills coupled with hybrid cloud, in particular, is one of the most important technologies in driving digitisation as it enables customers to reduce costs and increase revenues.

"The Sultanate of Oman has attached great importance to building the youth's skills to prepare them for the digital future and the youth force complemented by modern technology can drive the digital transformation drive of



Oman. This is more so in meeting business imperatives such as regulatory and data sovereignty requirements, taking advantage of on-premises technology investment, or addressing low latency issues," Saif bin Hilal al Hosni said.

The pandemic has, according

to him, shown us that being able to adapt and prepare for the unexpected is now more important than ever. He lauded Oman's government which has prioritised digital transformation as a key enabler of its goals to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a competitive, sustainable

economy that is productive and diverse as laid out in its Vision 2040 strategy. Recently, the Omani capital, "Muscat", was selected to be the Arab Digital Capital for 2022.

"The Omani government has prioritised security in the country as digital transformation cannot take place without security transformation. The Information Security Division was established under the MTCIT to set regulations and policy related to cybersecurity."

Microsoft has signed several memoranda of understanding with the Omani Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), Omantel, Phaze Ventures and PhazeRo during the Comex AI Conference which was held from May 24 to 25.

"We have partnered with a number of organisations, including the Oman Technology Institute (OTI) and the National Youth Commission, to upskill and enhance the capabilities of young people in emerging technologies like cloud and AI, as well as collaborating with the Oman Information Technology Society to launch the "MaharaTec" initiative, all of which would enable the youth of Oman to actively take part in the digital revolution and grab hold of the future with their own hands," Al Hosni added.

■ FROM P1

Dhofar Governorate gears up for khareef season



They also looked into the availability of sufficient numbers of policemen to regulate traffic on all roads leading to the governorate, securing green spaces, beaches with rescue teams, maintaining security and safety for everyone.

In the field of health services, they discussed extending the period of working hours in some health centres to accommodate the increase in visitors resulting from the influx of tourists to the governorate. They stressed on the importance of strengthening the medical staff in the Wilayat of Salalah, health points, emergency

centres, heart centre, availability of adequate medicines and mobile medical services (ambulances) on the Adam-Thamrait line as well as in border stations.

FACILITIES

The readiness of housing and accommodation was also reviewed in terms of availability, level of service and ability to accommodate visitors. Besides, ensuring the provision of all food supplies in Salalah and the governorate's wilayats that citizens and tourists need, monitoring their prices to prevent exploitation and working

to provide car rental offices in some places to facilitate the process of movement and parking. Also, the authorities discussed assisting small and medium enterprises to open marketing outlets. They reviewed the readiness of telecommunications companies, electricity companies, roads leading to tourist sites in the governorate, and support them with equipment for any emergency.

Earlier, the Dhofar Municipality announced that the events and activities of the khareef season for this year will be held at various

locations such as parks, gardens, natural and tourist sites.

It said that the distribution of events came with the aim of attracting the largest number of tourists and introducing the tourist sites and landscapes in the governorate.

It said that the municipality's entertainment centre, where the Salalah Tourism Festival activities and events were usually held, will be closed due to the fact that it is undergoing comprehensive development work, in order to meet the aspirations of citizens and tourists.



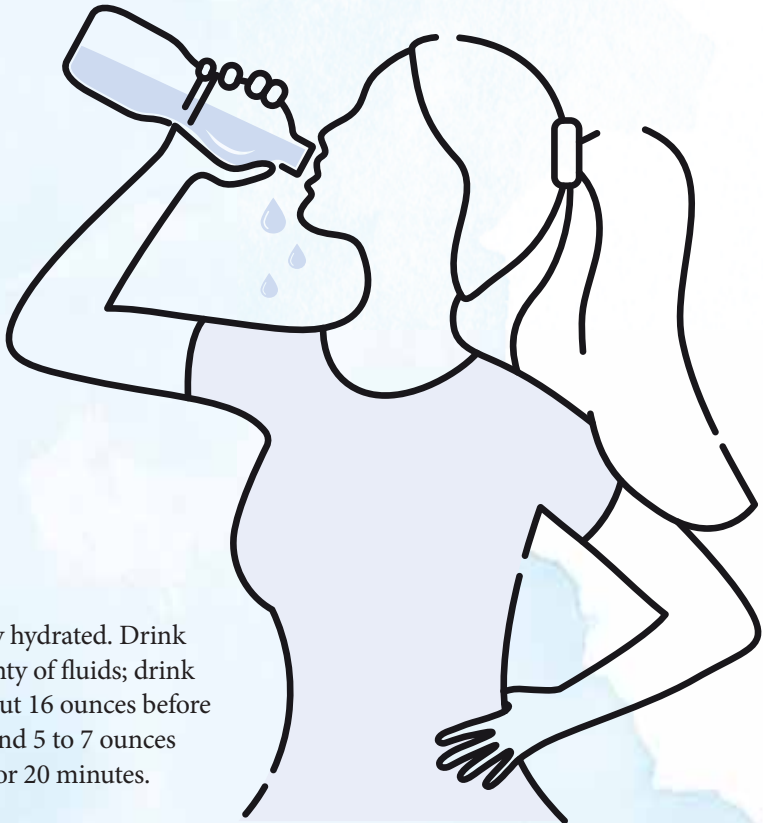
BEAT THE HEAT

10

TIPS TO
KEEP SAFE FROM
HOT WEATHER

BY DR NIHAL AFIFI
*Head of Primary Health at
the Ministry of Health*

1 Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids; drink about 16 ounces before starting and 5 to 7 ounces every 15 or 20 minutes.



10 Eat smaller meals. Eat fruits high in fibre and natural juice. Avoid high protein foods.



9 Avoid direct sun. Instead, find shade or block out the sun if possible.



2 Avoid dehydrating liquids. Alcohol, coffee, tea and caffeinated soft drinks can hurt more than help

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

HEALTH specialists have called for precautions against the ongoing heatwave and urged not to fall prey to any health risk due to the heat conditions.

The Met Office has warned of soaring temperatures that can touch 50 degrees, with the chances of a high heatwave.

“Unlike other years, temperatures this year are soaring fast. It calls for precautions against heat stroke”, said Dr Mahmoud al Rahbi, Head of Emergencies at Al Nahda Hospital.

One needs to take precautions to avoid heat exhaustion, as the heatwave affects everyone adversely.

“One should avoid going out during peak heat time between 12 noon and 4 pm and venture out only if it’s essential. Make sure you cover your head and face, have ample water and fluids and keep on sipping on fluids at regular intervals”, says Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist, Internal Medicine at Apollo Hospital.

Blue-collar workers should rest in the shade during peak hours, work on either side hours and maintain good hydration.

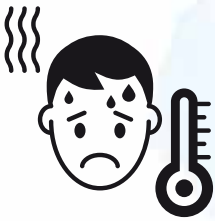
They should try to avoid taking heavy meals or fatty meals; instead, grab light food, fruits like watermelon and in case one has symptoms like body aches, dizziness, tiredness, shivering, fever or loose motion, should consult a doctor immediately as timely intervention can prevent further loss of water and electrolytes from the body and hasten recovery, according to Dr Singhvi.

HEAT STROKE

Heat-related illnesses can present with symptoms such as fatigue, heat rash, cramps, syncope and without intervention, can progress to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Children, the elderly, patients with chronic diseases, outdoor workers and athletes are more vulnerable to heat-related illness.

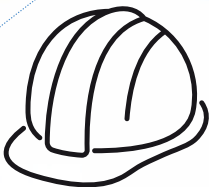
“Those with heat cramps should drink water and have a snack or a drink that replaces carbohydrates every 15 to 20 minutes. They should avoid salt tablets and get medical help if symptoms persist or other comorbidities are present”, adds Dr Safdar Basher, Specialist — Family Physician at Modern Al Salama Polyclinic.



8 Be alert to signs of heat-related illness. Know what to look for and check on other workers at high risk.



3 Wear protective clothing. Lightweight, light-coloured and loose-fitting clothing helps protect against heat. Change clothing if it is completely saturated.



7 Avoid getting sunburn. Use sunscreen and wear a hat if working outside.



4 Pace yourself. Slow down and work at an even pace. Know your limits and ability to work safely in the heat.



5 Schedule frequent breaks. Take time for rest periods and water breaks in a shaded or air-conditioned area.



6 Use a damp rag. Wipe your face or put it around your neck.



873 graduate from University of Buraimi

Al BURAIMI: University of Buraimi celebrated the graduation of the sixth and seventh batch on Thursday at Al Salam Grand Resort in Al Buraimi.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Saba bin Hamdan bin Saba al Saadi, Secretary-General of the National Celebrations, in the presence of members of the State Council and Majlis

Ash'shura, walis, and officials of the public and private sectors.

The university's fourth graduation ceremony saw the 873 students graduate with bachelor's and diploma degrees. Of those, 382 are from the College of Business, 183 from the College of Engineering, 166 from the College of Health Sciences and 142 from the College of Law.

On this joyous occasion, Yusuf

bin Abdul Rahim bin Karam al Farsi, Chairman of the University's Board of Directors, emphasised the need for empowering students with the necessary knowledge and skills, training them to assume responsibility and preparing them to lead the labour market with innovation and creativity in order to achieve Oman Vision 2040. Dr Salim bin Redha Radawi, Chairman of the Univer-



sity's Board of Trustees, pointed out that the university is actively seeking to increase the Omanisation of its cadres in both administrative and academic departments. Hence, in the past two years, the university has hired 55 Omani employees, reaching an Omanisation ratio of 95% in the administrative staff, and 64% in the total human resources at the university.

TENDER NOTICE



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

Tender No.	Tender Title	Closing Date of Selling	Submission Date	Eligibility	Fee
(MDO-TD-2022-04)	Geochemical Exploration Survey	07-06-2022	14-07-2022	Local Registered and International Companies who are experienced and certified in this kind of service.	OMR 25.00/- Twenty Five Omani Rial Only (Non-Refundable)

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

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

• Bid fee shall only be accepted through bank deposit in the following bank account:

Account Name : Minerals Development Oman SAOC
Bank : Sohar International Bank
Branch : Al Qurum
Account : 005020046853
Swift Code : BSHROMRXXX

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

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

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

GCC railway plans back on track: Report

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 28

The plans to develop and expand the rail network in the GCC has gained momentum in recent times, according to a recently released report.

The Oxford Business Group in its latest report said that the railway project 'was given a significant boost in December last year in Riyadh when leaders of the six countries approved the establishment of the GCC Railways Authority.



"The GCC Railway project, initially approved in 2009, was delayed due to oil prices and the Covid-19 pandemic. The project aimed to connect

all six GCC countries via a 2,177-km railway. Starting in Kuwait, passing through Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and finally terminating in the

Sultanate of Oman."

"The development of the railway would significantly improve regional connectivity by reducing transportation times and costs between major GCC cities and ports, improving trade flows across the bloc and attracting investment. The shorter travel times could help bolster the tourism and entertainment sector, an area that a number of Gulf countries are looking to grow in line with wider efforts to diversify their economies," the report said.

RO 1.2 bn for projects this year

FROM PAGE 1

This requires all government authorities to submit a list of developmental projects to be studied and evaluated by the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Tawazun Programme, the office for the management of government projects, the Secretariat General of the Tender Board in addition to the entity concerned with the project implementation, the official said. - ONA



Tender Number	T-22-2022	Tender Announcement	
"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:			
Tender Name	Supply of Tools and Equipment to Mwasalat Workshop		
Tender Fee	NIL	Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Start date for tender document distribution	Sunday, 29 MAY 2022	Last date for tender document distribution	Sunday, 05 JUNE 2022
		Last date for submission	Sunday, 19 JUNE 2022
The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.			
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.			
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.			
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C. "MWASALAT" at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.			
"Mwasalat" Head Quarter, Ghala P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman			
For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om			

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT



Al Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company (GPDC), invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Date of the site visit	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) - Excluded Transfer Charges
GPDC/2022/01	Sale of Fuel Oil (Diesel) at Manah Plant	7 June 2022	8/9/12/13/14 June 2022 at Manah Power Plant	26 June 2022	100/-

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee" and must write the tender name & number on the envelope.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tenderer name & tender No. as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at the Nama Holding reception before 02.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Sunday 26 June 2022.
- Each bid should be accompanied by temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of GPDC. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Interested party to deposit the Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on Account Name: Al Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company, Bank Muscat: 0423011069510017 (Bidder name and Tender Number to be mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- The deposit on the last day of purchasing should be before 02.00 pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- To visit the site at Manah Power Plant, please contact Mr. Said Al Kindi Tel: (99216345) or Mr. Saif AL Sinawi Tel: (71535182) from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm with all PPE.



Nama Holding

In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559287 / 217
E-Mail: siham.alaamri@Holding.nama.om

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT



Numo Institute for Competency Development invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
NICD/2022/02	Providing a learning management system platform with online library courses & technical support	2 June 2022	19 June 2022	100/- (Plus VAT Amount 5/- OMR) Total: 105/- OMR (Non-Refundable)

- Interested parties may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). The supplier user guide is available to be downloaded on the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available on the website. The deposit on the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through the I-supplier portal before 01.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Sunday 19 June 2022.
- Each bid should be accompanied by temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
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In brief

■ RAMALLAH



PALESTINIAN TEEN DIES
AFTER CLASHES WITH
ISRAELI ARMY

A teenager has been killed after a clash with Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian sources said on Friday. A bullet hit the 15-year-old boy in the neck near Bethlehem, the Health Ministry in Ramallah said. The boy was admitted to hospital where he died of his injuries. The Israeli army did not initially comment on the incident. The boy's death comes amid a wave of violence that has killed dozens of people in Israel and the Palestinian Territories since March. The killing of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh during a military operation and Israeli police violence at her funeral have further increased regional tensions.

■ LAGOS



31 DEAD IN STAMPEDE
AT CHURCH IN
SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Thirty-one people were killed and seven more were injured during a stampede at a church event in southern Nigeria, police said on Saturday. "The stampede involved a large crowd that turned up to receive free food donations," a police spokesperson in Rivers State, Grace Iringe-Koko, told dpa. There was pushing in the crowd before the event started in Port Harcourt, which then triggered the stampede. Local media outlet Punch reported that scores of people had gathered for The Kings Assembly "Shop for Free" charity event, held at the Port Harcourt Polo Club, with many queueing from Friday to gain access.

Russia steps up battle for eastern Ukraine

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine: Russia pressed its onslaught on eastern Ukraine on Saturday, saying it had captured the strategic town of Lyman and had successfully tested hypersonic missiles in the Arctic.

Ukrainian forces battled to repel Russian forces from the outskirts of the key city of Severodonetsk, a Ukrainian official said, however denying claims it had been surrounded.

Russia is waging all-out war for the eastern Donbas region -- Ukraine's industrial heartland where President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused Moscow of carrying out a "genocide".

"The town of Krasny Liman has been entirely liberated from Ukrainian nationalists," the Russian defence ministry said, using the Russian name for Lyman and confirming an announcement made a day earlier by pro-Moscow separatists.

Lyman lies on the road to the urban centres of Severodonetsk and Kramatorsk.

Russian forces have been



A boy with the Ukrainian flag draped across his shoulders, stands on the turret of a tank during the opening of the exhibition of destroyed Russian military equipment in the centre of Ukrainian capital of Kyiv on Saturday. – AFP

closing in on Severodonetsk and nearby Lysychansk in Lugansk province, with conflicting reports about the extent of their advance.

Regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said Russian shelling continued on Severodonetsk as Ukrainian soldiers fought to oust

the invading forces from a hotel on its edges, but rejected claims the city had been encircled. "Severodonetsk has not been

cut off... there is still the possibility to deliver humanitarian aid," he told Ukrainian television.

A Lugansk police official, cited by Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti, late on Friday said Severodonetsk was "now surrounded" and Ukrainian troops could no longer leave the city.

FRANCE, GERMANY
URGE TALKS

Three months after Russia launched its invasion on February 24, leaving thousands dead on both sides and forcing 6.6 million people out of the country, Moscow has gained control over swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine, including port cities Kherson and Mariupol.

Other Ukrainian ports have been cut off from the world by Russian warships, preventing key grain supplies from being transported out.

Russia and Ukraine supply about 30 per cent of the wheat traded on global markets.

— AFP

Japanese Red Army founder
Shigenobu freed from jail

TOKYO: Fusako Shigenobu, the 76-year-old female founder of the once-feared Japanese Red Army, walked free from prison on Saturday after completing a 20-year sentence for a 1974 embassy siege.

Shigenobu was one of the world's most notorious women during the 1970s and 1980s, when her radical leftist group carried out armed attacks worldwide in support of the Palestinian cause.

Shigenobu left the prison in Tokyo in a black car with her daughter as several supporters held a banner saying "We love Fusako".

"I apologise for the inconvenience my arrest has caused to so many people," Shigenobu told reporters after the release.

"It's half a century ago... but we caused damage to innocent people who were strangers to us by prioritising our battle, such as by hostage-taking," she said.

She is believed to have masterminded the 1972 machine



Fusako Shigenobu (C) after her release from jail, flanked by her daughter May Shigenobu (R) and her lawyer (L) talks to journalists in Akishima, Tokyo prefecture on Wednesday. – AFP

gun and grenade attack on Tel Aviv's Lod Airport, which left 26 people dead and injured about 80.

The former soy-sauce company worker turned militant was arrested in Japan in 2000 and sentenced to two decades behind bars six years later for her part in a siege of the French Embassy in the Netherlands.

She had lived as a fugitive in the Middle East for around 30 years before resurfacing in Japan.

— AFP

26 people missing after
ferry sinks in Indonesia

JAKARTA: Twenty-six people were missing on Saturday after a ferry ran out of fuel and sank in bad weather off the coast of Indonesia, officials said.

The country's search and rescue agency said the vessel was carrying 43 people when it capsized on Thursday in the Makassar Strait, the sea separating the islands of Sulawesi and Borneo.

News of the accident only reached officials on Saturday, the local head of search and rescue Djuanidi, who like many Indonesians goes by only one name, said.

"Seventeen people have been rescued alive by two tugboats that were passing by. We have deployed a rescue team to search for the missing others," he said.

A group of 40 rescuers were at sea searching for survivors, Djuanidi added.

Marine accidents are common in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of around 17,000 islands where safety standards are often lax.

Last week a ferry carrying more than 800 people ran aground in shallow waters off East Nusa Tenggara province and remained stuck for two days before being dislodged. No one was hurt.

In 2018 more than 150 people drowned when a ferry sank in one of the world's deepest lakes on Sumatra island. — AFP

Thousands gather to celebrate
Northern Ireland centenary

LONDON: Cries of "no surrender" echoed at Stormont on Saturday as more than 10,000 people gathered to celebrate the centenary of Northern Ireland.

While political deadlock remains, people at the centenary event were upbeat and in a relaxed mood as they fanned out across the grounds of Stormont to celebrate the past, present and future of Northern Ireland.

They said the celebration, delayed by a year, was not overshadowed by the row over the Northern Ireland Protocol.

However, the post-Brexit arrangements which have paralysed politics in the region were mentioned repeatedly by speakers and others as one of the great threats to the place of Northern Ireland in the UK.

Grand Secretary of the Orange Order, Rev Mervyn Gibson, appealed for unity within unionism, as he hit out at US President Joe Biden and US Congressman Richard Neal in his speech at Stormont.

He suggested that "compromise" might be necessary to secure the stability of Northern Ireland, telling the crowd: "We do not live in a world as we would like



An Orange Order member displays his badges at Stormont as they gather for their Centenary parade, in Belfast on Saturday to mark the hundred years of the formation of the Northern Ireland State. – AFP

it to be. We live in a world in the reality of today, with its challenges for this generation."

There were cheers and applause during his speech as he defended the place of Northern Ireland in the UK.

"Someone tweeted ahead of today that we as unionists are living in times of uncertainty and opposition. They are right, but that is and always has been the case," he told the crowd.

"We have always lived in such times due to those within who want to destroy Northern Ireland

for the sake of some new utopian Ireland where we are told we will all be valued.

"A new Ireland where the planter after 400 years will finally be accepted. "Let me respond to this magnanimous gesture: we neither need your permission nor acceptance.

"We are here longer than Joe and Richie's folks are in America. We are United Kingdom citizens by birth, Northern Irish through our culture and heritage, which makes us British by choice and conviction. — dpa

جامعة الشرقية

A' SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

A'Sharqiyah University (ASU) is a private higher education institution located in Ibra, north of A'Sharqiyah Governorate of the Sultanate of Oman, about 150 km from Muscat. It was established in 2009 by Ministerial Decision (78/2009) issued by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Auction details:

ASU's Tender Committee has the pleasure to invite the companies to submit their proposals for the following auctions:

Auction No.	Description	Document Collection Deadline	Site Visit Date	Bids Submission Deadline	Document Fees for Each Auction
ASU/04/2022	Providing Popcorn, Fresh Juices & Ice-cream	02/06/2022	06/06/2022 10:00am	16/06/2022	30
ASU/05/2022	Providing meals in food court				
ASU/06/2022	Steam / Water car wash				
ASU/07/2022	Renting a Bookshop to sell stationery, and provide printing and photocopying services				
ASU/08/2022	Providing Vending Machines to sell sweets, refreshments and hot drinks				

The specialized companies of the above assignment can obtain the auction document from Procurement and Contracts Department at A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra, during the working days from 8:00 am to 02:00 pm.

Bids have to be submitted in closed sealed envelopes, addressed to (Tender Committee, A'Sharqiyah University - Ibra), bearing the auction subject with its reference number with no indication to the name of bidders.

The submitting of the main envelope should contain the following:

Separate sealed envelope contains technical proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).

Separate sealed envelope contains commercial proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).

ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids.

http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf

ASU is not bound to accept the highest bid.

For more details, please don't hesitate to contact us on: (+968) 25401115/25401112.

It’s not looking too good for govt of the people, by the people and for the people



JAMELLE BOUIE

The anti-slavery politicians of the 1840s and 1850s did not speak with a single voice.

Some opposed slavery for moral and religious reasons and hoped to wipe its terrible mark from the body politic of the United States. Some opposed slavery but denied that the federal government had any right to interfere with the institution in the 15 states where it persisted. They were committed to “free soil” in the West more than abolition in the South. Still others weren’t concerned with slavery per se as much as they were fiercely opposed to Black migration from the South. They opposed slavery, and supported colonisation, because it was the way to ensure that the United States would remain a “white man’s democracy.”

What tied the anti-slavery factions of American politics to each other wasn’t a single view of slavery or Black Americans but a shared view of the crisis facing the American republic. That crisis, they said in unison, was the “slave power.”

The “slave power” thesis was the belief that a slaveholding oligarchy ran the United States for its own benefit. It had ruled the nation for decades, went the argument, and now intended to expand slavery across the continent and even further into the North.

The “slave power” thesis was also a claim about the structure of American government itself. As these anti-slavery politicians saw it, “the real underpinnings of southern power were regional unity, parity in the Senate, and the three-fifths clause of the Constitution”, historian Leonard L Richards writes in “The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780 to 1860.” Together, this gave the slaveholding oligarchs of the South a virtual lock on much of the federal government, including the Supreme Court. “Between Washington’s election and Lincoln’s”, Richards points out, “nineteen of the thirty-four Supreme Court appointees were slaveholders.”

For anti-slavery politicians, the counter-majoritarian institutions of the American system enabled a faction that threatened democracy. The question of the “slave power”, then, was ultimately one of self-government.

The “slaveholding interest” is “resolved upon the dethronement of the principles of republicanism and the establishment in their stead of an oligarchy, bound together by a common interest in the ownership of slaves,” declared the men who gathered in Pittsburgh on February 22, 1856, for one of the first national meetings of the Republican Party. “The time draws nigh, fellow-countrymen, when



Catie Edmondson, left, a congressional reporter for The Times, with a group of reporters trying to get comments from Senator Joni Ernst, Republican of Iowa, in the Capitol in 2019.

The “slave power” thesis was the belief that a slaveholding oligarchy ran the United States for its own benefit

you will be called on to decide upon the policy and principles of the General Government.” Your votes, they continued, “will determine whether Slavery shall continue to be the paramount and controlling interest in the Federal Administration, or whether other rights and other interests shall resume the degree of consideration to which they are entitled.”

You’ve probably guessed, by now, that this is not an idle history lesson. I am thinking about “the slave power” because I am thinking about the ways that narrow, destructive factions can capture the counter-majoritarian institutions of the American system for their own ends. I am thinking of how they can then use the levers of government to impose their vision of society and civil life against the will of the majority. And I am thinking of this in the context of guns, gun violence and the successful movement, thus far, to make the United States an armed society.

Two weeks ago, a shooter killed 10 people at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York. Three days ago, a shooter killed 21 people, including 19 children, at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Although there has been, in the wake of both atrocities, the requisite call for new gun control laws, no one believes that Congress will actually do much of anything to address gun violence or reduce the odds of gun massacres. The reason is that the Republican Party does not want to. And with the legislative filibuster still in place (preserved, as it has been for the last year, by at least two Democratic senators), Senate Republicans have all the votes they need to stop a bill — any bill — from passing.

The filibuster, however, is only one part of the larger problem of the capture of America’s political institutions by an unrepresentative minority whose outright refusal to compromise is pushing the entire system to a breaking point. Large majorities of Americans favour universal background checks, bans on “assault-style” weapons, bans on high-capacity magazines and “red flag” laws that would prevent people who might harm themselves or others from purchasing guns.

But the American political system was not designed to directly represent national majorities. To the extent that it does, it’s via the House of Representatives.

It’s still Covid’s world. We’re just living in it



FARHAD MANJOO

There are days now when you can almost forget about the virus. Hundreds of thousands of people around

the world are still being infected with Covid-19 daily — an average of about 361 Americans died from it everyday in the last week — but after more than two years and millions of lost lives, the pandemic has given way in headlines and breaking-news crawls to older and more familiar atrocities.

Across much of the United States, the rhythms of life have returned to something like their pre-pandemic tempo. Bars and restaurants are packed, there’s a wedding boom and Memorial Day weekend looks likely to kick off a busy summer travel season.

But remember how giddy we all were for a virus-free summer? It was in May 2021 that officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised that Americans who had been vaccinated could take off their masks and forget about social distancing in most settings. Then, during a successful campaign to vaccinate millions of Americans, the White House began preparing a Fourth of July bash to declare a “summer of freedom” from the virus.

You know how that turned out. America’s vaccination rate was too low, and just when we thought we’d licked it, Covid wriggled free. First the delta variant spread widely, then omicron and its many subvariants. Masks were ordered back on. Boosters were soon recommended for people older than 12. And in the year since what was once billed “hot vax summer”, about 400,000 more Americans died from Covid-19.

This is not a column about the dangers of prematurely

declaring victory against the pandemic. Few American health officials are urging anything but caution and vigilance now.

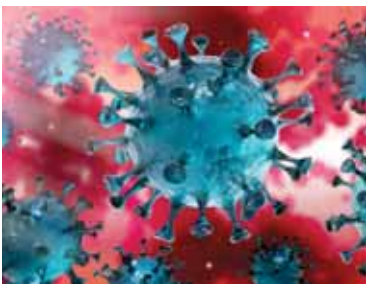
But last summer’s rapid Covid turnaround does illustrate a dynamic that I worry we have yet to internalise: Any peace we’ve reached with the virus may be only a temporary, uneasy one. It seems likely that, at least for the foreseeable future, our lives may continue to be upended by the whims of this wily, unpredictable virus, until we can advance against it.

And it isn’t just our health that’s at stake. I worry that Covid’s very unpredictability could inject volatility into global affairs. It’s been remarkable to watch how the zigs and zags of the pandemic era have confounded not just public health officials and the Biden administration but also the Federal Reserve, the Chinese government, hedge funds and some of the world’s largest businesses.

How can humanity effectively plan for the future if the virus keeps pulling the rug out from under us? From the beginning of the pandemic, we’ve heard about adjusting to a “new normal”, but Covid’s malleability suggests it may not be one new normal we’ll have to get used to. And as long as the virus keeps swerving in unpredictable directions, it may continue to rock our politics, shock our economy and hinder our ability to work collectively to address every other major problem humanity faces, especially global threats like climate change.

The basic problem is that especially since the emergence of the omicron variant, it has become painfully clear that while vaccines prevent severe illness and death, research shows that even vaccinated people can keep getting sick from Covid-19. The elderly, unvaccinated, immunocompromised and others at high risk may continue to face greater danger.

Even though far fewer people are becoming seriously ill from the virus than at its peak, consider the level of disruption to daily life that we may continue to face — the labour



Hundreds of thousands of people around the world are still being infected with Covid-19 daily – an average of about 361 Americans died from it everyday in the last week

shortages brought on by sickness, burnout and overwork, the toll of stress and psychological fatigue on a population that has had little respite from the ever-present danger of disease.

And because the effects of the virus will play out in different ways in different parts of the world, the disruptions could ripple erratically across the globe. China’s troubled zero-tolerance approach to fighting Covid has snarled ports in Europe and the United States and forced some carmakers to suspend production.

Of course, it isn’t just the virus that has undermined global stability. Russia’s war on Ukraine and extreme weather exacerbated by climate change are also roiling the world’s economy.

But look at just about any economic story these days, and you’ll see the pandemic playing some mischief. Robert Califf, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, told a House panel this week that a Covid-19 outbreak caused a delay in the agency’s inspection of the Abbott Nutrition plant implicated in the national shortage of baby formula. Another lapse was “likely due to Covid-19 staffing issues” in the FDA mailroom, Califf wrote.

Eventually the world will adapt to Covid’s tricks. Nasal vaccines that are now in clinical trials may be able to curb transmission of the virus, which could deal a blow to Covid’s many variants. Wider access to therapeutic drugs could make catching Covid less risky and disruptive. And after a few years, perhaps the virus’s waves may settle into a seasonal pattern that we could adapt to living with.

Over the next few years, though, we may be in for a bumpy COVID ride. New variants have proved more contagious. People are burned out on doing much to avoid it. And we have no idea what the next variant may unleash upon a world already thoroughly pummeled by the disease.

Happy summer!

The grandmothers’ bench



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

I was recently listening to a podcast about an initiative in Zimbabwe where a lack of mental health professionals led the authorities to train grandmothers to provide psychological support after receiving training. The programme was called the “friendship bench”. It functioned in such a way that a willing elderly woman would sit on a bench at the hospital garden and the person seeking mental health advice would come and sit next to her. Then a conversation between the two begins. The idea was initially driven by the shortage of trained mental health professionals and clinics, and hence the bench in the open space. Grandmothers were chosen because they have the time and the patience to listen to younger people and use their life experiences and basic training in providing psychological

support. Grandmothers are also well respected in the African communities as they are perceived to be kind and caring and would be more likely to listen to people without being judgmental. The grandmothers received basic training in a simplified version of cognitive behavioural therapy which is a type of therapy that focuses on addressing unhealthy way of thinking and replacing them with new and more positive ones. This is done in three steps, the first step is called “Opening the Mind,” and involves listening to the person, the second step is called “Uplifting,” and involves summarising the problems and asking the person to select one issue that they would like to work on, and the third is “Strengthening,” which involves breaking down the problem and providing a plan. One

AN INITIATIVE IN AFRICA HELPS PEOPLE TO GET MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE FROM TRAINED GRANDMOTHERS IS CONSIDERED A SMART WAY TO ADDRESS STIGMA AND OVERCOME SHORTAGE OF TRAINED COUNSELLORS

of the reasons for the programme’s success is the fact that the person seeking counselling gets to choose what he or she wants to work on even if the grandmother felt that the issue was not the most important one for the person. Therapy is done sitting on a bench in the open space which is an excellent way to relax and puts the person at ease to express himself or herself. This project is an example of initiatives to address stigma

towards mental illness which makes people of different communities hesitant to consult a psychiatrist or psychologist. Stigma is an international phenomenon and different countries developed initiatives to address it. Here in Oman and other Arab countries stigma towards mental illness stems from several misconceptions about the causes of mental illness as some people believe mental health conditions are caused by magic or evil eye or by being less religious. Such beliefs alienate the person and make them shy away from seeking professional advice and suffer in silence which eventually has a negative impact on their health and can lead in some cases to suicide or addiction to alcohol or narcotic substances. What I like about the grandmothers bench initiative is

that it did not cost much in terms of money but was mainly built on people’s creativity and passion to help others. Getting grandmothers involved is a smart way of helping them defeat their own loneliness and enabling them to give back to their communities. If the person needed more specialised treatment the grandmother would arrange for him to see the psychiatrist. So what can we learn from this initiative? For me, the first thought that came to my mind when listing to the postcast was how well power can make people more creative and enable them work with limited resources, how community spirit brings people together to think out of the box and come up with creative ideas. Let us all learn from each other and work towards helping those who are in need.

Climate change effect on Peruvian glaciers debated in German court

ERNESTO TOVAR

German judges and experts have arrived at the edge of a melting glacier high up in the Peruvian Andes to examine a complaint made by a local farmer who accuses energy giant RWE of threatening his home by contributing to global warming. The visit by the nine-member delegation to the region is the latest stage in a case the plaintiffs hope will set a new worldwide precedent. Leading the demand for “climate justice” is 41-year-old Peruvian farmer Saul Luciano Lliuya, who lives in the mountains close to the city of Huaraz. He has filed suit against the German firm RWE, saying its greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for the melting of nearby glaciers. The trip was ordered by the Higher Regional Court in the northern German city of Hamm, where Lliuya submitted his claim against RWE, having previously had his case dismissed by another court in Essen. The delegation must determine what risk the melting glaciers pose to the city of Huaraz and its 120,000 inhabitants below the Palcacocha glacier. “We want the RWE company to be held responsible for environmental damages,” Lliuya, a farmer and tourist guide supported by the German environmental NGO Germanwatch, said. “In general they have polluted all over the world and with this claim we are trying to do something,” added Lliuya. RWE operates in 27 countries in the world, including Chile and Brazil, but not Peru. The claim “was rejected in the first instance because it did not have any legal basis and did not respect German civil law,” RWE spokesman Guido Steffen said. “We are confident this will happen again with the appeal.” RWE insists that “according to law, individual emitters are not responsible for universal processes, that are effectively global, such as climate change.” Lliuya and Germanwatch met during the COP20 climate change conference in Lima in 2014, after which the German NGO’s activists travelled to Huaraz to discuss a potential claim in Germany. Lliuya says his greatest fear is that the melting glaciers result in the Palcacocha lake overflowing. At an altitude of 4,650 metres, the huge blue-turquoise lake sits below the Palcaraju and Pucaranra glaciers in the Huascaran national park, and could flood Huaraz below if it bursts its banks. — AFP

In hopes of returning home, displaced Ukrainians learn how to detect mines



Erika Solomon

The author is a correspondent at NYT International desk in Berlin

The instructor held his hand above his head, revealing a tiny, wavy green piece of plastic nestled in his palm. “See this? Some civilians told me they saw these on either side of the humanitarian corridor they were walking down. They looked to them like leaves,” said Serhii Romaniuk, the teacher, explaining that the green plastic “leaf” in his hand was actually a deactivated land mine. “It was called a safe corridor, but that was a lie. It was mined on either side.” His voice boomed across the dark subterranean room — a school cellar arranged like a military bunker, plastered with posters about different weapons and tires for exercise drills. Listening attentively were a handful of muscular young volunteers from a local defence force, who crammed themselves into the circle of wooden school desks. Sitting among them also were civilians: young boys, women and older men. Basic military preparation courses offered in cities like Lviv were developed with local volunteer defence forces in mind. But now teachers like Romaniuk are opening their doors to civilians, in particular those who have fled fierce battles in the east to the relative safety of western Ukraine. The civilians at Romaniuk’s course live inside the classrooms of the school above. And they have one goal in mind: “to go home,” said 13-year-old Nikita, from the Donetsk region, a key target of Russia’s territorial aims. “But when I go back home, I need to know how to react around weapons or land mines that I might come across. I’m learning all kinds of things here. I didn’t know, for example, that mines could be connected to each other and timed,” he said. The war has displaced more than 12 million Ukrainians, more than half of whom fled to safer regions in Ukraine’s west. But now tens of thousands of civilians are returning to the places where their army has beaten Russian forces into a retreat. And some of those places could be



Serhii Romaniuk, a former military serviceman, teaches a class about mines, ammunition and cluster bombs at a shelter in Lviv, Ukraine.

ACCORDING TO THE UN, UKRAINIAN FORCES HAVE REMOVED NEARLY 80,000 MINES AND EXPLOSIVE DEVICES SINCE THE FULL-SCALE WAR. BUT IT WILL STILL TAKE YEARS TO REMOVE ALL OF THE MINES IN UKRAINE

literal minefields. According to the UN, Ukrainian forces have removed nearly 80,000 mines and explosive devices since the full-scale war. But it will still take years to remove all of the mines in Ukraine, it said. Mines have a debilitating affect on civilian lives because even just the possibility they are present can be paralysing. Many farmers in recaptured territories have found themselves unable to sow their fields after the army warned them it suspected mines had been planted, but said that it was unable to sweep the areas yet. Romaniuk, a white-haired military veteran, held up a heavy, circular tin that he said was an anti-tank mine — the type most often found in farmers’ fields. “If you know about them, how to spot them, then you’re armed at least with knowledge of what to do,”

Romaniuk said. His course is not just about land mines: Romaniuk also runs basic military drills. And he gives lectures on how to determine the types of missiles being used, the shock waves they create and what to do when a bomb hits. It is his civilian students for whom that knowledge is no longer theoretical. The local volunteers are from Lviv, barely damaged by the war, and have never experienced the type of shelling that the civilians they share the classroom with have faced. Ruslan, a 44-year-old from the embattled city of Sievierodonetsk who requested his last name be withheld because he fears repercussions for family in Moscow and Russia-held areas, knows what it is like to be smashed into a wall from a blast wave. He has survived siege and missile strikes and escaped his home under mortar fire. Listening to the lecture brought back painful memories. “It’s really hard. But what choice do I have?” he asked. “We have a terrible war going on, and that affects everyone, whether you’re a grandmother or a child,” he said. “We have to try and save ourselves.” — *The New York Times*

Listen to the little things, to hear the big things



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

The pandemic’s reach has been far and wide, and its socioeconomic consequences have been unprecedented as business closures, job losses, social distancing, isolations, and quarantine restrictions and lockdowns have all wrought significant changes to the social and community fabric of Omani society.

It has been a challenging time for everyone, whether

contracting the virus, or living in fear of the virus, to having colleagues, friends and family fall ill to the scourge, to fatalities. While at the other end of the scale, being unable to hold and reassure loved ones, to be interacting, socially distanced with those whose voices have become strangely muffled by masking, whose faces we cannot see to take non-verbal communication clues from, and whose eyes have been averted in fear and hesitancy. All of these have conspired to induce a level of trauma that can only be reflected upon now that we appear to have a margin of ‘comfort’ concerning the pandemic.

Researcher Hanaa A M Shuwiekh, of Fayoum University in Egypt, has led a study team to research post-Covid-19 stress, post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, and depression across the Middle Eastern region, and has concluded that a significant variance in stressors and traumas well beyond previous records. Discussing the subsequent implications for the mental health needs of all Arab countries, and as an ongoing trauma situation, with indeterminate origins and uncertainty as to its future, the pandemic still maintains a fearsome profile, and for those with failing mental health responses, significant insecurity.

The research suggests that the uncertainties of tenure of the pandemic drive the fear factor, in many cases, beyond rationalisation and conception, as we have a distinctly human focus on time, where they write, “time perspective and anticipation, not the past, are the primary focus.” In other words, we become locked in to a realistic, almost fatal anticipation, or obsessive fear that we will become victims. It is an extraordinarily accurate description of how most of us have felt during the pandemic. Fortunately, for most of us, it passes, but for the others, that trauma revisits them a thousand times daily.

They recognise too that while the world has been profoundly scarred by the pandemic, the cultural and traditional perspectives of the Middle Eastern, North African region are such that much of the trauma and stress remains hidden, neglected, within that renowned cultural reserve, leaving mental health issues dramatically under-reported. The conclusions are, if not alarming, certainly sobering, as the study determined that there was, “a clear need for mental health intervention for Arab countries, especially those most affected. The results suggest high levels of distress that warrant the attention and assistance of world health organisations.”

This remarkably frank research may have focused on what many may consider a ‘taboo’ subject, however, if you agree with their findings and conclusions, you must be concerned for the young people who have had two of their most impressionable years ‘stolen’ from them. If we adults have had to put up with anti-social distancing, work-from-home and disrupted work schedules, at least as adults, we have had the power to make choices and decisions. If we are honest with ourselves, how many of us trusted any decisions to our children, whether 8 years old, or eighteen? I’ll wager, very few. They have gone nowhere, seen nobody, and no matter how glibly you attempt to brush off their introspection, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Netflix, and OSN are no substitute for playgrounds and playtimes.

So, while you remain aware of the symptoms of mental health concerns among mature adults, and especially the elderly and infirm, spare more than passing thoughts, spare time, and explore your children’s reflections on the restrictions of the pandemic. Above all, encourage them to be honest with you, as they may feel unwilling to unburden themselves... doing so in private, one-to-one settings works well, and don’t be scared to divulge your own fears... to reveal theirs.

Listen to anything they will tell you, for if they won’t tell you the little things, they will find it difficult to tell you the big things when they need to.



TROOPING THE COLOUR

Irish Guards march across the parade ground during the Colonel’s Review at Horse Guards Parade in London on Saturday. The Colonel’s Review is identical to Trooping the Colour, the Queen’s annual birthday parade. – AFP

Georgia embodies Trump’s mounting political, legal woes

FRANKIE TAGGART

When most Americans think of Atlanta, they picture vaulting skylines, the thriving music scene and Coca-Cola -- but when Donald Trump looks to Georgia’s seat of government, he sees danger on all sides.

The Peach State has become a potent symbol of the headwinds Trump faces as he fends off a criminal probe into his election interference and questions over his continued relevance in the Republican Party.

The former president staked enormous political capital on his endorsements of a trio of candidates he had handpicked in his crusade to exact vengeance on those who were unwilling to overturn the will of the voters in 2020.

His recruits were wiped out in Georgia’s primary elections last Tuesday -- by a landslide in the case of the governor’s race -- as voters pushed back against his meddling in their state.

Trump has inserted himself relentlessly into Georgia politics, pushing for Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in a now-infamous phone call to “find” enough votes to overturn President Joe Biden’s victory.

Earlier this month, in the plush 12-storey government complex two blocks from the state capitol in downtown Atlanta, Fulton County’s top prosecutor Fani Willis impaneled a special grand jury to investigate Trump’s attempts to overturn Georgia’s election results.

A potentially year-long process, the probe into whether Georgia laws were violated could end in Trump facing a raft of solicitation and conspiracy charges connected to election fraud and interference.

Investigators have already interviewed dozens of witnesses and the jurors are expected to subpoena 30 people who have declined to testify voluntarily.

In the January 2, 2021 call to Raffensperger, Trump repeatedly and falsely claimed to have won Georgia “by hundreds of thousands of votes” during a bizarre hour-long back-and-forth.

Cycling through a laundry list of conspiracy theories to explain his loss, he demanded that Raffensperger “find 11,780 votes” that could be tossed out -- one more vote than the margin of his defeat.

The Washington Post published a transcript and audio of the conversation the following day, sparking uproar in a country already well-versed in Trump’s election theft fantasies.

A month later, Willis announced her criminal investigation, which would take in the phone call and Trump’s public and private pressure on other

officials, including the governor, attorney general and the secretary of state’s chief investigator.

A group of Brookings Institution legal experts wrote in October that Trump’s post-election conduct in Georgia “leaves him at substantial risk of possible state charges predicated on multiple crimes.”

The analysis concluded that Trump’s efforts were “well outside the scope of his responsibilities” as president and predicted that his legal arguments in his defence would likely be “meritless.”

Trump has furiously denied wrongdoing, alleging “prosecutorial misconduct” at a rally in Texas in January,

A POTENTIALLY YEAR-LONG PROCESS, THE PROBE INTO WHETHER GEORGIA LAWS WERE VIOLATED COULD END IN TRUMP FACING A RAFT OF SOLICITATION AND CONSPIRACY CHARGES CONNECTED TO ELECTION FRAUD AND INTERFERENCE

in which he called for protests against “radical, vicious, racist prosecutors,” prompting Willis to request beefed-up FBI security. With the walls closing in, the 75-year-old former reality TV star has turned to the court of public opinion for vindication of his election fraud claims -- and a chance of pursuing his dream of a second term in the White House.

But here, too, he is struggling to make headway.

Raffensperger was among three top officials who easily repelled Trump’s attempted ouster in Georgia, alongside

Governor Brian Kemp and Attorney General Chris Carr.

Each had rebuffed his attempts to interfere in the 2020 election, raising questions about the Republican leader’s continuing sway over his party in one of the country’s key battlegrounds and the waning patience of the wider public over his election disinformation.

“I voted for him, but I didn’t like some of the accusations towards our state,” retired county government official Elva Dornbusch said at an election eve rally for Kemp in Atlanta’s northwestern suburbs.

The 78-year-old said she hadn’t been taken in by any of Trump’s conspiracy theories surrounding the 2020 election.

“I think the election was as fair as could be. My husband worked in the polls and he understands the process. And no, I don’t think it was stolen,” she said.

Whether Georgia represents the shape of things to come nationwide remains to be seen, but signs of Trump’s receding influence have been unmistakable in recent weeks.

While he has had some high-profile successes, such as former White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who won the Republican nomination for governor of Arkansas on Tuesday, Trump has backed as many losers as winners in his endorsements for governor in this election cycle.

“There’s this sort of narrative, this emerging narrative, about the enduring dominance of a Trump endorsement,” Nse Ufot, CEO of voter support non-profit the New Georgia Project, said.

“As awful of a leader that I think that Brad Raffensperger has been and Brian Kemp has been, they were able to demonstrate how (Republicans) could win without having Trump’s endorsement in a place like Georgia.” — AFP



Trump has inserted himself relentlessly into Georgia politics.

sport

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Serbia to play Oman ahead of Qatar WC



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 28

Serbia will play against Oman ahead of their participation at the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 in November. This was stated by Oman national football team manager Maqbool al Balushi during the training session of Red Warriors at Sultan Qaboos Complex on Friday night.

Serbia will face World No 1 ranked team Brazil in Group G at the World Cup besides Switzerland and Cameroon.

“We were very close to have another strong preparatory match against Croatia team as part of their preparation plan for the Fifa World Cup as well. Couple of days

back, the Croatian side considered Saudi Arabia for the friendly as they have qualified to the global football championship and close to Qatar as well”, he told ‘Oman Daily Observer’ in exclusive remarks.

The Red Warriors team manager clarified the reasons and difficulty of arranging more preparatory matches against the qualified teams to the World Cup.

“The time is very tight as the world football governing body Fifa has instructed all the qualified teams and associations to end the first phase of the domestic league by November 14 and the teams should arrive to Doha city on November 19. The participating teams in World Cup have very less time to organise camps in the



neighbouring countries of Qatar”, he added. Meanwhile, the Oman team arrived on Saturday to Doha city to begin their abroad camp

and team’s actual preparations for the forthcoming Arabian Gulf Cup in Iraq, Basra city, and 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

TWO FRIENDLY GAMES

“This camp aims to take benefit of Fifa days as the national team will play two friendly games against Nepal and New Zealand on June 3 and 9 respectively in Doha. In September, the national team will take part in an international friendly tournament in Jordan. The confirmed teams in the tourney till now are Oman, hosts Jordan, Iraq and a fourth team will be finalised and announced soon”, the Oman manager said.

Maqbool stated that the 2022-23 top-tier league will start in August. “Head coach Branko Ivankovic will follow up and monitor the players progress during August with their clubs. This under way camp featured all

the players except Motaz Saleh who could not take part in the first sessions after his campaign with Dhofar in the AFC Cup in Kuwait. Essam al Subhi joined the camp on Saturday while Fayeze and Zaher will join the team on Tuesday in Doha”, he ended.

The preparatory camp began on May 26 and will end on June 10.

OMAN SQUAD

Mohammed al Musalami, Arshad al Alawi, Amjad al Harthi, Khalid al Buraiki, Ahmed al Rawahi, Mohsin al Gahssani, Fahmi Said, Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fahad Adil, Ahmed al Khamisi, Omar al Fazari, Mahmood al Mushafri, Ayman Dhai, Omar al Malki, Mutaz Saleh, Yazeed al Mashani, Mohsin Jawher, Ahmed al Kaabi, Fayeze al Rushaidi, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi, Salah al Yahyaiei, Juma al Habsi, Harib al Habsi, Khalid al Hajri and Essam al Subhi.

Hrustic, Rogic spearhead Australia squad for crunch World Cup play-off

SYDNEY: Ajdin Hrusic, fresh from winning the Europa League with Eintracht Frankfurt, and ex-Celtic star Tom Rogic spearhead Australia’s squad named on Saturday for a crunch World Cup play-off against the United Arab Emirates.

The Socceroos’ bid to directly make a fifth straight World Cup ended with defeats to Japan and Saudi Arabia in March.

It thrust them into an Asian qualifying play-off against the UAE in Doha on June 7, with the winner then facing Peru a week later to book their spot at the finals in Qatar this year.

Attacking midfielder Hrusic heads into camp on the back of his recent Europa League triumph, helping Frankfurt beat Rangers in a penalty shootout, while Rogic was a key part of the Celtic side that won the Scottish league title.

Coach Graham Arnold named nine players who were not involved in the Japan and Saudi games when the squad was hit hard by Covid withdrawals and injuries.

There are returns for Adelaide winger Craig Goodwin, Melbourne City forward Mathew Leckie and Central Coast defender



Kye Rowles along with striker Adam Taggart, playmaker Aaron Mooy, Rogic and Jackson Irvine.

Arnold’s strikeforce was also boosted by the return of the A-League golden boot winner Jamie Maclaren who missed the Saudi game in March to get married.

“Our qualification journey for this year’s World Cup has been challenging, however the bigger the challenge, the greater the reward”, said Arnold, whose job is on the line.

“Just like in 2017 and 2005 I have full belief that our boys will emerge through the play-off system and seal Australia a place at the World Cup.”

Speculation was rampant that Arnold would be sacked after their failure to automatically make the World Cup, but Football Australia backed him to remain until at least the end of the qualifying campaign.

Australia will play a friendly against Jordan in Doha on June 1 to prepare for the UAE game.

AUSTRALIA SQUAD: Nathaniel Atkinson (Hearts/SCO), Aziz Behich (out of contract), Martin Boyle (Al-Faisaly/KSA), Nick D’Agostino (Melbourne Victory), Jason Davidson (Melbourne Victory), Milos Degenek (Columbus Crew/USA), Kenny Dougall (Blackpool/ENG), Mitchell Duke (Fagiano Okayama/JPN), Denis Genreau (Toulouse/FRA), Craig Goodwin (Adelaide United), Ajdin Hrusic (Eintracht Frankfurt/GER), Jackson Irvine (St Pauli/GER), Fran Karacic (Brescia/ITA), Joel King (Odense Boldklub/DEN), Mathew Leckie (Melbourne City), Awer Mabil (out of contract), Jamie Maclaren (Melbourne City), Riley McGree (Middlesbrough/ENG), Aaron Mooy (Shanghai Port FC/CHN), Andrew Redmayne (Sydney FC), Tom Rogic (out of contract), Kye Rowles (Central Coast Mariners), Mat Ryan (Real Sociedad/ESP), Trent Sainsbury (out of contract), Gianni Stensness (Viking FK/DEN), Adam Taggart (Cerezo Osaka/JPN), Marco Tilio (Melbourne City), Danny Vukovic (NEC Nijmegen/NED), Bailey Wright (Sunderland/ENG). – **AFF**

Mancini thanks Chiellini before Italy send-off against Argentina

ROME: Giorgio Chiellini’s final match for Italy against Argentina next week is a chance to thank him for his 18-year service, coach Roberto Mancini said on Friday.

Chiellini has announced his departure from club side Juventus and his international retirement at the end of this season, but the 37-year-old could continue to play in North America, according to several media reports.

The ‘Finalissima’ game at Wembley will be Chiellini’s 117th international appearance for the European champions.

“He made his choice and choices must be respected. I will speak with him to thank him, it’s normal for him to take another route”, Mancini told a press conference at the start of Italy’s training camp.

The defender won a bronze medal at the 2004 Summer Olympics with Italy before being called

up for the senior team by Marcello Lippi in November that year against Finland.

Eighteen years later he is among a group of 45 players called up by Mancini in June. Italy face Copa America winners Argentina in London on Wednesday in the revived meeting of the champions of Europe and South America.

Italy will then play Germany twice, Hungary and England in the Nations League.

Mancini insisted that Chiellini would be the only retirement from the Azzurri, despite Italy missing out on a second consecutive World Cup.

“Some may play their last game of the season (against Argentina) and go home because we have to make choices, but no one is Giorgio’s age”, said Mancini.

“We have to start again, the supporters are still behind us despite what happened.” — **AFF**

France’s sports minister
backs Mbappe to shine
at Paris Olympics



BERLIN: France’s sports minister Amelie Oudea-Castera believes Kylian Mbappe will be the poster boy for the Paris Olympic Games. Mbappe last week decided to stay at Paris Saint-Germain, despite having widely been expected to join Real Madrid on a free transfer. The 23-year-old has signed a three-year deal with PSG, keeping him at the Parc des Princes until 2025. It is a move that Oudea-Castera believes benefits the whole of France, as she suggested Mbappe, already a World Cup winner, will now be the star for the country to get behind in the 2024 Olympics. “To be on the field, in our magnificent sites, to represent his country at the Olympic Games in 2024, he has always dreamed of it and he will make so many of us dream of it,” she said. “It’s a big ‘YES’ in capital

letters. PSG will be fully behind the Olympic and Paralympic Games. I am certain that all this will happen.” Oudea-Castera thinks Mbappe is worth the huge salary the Ligue 1 champions are paying him. “The amounts are very high, but that rewards an immense talent, constant work. He is a huge worker, sport also has its big stars as has entrepreneurship,” she added. “It’s not dirty or ugly, especially since he gives a lot. Kylian makes his values clear, he is very committed.” Oudea-Castera also had a word for Mbappe’s France team-mate Karim Benzema, who she backed to win the Ballon d’Or after an extraordinary season with Madrid that might culminate in a Champions League triumph, with Los Blancos facing Liverpool in Paris on Saturday. — **dpa**

Change of clothes
brings change of luck for
Swiatek at French Open



PARIS: World number one Iga Swiatek racked up her 31st straight win to reach the French Open last 16 on Saturday, partly crediting her victory over Danka Kovinic to a hasty wardrobe rethink. Swiatek, the 2020 champion in Paris, dropped serve three times against her 95th-ranked Montenegrin opponent before sealing a 6-3, 7-5 victory. Kovinic recovered from 1-4 down in the second set to lead 5-4 but Swiatek steadied the ship with a hold and a break before serving out for victory. The 20-year-old Pole admitted that slipping a long-sleeved white shirt over her playing jersey wasn’t just a response to the chilly temperature on Court Philippe Chatrier. “These are superstitions, so I don’t really believe

in that. But I have seen sometimes when people were changing their outfits in between sets and they suddenly came back. I don’t know if that has something to do with the level of the game,” said Swiatek. “I know that in Guadalajara, Aryna (Sabalenka) changed outfits when she was playing against me, and she won the next set. So I didn’t know if the outfit won for Aryna but she was still playing good tennis. Some players are doing that.” Her winning streak is the best on tour since Serena Williams’s run of 34 successive wins in 2013. However, that stretch will be tested on Monday by teenager Zheng Qinwen who has marked her debut appearance in Paris by becoming only the fourth Chinese player to reach the fourth round. — **AFP**

Lyon dominate Toulon to claim
maiden European Challenge Cup title



Lyon’s Georgian wing Davit Niniashvili (R) scores a try then refused for out of bounds during the European Challenge Cup rugby union final match between Lyon Olympique Universitaire (LOU) and Rugby Club Toulonnais (RCT) at the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, southeastern France, on Friday. — **AFP**

MARSEILLE: New Zealanders Jordan Taufua and Charles Ngatai were at the heart of a tough-as-teak Lyon defence that helped the Top 14 team to its first European title with a comprehensive 30-12 victory over Toulon in the Challenge Cup final on Friday. Lyon led 10-7 at half-time thanks to Baptiste Couilloud’s try converted by Leo Berdeu, who also bagged a penalty. Baptiste Serin crossed for Toulon’s try, Louis Carbonel hitting the extras. Lyon turned the screw in the second-half, with a penalty try followed by a try for Pierre-Louis Barassi with Toulon’s Aymeric Luc in the sinbin. Cheslin Kolbe crossed for a late consolation try, but by then Berdeu and Ngatai had each hit a penalty to condemn Toulon to a fourth Challenge Cup final defeat. Taufua said his team had been “after a performance we could be proud of and I thought we did that tonight. “Championships are won on defence and the boys stepped up.” Toulon coach Franck Azema



said Lyon had produced a “great performance”. “Rugby is a pressure game and we yielded to the pressure. “They were better in just about everything.” Fans had barely got comfortable before Couilloud gathered a Ngatai chip and streaked over, but referee Luke Pearce ruled the try out because of an earlier knock-on by Lyon captain Taufua. Taufua’s barn-storming start to the match, however, got just desserts in the eighth minute when he intercepted a pass by Italy veteran Sergio Parisse and surged towards the Toulon tryline. The defence managed to bring him down, but the former Samoa and New Zealand under-20 representative popped up a delicious offload that Couilloud took without breaking stride for the opening try. Berdeu kicked the conversion despite the deafening whistles from the massed ranks of Toulon fans. Toulon reacted as they would

have wanted, enjoying their first period of sustained pressure, Serin eventually crashing over from short range with the Lyon defence in tatters. - Impressive Ngatai - Carbonel booted the extras, but Berdeu restored Lyon’s lead after Toulon were penalised for a high tackle. One-cap All Black centre Ngatai, who is due to join Leinster at the end of the season, seemingly went close as he ran on to his own grubber through, but referee Pearce wasn’t even tempted to go to the television match official. Toulon roared back up the pitch, the ball was worked wide to Fiji’s Olympics sevens gold medallist Jiuta Wainiqolo and only a double tackle from Toby Arnold and Josua Tuisova prevented a try. Berdeu shanked a straightforward second penalty just before half-time, and if that was not bad enough, Lyon’s teenage Georgian winger Davit Niniashvili had a try disallowed after his effort to go in under the posts saw his boot just nick the deadball line. — **AFP**

Rookie Di Giannantonio claims
shock Italian MotoGP pole

MUGELLO: Fabio Di Giannantonio claimed a shock pole position in the Italian MotoGP on Saturday, the Italian snatching top spot on the grid for the first time in his career on his final lap at Mugello. Gresini rider Di Giannantonio had led for large tracks of the day’s second qualifying run but looked to have lost pole to Johann Zarco and then Marco Bezzecchi until he posted a stunning time of one minute, 46.156sec on the day’s last lap. The 23-year-old Italian had made his way into the second run after topping the times in the first qualifying session and his team celebrated wildly as he crossed the line after time had elapsed to snatch pole at the last. Di Giannantonio is in his first



season in the top class MotoGP after finishing seventh with Kalex in Moto2 last season. He was one of two rookies in the top two positions alongside VR46 Racing Team rider Bezzecchi, who took second in the grid on his Ducati for his first ever top line finish in MotoGP, just 0.088sec

behind Di Giannantonio. Reigning champion and current overall standings leader Fabio Quartararo finished sixth, the Yamaha rider 0.350sec off the pace and behind a top five dominated by Ducati riders on good form on home turf. Quartararo leads the championship standings by 14 points ahead of Aprilia’s Aleix Espargaro, who finished seventh. Marc Marquez finished in 11th, the six-time MotoGP champion spinning off his bike almost instantly after making the second session alongside Di Giannantonio. Spaniard Marquez overtook to have the open track in front of him only to completely lose control on turn two and flew off the bike across the tarmac. He walked away and recovered to take part in the rest of the session but was nowhere near the leaders. Francesco Bagnaia posted the fastest time in the third practice but finished fifth in qualifying, 0.315sec behind the shock pole winner. — **AFP**



Butler’s heroics power Heat over Celtics to force NBA game 7

NEW YORK: Jimmy Butler scored a career play-off high 47 points and the Miami Heat forced a winner-take-all showdown for an NBA Finals berth by defeating Boston 111-103 on Friday.

The Heat levelled the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals at 3-3 to set up a seventh-game clash with the Celtics on Sunday at Miami.

“We know what we’re capable of. We get to take it back to the crib and win game seven,” Butler said. “We knew we were going to come in here and get one. We know we’re going to win this next one too.”

Sunday’s winner will face the Golden State Warriors in the NBA Finals that begin on Thursday in San Francisco.

Butler hit 16-of-29 shots from the floor, 4-of-8 from 3-point range, and all 11 of his free throws in 46 minutes while contributing nine rebounds, eight assists, four steals and a blocked shot.

“Jimmy just brought his competitive will tonight,” Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. “And it was a will that would not let us lose.”

Such faith inspired the superb effort, Butler said.

“My team... my coaches got so much belief in me,” Butler said.

“They give me that confidence to just go out there and play basketball the right way and just hoop.”

Butler battled through a sore right knee to produce his fourth 40-point game of the play-offs and thanked a message from former Miami star guard Dwyane Wade for inspiring him.

“He was telling me I could do this,” Butler said. “Knee a little banged up but nobody cares. Go out there and continue to build your legacy and it meant the world to me.”

The Heat seek a second trip to the NBA Finals in three seasons, having lost to the Los Angeles Lakers in 2020. Miami last captured the NBA crown in 2013.

The Celtics seek their first trip to the NBA Finals since losing the 2010 title to the Lakers. The Celtics haven’t won the NBA crown since 2008.

Jayson Tatum led Boston with 30 points while reserve Derrick White had 22 and Jaylen Brown added 20.

“We’re frustrated,” White said. “Everybody is motivated to get on that plane and go down there and get the win.”

Miami’s Kyle Lowry added 18 points and 10 assists before fouling out. — AFP

Debutants Gujarat Titans face Rajasthan Royals in IPL final

AHMEDABAD: Indian Premier League debutants Gujarat Titans will take on a Shane Warne-inspired Rajasthan Royals in Sunday’s final, both teams eyeing a fairy tale victory after each enjoyed a dominant season run.

Fourteen years ago, Warne led underdogs Rajasthan to glory in the marquee T20 tournament’s inaugural season.

This year they face another set of first-timers in the final of a season that began just weeks after the Australian spin legend’s shock death.

“Shane Warne... is such an influential figure for the Rajasthan Royals and having led the team to success in that first season,” said star batsman Jos Buttler.

“We will miss him dearly, but we know he is looking down on us with a lot of pride.”

In-form Buttler led Rajasthan’s fightback in the second qualifier to knock out Royal Challengers Bangalore and reach their first IPL final after they won the inaugural edition in 2008.

He equalled Virat Kohli’s record of four tons in an IPL season with 106 not out during Rajasthan’s chase, and leads the season’s batting chart with 824 runs.

Gujarat skipper Hardik Pandya has established his side as the team to beat this year after topping the league table and storming into the final when they beat Rajasthan by seven wickets in the first play-off.

“It’s really going to be a tough challenge,” Rajasthan head coach



Kumar Sangakkara said of the looming showdown.

“(Pandya) is an exceptional player. He has led his side really well,” the former Sri Lanka captain told reporters.

“They are an exceptional team, highly skilled, really well settled, performing at peak consistently through this entire tournament.”

Gujarat will be playing at their home ground at the world’s biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

The franchise, owned by venture fund CVC capital, have been a force to reckon with since their opening win over fellow newcomers Lucknow Super Giants and they were the first to

book a play-off spot.

KILLER’ MILLER

South Africa’s David Miller and Indian batsman Rahul Tewatia have been key to their success with the middle-order pair rescuing Gujarat out of tough spots.

“Killer” Miller, as the left-handed hard hitter is known, made an unbeaten 68 to power Gujarat into the final early this week with a seven-wicket win in Kolkata.

Tewatia made two sixes in the last two balls to snatch a one-run victory over Punjab Kings last month.

Mohammed Shami has meanwhile led the team’s

dominating bowling charge with 19 wickets in 15 matches, ably assisted by Afghan spinner Rashid Khan. Rashid not only claimed 18 wickets, but also boosted the team’s batting at crucial moments, including two sixes on the final two balls to pull off a sensational chase in the league stage, mirroring Tewatia’s feat.

“The more important thing was the balance that we had in the team really helped us to reach this position,” said the champion leg-spinner. Everyone on the team had been certain of what role they were to play, he added. “There was no confusion in the players’ mind.” — AFP

Duplantis launches outdoor season with Eugene Diamond League pole vault win

EUGENE, UNITED STATES: World record-holder Armand Duplantis made a smooth if unspectacular start to his outdoor season on Friday, winning the men’s pole vault at the Eugene Diamond League with a vault of 5.91m.

The US-born Swede — known as “Mondo” — had victory in hand when he made three failed



attempts at 6.07 and said that left a sour taste in his mouth.

“I feel like when I go into any competition I want to get over six metres now,” said Duplantis, who set two world records in two weeks at the World Indoor Championships in March, taking the new benchmark to 6.20m.

He won at the Diamond League in Doha earlier this

month, but that competition was moved indoors because of high winds, making Friday his first outdoor competition in a season where the World Championships will be held at the same venue in Eugene in July.

Duplantis said he was “just trying to get a feel for outdoors” at the event, held at Hayward Field. — AFP

Lee falls to Masson, ousted from LPGA Match-Play



Bank of Hope LPGA
Match-Play Hosted by
Shadow Creek – Day Three

LOS ANGELES: Germany’s Caroline Masson beat top-seeded Minjee Lee 2&1 on Friday to cap a perfect 3-0 round-robin and eliminate the Australian star from the LPGA Match-Play in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Masson booked a round-of-16 tilt with Andrea Lee on Saturday at Shadow Creek.

Lee beat Northern Ireland’s Stephanie Meadow 2&1 to win her four-woman group.

Lee, the world number four coming off a victory at the Founders Cup two weeks ago, won the 14th and 15th holes to cut her deficit to one hole.

But Masson ended the match with a par at the 17th.

“I knew it was going to be tough,” Masson said. “Minjee is a great player. She has been playing great the last -- well, years really, but the last few weeks as well.

Also it’s match play, and I feel like pretty much anybody can beat anybody out here.”

Masson was proud of her ability to stay on an even keel as Lee challenged, something she said she’d done well throughout the three days of round-robin play.

The German also notched 2&1 wins over Brittany Altomare and Chun Young-in, never trailing in a match.

“I kind of went a little longer than I could’ve in all three matches, but I closed it out in the end,” she said.

Six more of those advancing to the knockout stages swept their groups, with Sweden’s Madelene Sagstrom, England’s Jodi Ewart Shadoff, South African Paula Reto, Hong Kong’s Tiffany Chan, American Lilia Vu and South Korean Choi Hye-jin also going 3-0.

Sagstrom beat Ryann O’Toole 2&1 on Friday to line up a match against American Emma Talley.

Shadoff topped Jasmine Suwannapura 3&2 and will take on Chan, the next-to-last seed who is playing on a sponsor’s invitation. South Korea’s Jenny Shin, who lives in Las Vegas, rallied to tie her match with Kang Hae-ji and advance.

South Korean Ji Eun-hee advanced in dramatic style with a tie against Malaysia’s Kelly Tan. Tan was 2-up with two to play, but Ji produced a couple of clutch putts to get the half-point she needed to move on.

Two groups were decided in play-offs, with Scotland’s Gemma Dryburgh beating Gaby Lopez of Mexico and Thai Moriya Jutanugarn beating South African Ashleigh Buhai, both deciders finishing at the first hole. — AFP



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BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by its subsidiaries Mubadrah and Shumookh Investment and Services, is currently implementing more than 30 vital infrastructure projects aggregating over RO 200 million in investments across its network of 11 industrial cities.

It includes RO 100 million in construction projects benefiting eight industrial cities, said Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani (pictured), CEO of Madayn. Separately, Madayn attracted



and localised 130 industrial, commercial and service projects during the first quarter of 2022 with an investment value touching RO 64 million and covering a total area of 818,000 sq metres.

According to AlHasani, Madayn is completing the infrastructure works for the expansion of phase

7 in Suhar Industrial City at a total cost surpassing RO 13 million.

This project, which has reached 77 per cent of completion rate, involves completing the remaining works of phase 7, setting up water tanks, connecting main water line, fencing and security gates.

Work is also under way to

complete construction of power plant, implementing irrigation networks, and water and sewage networks.

Moreover, the expansion project of Nizwa Industrial City (Phases 3 & 4), which is valued at RO 5.5 million, has reached 77.6 per cent of completion rate in



infrastructure works on an area of one million sq metres. Most of road works, electrical connections and remaining excavation works are in progress.

Madayn is also continuing with infrastructure development project at Sur Industrial City. This project constitutes of road construction, surface water drainage, drainage channels, water-supply infrastructure, switchgear system, supply and installation of low voltage cables, supply and installation of solar street light system, and potable

water network.

Madayn has also begun to implement infrastructure related roads and services at Mahas Industrial City at a total value of more than RO 4.5 million. Madayn has completed awarding the infrastructure development tender in the industrial city of an area of more than 1 million sq m.

This project comprises road works, rain drainage networks, sewage networks and water networks.

As for Al Buraimi Industrial City, Madayn is implementing the infrastructure development project in phases 1 and 2 at a total cost exceeding RO 5 million. This includes the implementation of sewage treatment plant with a capacity of 400m2, road rehabilitation works, water supply distribution network, electrical works, street lighting (85 lighting poles) for phase 2.

TURN TO PAGE 15

CBO cautions against ‘abusive’ debt collection practices

New curbs: Abusive practices include daily phone calls, threatening or aggressive language, harassing relatives and coworkers, publicly embarrassing or shaming borrowers, knocking at borrowers’ doors, making late-night or early morning calls, threatening to use violence or physical force

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Aggressive debt collection activities – long the bane of financial systems in many countries around the world – have been strictly barred in the Sultanate of Oman, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has warned.

The caveat is set out in a newly introduced regulatory framework formulated by the apex bank for the protection of the rights and interests of financial consumers in the country.

A circular issued by the CBO to this effect prohibits



licensed banking and financial entities, as well as their third party agents, from employing “abusive” debt-collection practices” in the pursuit of debtors.

“Abusive practices include, but are not limited to, daily phone calls, threatening, offensive, obscene, discriminatory or aggressive language, harassing relatives and coworkers, publicly embarrassing or shaming

borrowers, knocking at borrowers’ doors, or making calls during late-night or early morning hours, adopting an intimidating manner, using or threatening to use violence or physical force against the borrower, misleading the borrower about the extent of debt or consequences of nonpayment,” the Central Bank explained in its circular.

Importantly, banks and other licensed financial

institutions are mandated to formulate guidelines detailing the types of debt-collection practices that are “appropriate”, on the one hand, and those that are “inappropriate”, on the other.

Additionally, banks are required to clearly spell out in their credit agreements with customers the type of debt that can be collected on their behalf by third-party service providers, and the “manner in which such debt can be collected”.

Licensed entities transferring or selling their debt to another party, perhaps without the knowledge of the borrower, are obligated to notify their customers of the transaction, as well as provide all relevant information about the new owner of the debt.

Besides mandating fair debt collection practices, the new CBO regulatory framework also seeks to strengthen customer interests and safeguards with regard to: Disclosure and Transparency, Fair Treatment and Business Conduct, Data Protection and Privacy; Dispute Resolution; and Financial Education and Financial Capability.

Omani non-oil exports jump 57 per cent in value

MUSCAT: The value of Omani non-oil exports surged 57.5 per cent to RO 1.170 bn during January-February this year, up from RO 742.9m for the corresponding period of 2021, as the manufacturing sector benefited from a strong economic recovery, alongside government measures to stimulate industrial activities and simplifying procedures.

Non-oil exports accounted for 33.2 per cent of total commodity exports, supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to diversify economically and enhance the performance of economic activities.

Commodity exports jumped 51.5 per cent in January-February 2022 to reach a value of RO 3.518 billion, up from RO 2.321 billion in the same period last year. However re-exports fell 29 per cent to RO 187.9 million this year, down from RO 264.4 million in 2021. Oil and gas exports soared to RO 2.160 billion, up from RO 1.314 billion last year.

Chemical and associated industries, mineral products, ordinary metals, plastics and manufactured goods contributed about 75 per cent of total non-oil exports, according to the NCSI.— ONA

SSA Business Solutions Welcomes Mr. Ali Mohamed Juma Al Lawati as Senior Partner for GCC Region

It is our pleasure to welcome Mr. Ali Mohamed Juma Al Lawati to the SSA family as Senior Partner, GCC Region. Mr. Ali has had an illustrious career of over 2 decades across financial services, insurance and diversified sectors and brings rich entrepreneurial spirit and zeal to SSA. He has served on the board of a number of esteemed institutions including Vision Investment Services, Vision Insurance, Oman Development Bank SAOC, Muscat Securities Market and Vision Emerging GCC Fund. He holds a B.Sc. in Mathematics and Statistics and received MBA from London Business School. We wish him a great journey with SSA in helping scale the firm to further great heights !!

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Capital Intelligence affirms Alizz Islamic Bank’s rating with stable outlook

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank announced that the international credit rating agency Capital Intelligence has affirmed Alizz Islamic Bank’s (AIB) Long- and Short-Term ratings on the Oman National Scale at ‘omAA’ and ‘omA1+’, respectively with stable outlook which was improved during the year as a result of change in outlook of Oman Sovereign rating and strengthening of the bank’s financial position.

The report emphasised that the credit rating of AIB is based on the bank’s resilient financing quality metrics, sound liquidity position and a return to net profit in 2021.



The non-performing financing ratio remained moderately low and a more than average provision coverage

position compared to the peer banks was maintained.

The continued expansion of customer deposits further

supports the bank’s sound liquidity position. The bank’s return to net profit in 2021 was aided by a wider net financing margin and a rise in fee based income.

Commenting on the result of this report, Sulaiman al Harthi (pictured), Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank, said, “Strengthening of the fiscal balance and improved macroeconomic indicators resulted in improvement of the outlook for Oman’s sovereign rating and will have a positive effect on the banking sector as well. The bank will continue its transformation journey and intend to deliver sustainable

results based on well-defined strategy and improved economic environment of Oman.”

“Oman is witnessing a gradual recovery in the economic activities after lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. This along with other initiatives taken by the government to support the economy has helped the banking sector to navigate through these challenging times.

“The bank is on the right path to continue its growth momentum with strong support from its shareholders and endeavour to enhance the shareholders’ value and emerge as a solid Islamic banking franchise,” he added.

Bank Nizwa announces instant account opening digitally



MUSCAT: Leading the way for change, Bank Nizwa has been at the forefront of digital transformation and innovation. With the government also encouraging the digitalisation of the banking and financial sector, Bank Nizwa has ensured that it adopts all the measures necessary to create a seamless transition for its customers.

In line with its customer-centric vision and values, the bank now enables customers to open their Sharia-compliant accounts from the comfort of their homes through Bank Nizwa’s Mobile Banking App. This enhancement provides new customers with a valuable experience as an efficient business tool.

Bringing Islamic banking close to the community, the bank incessantly works towards delivering its customers with easy, efficient and secure offerings. Bank Nizwa continually invests and harnesses technology and innovation to offer premium Sharia-compliant financial services.

“Bank Nizwa’s investment in technology geared towards digitalisation coupled with ongoing product innovations have helped us get closer to our customers and has made banking a more pleasurable experience.

“By continuously enhancing our mobile app and adding new features to it, we are able to benefit those individuals who might not be able to visit our branches to open an account. Bringing this facility to their homes, we want to be there with our customers every step of the way and give them access to our services round the clock,” said Sadiq al Lawati, Head of E-Channels and Digitalisation, Bank Nizwa.

Tasees, ASMED hold boot camp for SMEs



MUSCAT: In working towards the strategic goal of establishing the Sultanate of Oman as a hub for entrepreneurship and innovation, Khimji Ramdas Eshraqa’s Entrepreneurship Academy (EEA) – ‘Tasees’ recently organised a first-of-its-kind “Business Finance” workshop for small-medium enterprise (SME) owners.

The workshop was part of a training and development boot camp series in collaboration with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED).

‘Tasees’ training programme is the first in a series of workshops organised for SMEs who hold a Riyada card, and have been in business for more than a year. Initiated to solve a major pain

area for SME owners, especially finance — the programme received over 200 applications from across the Sultanate of Oman. 15 SME owners were then chosen to join the training programme’s classroom sessions held at EEA’s premises in Athaiba, over three consecutive days.

Participants were chosen from various sectors including tourism, oil and gas supplies, manufacturing, healthcare, auto servicing, construction, and land surveying, to name a few.

Some of the topics that were discussed during the workshop include the history of business, use of money, income statements, the health of a business, financial ratios, net present value, as well as internal rate of return.

Shell Oman conducts technology seminar to promote innovation

MUSCAT: To showcase Shell’s latest developments, Shell Oman conducted the Shell Technology Seminar 2022 that took place in both Muscat and Salalah and saw in attendance business customers, partners and leading regional experts from Shell.

The event, which was dedicated to showcasing Shell’s extensive range of lubricant solutions, also introduced guests to Shell’s newly rolled out Lube Advisor.

Responding to the increased reliance on remote technological solutions, Shell’s Lube Advisor is a breakthrough in modern technology. A wearable gadget, it supports customers in optimising their lubricant operations by providing remote consultations. With a keen focus on safety, the Lube Advisor also provides real-time monitoring of field technicians while offering them audio-visual assistance when performing maintenance services.

The seminar announced that Shell’s customers in Oman and the Middle East can now access the Lube Advisor to enhance the safety of workers, increase



on-ground efficiency and boost overall operational decision-making.

Dedicated to maximising equipment efficiency by reducing downtime and improving efficiency, the seminar also highlighted the various applications of Shell’s diverse range of lubricants and how the improved technology could save time, money, and even lives.

Commenting on the company’s take on innovation in the lubricants sector, Mahmoud al Abri, Commercial Lubricants - General Manager, Shell Oman,

said, “As a local company with a global brand, Shell Oman is committed to utilising our access to global know-how and share knowledge with our customers and partners, and the Shell Technology Seminar is an ideal platform for us to connect, engage and learn more especially in the presence of the Shell Lubricants experts and subject matter experts.”

Shell Oman is committed to working in line with the directions and priorities of Oman Vision 2040 and creating in-country value.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds announces Sparkling Summer offers

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 285 outlets spread across the globe, has unveiled the Sparkling Summer offer to celebrate the onset of summer.

This offer will run at all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets located in Oman until June 18, 2022.

Through the Sparkling Summer offer, the brand gives its customers an exclusive chance to enjoy free gold coins with the purchase of diamond and precious gem jewellery.

Customers get half gram gold coin on every RO 300 worth of diamond jewellery purchase and a 1 gram gold coin on every RO



500 worth of diamond jewellery purchase.

“With the school vacation fast approaching, many of our

customers are gearing up to travel to their home country.

“They will want to gift their loved ones back home or even buy

something for themselves to stand apart during a family function.

“We wanted to treat them to an array of exclusive designs when they are at our showrooms, which is why we have launched new jewellery collections specifically for this season. And with the exclusive offers, we are sure that we can add an extra value to their purchases,” said Shamlal Ahamed, MD – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

To add more glitter to the season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled the latest collection of jewellery in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers.

Ooredoo wins Comex Excellence in Technology Award for Data Centre

MUSCAT: Forging its path as a data and tech leader, Ooredoo has bagged the Comex Excellence in Technology Award 2022 for its state-of-the-art Data Centre.

Announced during the Comex Technology Show at the Oman

Convention and Exhibition Centre, the award recognised the facility’s success in advancing Ooredoo’s own operations, while propelling Oman’s digital transformation, broadening Internet accessibility and strengthening digital communications across the country.

Dr Ahmed bin Abdullah al Abri, Chief Technology and Information Officer at Ooredoo, said “We opened our latest facility in Bausher in 2021, which ranks as a Tier 3 Plus data centre in Oman. It represents a major breakthrough in hosting and data processing, and has set the foundations for the development of transformative technologies such as 5G, cloud services, IoT, and other high-potential, high-growth areas.”





New Age Banking Summit to focus on evolving financial landscape



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

The seventh edition of New Age Banking Summit, organised by UMS Events, will take place at Al Bustan — A Ritz Carlton Hotel on May 31, 2022. Tahir al Amri (**pictured**), Executive President, Central Bank of Oman (CBO) will be the Chief Guest and keynote speaker at the event hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani and supported by Oman Banks Association.

The event will highlight the fast changing financial eco system and how the banks are becoming future-ready by adopting new strategies, innovating products and services, and reaching out to customers on digital channels, while proactively combating cyber risks.

It will serve as an engaging platform to focus on new business models to make the banks relevant for next generation customers, and empower them to devise new growth paths and build operation efficiencies.

It will include presentations

and discussions involving a cross-section of industry experts from the Sultanate of Oman, rest of the GCC and international markets on subjects including digital transformation, borderless financial ecosystem, fintech, AI, intelligent automation, digital payments, green financing, core banking, crypto eco-system, cybersecurity, digital customer experience, financial inclusion, 5G and cloud services.

The event will be attended by industry thought leaders, senior bankers, fintech specialists, finance & investment experts, insurance professionals and consultants. The Oman Banking & Finance Awards will be co-located with the Summit.

The awards will felicitate the key industry leaders, organisations and products/solutions that are at the forefront of new-age financial services in the Sultanate of Oman. The event will also host a workshop on the topic 'ESG Adoption in BFSI Sector' for the select attendees. It will be conducted by Imad Alfadel, Founder & Managing Partner, ESG Integrate, UAE.

Commissioning phase of Duqm Refinery to start in Q1 2023

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

Duqm Refinery, a 50:50 joint venture of OQ Group of the Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait Petroleum International of Kuwait, is now almost 90 per cent complete in its construction and is slated for the start of the commissioning phase in the first quarter of 2023.

According to Talal bin Hamed al Aufi (**pictured**), CEO of OQ Group, work on the \$8 billion undertaking at Duqm SEZ, is progressing at a rapid pace despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

In a statement to ONA, Al Aufi said the construction phase comprises three major packages being implemented by different consortiums and contractors.

In addition to the main components of the complex, the construction phase also includes storage and export facilities for



liquid and bulk petroleum products at Port of Duqm, crude oil storage facilities at Ras Markaz and a 80-kilometre crude oil pipeline line from Ras Markaz to the refinery.

When operational, Duqm

refinery will enhance the country's refining capacity by refining 230,000 barrels of crude oil products per day, which will serve demand growth in the region and globally, as well as add to the SEZ's investment appeal.

Dentons wins IFN award for Oman Air dual facility financing

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

Multinational law firm Dentons' Banking and Finance team has been awarded IFN's Ijarah Deal of the Year for Oman Air's dual facility refinancing.

Dentons advised Oman Air in relation to an RO 149 million conventional facility from Bank Muscat and an RO 46 million Islamic term finance facility (Service Ijara Facility) through Bank Muscat's Islamic window Meethaq Islamic Banking, both facilities were supported by a guarantee from the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. The team was led by partner Sadaf Buchanan (Muscat).

The accolade was one of three award-winning deals that Dentons had garnered in the IFN Deals of the Year Awards 2022, announced in Dubai on May 27,



2022. These awards recognise excellence, achievement and leadership in the Islamic finance industry.

The other two award-winning categories that Dentons won accolades for include: Social Impact Deal of the Year, which was awarded to IsDB's \$2.5 billion sustainable Sukuk.

Dentons advised IsDB, a multilateral development finance institution located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on the issuance of \$2.5 billion trust certificates under its \$25 billion trust certificate issuance programme, which marks the IsDB's largest issuance to date.

The proceeds will be used to finance green and social projects.

The team was led by partner Alex Roussos (Dubai); The Kuwait Deal of the Year was awarded to Kuwait Finance House's \$750 million Tier 1 Sukuk.

Dentons advised the joint lead managers (including Standard Chartered Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Emirates NBD and First Abu Dhabi Bank) in respect of KFH's Reg S \$ perpetual tier 1 capital securities issuance, which was the first AT1 issuance for KFH and represented its first foray into the international capital markets overall. The team was led by partner Alex Roussos (Dubai).

Commenting on the awards, Dubai-based partner Alex Roussos said: "We are thrilled to have supported our clients on these three key transactions in the Islamic finance space. Congratulations to everyone at Dentons who was involved in these matters!"

RO 200 million worth infrastructure projects under way to strengthen Oman's industrial cities

FROM PAGE 13

Work is under way to complete the sewage plant and rainwater drainage networks.

The CEO of Madayn stated that the project of developing Ibri Industrial City (Phase 1) is valued at RO 9 million and includes road works, and services network such as sewage, rain and telecom networks, and wadi protection walls. A total of 303 solar lighting poles will be installed.

Work is also moving ahead with the construction of KOM 6 building, which will add more than 40,000 sqm of rentable office space adopting latest specifications.

Also making headway are Al Mazunah Free Zone Phase 1 — Package 2 and Phase 2 at a total value reaching RO 6 million. Madayn has also completed infrastructure construction work at Samayil Industrial City with a total value touching RO 40 million. The construction of the Facility Building in Samayil Industrial City has also been completed on a total area of more than 16,000 sqm. Additionally, Raysut Industrial City (Raysut 2) expansion project has been completed with a total value of RO 3 million.

Besides, Madayn has initiated Masar Service Centres in all of its industrial cities and they are currently operating and delivering a lineup of services to the investors. Masar presents an integrated platform to meet the requirements of investors for their projects in terms of licenses and approvals under one roof and within a specific timeframe.

HORECA show set to make Oman debut

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 28

The first edition of HORECA Oman — a high-profile event focused on the foodservice and hospitality industries in the Sultanate of Oman and the wider region — will take place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Muscat, from May 31 to June 2, 2022.

Organised by Hospitality Services, HORECA is a premier meeting place for the hospitality and foodservice industries, with a history spanning almost three decades.

The Sultanate of Oman's entry into the HORECA network — which comprises Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Jordan — signals an important step for the country's foodservice and hospitality industries.



Co-organised by Al Nimr Expo, the international event will feature an exhibition of

products, services, equipment and technologies, providing buyers with an unparalleled

opportunity to meet key players and do business.

It also serves as an educational and entertainment platform that showcases young talent through various culinary, bar and hospitality competitions, live cooking demonstrations as well as B2B meetings, networking sessions and panel discussions with industry leaders and specialists.

Nader Abbas, Managing Director of Al Nimr Expo, said: "Oman is a lucrative and prospect-laden market for investors, suppliers and international companies seeking partnerships and ways to expand their businesses and operations in the fields of hospitality and foodservice."

We are delighted to partner with Hospitality Services to organise HORECA Oman, a

much-needed trade and business platform relevant to the ongoing largescale hotel and resort development and food-related projects across the Sultanate of Oman."

Maha el Khoury, Project and Sales Director at Hospitality Services, added: "More than 100 of the most promising chefs, culinary students, baristas and mixologists will go head-to-head in a series of live cooking, display challenges, barista, latte art and mocktail competitions that will really test their skills."

The event has garnered a significant amount of interest from regional and international exhibitors. International jury members include: Christophe Marguin, Youssef Akiki, Paul Hayward, Tarek Ibrahim, James Knight-Pacheco and Sylvain Arthus.

High stakes as Hungary eyes Russian oil ban exemption

With EU leaders set to meet on Monday to try to seal a sixth Russia sanctions package that includes an oil embargo, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has mounted his latest show of defiance.

The package proposed earlier this month by the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, requires unanimous backing from all 27 EU member states.

But the combative Orban has described an embargo as "a red line" and an "atomic bomb" that would destroy the central European country's economy.

Budapest — which under Orban sought lose ties to Moscow until the invasion of Ukraine — insists a ban would spark recession, shortages and rocketing prices, and undermine Hungary's energy security.

In a letter last week, Orban told EU chief Charles Michel that bringing up the embargo at the leaders' summit would be pointless.

"Solutions must come before sanctions," said Orban, who has often been the odd-man-out in EU decision-making and currently is at loggerheads with the bloc over rule-of-law issues.

Orban has dismissed the EU's compromise offer of a short exemption of a few years, and insists that the package exempts imports through pipelines like the "Druzhba" (Friendship) which delivers the Urals crude brand that meets around 65 per cent of landlocked Hungary's oil demand.

Alternatively it wants a longer exemption and transition period of at least three and half to four years, and at least 800 million euros (\$860 million) in EU funds to re-tool refineries for non-Russian crude oil processing and boost the capacity of a pipeline to neighbouring Croatia.

Faced with the stand-off, voices abroad, including German economy minister Robert Habeck, have called for the EU to launch the embargo regardless.

"If the 26 of us consent to it, even if with the exception of Hungary, it's a path I would always support," he told German public radio. — AFP

Solutions must come before sanctions

VIKTOR ORBAN
Prime Minister, Hungary



POLAR BEAR IN SEA ICE

Kvitbjorn (Polar Bear, in Norwegian), a hybrid touristic boat, combining a diesel motor and electric batteries, makes its way in the sea ice in the Borebukta Bay, located at the northwestern side of Isfjorden, in Svalbard Archipelago, northern Norway. Home to polar bears, the midnight sun and the northern lights, a Norwegian archipelago perched high in the Arctic is trying to find a way to profit from its pristine wilderness without ruining it. — AFP

Time to look past Bitcoin



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The writer is a member of the International Press Association

FINALLY, AT THE TAIL OF A NEWS REPORT ON FINANCE, THERE WAS A MERE 10 SECONDS MENTION OF THE CRYPTO MARKET COLLAPSING

I just returned from a long-awaited trip to Italy. After almost 3 years I managed to go back to visit my family and friends.

And after nearly 2 decades spent abroad, it is always fascinating going back "home" and find out that everything seems changed, while nothing much has actually changed.

That is why I use the inverted commas for "home". I am proud of being Italian, but the sense of stagnation when it comes to innovation is quite palpable.

Moreover, I almost invariably find my friends working at the same company, on the same job, with the same ambitions. I love them the way they are, but it is at times hard to have a conversation on some of the latest developments that are changing the world.

Throughout the time of my holiday, the LUNA/TERRA situation unfolded, creating one of the largest crypto disasters ever, yet there was no coverage about it on any mainstream media for a week.

Finally, at the tail of a news report on finance, there was a mere 10 seconds mention of the crypto market collapsing.

Since 2016, I have been advocating — and at times criticising — the importance of tech development finalised towards affordable global payment systems as well as distributed ledgers able to dis-intermediate entire industries.

I cannot say that I was involved from the beginning, but by 2022 I am considered an early adopter. And what I have seen, is the rise and fall of ideas, such as Initial Coin Offering, and witnessed the compound growth of what "learning from failure" looks like in technology.

The concept of Decentralised Finance — or DeFi in short — has been one of the most significant innovations of this decade, and it is just the beginning. Yet, I also realise how getting to understand all of this, requires will and dedication.

So it is not fully a surprise to me, that while I was in Italy, every time I mentioned that I worked in blockchain and cryptocurrencies, the most common comment was inevitably: "Ah! Bitcoin!"

And even more worrying, in some cases, someone replied to me that they were offered an investment in a blockchain project. But then, upon further investigation, they were

referring to a ponzi scheme with some sort of metaverse in the middle of it.

Hyper, Ultra, Mega, etcetera... all sort of suffix before Verse to make it sound like the latest innovation, while at the core of it, when they said investment, they truly meant the onboarding fee in a Multi Level Marketing company with no products to sell.

It is truly saddening to see the industry being so poorly represented in a country like Italy, where innovation thrived for decades and still does around more traditional industries.

But if I stop criticising my own country, I realise that this type of mindset is broadly present around the world.

Too many people see cryptocurrencies just as a way to make money quickly, instead of understanding the solutions that distributed ledgers are bringing to the world to solve the very problems that traditional systems have tried to solve.

Whenever an innovation is tested, even when it fails, leaves behind breadcrumbs of success that will eventually become the everyday solutions we will be using in many aspects of our life.

Get ready for reverse currency wars



JEFFREY FRANKEL

The author, Professor of Capital Formation and Growth at Harvard University, previously served as a member of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers. He is a research associate at the US National Bureau of Economic Research.

The US dollar is up 12 per cent against the euro over the past year and, at €0.93, is approaching parity. If prices of oil and other commodities now seem high in dollar terms, they look even higher in euros.

With the greenback surging, and inflation in many countries currently at multi-decade highs, we may be entering so-called "reverse currency wars", in which countries compete to strengthen their currencies' foreign-exchange values.

The term "currency wars" was originally a colourful description of what international economists had long called "competitive devaluations" or, after exchange rates began to float in the early 1970s, "competitive depreciations".

In these situations, countries feel aggrieved that their trading partners are deliberately pursuing policies to weaken their own currencies in order to gain an unfair advantage in international trade.

Competitive depreciation can arise when all countries' main macroeconomic goals, in addition to maximising GDP growth and employment, include improving their trade balances. This generally describes the past few decades in the world economy.

A reverse currency war, on the other hand, involves competitive appreciation. Here, countries think their trading partners are deliberately trying to strengthen their currencies in order to rein in inflation. This could describe the period that began in 2021, when inflation returned as a serious problem in most countries.

In both cases, it is impossible for all countries to pursue such strategies, because they cannot all move their exchange rates in the same direction at the same time. Both competitive depreciation and competitive appreciation are often perceived as evidence of a lack of international cooperation to achieve exchange-rate stability, and sometimes lead to calls

for a new Bretton Woods-type arrangement to promote greater policy coordination.

The United States has often been quick to allege that other countries' currencies are unfairly undervalued. Since 1988, Congress has required the Department of the Treasury to submit semiannual reports on whether America's major trading partners are manipulating their currencies. China and other Asian countries are the most frequent targets.

But Switzerland is also under suspicion, even though the Swiss franc is easily the most expensive major currency by other criteria.

In February 2013, the US Treasury spearheaded a sort of micro-Bretton Woods agreement whereby G-7 countries would refrain from taking steps to depreciate their currencies. The 2013 pact is little known, but it has worked. Over the past decade, G-7 members have not intervened to sell their own currencies on the foreign-exchange market.

China, which is not a G-7 member, does intervene in the currency market. Since 2014, however, it has done so to slow the renminbi's depreciation, not to encourage it.

The phrase "currency war" was coined in 2010 by Brazilian leaders protesting the monetary policies of the US, Japan, and other countries. They did not accuse the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of Japan of explicitly devaluing the dollar or the yen, or of intervening in the foreign-exchange market to drive down these currencies, but rather of adopting excessively loose monetary policies. US and Japanese policymakers, their Brazilian counterparts argued, had cut interest rates to zero, and then gone further by introducing quantitative easing, with the deliberate intention of depreciating their countries' currencies, boosting net exports, and exporting unemployment to their trading partners.

Similarly, nobody today accuses the US authorities of using foreign-

exchange intervention to appreciate the dollar. The complaint is rather that the Fed's current interest-rate increases attract capital inflows to the US and strengthen the greenback, forcing up interest rates internationally and thus keeping global growth below where it could be.

There is ample historical precedent for fears of competitive devaluation, most notably the 1930s, when major powers devalued their currencies against gold and thereby against each other. Is there also a precedent for competitive appreciation? Some have argued that the early 1980s provided such an example.

When the Paul Volcker-led Fed raised interest rates sharply to fight inflation, it knew that it would be aided in that task by the dollar's appreciation. But the corresponding depreciation of US trading partners' currencies worsened their inflation rates and forced them to raise interest rates as well. © Project Syndicate, 2022

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Aiding a child's sensory development

Sensory Play has emerged as an essential type of activities that stimulates children's senses and re-activate the brains and senses correlation with the basic surrounding nature. It promotes exploration skills and following the scientific methods while playing and innovating the playing themes... **P20**

Scientists make way for gene-edited tomatoes as vegan source of vitamin D

If British scientists have their way, two medium-sized tomatoes a day could keep the doctor away.

A research team led by scientists at the John Innes Centre in Norwich have edited the genetic makeup of tomatoes to become a robust source of vitamin D, which regulates nutrients like calcium that are imperative to keeping bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

Although vitamin D is created in our bodies after exposure to sunlight, its major source is food, largely in dairy and meat.

Low vitamin D levels — associated with a plethora of conditions from cancer to cardiovascular disease — affect roughly 1 billion people globally, the researchers said.

Tomato leaves naturally contain one of the building blocks of vitamin



D3, called 7-DHC. Vitamin D3 is considered best at raising vitamin D levels in the body.

The scientists used the Crispr tool — which is designed to work like a pair of genetic scissors — to tweak

the plant's genome such that 7-DHC substantially accumulates in the tomato fruit, as well as the leaves.

When leaves and the sliced fruit were exposed to ultraviolet light for an hour, one tomato contained the equivalent levels of vitamin D as two medium-sized eggs or 28 grams (1 ounce) of tuna, the researchers wrote in a paper published in the journal Nature Plants.

Most vitamin D3 supplements come from lanolin, which is extracted from sheep's wool. Since the sheep stays alive, it works for vegetarians, but not vegans.

The scientists are now evaluating whether sunshine, instead of ultraviolet light, can effectively convert 7-DHC to vitamin D3.

New regulations in Britain have allowed the researchers to evaluate this theory — but it could be some time before they are ready to hit supermarket shelves.

To close the current gap in the intake of vitamin D from dietary sources, two medium-sized gene-edited tomatoes should be enough, said the study's lead author, Jie Li, adding that it is hard to tell a gene-edited tomato apart from a wild tomato.

"They taste like tomatoes," added Cathie Martin, another study author. — **Reuters**

READ

AKATA WOMAN

BY NNEDI OKORAFOR

With the help of her friends, Sunny embarks on a mission to find a precious object hidden deep in an otherworldly realm. Defeating the guardians of the prize will take more from Sunny than she has to give, and triumph will mean she will be forever changed.



UPROAR

Angry Swedish football fans are auctioning replicas of the sawn-off nose of a Zlatan Ibrahimovic statue to protest against the commercialisation of the sport and what they perceive as the star's betrayal. Bids on website eBay hit \$610 (\$68 euros) on Tuesday. — **AFP**



FASHION INSIDER

Russian fashion designer Yulia Yanina arrives on May 26, 2022 to attend the annual amfAR Cinema Against AIDS Cannes Gala at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes, southern France, on the sidelines of the 75th Cannes Film Festival. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

CULTURE

Chelsea Flower Show: unexpected gardeners and the queen in a buggy



QUEEN ELIZABETH II put in an appearance at the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show on Monday, as it returned to its traditional May slot after the hiatus of the coronavirus pandemic.

The 96-year-old monarch, who has cut back on her public appearances due to difficulties walking, was seen for the first time using a chauffeur-driven buggy to get around. She toured the manicured grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea — a retirement home for army veterans — with Keith Weed, the president of organisers: the Royal Horticultural Society.

Some 140,000 people are expected to attend the west London show from Tuesday until Sunday, with several creations designed to pay tribute to her record-breaking 70 years on the throne.

One is a new rose, "Rosa Elizabeth", which is in line for a prize, while another is a huge purple steel structure of her profile, with foliage, 70 pots of her favourite flower lily of the valley and rosemary.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The future of the planet, a return to more natural gardens and well-being are recurring themes at this year's exhibition, which has been organised by the RHS for more than 100 years.

One of the 39 spectacular gardens created for the occasion is a huge 15-tonne block of ice made from rainwater, surrounded by trees and plants.

It will melt slowly over the next few days.

"We're remembering the melting and thawing of the permafrost within the Arctic regions," its creator John Warland said.

But he said there is still a positive message despite the "doom and gloom" of climate change.

"Ten years ago, scientists went down into the ice and they found seeds... that were 32,000 years old that were actually viable and that they were able to germinate," he added.

"So although climate change is bad, possibly locked deep within the ice could be the secret and key to the onward survival of mankind."

Another garden that stands out has a rustic hut surrounded by wild flowers and a small stream blocked by a beaver dam. "Beaver wetlands are absolutely incredible," said Sara King, head of the rewilding network at Rewilding Britain. "To bring a slice of that here... for people to experience and hear the soundscape is really incredible."

HEALING POWERS

There are no beavers in Tayshan Hayden-Smith's garden but a strong message.

Hayden-Smith, 25, grew up near the Grenfell Tower block, where 70 people were killed in June 2017, in Britain's worst residential fire since World War II.

The high-rise — still standing and shrouded in tarpaulin — is just 10 minutes from the Chelsea Flower Show. Hayden-Smith was a young footballer in Austria at the time. He returned to London immediately and started gardening.

"It was my response to the fire that taught me and showed me and exhibited the healing and unifying powers of nature," he said.

"This is exactly what I'm here to express, how gardens can tell a story, how it can bring people together but also how it can heal and how it can unify."

He rejected stereotypes of gardening being a pursuit for older white people. "It's not a luxury. It's not a hobby. This is something that saves lives," he added.

Hayden-Smith describes himself as an "activist" rather than a garden designer.

"My mission is not to design gardens necessarily on my own. My mission is to create more access to nature and to make gardening more inclusive." — **AFP**

CINEMA

'Pushing boundaries': Indian film industry seeks new horizons in Cannes



INDIA'S FILM INDUSTRY, the world's most prolific, is taking centre stage at the Cannes Film Festival, but insiders say it's a challenge to please global audiences without losing its massive fanbase at home.

India is the festival's first-ever guest of honour this year in its "Marche du Film" where global companies come together to buy and sell film rights and hash out production deals.

A high-profile Indian delegation, including a government minister, has been given privileged access to global distributors and screened many work-in-progress movies in search of financing.

"We feel that Indian cinema may be at a turning point, that there's been a renewal of Indian cinema," Jerome Paillard, the Marche du Film's executive director, told AFP.

Global distributors took a major interest in India a decade or more ago with global hits like Hindi-language film "The Lunchbox" (2013).

"And then nothing much happened", he said.

"But now there are several films in the making that we find interesting. Maybe there's a new impetus."

VERY SELF-CONTAINED

The Indian film industry produces up to 2,000 movies per year, more than any other country.

The country's 1.4 billion inhabitants, growing middle class, huge theatre network, and sizeable global diaspora give the sector a fanbase that is the envy of the world.

It has also made inroads

beyond its native speakers — in places like China, Egypt and Nigeria.

But catering to Indian tastes can often stand in the way of going further, said Pranad Kapadia, the director of Moviegoers Entertainment, a UK-based distribution firm specialising in Indian cinema.

"We're very self-contained," he told AFP at the Cannes festival.

"Obviously a film-maker wants to make content that resonates with every audience. But in an effort to target a non-core audience, you may alienate your core audience."

Indie film-makers in India — with a taste for the more high-brow fare that might interest the global festival circuit — often struggle to get financing from major producers or the government, said Paillard.

This was not always the case. In the 1950s and 1960s, a generation of Indian directors moved away from traditional musicals and were supported by the government.

The most lauded was Satyajit Ray, whose films won prizes at film festivals in Cannes, Venice and Berlin.

But as big-budget blockbusters grew more important in later years, such independent movies were overshadowed by Bollywood's output aimed at a mass audience.

STAY ON THE DANCEFLOOR

Many still try to break the mould, like "English Vinglish" (2012), that scored well at home and with expat Indians,

and went on to be dubbed or subtitled into 12 other languages.

"There are directors, storytellers and subjects that can travel," said Kapadia, highlighting director Sanjay Leela Bhansali as someone who appeals to both the Indian mainstream and the Western art-house crowd.

Bhansali's latest movie "Gangubai Kathiawadi" premiered at the Berlin Film Festival this year.

"Our job is to keep pushing the boundaries," said Kapadia. "The sky's the limit."

This year's Marche du Film experience, meanwhile, may take some time to translate into tangible deals outside India's main markets in South Asia and the Gulf states, but is still invaluable, Kapadia said.

"You have to be there. Stay on the dancefloor and you'll find a partner," he said.

Indian actress Pooja Hegde, who shoots four films a year in three Indian languages and has 20 million Instagram followers, said she too was hopeful.

"Things are changing. Indian cinema is going to the world," she told AFP.

She and many other Indian actors present in Cannes — including superstar Deepika Padukone, a main jury member — were promoting "brand India", added the 31-year-old former second runner-up at the Miss Universe India contest.

"We're spicy," she said laughing. "We manage, we hustle. That's brand India." — **AFP**

ART

'Looty' project launches digital art heists to reclaim African artifacts



A NIGERIAN MAN has launched a project called "Looty" to reclaim African artifacts stolen by European colonisers by creating 3-D images of them, selling them as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and using the proceeds to fund young African artists.

Calls for objects stolen during the colonial period to be returned to their places of origin have intensified in recent years, and Western institutions have sent items back to countries including Nigeria and Benin.

Chidi Nwaubani, the founder of Looty, described his project as an alternative form of repatriation, by which digital technologies are used to reclaim a measure of control and ownership over artifacts still held far from Africa.

"Imagine a world where these items were never looted," Nwaubani told Reuters in an interview. "We're just trying to reimagine that world and bring that world into the digital form."

The process begins with what Nwaubani called a "digital art heist", a perfectly legal procedure in which a Looty team member goes to a museum and scans a target object using technology that can be used to create a 3-D image.

An NFT of the image is created and put up for sale via the Looty website, which also

acts as an online gallery where anyone can view the images for free. Nwaubani said 20% of the proceeds of NFT sales would go towards grants for African artists aged 25 or under.

NFTs are a type of digital asset that allows anyone to verify who owns them.

The website launched on May 13 and although there were no immediate sales, Nwaubani has received messages of interest from around the world.

Looty's first NFTs are based on an image of one of the Benin Bronzes that were looted by British troops in 1897 from what is now Nigeria and are held in the British Museum in London.

"Knowing that it's Nigerian but it lives outside of Nigeria has always troubled me. So I felt that there's something that we could do to change that," said Nwaubani.

Looty's next big project is focused on an Ancient Egyptian item, Nwaubani said, declining to give further details.

The name Looty refers to the act of looting and is also a playful homage to the dog Looty, which was found by a British captain after troops looted the Summer Palace near Beijing in 1860, taken back to London and presented to Queen Victoria. — **Reuters**



art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | MAY 29 | 2022

Aiding a child's sensory development



By Ruqaya al Kindi

Children's brains develop rapidly during the early years, and the most important areas of development are movement, language, feelings, social relationships and communication skills. Through activities that stimulate a child's senses of taste, sight, touch, smell and hearing, the child's brain develops through the formation of neural connections (especially the kids between 6 months to 8 years).

This is called Sensory Play and "has emerged as an essential type of activities that stimulates children's senses and re-activate the brains and senses correlation with the basic surrounding nature. It promotes exploration skills and following the scientific methods while playing and innovating the playing themes", Ibtisam al Abri said, the owner of Patterpillar, which specialised in selling and organising sensory play activities.

Sensory Play is the primordial way of play for children, but due to the modernised lifestyle many types of entertainment has replaced the authentic way of playing and learning. Those new types of games, unfortunately, have disregarded the basic growth needs for babies hence.

"Kids were raised, in the past, surrounded by nature either in a farm raising animals or by the beach fishing and helping in house work, as a result there would be a higher chance for them to interact with animals and the different substances such as soil, mud and sand", she explained.

The provision for sensory play, as she added, became limited due to the modernised life style, therefore Patterpillar has come up with this model in Oman to offer that kind of environment and playing kits.

"This kind of play uses the basic environmental ingredients such as sands, trees, colors, water, organic soil, slime, play dough, instant snow, jelly, foams and etc. Sensory play is a paramount to maintain the healthy growth and learning of sensing and experience", Ibtisam said.

Parents can adopt sensory play for their children as an essential part of their lives, and this is not difficult. "It's all about the basics and nature. parents can take their children to the beach, the public parks or even just the outdoor backyard at their houses and give them the chance to explore the nature around them or playing with ani-

mals. The kids can play in the walls, instead we should provide them the alternative space for painting and drawing. Patterpillar offer several types of sensory kits that can be used at home", she pointed out.

She mentioned that Outdoor activities such as playing with sand or playing with water are really important because they can reduce children's stress and the negative energy in a very healthy way, it also encourages the child's creativity and imagination, and plays a big role in enhancing the child's senses and fine motor skills.

It's a challenging, nowadays, for parents to provide sensory play for their children due to four main unintentional reasons. "Lifestyle is a challenge, where the parents are really focused on the child's appearance or the how others view them and their lifestyle", she said.

Busy life, as she added, is another obstacle where when both parents are busy in working, the chances are low for the child to go out visit parks and play. Parents, therefore, try to replace the entertainment by giving the child a device to play with.

She mentioned that, "Modern houses is a challenge as well, where nowadays people live in small spaces like apartment so there isn't a space for the child to run around and play freely."

Types of entertainment is the fourth challenge. "The appearance of digital gaming and electronics makes the kids want it more and since it's more convenient for the mothers although it's more expensive it becomes the first option", she shared.

"Messy play enhances children's body control and balance through the large and small movements that they make when they play. Simple actions, such as holding a paint brush over an easel or pouring water from one container to another, helps children focus their fine and gross motor skills, which improves their control and balance with practice", she explained.

Messy play is a sociable activity, whether with family or other children, therefore, it will enrich relationships through social interaction. "As young children can't explain things verbally, it allows them to share their discoveries in different ways through the use of objects and gestures. Children, as well, need to think about their actions in order to be able to convey this explanation which also helps develop their cognition", she shared.